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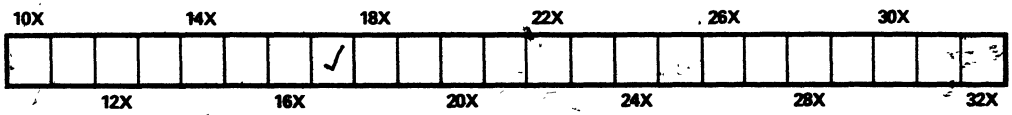


A LITTLE MAID OF ACADIE

BY

MARIAN C. L. REEVES

AUTHOR OF "OLD MARTIN BOSCAWEN'S JEST," ETC.

COR.—And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?

TOUCH.—Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. . . . . In respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious.

As You Like It.

NEW YORK
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1888

A LITTLE MAID OF ACADIE.

I.

"... In the hollow by the stream
That beach leans down into, of which you said
The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart,
And pines for waters."

A STONY hollow, down among the hills. The very spot where, when at the creation rock and earth were being sown broadcast over the face of the globe, the rocks wore through the bottom of the sack that held them, trickling thick and fast in a gray stream that frets the brown little mountain river hurrying to the St. John.

A spot wild and untrodden since that day, one might have said; but for the bleaching skeletons of trees that bristle up the slopes, and tell where lumber-camps have been, and gone. Young trees and alders and tall ferns are trying fast to cover up the havoc these have made; and where they cluster closest, the stream broadens out, giving

babbling promise of a shallow ford, so clear as it runs over the pebbles.

A promise which old Dobbin, wiser than his rider, knew better than to trust; for he made what protest he could, sidling on the margin, before he went floundering into a treacherous pool midway. As Dr. Kendal pulled him up rather roughly, having taken more water than he liked, a peal of mocking laughter rang out, up-stream.

Now, to be mounted on a sorry nag is quite mortification enough to a good horseman, without the added aggravation of providing amusement for a by-stander—in search of whom, Kendal turned half angrily in his saddle, and caught sight of a gray something drifting with the twilight shadows half-way across the water.

So dim was it, amid those shadows, that it might almost be mistaken for the evening mist; or, if one were fanciful, for malicious water-sprite, that

> "... mid her reeds
> Pressed her cold finger closer to her lip,"

checking her involuntary laughter as she saw herself discovered. But Kendal, being of a practical bent, instantly inferred stepping-stones.

The small gray, hurried figure had flitted over to the opposite bank, vanishing in the trees, while Kendal still drew bridle, half minded to

ride after, and demand why she had left him to flounder through the water here, while she could have given a hint of the ford above?

However, there was something she had shown him, whether she would or no: the opening through the wood, which elsewhere closed in, impenetrably thick and matted.

Kendal had ridden down into the hollow, beckoned by a thin wave of chimney-smoke from the house to which he had been called to visit a new patient.

A starveling signal, to be flung out from the high-sounding De Landremont homestead. But Kendal had been long enough in the Madawaska region to look for nothing on a larger scale than the trim cottages of the *habitans*. With their quaintly sloping whitewashed roofs set in ruddy buckwheat patches, or yellowing strips of late-ripening grain, they spread along the natural terraces of the river St. John, and up into the skirts of the forest, whither the old Acadians fled, a century ago; or such among the old Acadians, Evangeline's compatriots, as happily escaped the English ships that would have carried them into exile. In this safe refuge, on the summer farms or in the winter lumber-camps, the years went by: in Acadie, as the habitans dreamed, until one day they woke, and found that Maine had reached out her boundary-line, and drawn some of them

in just here. On each side of that line, sometimes imaginary, sometimes the clear, broad, twisting band of the St. John, the old Acadian families remain, one half "American," one half provincial, both halves wholly French; though willingly enough making room among themselves for an outsider such as Dr. Kendal.

He meanwhile had reached the gap where his unwitting guide had vanished; pushed his way along the path on which the alders trespassed; and emerged on a wide open space which might once have been garden, but where now scrub spruce and firs were straggling, and sumac thrust its coarse red pompons in the stead of flowers. In the midst, a rambling cottage, larger than the wont, but gray and leaning to decay, and with that niggardly line of smoke wavering above.

It was the one sign of occupancy about the place; so Kendal followed it, flinging his bridle over a half-sunken gate-post—gate there was none—and crossing the furze-grown, wood-littered yard to the door.

His knock was unanswered. But the line of windows with that gaunt and hollow-eyed look which the want of curtains always gives, offered him no encouragement to try farther on. The chimney-smoke was at least something promising; so, after a moment's hesitation, he lifted the latch.

It was a long, low-raftered kitchen into which he was invited by the firelight. The flames went dancing about a row of tins on the tall dresser-shelves; catching at the polished circle of the spinning-wheel, and the high wooden settle against the wall; glancing over at the brasses of a *crédence*, an old-fashioned press, just opposite; thence slinking back behind the black pot hung in the great roomy chimney, and flickering out again with brightening touches upon what Kendal only just then caught sight of.

A fair head half turned his way, with startled poise, a small gray figure seated on the hearth.

Nothing misty nor naiad-like, here, but only a very earthly little girl; to whom, however, Kendal straightway went up, and said—in English due to the fair hair:

"Water-witches don't care for a fire; so you'll not mind my taking this from you, as I was not prepared for that plunge in the stream?"

He had taken his stand on the hearth before her, leaning against the side of the wide chimney: a rather massive, dark-bearded man, twisting his riding-whip in a pair of vigorous, ungloved hands, and looking down on her with a twinkle in his deep-set gray eyes.

Her color deepened; she shifted her position, fronting him more directly, her elbows on her

knees, her chin in her two little brown hands, her blue eyes sparkling defiance up at him.

When that movement was all the answer he had—

"Do you not understand?" he said, this time in French.

"Oui, 'comprends," she returned indifferently, settling herself into her old position.

"What had I done, that you should give me no hint of the ford?"

"What had you done, that I should give you any hint of it?"

She said it with such directness, such certainty of unanswerableness in the cold, sweet voice, that Kendal rather stared at her, taken by surprise: as when one would touch a rose, and finds it tinted marble instead.

How had she come by that fair little, sunny-haired face, the big childish blue eyes that ought to have had the sunshine in them too, but had only an unchildlike hardness instead? Kendal had nothing to say, for an instant; and then the pause was broken by the opening of an inner door.

"Oh, but that is fine! on a summer evening like this, to burn up all the wood my viert' huomme Pacifique has cut for madame's fire upstairs!"

The brisk old body on the threshold, her white-

kerchiefed bosom swelling with indignation at the reckless extravagance of the fire, her crest of a white cap bristling, her sharp little face thrust forward, like an angry hen that finds her nest meddled with—had taken no note of the stranger. Until the girl said, with a careless shrug :

"I *have* burned a beauté of your wood ; that is because you left me no candle. Use the one in your hand, tante Marguite, and see we have a visitor."

Tante Marguite came hastily forward, with a quick change of tone, a ring of relief in it.

"Eh, it is monsieur the doctor ?"

"Yes, I am Dr. Kendal. I received your message—"

She had turned to the girl :

"Go, then, tell madame I am showing monsieur the doctor up."

The girl rose, as of habit, at the peremptory order ; but lingeringly, in a surprised way, with an evident desire to hear more.

But not a word more was added, until the door had closed on her.

Then :

"Listen a little, monsieur," the woman went on, in her provincial French, "I fear you will find madame failing fast. It is, however, true that she is near as young as me" ; with a complacent drawing up of her own alert, round figure.

"But as Pacifique (that is my man, monsieur, that was gardener here, when there was anybody to see a garden !) tells me only yesterday, peonies and those common things are well more hardy than the dainty flowers one puts in the vase in the salon. But monsieur will come and judge for himself."

Kendal was a little impatient to do so; but she detained him to explain that le Bon Dieu had brought him to the neighborhood just in time. For if madame's illness had been but two weeks earlier, while the old doctor was yet alive, and Dr. Kendal had not come down from Rivière du Loup to fill his place, what a misfortune! For madame would not have sent for the old doctor, at any price; not since he had taken upon himself to speak to her about monsieur Jean, just after monsieur François turned his back once for all on the old home. And if monsieur the doctor is to do madame any good now, he will have the kindness to remember she has never spoken of the old story, nor heard those two names, for it's many and many a year.

"You need not fear," Kendal interposed, good-naturedly. "The less, that I know nothing of the old story, and hear the names for the first time from your own lips."

Marguite looked rather crestfallen than relieved that gossip did not busy itself about the

De Landremont house. But she was prompt to say, somewhat stiffly indeed :

"So much the better ; for there's no getting anything out of a bag but what's in it. This way, then, if monsieur pleases."

But Kendal could catch a murmur now and then, as she lighted him up-stairs :

"Truly ! and he in the village two whole weeks ! And to think all the world could forget that little history ! But, all the same, le Bon Dieu has brought him just in time, in place of the old one."

Kendal smiled rather grimly. If she thought the death of his predecessor providential, what would she think of that episode in Kendal's own life, which had more or less remotely brought about his being here, in the stead of the medical adviser madame would not have sent for ?

The sound of footsteps on the stairs must have announced them ; for as the two reached the landing, a door was opened by the girl, who flitted past without speaking, and they entered the room.

Kendal's expectations, on the basis of so much of the house as he had already seen, were at fault here. It was as if all that the other rooms had ever known of quaint and massive, in the way of old mahogany, had marshaled themselves about the mistress antiquated as they. In the light of

the silver candelabrum on the stand at her elbow, she was glancing up at her visitor, out of a pinched white face; all the more white and waxen for the startling contrast with the black silk kerchief tied three-corner-wise over her silvery hair. It gave her the look of a religieuse; a look flatly contradicted by the quick, vivacious eyes—

> "Coal coal black, and they're like a hawk,
> And they winna let a body be,"

said Kendal to himself, while she was welcoming him in French much older than herself:

"Dr. Kendal, is it not? I am charmed to see you; though perhaps you may think my sending for you a mere trap to catch a visitor? The truth is, my good Marguerite here—"

A smile of friendly understanding passed between mistress and maid, as the latter softly withdrew from the room.

"My good Marguerite will have it that I am not quite strong this summer; and so, as I am entirely dependent on her for companionship, I find it wisest not to dispute on the point of a needle, and am a little ill accordingly."

Kendal looked at her in some doubt as to how much of the cheerful tone was real, how much assumed. To him, the first light touch of death was so apparent in the delicate, pinched features

that he must think she had at least felt the approach of the cold hand. He watched her with the interest we are wont to feel in one who is, we see, well-nigh face to face with the mysteries of that strange, hidden world. But to those keen old eyes there were no mysteries; and not much of a world outside the four walls of this chamber of hers.

"I do not know to what will serve your powders, Dr. Kendal," she said to him, tapping with transparent hand certain tiny folded papers his saddle-bags had furnished forth, when nearly an hour later he had risen to go; "but I am sure your visit has been of benefit. You will always be the welcome monsieur, as often as you may spare an hour for an old woman—a *septante* who has been out of the world a good many years already. For me, I commence to believe," she added, graciously, "I have been in error, since a long time, in so shutting all young companionship out of my life, that I forgot it could interest me—until you came."

Young companionship! Kendal was smiling to himself over the words, as he went out.

They had an odd sound in them, applied to himself.

A man's age is not always to be computed from the entry of his birth in the family Bible. It was now some years since Kendal had believed

his youth as completely ended as if he were verging on the threescore years and ten of the old lady upstairs. Yes, youth and he had parted company; he did not know that he should desire a meeting again. It was well over; he had no more wish to bring it back, with its feverish moods, than to risk having again the scarlet fever, or anything else incident to one's early days. Perhaps if what he called his middle-age had been even as much as the precise middle of the allotted threescore years and ten; or had brought with it any other physical sign than an added breadth of shoulder: in other words, if youth had passed so far away from him, as to be beyond glancing over her shoulder at him as she went—he might have reached out eagerly after the mere retreating shadow. As it was, he was conscious of a faint, pleasurable amusement at Mme. de Landremont's odd mistake—a feeling which left him no time to wonder that, in speaking of young companionship, she should keep no note of the girl downstairs.

He was the more taken by surprise when, at an angle in the stairs, the girl stopped him, starting up suddenly from her seat on a lower step.

"Tell me, is she ill—my grandmother? You are a doctor: tell me, will she—will she *die?*"

"Your grandmother?" He repeated the words almost incredulously.

She never heeded. She stood in the moonlight slanting in at the window behind her, and lifted to him a pale, determined face that would not be trifled with.

"Will she *die?*"

The voice sank to a frightened whisper, appealing to him as if he had only to open his lips and pronounce for death or reprieve.

Perhaps she interpreted his grave smile too hopefully, as he said:

"She is not ill. Perhaps she may never be ill. She is old; the sands are running low, the threescore years and ten are almost spent. I think you will one day be glad, if you can brighten the grief while that is left; can cheer with your companionship—"

"My companionship—*my* companionship!"

She broke in with a short, hard laugh; so bitter, that involuntarily he drew a step nearer her.

At that she recovered herself, with a haughty drawing up of the small figure, and looked him full in the face. "You don't know what you are talking about—" she said, insolently; and went from him like a flash.

Kendal descended, feeling, as he told himself, rather more hot and angry than was worth while for a child's impertinence—a child, a mere fraction of youth, which apparently did not count

in the summing up of the inmates of the old house.

And how soon would Death's summons come, to lessen the number yet more? The utmost Kendal could hope to do, would be to bar the door against it for a very little while.

II.

"... the slow door
That, opening, letting in, lets out no more."

THE summons was nearer than Kendal knew.

He had but paid two or three visits more, made welcome by the gracious old lady, but seeing nothing of the girl, save a gray shadow vanishing among the trees.

When one midnight, came old Pacifique, hurrying with so urgent a message, that Dr. Kendal, as he threw himself into his saddle, feared Death on the Pale Horse would reach madame's door before him.

And so, indeed, it proved.

When Kendal—better mounted than in Dobbin's day, and therefore easily distancing Pacifique—had dismounted, and made his way acro

he littered yard to the house, he nearly stumbled ver a small figure crouching on the door-step.

So small a figure—so desolate out there in the ark, with head dropped on its knees—that it is o wonder the man was moved, as one is easily y a child's trouble. And seeing that her sob- ing made her deaf to his approach, he gently id his hand upon the drooping head.

"Come in with me—I will take you to her," e said.

He could feel the shudder that shook her from ad to foot. She slipped from under his hand, d the next instant she was gone, beyond the gle of the house.

This was no fitting time to give the wayward eature a thought more. Yet it may be ques- ned whether Kendal did not, as he made his y up through the empty house, guided by the mmer of a light placed on the landing.

There was a farther glimmer across Mme. de ndremont's threshold. Marguite must have n on the watch for him, for she opened to him nce, quietly as he came.

The sharp old face was blurred with tears. t she did not speak until he had bent over the ; then reverently replaced the waxen hand sed on the quiet breast.

The woman moved to a window apart, and dal followed her; both with the stealthy

tread which one falls into in the death-chamber; as if one feared disturbing that one sleeper whom no jarring sound can ever again trouble.

"I suppose, from what your husband told me, it was too sudden to have sent for me earlier," said Kendal, speaking in a suppressed voice. "Had it even been otherwise, I could hardly have done anything. It might be some relief to you, perhaps," he added, after a pause, looking kindly at the old face with the painful tears of age upon it, "if I were to take on me some of the arrangements now? That is to say, if there is no proper friend within reach to do it, as appears to be the case."

"If monsieur would have the goodness? See then, my old Pacifique, he does of the best which he knows; but he'd be coming to ask me about everything; which is what I could not bear, though mostly I do like it well," she added, candidly. "Now, monsieur would understand what is fitting. Hé bien, it is everything of the best that is fitting. There is no need to stint the money; she that is gone had enough and to spare, for all she chose to live here in this lone some way, with just us two to care for her."

"And mademoiselle?" put in Kendal, with remembrance of the lonely little figure on the door-steps.

"Oui-dà! Mamselle Françuaise!"

There was a sort of contemptuous snort in the words — checked, however, by a glance toward the bed, where no unseemly sound could come to break that rest.

Kendal, still thinking of the lonely child, was saying:

"And those who should be notified? It ought to be done at once."

"There is no one, monsieur. No one knows, these years and years, where monsieur François is; and all the rest of her family have gone before her. All but Madame Jean's; if you call *that* her family! Madame Jean is in Europe: better friends at a distance than enemies near, say I. It is my old man and me who will accompany her to the grave. And mamselle Françuaise, suppos—" she added, as an after-thought.

"Mamselle Françuaise, of course. And this Madame Jean?"

"Is her son's widow, monsieur must understand. See a little, I will fetch monsieur her letter, which reached madame the day monsieur first came to see her. She bade me put it away here in the secrétaire. It has directions enough for daily correspondence, ma bonne Marguite,' she said to me. 'The woman might know it imports me nothing, how she may run cackling over a whole continent, with her brood at her heels; one of them may pick up a prince's feather some-

where as they go, but it can import nothing to me.'"

She repeated her dead mistress's speech, with evident satisfaction in it, before she added for herself:

"I'd be beholden to monsieur if he would have the goodness to write instead of me. For, the pen once in my hand, one good time for all, there's things would get themselves written down on the paper—do I not know it, I who speak? Figure to yourself, monsieur, it would be as much as my place is worth."

Kendal had opened the thin sheet of foreign paper she had given him, and was jotting down the address at the top of the page.

"Just Madame Jean, monsieur: her family is all. Except the neighbors. They came willingly enough to the old house, in the days when it was the best known of all around for gay doings; may be they'll not mind coming yet one time, if only to see the changes the long years have brought about. For it is years and years since monsieur Jean made that marriage that turned madame so bitter against him; and reason good, too!"

It was not just the moment to be interested in a match of years and years ago; and though curiosity, man to the contrary notwithstanding, is not unmanly failing, Kendal did not pursue the

subject. He was folding up the letter, when Marguite stopped him.

"If it pleases monsieur to take it? It is necessary to read it. There's nothing in it that the whole village does not know—or did before they forgot," she added, resentfully. "There's more than one direction in it, see you, monsieur; they're running about so over yonder countries—one date for a letter to get to her at such a town, and another at another, *bonne chance!* 'Tis but little she need have put herself to the trouble to set them down for my poor mistress; if she yet lived, 'tis little of a letter Madame Jean need look for. But I suppose it's proper now."

"Most certainly." Kendal was putting the letter into his pocket-book. "And about mademoiselle Françuaise? This Madame Jean is her aunt?"

"Her aunt! But that is just what she ought to have been—that is to say, monsieur François's wife, since she was first promised to him, poor boy! Ah, he'd never have gone wrong as he did, if she had not thrown him over for his brother! Pardon excuse, monsieur; Madame Jean is Mamselle Françuaise's mother."

Kendal felt a quick sense of relief, as if the little, impracticable thing had weighed more heavily on him than was needful.

"Her mother? I am glad to hear that."

"Are you so, monsieur?" was old Marguite's interpolation, with a toss of the head, like a charger snuffing the battle afar.

"I found the child out on the door-step, crying fit to break her heart," he went on. "Do not let her be too much alone. The young need a helping hand to ease the burden of their sorrow for them."

He missed the muttered "Ouais! Mamselle Françuaise will never break her heart under that burden!"

For he had gone out, with that same hushed step, and a reverent farewell glance across at the upturned face on the pillow—the fair old face that he would see no more.

For the girl, he saw nothing of her as he went down-stairs.

Out of doors, the dubious gray dawn was confusing everything, until Kendal had almost reached his horse, when something moved beyond it.

It was Françoise, her head bowed down on the arm she had flung across the creature's neck, in a sort of dumb appeal for the companionship of some living thing, in this first hour of her contact with death.

But it must be some living thing which would leave her free from question or from scrutiny.

For when she heard Kendal's step, she started up and went past him, without speaking.

III.

"Life treads on life, and heart on heart—
We press too close, in church or mart,
To keep a dream or grave apart."

"MAMSELLE FRANÇOISE, of course," Kendal had repeated, when Marguite was counting on her mistress's followers to the grave.

But she had somewhat miscounted, as it proved.

The hour came when the funeral procession was to start for the village church, but Françoise was nowhere to be found.

So, after all, the two old servitors fell into place as chief mourners; rightful place, as they both evidently thought it.

There was plenty of honorable observance in the gathered throng of *fidèles;* but never a tear to fall on the heaped-up mold, save those few dropping slowly and bitterly from Marguite's eyes, as she clutched the arm of her more phlegmatic spouse, with a pressure which even in her distress was intended to convey to him her sense that he was not doing his full duty to the occasion, by standing there dry-eyed.

But when Kendal came by the churchyard again, in the early twilight, he was not surprised to find the girl sitting in the shadow of the great black cross which towered in the midst of the

graves, its arms spanned by the white circle, emblem of eternity.

She was in her usual listless attitude, her elbows in her lap, her chin propped in her two hands. She did not move, except to put up an impatient shoulder, when she heard the stir of some one coming to her through the long grass; and she said petulantly, and without looking round:

"You needn't mind me, tante Marguite. I'm not going home yet—I don't want any supper."

There was a strained sound in the voice; and Kendal caught the gleam of tears in the eyes which persistently, as if to hold back the drops from falling, fixed themselves upon the wooded line of the horizon. He saw her start as if she knew him without looking directly at him, and he said, gently:

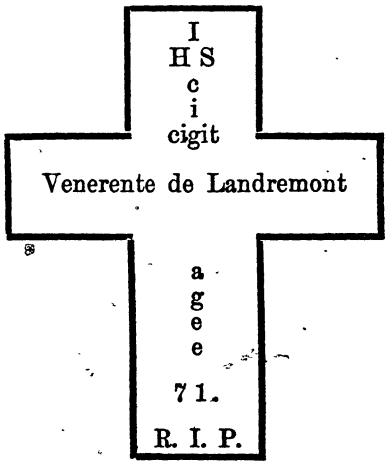
"You must not send me away quite at once. I have ridden far to have a moment's talk with you."

"Ah, ça! I know what you are going to say!" Again she put up her shoulder, with that same impatient gesture. "It is hardly worth the pain, however. I have my suffisance of it; tante Marguite has been preaching at me in good time, from the same text. Two heads in one cap, you two, monsieur; but, all the two, you will never make me sorry that I stole away and hid myself this morning, instead of joining in the triumphal

procession to lay her away in the grave. As if, even if she knew, she would care that I—that *I* was near her!"

It was rather a gasp than a sob, which broke the voice. And then she turned on him, in a sort of breathless defiance of her own emotion.

But he only took his seat quietly on the sloping ground at her feet, half-averted from her, and letting his gaze rest, as had hers, on the new mound a stone's-throw off. It was already marked, as the majority of those around, with a cross about two feet high, neatly covered with black muslin stitched over it; on which was also stitched, in letters of white tape:



Kendal glanced at the girl's face, from the cross; and he easily guessed who had planted it there.

But he made no comment.

The moon was beginning to glimmer silvery through the gray dusk; the woodland stir came to them like a sigh. Kendal left time enough for the calm to quiet her, before he spoke; even then, rather to himself than to her:

"I have often thought the greatest marvel of the other world is the different view of this one, which must flash upon our suddenly clear-seeing eyes. To behold the things we have cared most for in our daily life, the little comforts and habits, dwindled to a mere speck of valley-dust blown off from us upon our heights; and the love, the very vital air we breathe, the one thing that mounts with us—"

She put up her hand hurriedly to stop him.

"I understand you; you suppose it would comfort me to believe that grandmamma, though here she never thought about my love, would set great price on it *there*. But you are mistaken from beginning to end. I never loved grandmamma."

She said it in a bitterly shamed way, sinking her head as if humiliated by the confession. But she spoke it out bravely, as repelling the dishon-

esty of claiming credit for something she did not deserve.

Kendal heard her in surprise.

And her agony of suspense on the night of his first visit, when she stopped him on the stairs; her sobs out in the night of death; her hopeless attitude just now?

"I suppose you have felt it hard to be kept here, away from your own mother," he said in the pause, half involuntarily, trying to solve the problem for himself.

Down went the fair head, lower yet.

"Nor my mother, either. Why should you trouble about me, Dr. Kendal? I am not worth your while. I am not a good girl. As tante Marguite says, I have the *chœur dur*. I don't love any one at all."

"Poor child! poor little Françoise!"

She lifted her head from her hands and looked at him.

He was not looking at her, as he sat there at her feet; his dark, strongly marked face in profile, his eyes again on the horizon-line.

There was nothing to startle the girl in such words from him. She would never have made that mistake of the grandmother's about his young companionship.

She watched him a moment in silence; and then—

"I think you must be like Uncle Frank," she said, wistfully. "Not in face—I don't mean that—he was blond, like me. That is why they gave me his name, because we were so much alike."

"His name?"

Her glance had wandered again, absently following the breeze as it freshened in the waves of grass, and here and there flung out the spray of daisies or foam-drift of immortelles.

Turned aside so, she missed the sudden keen and searching look which, without changing his position, Kendal had fixed on her as she answered:

"Mais oui, his name. Françoise was as near as they could give a girl, of course; but then I was always called Frank, as a little one in the family."

"Madame Jean's family?" Kendal said, involuntarily quoting tante Marguite.

The girl colored a little.

"But yes, certainly. We were living in Liverpool then; we spoke the English altogether there; that is not to say I have not forgotten much since then. My uncle François was Frank—"

The searching look intensified, as if Kendal were seeking something in the unconscious face which had not struck him before — something

which he was by no means sure he had found even now. And yet—

"Frank Latour?" he said, with a questioning inflection.

"No, but De Landremont, monsieur understands. Eh, then, I had almost forgotten; it *is* François La Tour de Landremont, for a daughter of La Tour was wife to a De Landremont in the early days of Acadie. But my uncle François was just Frank with us in England; and I was Frank. I can just remember; and how Marie would always call me so—and papa. Mamma never did; she—"

There she checked herself abruptly. She glanced at Kendal with hurried inquiry in her eyes. How much had she said?—too much?

But the utter absence of curiosity in his face and attitude reassured her.

She did not perceive that he was listening with an intentness deeper than mere curiosity, and that might have suggested a stronger interest in this Frank Latour—de Landremont—than an unfamiliar name awakens.

No one could tell the relief it was to her to speak. The strange hush she had been kept in for days was appalling to her. There was something comforting in going back into the past, with some one who would see nothing more in it than she had while she lived it. Afterward,

tante Marguite had let fall enough to her to take all the pleasure out of it. To tante Marguite she could never have made any reference to it again. But it was different with Kendal, who would not see anything but the obvious outside.

So she went on :

"I can just remember the time before I came here ; the big house outside of Liverpool, with its great gardens ; and the holiday journeyings now and then to strange foreign places. For papa never returned here after his marriage. And when he had made, oh, quantité in money, by lumber and ship-building, first in St. John, and then in Liverpool, he would take us traveling. That is not the way the sons do here, you know," she said, more gravely, as if confessing to heterodox proceedings. "They settle *auror de leurs pères*, with here a strip and there a strip cut off the home-farm, and a little house built on it as each marries. There was a little house built on the other end of the farm here, for Uncle Frank—"

She broke off hastily.

"Only, he did not marry. But those old days —those journeyings—it is all a dream, but a dream one likes to think of, when one wakes."

"One should have more years than yours, to care to dream of the past," Kendal said, hastily. "At your age—"

"I was nearly nine years old. Of course, it

is not clear to me. It is just a strange jumble of moving pictures, in which I somehow lose myself."

"And you like to lose yourself?"

"But yes; why not?"

He turned toward her more directly, leaning his elbow on the bank above him, searching her face as he asked:

"You would like to go back to those old countries, to spend some time there—this autumn and winter, for instance—with your mother and sisters?"

The child's face kindled when he began; but when he came to those last words its light fell, and she only answered:

"No."

"You do not wish to go?"

"I will not go."

Then, hurriedly, in a startled way: "Why do you ask me that, monsieur? I may stay here, is it not so? I may stay on here with tante Marguite and bonhomme Pacifique?"

"So Marguite says. She tells me she is sure your mother will let you choose for yourself, and that your grandmother insisted on the freedom of your choice, in the last charges she left. Frank"—he said to her, suddenly, with a change of tone from the matter-of-fact one of a moment before—"my dear little girl, you are so young, and you

have no friend near you to advise you. Will you be offended if I speak out plainly what I am thinking? As if—as if I were the Uncle Frank you have told me I must resemble. Then you will be sure I am not speaking carelessly, when I say I fear you are making a mistake. Your mother and sisters should be more to you than a crabbed old woman who is, after all, not too good to you."

"And they?"

The words came with emphasis. Kendal's face changed, and the girl saw it and said, with a brusque little laugh:

"You see I was right when I told you once before, you do not know what you are talking about."

"About a girl's own mother and sisters," was the quiet answer.

"Ah, yes. And it goes without saying that my mother loved me much, and that is why she sent me away to grandmamma, who loved me also, without doubt. As to *mesdemoiselles mes sœurs*, Marie was always away at school, until the last two or three years; and Arsène was the next; and Melerente and Anne, they were besséonnes."

"Besséonnes?"

"Eh, what do you call the same day born—they had each other—why should they trouble

about me? And a child of my age was in my mother's way, tante Marguite says."

"And your father?"

The question escaped Kendal, and in the very utterance he regretted it. But not when he saw the light that dawned in her face.

"My father—"

She said the words over, dwelling on them with a softness in her voice, of which he had not thought it capable. "Ah, yes, my father loved me!"

The blue eyes widened, deepened; like the skies they matched, they grew large with a happy brooding.

And then, with a little stir, she roused herself out of her dream.

"Although, of course, he did not like to have me with him, Marguite says."

"Of course he did not like to have you with him?"

"For I was too much like Uncle Frank." And then again she broke off in a startled way: "You know!" she cried, breathlessly; "you know!"

She had not supposed it (for why, indeed, could a stranger know anything of what had come to pass so long ago?); but something in Dr. Kendal's face now startled her with the misgiving.

He answered her reluctantly :

"A little. Some idle chatter in the village to-day supplemented a few words which old Marguite let fall."

She drew her breath hard.

"It was she who told me too, one day when I had made her very angry."

"She is a cruel old woman," Kendal said, indignantly.

"Poor old tante Marguite, she did not mean to be cruel ! I think she was sorry the moment she had spoken ; for she would cover my bread with marmalade for fripe at breakfast, an entire week after. Fancy ! When I just hate marmalade. She thought I must like it because it was English !"

What a child she was still ! Kendal smiled too, as he said :

"We ought to be friends, on Sydney Smith's rule of friendship, for I hate marmalade, too. But you didn't eat that bread the whole week, I suppose ?"

"Oh, but of course I did. You know I couldn't let poor tante Marguite think I was still angry with her, when I had behaved very ill to her too. And tante Marguite has sometimes tried very hard to like me a little, Dr. Kendal—"

"She must have had to try very hard indeed,"

said Kendal, smiling into the fair little, earnest face.

"—because I resemble her monsieur François."

"Some people have a knack of seeing likenesses," Kendal put in, rather staring at her. "And your grandmamma?"

"Eh, *c'est ça*—papa fancied when he sent me to her I would comfort her for Uncle Frank; but from the first she could never bear to look at me—"

She broke off in a troubled way.

"I would never have said anything—I would never have told you anything—but that you knew already from tante Marguite. You are sure of that, monsieur?"

He laughed—just a little shortly.

"I am sure of anything you say, even when you are at the pains to show me you hold me off, like any other stranger, from all that concerns you. I ought to apologize for so much as thinking of interfering—"

He was taken by surprise when she leaned forward, looking at him with eyes suddenly suffused.

"*You* may say anything you wish to me," Dr. Kendal."

"Finish it, Frank. 'For you are my friend, and I will trust you, even if you don't say any-

thing of what is in your mind to bring about for me. And if the clew fail—'"

He broke short off there, as if in truth he had said more than he intended, of what was in his mind.

Frank Latour—de Landremont?—the clew ought not to fail. One must be able to trace it out at last, although it may take time and trouble. But little Françoise had best not know, until there is something more than mere conjecture or coincidence. Until then, let the past be past.

He turned his back on it, with an impatient movement of his shoulders, as if there were little in it he would care to face again.

Frank's face was a pleasanter study, with its puzzled little frown.

For the speech he had dictated to her was perplexing: he had put it all into English, while she was accustomed to eke hers out with a bit of *patois* here and there. And she was not at all sure of the meaning of that word "clew."

But she tackled the whole boldly; and even repeated again at the close, quite softly:

"For you are my friend—" then added something of her own:

"For you have been kinder to me than ever any one was, since I was so high," measuring off with a wave of her hand above the tall grass,

height rather fitted to a fairy than to the forlorn little maid of eight or nine years who had been sent here into exile. "I must have seemed ungrateful to you," she went on, shyly; "I had not been used to very much kindness—I did not understand it."

"Are you sure you understand yourself? For instance, my little mamselle Frank, you have spoken of yourself as cold-hearted and unloving; yet I have seen you in a passion of grief for one who was certainly not everything she might have been to you."

She edged nearer to him in the moonlight, with an awed look in her eyes.

"I am afraid of death. And papa died. And if grandmamma should meet him at once, and tell him I have never been of the least comfort to her, as he sent me to be?"

"But, petite, that is morbid. Was it fault of yours that your fair little face brought memories too sad for her to bear? We are not all of us like you, child; some of us will not face the past, but run away from it, even though we know the ghost has little to upbraid us for."

His tone might, to an older ear, have interpreted the "we" as something more than a mere form of speech. But she was just now too self-absorbed, in a child's selfishness, to heed.

"Then you do not think I am to blame?" she said, eagerly. "I would have loved her dearly if she had let me."

"I am sure of it. And, Frank, when your mother—"

But the softness was all gone out of her voice. "That is different."

"I am aware of that," he said, quietly. "Every one is different from a mother."

"But you do not understand. It was she who made my father untrue to Uncle Frank; it was she—"

She checked the passionate outburst, covering her face, as Kendal broke in quietly:

"Your mother."

"Yes, my mother?"

The calm of those three words was unchild-like enough. But, as if she were a child, he put his hand on the two which she let fall together; covering them with a firm pressure.

"Wait," he said. "Even were it for you, as her child, to sit in judgment on her, still, you would not judge unjustly? Recollect, you know but what old Marguite has told you; a witness the most prejudiced—"

She shook his hand from her, as she started to her feet.

"I have heard too much already!" she cried, passionately. "What! you would have me be-

lieve my father something worse than Marguite has taught me; not the dupe of a false woman, but a traitor!"

She flung from him, with that last word; and Kendal, if he had had any answer to it, could not have spoken it; for, swiftly as she had flitted out of his ken on that first evening when he saw her, she passed from him now, the low firs snatching her from sight, down the hill-side.

Kendal could see nothing better than just to mount and ride away.

So, then, what had been gained by this attempt with a legion of arguments to bring this little savage to terms?

"'The King of France, with twenty thousand men,
Marched up a hill, and then marched down again,'"

Kendal said to himself rather scornfully; and turned his horse's head for home.

IV.

"... the one maid for me."

"Deare Dr. Kendal:

"Tante Marguite has been some days impairing. Her sicknesse is not extream at p'sent, but she wolde be much satisfy'd if you came to visite her.

"This, by the hands of Jean Michaud, who passes to the village—from yours to co'mand,

"Your friend, Frank.

"Postscriptum.—Are you well angry with me, Dr. Kendal? I may have deserv'd it—but I hope you believe I speake my very soule to you, when I say I am sorry."

It was this curious epistle which reached Kendal one day, some three weeks after the great De Landremont funeral. An ambitious reaching out, on the child's part, after her half-lost English, he divined; but where did she get her quaint style? Not, certainly, from her youthful recollections. It should have been written, not in the French character, but in the square and upright one which belongs to the days before the long S had gone out of print, and which one now sees only in brown ink on the yellowed pages of one's family letters of more than a century ago.

Kendal was thinking this, and smiling over it, as he let the bridle fall on his horse's neck; when there was a rustle in the long grass by the road-

side, and, as he glanced up, his eyes met Frank's. But why should he have colored crimson, and thrust the letter into his breast, before he spoke to her?

He dismounted, and walked beside her in the tangled road; and she looked up at him with a flushed face for an instant without speaking. Then she said, shyly, in French, as usual:

"Tell me a little, monsieur: you were laughing at my letter? And I did give myself much pains with it! But it is the first I ever wrote; and I am afraid I don't know how. Would you mind telling me what is wrong in it?"

He did not say he thought it quite the prettiest letter he had ever read, especially the postscriptum. He only asked:

"Will you tell me first who taught you to write English?"

"Oh, is it so bad as that?" she cried, flushing again with mortification. "I thought I had gotten almost every word right, from some great books which Uncle Frank left here — he had studied the English at the Fredericton schools, you see. And I wanted to remember it. But I don't know that I like to study very much," she added, apologetically, "unless I can carry the book out of doors somewhere—and they are most of them too heavy for that."

"Will you let me lend you some that are

lighter every way? And will you show me those you have which you like most?"

"Oh, yes, I should be glad to do that!" she said. "There is the 'Faerie Queen'—I think that is the best of all. And the 'Household of Sir Thomas More'—"

"But that is not an old book."

"Isn't it?"—puzzled. "Grandmamma said it was, though. That was one day long ago, when she would still sometimes leave her room—once in a long while, you know—and come out to pace up and down, up and down, the path between where the flower-beds used to be. It was in going down, that she passed the open door of the lumber-room, and saw me in there, reading. It was an old book, half torn; somebody's Diary, I remember, and stupid enough, it told so much about his new coats and velvet tunics. I was not sorry when grandmamma took it away, and told me to read that 'Household of Sir Thomas More' instead—since I had a fancy for old books, she said. But what I did not like as well, was that she came into the lumber-room first, and looked over all the books, and made Marguite carry off the most to light the fires with. I never guessed before that grandmamma knew English."

"I am afraid your grandmamma was not a very liberal censor of the press," said Kendal,

smiling. "Never mind, you'll let me bring you what you are to read. And, Frank—" he added this with some hesitation, "there is the long winter before you and me, and we neither of us have many friends. Suppose I were to ride down once or twice a week, and bring you books, and see what you had read, and—maybe help you a little in it?"

"Oh, but would you really not think it too much trouble?" She turned toward him in her eagerness, her face alight. "You see, the winter is so slow! it never passes. I'm afraid I am not very fond of books; but then anything is better than the chimney-corner with only tante Marguite to speak to. And this is what I have to put up with, half the winter-time; for we never have any but the one fire in the kitchen (grandmamma's up-stairs didn't count, you know) because Pacifique has all the wood to cut, and he always grumbles if too much is burned down-stairs. And if there were any one else but those two to come in sometimes! You see, in winter one can not be out of doors the whole day long. And so, to read—or even to study—that is not so bête, the idea."

It was not a very flattering reception of his offer, though assuredly a frank one.

But Kendal had made the offer with the desire to be of service, and he had had experience

enough to know that services are wont to be accepted more readily than gratefully.

Françoise's English was certainly as antiquated as the French spoken in the district. But it appeared to Kendal no heavy task to carry her forward into modern times.

The winter was not spent, before he had advanced with her as far as Tennyson.

The evening he brought "Enid the Fair" to introduce her to, began like many another in the old farm-kitchen. Just now Kendal's voice had paused a moment in his reading; for on the other side of the wide room, at either end of the spread supper-table, stood the old husband and wife, with reverently bowed heads, reciting in antiphony a sort of litany of grace before meat. The logs piled up in the wide hearth sent red lights flickering about the walls and shining floor; the high old-fashioned dressers with their rows of burnished tins; the spinning-wheel in its chimney-corner; and the two standing figures—Marguite with her sharp features shaded by the white cap she wore as her mother had before her; and solemn Pacifique in his new lumberman's dress, in which he will go off to-morrow to the woods, resplendent in blue flannel shirt, with gay silk handkerchief knotted about the throat, and breast-plate of red flannel embroidered with a gayly-plumaged cock.

All things come to an end, the long grace with the rest. Pacifique had caught up his shining pewter-mug, making the sign of the cross with a sweep of his arm before he drank; the two old people were sitting down to their evening meal, and the girl was saying:

"Go on—go on!" impatient of her reader's pause.

Kendal glanced across at her, from under the shade of his hand that kept the direct rays of the flickering lamp from his eyes. She was sitting opposite to him at the small table, her arms upon it, her face framed in her two hands, her eyes fixed in breathless listening on his face. Why in the world did he pause so long? And why, when he resumed, did he turn the page back, not forward:

"... Entering then
Right o'er a mount of newly fallen stones,
The dusky-raftered, many-cobwebbed hall,
He found an ancient dame—
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
—Here, by God's rood, is the one maid for me!"

"Why do you stop?" cried Françoise again, "and go backward? and why—eh, you have left out something this time!"

Kendal pushed the book from him; he said, in an altered tone, half lightly:

"Frank, the old place will soon be changing, Dame Marguite tells me. When the leaves come out, 'the dusky-raftered hall' will be coming out too in new colors and freshness. The quaint old paneled doors are to know paint again, and the long, sloping roofs to renew their coat of white-wash. Pacifique's hoe is to be down on the bramble-roses, and the sedge-grass that has blotted out the garden-beds; and the first boat that can come up the river to the foot of the falls is to bring what my neighbor, old Niel MacNiel, would call 'braw new inside plenishing,' up from Fredericton. And then everything will be ready for Madame Jean and her household to come like the summer birds over the sea. And about the old place there will gather a life and brightness such as you can never remember here—"

"What will it be like?" she broke in, eagerly.

She was looking at him with a wondering expectancy. "What will it be like?"

"Like the old times, perhaps. Has Marguite never told you of them?"

There was a chill of disappointment in his tone, at her eagerness; but as he answered her promptly enough, she did not observe it.

"Marguite? She never tells me anything."

"Perhaps I know, then, better than the lady of the manor. I have heard it mentioned in the village how gay the old house was a score or so of

years ago; how there were lines of carriages from much farther down the river than Tobique-way; even garrison-parties from as far as Fredericton; and music and dancing, such as the old walls and floors would tremble at now."

The girl was trembling, in a quiver of excitement.

"O Dr. Kendal! will it be so again?"

"What should prevent it?" Not the poor old lady's death, he said to himself, rather grimly. The family were letting time enough elapse before coming to take posession; and surely they could do so then with the proper festivities, after these months of mourning conceded to the old house. "*Le roi est mort—vive le roi,*" is the same all the world over. And Françoise—for why, indeed, should the girl mourn?—Françoise sitting over there now in her shabby gray gown—

> ". . . a blossom vermeil-white,
> That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,"

would blossom out, like Enid, in all her springtime bravery, and quite forget this gloomy winter.

He was the more taken by surprise when the April face suddenly clouded over. She pushed back her chair with a sharp movement.

"Me, I shall run away to tante Marguite. You know that, when they come, she means to withdraw herself to the little cottage at the other

end of the farm, which grandmamma left her. Me, I hate change; I should miss the old free life—and grandmamma."

It was almost the only time the name had crossed her lips since that evening after the funeral, when it had broken from her in a storm of vehement, half-angry tears.

She spoke it now in a low, reverent way which showed that the bitterness of the past was past. It was Kendal's tone which had the bitterness in it now.

"And me, Frank?" he said. "And me? Ah, child, may you always be so honest with me: even when it is to show me I am nothing to you—not even to be missed."

"Missed?" There was anxiety enough in her eyes, in her voice, to acquit her of indifference. "You are not going away, monsieur le doctor? You are not going to leave me alone?"

He answered her with an odd sort of smile, and a question of his own:

"It is you who are going, not I. How far, in that gay new life of yours, from the village doctor with his traveling pharmacy of saddle-bags? Little Frank, as yet you do not know enough of the world to answer me that; but you soon will learn."

"I shall never learn—never, if, by my learn-

ing the world, you mean forgetting my best friends."

She reached her hand out to him, across the table. What could the man do, but seize it with an eager violence that almost crushed the small fingers? And then (old Pacifique had pushed away his chair and was turning to the door, and Marguite was busied at the dresser, with her back to them) Kendal stooped and brushed those fingers with his bearded lips.

"Frank, if you would let me be your best and closest friend, indeed: if I could teach you to trust yourself to me!"

He spoke so quietly, there was nothing to startle her, so she said:

"But I have learned that already."

Kendal did not so much as raise his head and look at her. It was as though he feared to break, with slightest movement, the spell of some dream too blessed to tarry out of paradise. Did the girl's own clear and steady voice break it, when, with that briefest pause, she went on:

"When one has been so very kind as you have been to me, that is a lesson which surely needs no teaching."

At that he raised his head, still keeping her hand, but in a quiet clasp. His face was quiet, and a little paler than before.

"Lessons, Frank—I have given you a few of these, indeed—tiresome things—"

"Oh, but indeed, indeed it was good of you!" she cried; not denying his qualificative, however. "For what should I do without them—I who knew nothing, just nothing at all? I should have been ten times as much afraid of mamma and Marie and the others."

"—And while I have been giving these," he went on, taking up again the thread of his speech, and not caring to break it off with any discouraging hint of the difference between his method of instruction and that of the fashionable masters her sisters had no doubt had—"and while I have been giving these, did you never once think what you have been teaching me?"

"*I*—teaching *you?*"

He answered her with a slight smile of mockery at himself, as he let her hand go.

"Any boy of twenty might have told me I was a fool for my pains. But so it was; I learned the lesson by heart, though you gave it without meaning that I should. Were I a boy of twenty again, I might hope to unlearn it; but not now. Frank, can you tell me what it is?"

He was leaning toward her, when tante Marguite's heavy tread shook the floor, and she drew out her spinning-wheel at the other side of the hearth.

Sitting over against the low flax-wheel, she was expert enough to be able to divide her attention between her shining thread that, as she drew it out, caught here and there a gleam of the leaping firelight, and the thread of the conversation opposite, which certainly was not running smoothly nor brightly at this moment.

But the man could not stop now; the suspense of waiting till a more convenient season would have been unbearable.

He went on, trusting his glance to be his interpreter:

"Will you try to repeat the lesson after me? 'I love you.' If you could ever learn it—"

Just those words, "I love you," in the English, which tante Marguite would not understand: the rest in French.

And in French Françoise was answering him, except just those three English words:

"'I love you.'" She said it blushing, laughing a shy little laugh. "It is quite easy, indeed, Dr. Kendal—and I don't mean to forget it—though I *am* not twenty!"

At those last words, his face clouded over. Not twenty; a mere child. What right had he to bind her so? When, perhaps, if she knew all—

The past had seemed so utterly past and gone to him that he had turned his back upon it, even

in his thoughts. But now he must look at the dead thing once more; must even show it to Françoise.

"Frank," he said, hurriedly, "Frank, I have a story to tell you—"

There he became conscious of Marguite's sharp eyes observing him.

True, she could not understand his words; but no one could be with tante Marguite without feeling sure that she heard and felt, as well as saw, with those black-beaded eyes of hers.

Frank looked up, as he stopped; and she clasped her hands half-gleefully, half-teasingly:

"A story? A little history? Ah, yes, let us have it. Me, I know none but tante Marguite's, about the Christmas-eve Cattle and the Birds of St. Luc."

"The Birds of St. Luc?"

"The oxen, they are, you know. And once there was an old man—"

What she said was, "*An fors y 'va an viert huomme.*" But by this time Kendal was sufficiently familiar with the dialect to follow easily enough the ancient Breton legend of the master who fell asleep one Christmas-eve in the manger, under the nose of his oxen, and was awakened after midnight by their talking together in good Christian speech. Every one knows (and it evidently has not occurred to Françoise to dispute it

seriously, though she does glance askance at Kendal to see how he is taking it) that the cattle are thus privileged this once a year, in memory of the Child who shared their manger on the first Christmas. "We are going to bury our master to-morrow, demoin," said they. And, sure enough! The master when he heard them, resolved to keep out of danger by not going to church on Christmas-day, as there was a troublesome ford to cross upon the road. Instead, he went to the forest, and spent the holy-day in wood-cutting. Toward evening he was coming home with a "*grus ouiarge*" of wood, and had reached the cross-road to the church, when his oxen began to back wildly away from it, with their unholy load. The old man was very frightened, until he bethought himself to stop them by laying two logs athwart the load, in the form of a cross. That did stop them, of course; but so suddenly, and with such a jar, that the master was thrown heavily forward to the ground, and the solid wooden wheels went over him. So the oxen did bury him, after all, scraping a hole under the dead leaves with their hoofs.

"He was a very wicked man; he did not say his penitence," Françoise wound up, nodding significantly at Kendal. "Tante Marguite can tell you what comes of that, and how sometimes a great frog will leap up in the woods and fasten on

one's nose for punishment, until the penitence be duly said."

She put up her hand, laughing, to her own straight little nose. "Me, I am not of the faithful," she added, more seriously.

Tante Marguite looked suspicious of the English words. She must have divined their meaning.

"It is all Madame Jean's fault," she said, shaking her head, gloomily—"all Madame Jean's fault! She led Monsieur Jean astray out of the faith; and my dear madame here, she would never meddle with the child. 'Blood can not lie,' the dear madame would say, thinking of Madame Jean. But, passe!"

Marguite put the subject from her with that meaning shrug, and set her spinning-wheel in motion again with the hand that had stayed it to deliver this thrust.

That the girl felt it, the sudden angry sparkle of tears in her blue eyes showed; but when Kendal would have spoken for her, she stopped him with a laugh—a little forced, perhaps, but resolutely careless.

"As tante Marguite says, passe! Monsieur is not my breastplate, to receive these thrusts for me."

"If I might be!" he said, eagerly. "If I could but teach you—"

This time, the laugh with which she inter-

rupted him was merry enough. Her girlish instinct would have kept her silent had the two been alone together; but she was safe under Marguite's eyes.

"You see, monsieur le docteur," she said in French, shaking her pretty head at him, "you must not be always for giving lessons; and you must take care what you teach me. I'm not so very dull at learning, and I do not forget. So, if there are any mistakes made, it is quite your fault."

"Mercy of my life!" Even Kendal, through all his grave burden of thought, could not forbear a smile at the shocked tone, and the way in which Marguite resumed her spinning, with a vicious push to the wheel. "It is just a wonder to me how monsieur le docteur has ever had the patience to bear with mamselle, lesson after lesson, and she with no more gratitude than that. You are going, monsieur? But I don't wonder, and mamselle idling as if she were possessed by the sleepy devil that makes sinners nod in church. But monsieur has the patience of an angel!"

Now, the crafty old woman had her own opinion as to Dr. Kendal's patience. She thought that was sufficiently explained by a desire, very natural in the village doctor, to lay the De Landremont house under such obligation as would open its doors to him in the brighter days that

were about to dawn upon it. She did not care to set herself to thwart that desire; more especially as it enabled her to describe the various phases of her rheumatism and have them prescribed for, without any drain upon the purse of which she, not Pacifique, held the strings, and rather tightly too. She did not grumble at the lessons, therefore.

This one was evidently to be cut short. Kendal found it impossible to treat this evening as if it were anything else than the gate to his whole future. What lay beyond it—what it must lead to—

He stood looking at the little creature who stopped the gap and would not let him see beyond, and was saying saucily:

"Indeed, tante Marguite, Dr. Kendal is quite satisfied with my progress, and even tells me I have taught him something. Though, indeed"—casting down her eyes demurely—"I should never have had the assurance to try to do *that*."

Kendal glanced wistfully at the red mouth quivering with its suppressed smile. Was he to have nothing but a mocking last word from it? "Won't you light me out?" he asked her.

But she shook her head.

"Tante Marguite will, this time, I am sure—won't you, tante Marguite? I must go over my lesson. I promise to be quite perfect in it when

you come back—if I can," she added, lifting her eyes with a flashing smile over the screen of her open book. And so he went away.

Somewhat dizzily; like a man who has stumbled perilously near a precipice's brink, and only just stops himself in time.

But had he stopped himself in time? Was it not already too late to consider whether he ought to have wooed this child? What did she know of love? "J'aime"—"I love, I like"—it was all one to her. As he plunged into the dimness of the wood-path, he could see again those bright eyes flashing laughter at him over the edge of her book.

Eh, well, the pain was only his; the girl would take no harm if this evening's lesson should not be repeated.

And it must not be repeated now. The man was a strong man; he must keep the mastery over himself. A little while, and her mother would be here; Françoise should choose between them then. It was not a dazzling lot, that of a poor country doctor's wife; if she should take it, instead of the new, gay life of which, no doubt, her mother would set the door ajar before her eyes, it should be with them wide open.

Meantime, Kendal was very far from giving her up, in his mind, much less his heart. All he could do to win her trust and faith he would do.

That was enough for the present, and the past might wait.

Away off somewhere in the distance, some restless brook, released from winter's bondage, filled all the windless hush with babble of spring's coming. Up the hill-slope, as Kendal crossed, the rising moonbeams drifted level through the black-layered fir-boughs, and caught at the slim, silver birches, and showed them rough with buds against the sky. "When the leaves come out!" Kendal said to himself, with that sense of hope and new life which the spring brings with it.

And yet to-night old memories were stirring. As he struck out of the wood, he had fallen unaware into a certain measured tread, catching up a snatch of a glee with a martial ring in it, once familiar enough to come to his lips now unconsciously:

"When the leaves come out, down with the streams we'll be sweeping;
We'll waken our land from her long winter sleeping."

What if Latour were to come with that waking? Was Françoise sleeping now, under the eaves, in the old house? To Kendal, as he shouldered aside a dusky evergreen, and the moon flashed out, it was as if her eyes shone out on him again over the edge of her book.

But this time, it seemed to him, not in mockery.

V.

"My heart is like a singing bird,
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree,
Whose boughs—"

ONLY, it was the apple-blossoms that the girl was like, as she sat swinging amid them, on the low bough of the gnarled tree that somehow long ago had straggled outside the gate to the road.

For there was a gate now before the rambling De Landremont cottage, though the unpracticed eye might not detect it.

Rather, perhaps, the unpracticed eye might have taken the whole fence for a succession of gates: so alike were all the sections, with their heavy top and bottom rail, into which the light upright stems fitted like pickets, but with the bark still on. It had as rustic a look as the pitch-pole, or the old "Virginny" fence, and the greenery pressed nearly up to it, across the road.

The road was a narrow, disused one; a mere spur of the highway which trends away and away up through the Madawaska settlement, beyond which the Acadians merge into Canadians. It was seldom that any one nowadays turned round that bend; and when Frank heard the beat of

hoofs, she never thought of glancing up from the long, blue stocking she was knitting, with her head bent over it in a brown study, until the rush nearer and nearer made her start.

If that bright bay were not actually running away, his driver had at least as much as he could do to prevent it, and the solid fence apparently in front.

But, in a flash, there is a gap in it. A section of it is lifted out bodily, and Françoise stands to one side, flushed and glowing with her haste and her exertion.

Outside, in the road, the dust blowing about her, her homespun dress gathered up, apron-wise, over her blue petticoat, for the accommodation of the knitting which she has already taken into her busy hands again, she has nothing to mark her from the bevy of *filles* whom the traveler earlier in his long drive had met returning from school, and who had arranged themselves prettily along the road-side, with shy nod and smile for the passing stranger. This girl looked as young as some of those, and as simply dressed; and the young fellow felt he was indemnifying himself for the lack of excuse toward those others, when in passing he leaned out toward her.

"Many thanks, my little one," he was saying, in French foreign to the district; equally foreign to France too, Frank was sure, as she caught the

Anglo-Saxon intonation. Something else she caught, also—the glitter of a piece of silver in his hand.

She put hers out, a little slowly, in response; and he deftly tossed the coin into it. The next instant, the restive horse had carried him beyond her; and she speedily effaced herself from the scene, pushing through the thicket bordering the road.

That was the last Frank saw of him; that glimpse of the straight young fellow with the fair hair and the frank face as beardless as if, according to an old Breton superstition, a careless priest had touched him at baptism with "the oil of girls."

It was the last she saw of him; but not the first she had heard of him, she was very sure.

When she was well out of sight, she drew a letter from her pocket: one of those rambling, inconsequent, gossipy letters which Marie would occasionally write to her little sister, now that there was no censorious grandmother to inspect them. And—yes, it was in this, that Marie told of a certain young Englishman who had come over on the same steamer to Halifax — Dallas Fraser by name. "And as mamma has somewhere, down about the roots of her family-tree, one Euphemia Dallas, we have all come to the conclusion that this very big D is a great, um-

brageous, golden-leafed branch of the same tree. Be that as it may, he is to cast his shadow over us in the skirts of the forest, what time the weather as well as the calendar shall call it summer. Meantime, he is doing Canada, while we remained to smother in spring fogs at Halifax, and then made our way toward you as far as Fredericton here. Will the weather ever let us get any farther? When it does, Mr. Fraser is to drive down for the fishing, from some place opposite Quebec, and we shall drive up the river with a gay party promised us from here; and it will go hard if we do not manage to wake all the old woodland echoes."

Frank crumpled the letter into her pocket again, as she strayed on. She did not linger in the greenery, within hearing of the horse's returning tread, when the visitor should find the house unoccupied; for Marguite had gone up to St. Leonard's to *confesse*, and would not be home until late. In fact, the sun had set, when Frank strayed back again, and found the old woman busy over the kitchen fire.

Marguite turned round sharply, as the girl came breezily in, tossing the coin, and catching it as it fell.

"Heads or tails, tante Marguite? If it's heads, it's mine; for you will own I'd a very good head of my own, to earn it. You should

have been here to see how I swung that gate open—"

"*Comme ça!* and let in that Nanon Michaud's whole flock of geese! I might have known I could not even go to *confesse*—"

"Without missing visitors? I doubt you'd have liked him much better than the geese, tante Marguite," she said, good-humoredly—"this kinsman of Madame Jean's."

"Dame! what is the child driving at?"

"What was the man driving at, you mean, tante Marguite? Straight at our fine new fence, apparently. Only I stopped him by throwing the gate open. Whereupon, he rewarded me as you see."

She showed the coin in her palm, with a laughing air of triumph.

"Mamselle Françuaise! Mamselle Françuaise! to think you'd have gone and done such a thing!"

"Why, tante Marguite, the gentleman—"

"A pretty gentleman!"

"A very pretty gentleman, indeed," says the girl, demurely. "Listen a little, tante Marguite; Madame Jean and her suite will be down upon you before you can turn on your heel."

"Saint Anne help us! what does mamselle mean?"

"That you may call on the best saints for help, tante Marguite, but if you don't bestir yourself,

Madame Jean will find you here, under her roof, instead of settled under your own."

"No, that she shall not! There has been a letter? I'll move out to the cottage, *vie et bagues sauves*, the very first thing in the morning, you will see! But there has been a letter, mamselle Françuaise? Or your Monsieur Tchouse, did he bring a message from Madame Jean?"

"Ben, tante Marguite: *vie et bagues sauves;* I'll stand for the *bagues*, for I mean to go with you, just at first. No, no letter, and no chance to deliver any message. But the pretty gentleman, my Monsieur Tchouse, is Madame Jean's avant coureur: none other than our—what is it?—twentieth possible cousin, who has lately come into a huge English fortune, and is, no doubt, a most admirable member of the family."

"Impossible—"

"But a fact. If you had been a wicked heretic, like some others—" with a little *moue*, "and not gone to *confesse*, you would have had to ask him to stay, for your sins. Me, I didn't know what to do with him, I own it. Besides, he had given me this."

She was tossing the coin gayly again, moving to and fro, the firelight chasing her slim shadow here and there, as it flitted about.

Marguite followed her with her sharp little black Dame Partlet eyes; keen enough after the

grain of corn and the earth-worm (or whatsoever may represent these, to the human Dame Partlet), but dull of vision for much that is as plain to other less keen souls as the clouds in an April sky.

Frank's blue eyes were full of them. They portended just such a blinding shower of passionate tears as fell upon the distaff in her hand, the very moment the old woman had pattered out with her milk-jug to the spring-house under the hill.

And so he had taken her for one of the village-girls, this cousin of hers—of her mother's.

And she was just the same as they; no difference.

But why had not Dr. Kendal told her so? The passionate child was as angry with him as if he were responsible for her mortification.

As for the badge of that mortification, the piece of silver, she found a tiny hole in it—or made one—and she fell asleep that night with the coin strung on a thin gold chain, about her neck, and heaving with every stormy heaving of her passionate heart, as she lay and dreamed the scene all over.

Only, in her dream, her mother stood by, watching with a strange smile, the one thing clear to Frank in that misty, half-forgotten face.

Perhaps that part of her vision was due to the fact that the chain was last clasped about her neck by her mother's hand. Françoise had never worn it since she came here, and tante Marguite held the slight thing in her hand, in unpacking the child's trunk, and delivered her first sermon to mamselle Françuaise with Madame Jean for text.

Françoise had kept it hidden away ever since —a sort of fetich, half cherished and half dreaded —before which, tucked away in the corner of her little trunk with which she was sent home to Madame de Landremont, she would kneel now and then, looking at it with brooding eyes, as if it represented the mother whose actual personality was so overlaid by tante Marguite's legends and traditions, that, like many another worshiper, little Françoise on her knees was not sure if the object of her cult were more demon or more angel.

And this it was, to which she linked the coin so lightly tossed to her by Dallas Fraser.

VI.

"Tu t'en vas, tu délaisses ta personne;
Tes promesses sont des angros:
Tu m'avas promis la foi bonne,
Aimer ta personne 'usqu, à la mort—
A présent tu m' abandonnes,
Tu t'éloignes de ce port—"

THE shrill, wild voice was disputing for the right to be heard, with the deep boom of the Grand Falls down into their rocky basin, and the rush of the rapids against the foot-rocks of the walls which shut that basin in:

"Mon batimaine est mouillé en rade—
Trois de mes camarades
Qui vont voguer—
J'entends la cloche qui sonne:
Ma mignonne,
Faut s'embarquer."

Evidently the lover in the song had "one foot on sea and one on shore," and took his leave in jolly strain. But his "personne" had the last word, with her:

"Triste 'oiture qu' an vaisseau—
Triste 'oiture qu' an vaisseau"—

and the singer's voice changed into that wild, despairing cry that had pierced through the boom-

ing of the waters, and reached the ear of a man clambering down the steep face of the cliff above her.

He had come here to see the rapids, and the curious wells formed in the rocks among them. But now it is the singer who draws him down from crag to crag, until—

Yes, there she lies in the sunshine on the rocks; a little, curled-up figure, with round, half-bared arm flung across the upturned face, so that hardly anything is to be seen of it but the red lips shrilling forth the ditty.

So pretty a picture she makes there, that the man who has just burst upon it stands to look. Startled, too; for she has chosen her resting-place amid such a fury of waters, that he half puts out his arm as if an inadvertent move of hers might send her slipping off the rock's smooth surface down into the torrent.

As he looks, the very rocks seem to heave with the long, rhythmic upheaval of the rapids. The waters rise and fall like the ground-swell of a heavy sea, only broken into broad swaths that twine under and over one another, in and out. The brown translucent water, fretted as it is with snowy spray against the base of the steep cliffs that close the gorge on either hand; the flakes of foam swept downward in the current from the cataract above; the blue-green, yellowed here and

there, of firs and spruce-trees standing stiff and dour in the cleft precipice's face; the shimmering silver-stemmed birch a-tremble in the breeze above; the ferns and mosses, and the lichens many-hued, that paint the walls of this rock-chamber, which a sudden turn in the sharp precipice shuts in—it all photographs itself in the yellow afternoon light on the young man's mind, as the background to that picture of the figure prone upon the rocks.

A child's figure?

Half he hesitates; till, peeping from beneath the dimpled elbow as she lies, he catches sight of a thin black book—"Primer—"

That is all there is to be seen of the title; but it seems to be enough to give him leave to stoop and put his hand upon her shoulder, giving it a little shake, as the torrent drowned the sound of his tread.

"My dear—"

She was on her knees in an instant, that being the position the most swiftly attainable on the slanting rock. The small, round, lifted face was just one of those over-leaning rock-roses, for color, as he looked down into it, and said:

"I beg your pardon, but I have quite lost my way, and I think you could put me into it. Besides," he added, with a smile, "I am afraid you are playing truant down here. It will never do

to waste the whole day, and your primer all unlearned."

She had caught up the little book, folding it in her apron, as she looked down, blushing still. Was she so much ashamed of playing truant? "Plait-il?" she said, as if she had not understood; and then, thinking better of it, "Where is it monsieur wishes to go?"

"To the old De Landremont place. Do you know it?"

"Yes, I know it. If monsieur goes up to the bridge, and then into the woods beyond—"

"But it is precisely short of the bridge that I have lost myself. Up there, above the cliffs, the clumps of evergreens have planted themselves out in the most bewildering of labyrinths, among which one may very well need a guide."

She opened her blue eyes wide.

"Monsieur is a stranger, then? Perhaps the English cousin who is expected?"

"Yes, I am the cousin, certainly. Is the neighborhood expecting me?" he said, half laughing; "for I understand the family have not arrived."

"Eh, not the neighborhood; they never heed what passes under the De Landremont roof. But tante Marguite—she that used to be housekeeper there—had a letter bidding her make ready, that the family were coming, and guests with them."

"Tante Marguite?" What a dainty little creature, for a niece to the housekeeper!

"Couldn't you manage, since through your good aunt we are in a manner acquaintances, to guide me through the firs?"

She rose to her feet, tilting her hat over her face, and deftly gathering up the folds of her homely dress in such a fashion as that no masculine eye would detect its proper "grown-up" length. To be sure, now that she was standing, the young man thought her rather tall to be pursuing her studies in a primer. But then he reflected how backward must be education in this part of the world; and the little, dimpled, childish face—

"And yonder is your school-room, down among the waters?"

"Yes; does not monsieur like it?"

"So well that I wish I might learn my book there, one of these bright days."

But the girl took no notice of the questioning inflection; and he fell back upon the orthodox inquiries one makes of a school-girl concerning her studies.

"It is not the French abécé," he said, stooping slightly for a glance at her black primer; which, however, he failed to get, as it was still wrapped in the apron, not to show him that it was a recent hand-book primer of English liter-

ature. "They teach you English at the school?" he said, in English.

The Sisters who teach pass the regular examinations as public-school teachers, Françoise told him.

"Me, my English has its faults," she added, demurely, dropping her French; "my remembérée is not too good."

"Is it not?" said Fraser, laughing; regretting the laughter the next moment, as it seemed to have the effect of silencing the little creature tripping on before him.

The steep climb to the summit of the cliff had been made, and they paused on the brink together, for a moment's looking down upon the gorge, and on the wild, white water beating and tearing its way out of those towering prison-walls. And then the two went on among the shrubbery-like clumps of evergreens, where Dallas Fraser might well have lost himself in the labyrinth, as he had said. But, after all, was it not as good a method as any other, of ridding himself of a long afternoon? He was quite sure of it, when he brought his roving glance from the tangled greenery upon all hands, back to the little creature tripping on demurely at his side.

"I hope I am not taking you too far out of your way?" he said, comfortably; not from any intention of releasing her, but to hear her voice

again. Then he leaned forward, trying to see her face; and, failing:

"Are you not leading me blindfold? For I am quite sure you can not find your way out of the depths of that hat—I have quite lost you in it."

"But then that does not matter, as monsieur is not looking for me, but for the road." Then she pushed it back a little, glancing up at him.

"I don't wear it all the time. It is only my study-cap; it shuts out everything but the book, you know."

"Envious thing! I am glad you don't. And you come here to study every day?"

"When I have nothing better to do."

"Then there are things better?"

"But, yes; much better. For instance, when I go out for a long day on the barrens, and—ramosse des granages—what you call, pick berries."

"The berries are for your—aunt Margot, isn't it?"

She lifted her eyes, with a malicious laugh in them. Would he be very much discomfited at finding that she was his cousin: she whom he had evidently taken for the housekeeper's niece?

He had caught the gleam of amusement in her glance.

"How stupid I am!" he cried. "Of course

it was you! You were at the gate, and opened it to me when my horse was running away. That I am here safe and sound I owe to you."

A tide of crimson flooded the girl's face. Owed!—she recalled, well enough, how he had paid that debt.

That coin was like a seal upon her lips. Why should she confess to him who she really is? He will go away soon, and he need never know.

Surely, she could keep out of his way for a few days. If need be, she could stay with tante Marguite till he is gone.

They had skirted Grand Falls village by this time; and the rush of waters under the suspension-bridge, as the two crossed it, took away all occasion for speech, if his words called for any answer. The smooth river, glowing in the slanting beams with soft, changeful, opalescent lights, speeds calmly to the very brink of the wide horseshoe, all the curve of which it fills with glancing rainbow spray, as it fills the tranquil evening and the darkening chambers of the winding gorge with the clamor of its thunderous voices. Other voices sink into instinctive silence. The grave-browed *habitant* on foot nods a mute salutation to his neighbor plodding home behind his oxen, whose ponderous tread upon the bridge falls as noiselessly as that of the moccasined Indian, slipping like a sun-bronzed shadow past the curve of

woods. Françoise shows him by a slight gesture to her companion; but does not explain, until, on the sloping road beyond the gorge, they look down toward the cataract.

Then she tells Dallas Fraser its old Indian tradition: of the brave Milicete girl taken prisoner by a hostile band, who forced her to act as guide in a descent on her own tribe; and how she led the descent in her canoe, straight for the treacherous falls, and death with her tribe's enemies.

She told it with a sparkle in her eyes, at which Dallas protested he could not but feel uneasiness, lest that sort of thing should be the prevalent fashion for guides all about Madawaska. At which—for it takes little enough to set two young people laughing together on a golden summer afternoon—they went on merrily, by a short-cut, where Frank flitted past him, glancing back at him, over her shoulder, with a nod:

"Follow me—if you can trust me!"

For a few yards plunging deep into the thicket, where her brown hands held back the boughs to let him through. To leave herself the freer, she had caught her gown up through her belt, in a festoon here and there, that gave a glimpse of a dark-blue petticoat, and a foot and ankle in keeping with the pretty, rounded figure. It was well worth watching in its supple motions, as it went on before him, so free and natural, with such an

utter absence of self-consciousness, such an ignorance of the charming moving picture she made in the rather washed-out homespun; the troublesome hat dangling now from her arm, and sundry rebel locks breaking out of confinement and curling softly all about her warm white neck and that crumpled rose-leaf of an ear.

Somehow, Dallas did not regret the narrowness of the path, that would not admit of two walking abreast. One may take a more comfortable look at a pretty thing like that, when not stopped by a pair of frank and sudden eyes that have a trick of intercepting such a look.

But he was stopped suddenly by a quick, startled, almost frightened gesture from the girl.

She stood in the path, her two arms raised to ward off a tangle of wild brier which the wind flung toward her. But she forgot it, and stood motionless in a listening attitude.

Dallas went to her hastily. He could not see her face, nor the object, whatever it might be, at which she was gazing so intently. From his standpoint, there was a blank of greenery all about. Only, on one round arm still raised mechanically to ward off the briery bough—on that arm, bared to the dimpled elbow by the brier catching at her sleeve, he saw a sharp red line, a crimson drop that trickled down.

The sight of blood may turn some men pale,

but it brought the hot color into Dallas Fraser's face. He pushed in between her and the thorns.

"You have hurt yourself—for me!"

She shook off his touch with an impatient movement. She hardly heard his words; she was not even looking at him. She put her finger to her lips with a gesture of silence, still in that expectant and yet shrinking attitude. And as they stood thus for an instant, there came to his ear also the sound which had reached hers first: the sound of wheels approaching.

"We are near the road, then?" he said.

As he stepped before her, the green boughs gave way like a curtain swept aside, and showed him the overgrown road; and, breast-high in the weeds, a pair of grays drawing a close traveling-carriage.

"It must be Mrs. de Landremont arrived at last!" said he, turning toward his guide.

But she was no longer at his side. There was the flutter of a homespun dress, a rustling through the thicket; and he stood alone upon the bank above the road, along which came the carriage.

The carriage?—no, but two, three—quite a procession, looking very much like conveyances gathered at hap-hazard in the village. Out of the foremost, a charming face he knew was leaning from the window, smiling and nodding to him.

VII.

"Free Heart, that singest to-day
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world
Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
To follow perhaps thy way?
Where the tamer thine own will bind,
And to make thee sing, will blind—
While the little hip grows for the free behind?
Heart, wilt thou go?—
Ah, no!
Free hearts are better so."

"BUT where is Frank?" said the owner of that charming face, not many moments later, pausing at the foot of the door-steps, by which most of the little procession that had come gayly up from the gate to the house had already disappeared within.

Marie asked the question, and the girl behind her—who looked indeed like an embodied echo of her—emphasized it, "Where *is* Frank?"—with apparently little expectation of an answer, as she gazed helplessly about her.

There was neither shrubbery nor undergrowth now, to hide so much as a mouse, in the level space which Pacifique had trimmed up until it was anything but ornamental. Trim it was, indeed;

an array of formal beds, in which no flowers were set out as yet, and only the whitewashed stones pointed out their places. All the ferns had been uprooted, and the sumacs and the brier-roses demolished. Françoise might not like it as well as in its days of ragged picturesqueness; but it was a model of neat precision. Even the old house had a rejuvenated air, with its fresh paint. Its very disheveled vines were stroked down into decorous bands that lay smoothly above the windows no longer staring out like empty eye-sockets; but curtained, and with a certain look of quiet possession, observable about the whole face of the house. Bonhomme Pacifique pottering about the littered yard had been in keeping with the past *régime*. Under the present, a maid tripped briskly forward from the spring-wagon turning from the gate, to take the ladies' shawls; and another, a staid elderly body sent back by Mrs. de Landremont, stood waiting a respectful instant to show the way indoors.

"Please, miss, your mamma says it is not long before dinner."

"And we must make ourselves beautiful for it; and if Mr. Fraser has not changed since when we knew him on shipboard, a dinner—even the sort of picnic dinner which I am afraid is all we can expect to-day—served at the fitting moment, is not a matter of sublime indifference."

That same brilliant face turned round upon Fraser with a laugh; and the last of the procession vanished in the doorway.

Up-stairs the burden of the question was taken up again:

"Where on earth can Frank be all this while?"

It was in the old madame's repainted, spotless rooms, where the ancient mahogany looked so gloomy and heavy; and like an answer came a slight, uncertain stir in the inner room.

Mrs. de Landremont did not hear, leaning listlessly back as she was in madame's own easy-chair in the window; nor did Arsène, who stood gazing dismally out of it. "I did not know it would all be as new and bald and four-square as it is! There is not a nook or a corner for a bit of romance about it. Mamma, if *this* was the sort of home Evangeline was carried off from—"

But Marie, turning round from the mirror, had caught sight of a little homespun figure hesitating on the threshold of the other doorway, with a hand upon the lock, in the act of flight.

"There is some one, mamma, who perhaps will know where to find— Frank, can it be you?"

Frank left the handle of the door, and came forward, half proudly, half shyly.

She was made aware of her sister's mistake, by the startled change of tone, as the wearer of

the homely frock turned her face slowly round. Frank was not surprised by the mistake: her only wonder was, that the tall and dainty creature in gray serge and silk, who came rustling to meet her, could be her sister.

Yes; and Arsène, too.

Frank certainly felt herself at fault as they embraced her, and exchanged glances with lifted eyebrows quite over her head. What a thing it is, the consciousness of a rather washed-out frock! For the first time in her life that consciousness came to Frank, although the washed-out frocks were by no means new to her. And through it all, she was led forward until she stood before the easy-chair in the next room.

Then somehow her hands were in her mother's, and she was being drawn down until the two faces leaned together, and there came the touch of lips upon her brow.

Only a light, swift touch. Frank had shrunk away a little, unconsciously; and the eyes fixed searchingly on hers, darkened with pain. The mother felt her shrink, and let her go.

The years of separation had opened a gulf between the two. To the mother, it had seemed that at a glance, a touch, it must close, and give her little one, her youngest, back to her. She had not counted on the shortcomings of a child's memory: its forgetfulness of many things; its

readiness to take impressions from those near at hand. The grandmother and Marguite had confused the image of her mother in Françoise's mind, until there remained but the blurred travesty of her.

The mother dimly felt this, without understanding it; and let her go, forcing a smile.

"You see, we have come rather earlier than we expected. We took advantage of the first excursion-boat up the river to the foot of the falls. We were fortunate in finding conveyances of one kind or another in the village, to bring us all out without delay."

Frank said nothing, in the pause. She was standing up now before her mother, looking at her with a sort of enforced criticism.

Garden roses are too rare in all this Madawaska region, to offer themselves to the little acadienne in the way of comparison; but if she had been familiar with a certain cluster rose of our acquaintance, the three faces grouped together before her, would not have failed to suggest it. Marie's 'flower-like face" brilliant and glowing, as if it had drawn into itself all the best of the air and the sun; the other two paling out in their different degrees, not as if they were faded, but grown into more or less faint reflections of the other, putting up with that second-best of air and sunshine.

To the girl's eyes, suddenly hot with painful tears for her father's loss which this meeting pressed back on her, the mother's calm seemed a serenity untouched by life's hardnesses. Françoise did not know how hard her young face grew. But her mother did, with one glance at it.

The two had no need to say anything more to each other just now; for Marie was exclaiming:

"How could you manage to have changed so little in all these long years, Frank? You see, it is impossible to call you anything but the old name. You are just the same shy little creature; only, instead of the light ripples all over your head—" touching the sunny waves—"You, must let my maid arrange your hair for dinner, child; it will be a real pleasure to Elise to get all this into her hand, for it is not a half satisfaction to her artist-soul," she said, with a laugh, "to go to work with the braids and puffs she has to eke out mine with."

"Oh—but yours is such a pretty shade, Marie!" The first in a little burst of disappointment; the other in genuine admiration of the red-brown tresses shining with the same warm color as Marie's eyes.

Marie threw a not discontented glance over her shoulder into the mirror. "I suppose color does go a long way nowadays; only it does not

make one a heroine to one's *femme de chambre.* But come, mamma, if you don't order us off to our toilets, and bestir yourself about your own, we shall never be ready for dinner, and that is a bad beginning of the new life. Elise shall come to you, Frank, the moment I can spare her. Let her choose your dress for you; her taste is perfect."

Françoise took a fold of her homespun between her fingers, rolling it together in an embarrassed way.

"I—I think—I won't come down to dinner, Marie."

"Not come down to dinner!"—the two sisters: the one echoing the other.

"I—this is just about as good as anything I have to wear."

Frank said this with a touch of self-asserting pride, lifting her head.

"Frank!"

But the mother, with a certain perceptible effort, as if she were hardly accustomed to interfere with Marie's decisions, interposed deprecatingly.

"Might not all that wait, Marie? Of course, Françoise—she has been but a child—her grandmamma would think. She is half a child; she will not object to waiting until we can send away for what she needs, to Fredericton or St. John."

The girl turned with a flash in her eyes.

"The frock is good enough for me. I am not ashamed of it. I do not want to go down to dinner. I care nothing for your town finery!"

"Frank!"

But she was out of the room in a small whirlwind.

Out of the room, and safe up-stairs in her own old one under the eaves.

But not so safe as that, after a while, a tap should not come to her door.

Françoise did not say "Come in"; no, not when presently the tap was repeated. She held her breath, as she half crouched, half knelt in her deep window. She lifted her head a little, couched on her arms in a listening attitude. Would not the footsteps pass away from her threshold, if she gave no sign?

But the door was opening, and Marie came in, with something gray and lustrous trailing from her arm. She gave a start when she saw the small brown heap in the window-seat. She went back and shut the door, and threw her light burden across a chair.

"See, Frank, I have something to show you, something I would like your opinion of."

When Frank did not stir, Marie went up to her and gave her a friendly shake.

"Come, come, wake up; this will never do."

And then, stooping over her: "What, tears? For the shabby gown, child? Only look here!"

It would have taken some determined resistance to withstand Marie's gentle violence. And as Frank was by no means determined to resist, she was drawn to her feet, and forward to the chair, Marie still holding her hands.

"Tell me, Frank, is it pretty? Would I look pretty in it, with the ribbons just to match your eyes?"

The child caught her breath. She had never seen anything so dainty in the way of a dress, as that silky gossamer, with its fringed knots of violet, and the lace laid like a faint frost-breath here and there, to soften all. As Marie went forward to shake out a fold, and in so doing let go her hands, Frank clasped them together with a gesture of delight.

"But it is as pretty as a flower! I wonder there are no flowers of silver gray like that. May I"—suddenly growing shyer—"may I see you in it, when you are dressed?—with the violet ribbons and all?"

But when Marie had made her understand that Elise had deftly altered it for Frank herself, the color flamed into her face, and she did not put out a hand, as her sister pushed the chair with its flowing draperies toward her.

"Why, what a willful puss it is!" cried Marie,

after a pause of vain expectation. "Come, now, I meant to leave you to Elise, but now I shall see you don this thing myself, for I perceive you are not to be trusted."

Frank stood like a rebellious child, one shoulder raised pettishly, surrendering herself as if afraid altogether to revolt against her tall sister who had taken her in hand. She was fingering the gold chain about her throat, glad that it was long enough to hide its odd pendant of a silver coin in her bosom, and thus save her from a possible question, as Marie took her by the shoulders, and turned her round, and made a dash at the fastenings of the despised frock, which she let fall to the floor, as she might have undressed a child.

"Did they mean to keep you an infant always?—a frock like this! How old are you, Frank? Only seventeen? Well, well, you need not look so penitent; you will amend of that. Only seventeen, eh? I suppose, then, we *might* keep Cinderella awhile longer in the nursery chimney-corner—"

Marie put her head on one side, with an air of deliberation, as she watched the girl. But seeing relief instead of dismay in the small face, she laughed outright, and rested her two jeweled hands on the girl's pretty, plump, bare shoulders.

"No no, you are not to get off in that fashion! All these people who have arrived with us,

you must meet them at dinner, whatever mamma said: else it will have a queer look, as if we were hustling you into the background. And you know, my dear, people might then recall the fact that I am only a step-sister, and plain Mary Smith. Fancy! when I have chosen to be Marie de Landremont ever since I went home to you from school, and found your papa was not at all the typical step-father."

Françoise winced. "Do not let us speak of that, Marie. I never speak of it. I like to think you are my own whole sister, just the same as Arsène, or Anne, or Melerente."

"You never speak of it? *not even to your great friend Dr. Kendal?*"

Frank could not have said that Marie emphasized those words, though certainly the pressure of the jeweled hands upon her shoulders seemed to lay stress on them. She could feel the sharp setting of the rings.

She opened her eyes wide.

"No—oh, no. Why should I?"

"Good child!" said Marie carelessly, letting her hands fall. "Why should you, indeed?"

She stood looking at her little sister, but in reality not seeing her. Frank would have been startled enough, could she have followed Marie's thoughts. They had gone back a long way; farther than Frank, farther even than Marie could

remember. In this old house, which Marie saw now for the first time, her mother's romance had begun. Anne Thibodeau was as young as this little daughter of hers, when first she came here from the States, on a visit to her kindred on the St. John. The romance, indeed, had begun with François, not with Jean. It was broken off on Anne Thibodeau's return to St. Louis, where the girl submitted to a Frenchily-arranged match, that gave her the name of Smith—a name heavily and richly gilded. It was in her early widowhood that old Madame de Landremont wrote and renewed her invitation, hoping to renew the engagement with François. The young widow came back on another visit to the St. John, and fell in love with the wrong brother, and the wrong brother with her. It was a passion that flung everything else to the winds. They were married notwithstanding the old madame's anger, and a provision in the late Mr. Smith's will, by which, in the event of his widow's remarriage, the guardianship of his little daughter and his daughter's fortune passed into the hands of his brother. It was not until Mary was rather older than Françoise now, that she came home to her mother from school. Her father's name was no longer gilded by the fortune her uncle had lost for her; and it was then that she chose to be Marie de Landremont, as she told Françoise, finding her

step-father by no means the typical one. She had had another reason for the change—the beginning of a new life abroad, utterly broken off from the old one. But this was a reason Marie told to no one. Neither why she had chosen at this time to bring her mother over here. Marie usually had her reasons, for all she chose sometimes to appear inconsequent enough.

As she was in her speech now, patting Frank's shoulder:

"After all, Frank, I am no cruel step-sister, any more than Arsène. We are well-disposed creatures, on the whole, who mean to be good to Cinderella—so long as she does not step in and carry off the prince," she added, with a flashing smile of satisfaction at her own image in the glass.

"Who is the prince, Marie?"

The elder sister started, and colored slightly.

It was not her wont to be embarrassed; but there was just a hint of confusion in her laugh.

"The prince, child? Who knows—perhaps he has been waiting for me all this while, up here in the skirts of the forest? There, now, Cinderella is dressed for the ball, and she may come and look at herself in the mirror."

A worm-eaten oval, with plenty of blurred rings over its once bright surface, it yet gave Frank a full-length vision which, advancing toward her, fairly bewildered her.

She put her hands across her eyes; then looked again, as if this time she expected some different reflection.

There it was still; all silvery and white and golden, as Marie lightly pulled the pin out of the loosely-knotted hair, and let down the whole in a bright flood. There needed no other sunshine to light up the whole picture.

"So you, too, think it charming, Frank?" Marie was laughing, nodding at the mirror. "Such nonsense, that 'beauty unadorned,' isn't it? Of course it will not do to pose outright for Little Goldilocks"— touching the bright waves with soft, admiring hand—"but Elise will see at once how to do it in some graceful, girlish way; you know it is well not to go over seventeen. It won't do for you to be 'out' yet; you are too young to go out."

Frank turned round with startled eyes.

"Not go out—too young to go out!" she cried, breaking into French in her dismay. "Moi, who go out every day and all day long! I don't see what you are laughing at!" she cried, beginning with trembling hands to unfasten the wonderful robe which had turned into fetters all at once. "But if you think I am going to be kept indoors because of your fine clothes! I would like to know—"

Marie good-naturedly gathered up over her arm

the dress Frank spurned aside with her foot. She gave a reassuring pat to the child's dimpled shoulder; which, however, was brusquely shrugged out of reach.

"You must let me laugh a little, when you say 'saouaire' for 'savoir,' my little Frenchwoman. What a small termagant it is! Don't do that before Arsène or mamma, my dear; you would frighten them. Don't you know it is an impossibility to stamp one's foot, or to—kick—anything out of one's way, even though it chance to be a toilet from Paris? Now I wonder if you are not the only girl of seventeen in the whole civilized world ignorant of the great meaning of that word 'out'?"

Marie went on to explain it. "Now that Anne is married to her German baron," she added, "and keeps Melerente with her—twins are so absurdly inseparable!—it is your turn. But first you should have some lessons, wherever mamma settles next winter. Oh, yes, of course nobody could winter here. It was just a whim of mine, our coming now, instead of sending for you. Your letters put it into my head; and as mamma was glad to come— But about you," she resumed, as if mamma's wishes were hardly worth dwelling on—"no doubt you have had a governess, or master—"

She made a pause at the last word, with a

sharp, furtive glance at Frank, while apparently absorbed in smoothing out a knot of ribbon on the dress.

"No, I never had a governess. But I have had lessons; you know I wrote you monsieur le docteur—"

"Oh, of course!" Marie affected a slight yawn. "The village apothecary; I suppose chemistry was part of the course? Did you find the lessons interesting?"

"Until the snow went, and the sunny days and flowers came. I like those much better than the books," Françoise confessed. And then, with compunction: "but that is not good to say, after all monsieur le docteur's trouble."

"This kind old doctor—he is not young?"

"Oh, no," the girl said promptly; "I should think he must be as old as—oh, suppose, as old as Uncle Frank was, that once when he came to see us in Liverpool. I've thought he was like Uncle Frank."

"Like—"

Marie repeated the word sharply. "François de Landremont was fair, like you."

"But it was not in face, that I meant; it was in kindness, in goodness to me. Marie, if I had known nothing, just nothing at all, when you came: if monsieur le docteur had not taught me—"

Marie's face lost the hard lines which for a moment had sharpened every feature. She drew a long, deep breath. It might have been a sigh of relief, but she turned it into another half-suppressed yawn, as if deprecating school-girl confidences.

"Time enough, child, to learn all our several attainments; just now we must have more regard to the adornment of the person than the mind. I am off, and will send Elise to you as soon as I can spare her."

When Elise had completed her transformation-scene with Françoise, she had a message to deliver, that mademoiselle was to stop in her mother's room on her way down-stairs. Françoise started obediently enough. But when she had reached a certain angle in the passage, and heard unfamiliar voices beyond it, the little heart which was fluttering like a bird's under all this borrowed plumage, failed her utterly. She turned and fled down a side stairway—"out," out at last.

The kindly twilight blurred with its own gray shadows the small gray figure flitting along, until the gnarled apple-tree outside the gate bent its bough obligingly, offering her a nest secure from observation. She took it unhesitatingly, in her ignorance of Parisian toilets; and sat lightly swaying to and fro, with no more thought for silk than for homespun.

She had enough to occupy her otherwise. Her hand had stolen up to her throat, twisting and untwisting the gold chain to which she had linked the coin so lightly flung to her by Dallas Fraser.

But she was not thinking of Dallas Fraser now; only of her mother, of that averted glance in her mother's eyes, as she looked at her.

After all these years! That was the way her mother met her, after all these years!

The poor, passionate child was covering up her hot face, even from the calming touch of the cool evening air. She was not crying, she was not even thinking; she was only aching with a wild longing to escape, from herself, from the contending feelings that were fairly tearing her heart to pieces between them.

She buried her head deeper in her arms. Perhaps it was that slight silken stir of hers: she missed a step that quickened to her across the road.

"Frank—"

"O monsieur le docteur! And I wanted you so much!"

"Frank, were you then thinking of me?"

"Eh, not at the moment," she admitted reluctantly, lest he should go on to ask what she was thinking of. "Not at the moment. But then I am always wanting you, you see, whenever I am lonely. And a big houseful makes one

loneliest of all, don't you think so? You have been in the village—you have heard of the arrival? But how did you ever know me, monsieur, in this disguise? Only see here!"

She was standing before him now, and she gave the folds of her dress a toss out over the road-side weeds.

"Would you have known your Cinderella, if you had had a good look at her so, instead of stumbling over her huddled all together as she might have been among the ashes in the chimney-corner?"

He did not answer. He was looking at her in a silence at which the girl said, disappointedly:

"I thought you would like it. It seemed to me I looked a little pretty in it. Not as Marie would have looked, of course, but still—"

Suddenly Kendal had both her hands fast in his.

"*Is* it my Cinderella? my Cinderella, whether she wear cotton or silk!" And then, as the startled pose of her head warned him of his vehemence, "This is silk?" he said, in a lighter tone. "And you are enjoying it, and all the other pretty things of your new life? But why are you out here alone, a little, solitary figure that drew me across to you as I was passing?"

"Passing?"

No one knew better than she, that this road

led nowhere else; and she told him so. "Where could you be passing to, monsieur? You can't pass to anywhere by our road."

"Well, then—" laughing, and speaking out, as if driven into a corner—"I suppose 'passing,' freely translated, means coming this way in the hope of seeing you."

"Then I am glad I came out. I wish you were coming in. I wish—"

She broke off with a confusing flash of memory, anent Marie's mention of the village apothecary.

"Do you wish it, Frank? Would it make a difference in your enjoyment of your new life?"

He had paled a little, waiting for the answer. But he need not have feared it.

"Oh, so much difference!" said the clear, prompt voice. "I am frightened of the new life. I wish we were back in the fire-lit kitchen to-night, with tante Marguite asleep in the chimney-corner, and the sound of bonhomme Pacifique's axe outside ringing through the stillness, and coming in to you and me sitting at the dresser, over our books."

She was swaying again on her apple-bough seat. The faint new moon, still pallid in the twilight, flung the leaves in dancing shadows on the bright head and lightly folded hands. Some-

thing in the demure attitude helped her words to carry Kendal back to a certain winter evening in the old kitchen, when the dancing firelight had flickered on the sunny hair, and face half-blushing and half-mischievous.

"The books—the lessons—Frank, I tried once, and but once, to teach you one which afterward I thought I had no right to do. I have kept silence since then. But now everything is changed—I have had news—it is no longer a hard, bare life that I would offer you. But what am I saying?—it is not for silver and gold that my little girl will come to me, if come she does. Only, I have the right to try to win her now, if it is not too late. Is it too late, Frank? Can we not go back to that night by the fire, when old Marguite pulled out her spinning-wheel between us, and you said—Frank, you said the lesson was easy, and you did not mean to forget it. Have you forgotten? I love—"

"'Thou lovest—'" she put in promptly, with a mocking yet unsteady laugh, willfully misunderstanding him. "Eh, monsieur mon maître, you are too much given to review-lessons; I learned my verbs long, long ago!"

He made no answer, even by a movement; and his face could not speak for him, for it was in shadow, as he leaned against the fence, under the boughs.

The silence frightened her. She put out her hand, with a shy touch upon his arm.

"As if I could not remember, without that!" she said, under her breath.

"If I go away for a little while, Frank—"

The light touch tightened into a clinging clasp, and her other hand stole up, and the small fingers locked themselves over his arm.

"Going away?"

There was dismay enough in the tone, to satisfy any lover, however exacting. For the first time Kendal looked without a misgiving into the young face raised toward him; into the eyes glinting with a sudden rush of tears, and down upon the quivering mouth—would a kiss comfort it, as it would a child's?

But he only answered:

"Going away, but to come nearer, Frank. Just a little while; and then will you give me such a welcome to your parlor as you used to the old kitchen?"

"That I will—always!" There was a ring of defiance in her tone. Marie might say what she would: Frank would never give up her friend—this one friend that she had—were he a thousand times village apothecary, "That I will—always!" she said.

"And you take me on faith; when you know so little of me, really?"

She shrugged her shoulders carelessly.

"Why should I know anything *of* you, when I know *you?*"

"But you have the right, Frank; and perhaps I have been wrong not to have told you everything. But it is a painful story—"

"Then do not tell me," she said quickly, with a shrinking movement, as if from the pain he spoke of.

"Oh, not to you, there is no pain in it for you. It is only a bitter memory; a ghost that will be laid forever, when I have told it you. But let it rest until I come back, if you will. You have not asked me where I am going, Frank," he said, with a movement of his hand dismissing the subject, and the ghost with it. "And yet I am going a long way."

"A long way?"

"Even into the States."

"Into the States! But why?"

"To seek my fortune," he said, lightly. "What! you never have guessed that I am what you people here call an Américitchain? But it is no wonder you did not know it: I myself have tried so hard to forget it."

"But you have been a Canadian—almost an Acadian—this long time," she said, eagerly.

"Yes, ever since I fled across the border out of prison."

There was a laughing, tone in his voice; but, for all the twilight, he was watching her to see the effect of his words.

They had absolutely none, beyond an impatient movement of her shoulder. She found idle jesting out of place while he was speaking of going away.

"You will not be long, monsieur? I—they are all so different from me—I shall feel so alone until you come back."

There could have been no more marked difference, one would have said, than between this dark, grave man older than his years, and the little, young creature looking wistfully up at him. But just now he saw the difference as little as she.

"Long?—the hours will be days, and the days weeks. But as time is counted, it will not be long before I come back to claim my little wife."

He saw her start at that last word.

"What does it mean, then? Frank, are you not to be my wife?"

"One day; oh, yes. But it is much too soon to think of that. People may be—engaged—a long while first. I— Need we think of that now, Dr. Kendal?"

He hastened to reassure her, half-smiling himself, although the glow had passed from his face.

"Not until you choose; you shall not think of anything until you choose," he told her, sooth-

ingly. "But, Frank, there are one or two things which people—engaged—do sometimes, but you have not done."

"I am sure I did not know. There are so many things I don't know," she said, naïvely. "I wish you would just tell me when I am wrong, monsieur le docteur."

"There, then." He shook his head gravely. "My name is John," he said.

"Oh, but I couldn't!" she cried, rather irrelevantly.

"And then, Frank, at parting, people who are—engaged—do sometimes—"

He might have told her without words, as he bent his head. But she drew her breath in such a hurried, frightened way, that he stopped.

"You do not love me then, Frank, at all?"

Of course she loved him. And he was going away.

An instant's pause, a little struggle with herself, and she put up her mouth to be kissed, as frankly as a child might do.

Did he not understand her? For, after all, he only took her hands in a firm grasp a moment, and then went away.

He did not even look back as he went; though she sat there with her hand raised to wave him a last farewell, when he should reach the wooded corner where the lane met the high-road.

Five minutes later she was up-stairs, and slipping again into her despised homespun frock.

For, after all, she belonged to the old days, not the new; to the village doctor, to homespun, to the kitchen chimney-corner, and tante Marguite.

As she stole down-stairs and out-of-doors once more, she could hear dinner being served in merry picnic fashion, in the big weaving-room, which had been turned into a dining-hall.

. . . . . .

"Tante Marguite—"

"Eh!" The old woman looked round with a start, tilting the saucepan as she set it down on the glowing coals on her own hearth. "Mamselle, it's never you! At this hour of the evening! What are you doing here?"

"I have made my escape." The girl came in across the threshold, with a nod, and took possession of the arm-chair in the window. "They put me in their fetters, but I broke loose from them."

"Fetters, mamselle Françuaise!"

Marguite looked capable of believing anything of Madame Jean.

"Fetters, tante Marguite; or perhaps I should say, prison-dress. It was very pretty, all rustle and ribbons; but it cramped me. So I have stolen away from it, while all those strangers are up at the house; and you must take me in."

"But, mamselle, Madame Jean—"

"Grandmamma said I might, you know very well, Marguite. You must go up to the house, and tell Madame Jean," the girl said, with a little willful nod. "Or there is Pacifique—he can go."

Pacifique was coming in with an armful of wood. He gave a sort of subdued purr of satisfaction when he saw the young mistress in her homely frock.

"So they haven't made a fine lady of you all at once, mamselle? That's well; but why have you sent monsieur le docteur away? I met him on the road, and when I told him it would please my old woman well to see him at this time, that she had much to try her nerves, he said he was leaving the village, and we must send for the doctor down Tobique-way. Faites excuse, monsieur le docteur!"—Pacifique shook his solemn head, taking both hands to straighten out his stiff rheumatic leg, as he deposited the wood on the hearth—"but the short-cut into the next world, over the twelve hundred and fifty leagues underground, into the kingdom of the demon, *that* a poor sinner would be sure to find, that goes to him down Tobique-way."

Frank laughed; and then grew grave as suddenly.

"Gone away!—" she said, under her breath.

There was an odd sound of respite in the words. And then she colored hotly; because she was a just a little shy of being engaged, need that make her ungrateful?

After all, Marguite was not able to resist the opportunity of standing face to face with her old enemy, Madame Jean, with the advantage on her (Marguite's) side.

It was an advantage, certainly, that mamselle had come over to Marguite's faction.

The sense of this accounted for the ready welcome accorded by the old woman, and the alacrity with which she bound on her best high white cap, and marched up to the house, prepared to do battle, in mamselle's cause, with Madame Jean.

But no battle ensued. It was not Madame Jean whom Marguite saw; but a bright-eyed, bland, quick-witted young lady, with a laugh in her glance that took the quaint old body in from head to foot; and a ready acquiescence in the proposal which was meant for a declaration of war—that mamselle Françoise should remain for the present at the cottage. A very sensible thing, mamselle Marie declared, with a smiling nod; a very sensible thing, until Elise—a perfect treasure in an emergency was Elise—should have a proper wardrobe comfortably in readiness for Françoise.

"And—I threw my cap over the mills," Marguite said, on recounting the story afterward,

winding it up after the manner of the nursery-tales. She could never be got to say how the interview ended. Perhaps on her side it was as well that mamselle Marie was not clear as to the Madawaska *patois;* and had a very indistinct idea as to what "le jeoble" in the old woman's muttered farewell had to do with "le diable."

VIII.

"The dowie Dean
It rins its lane,
And every seven year it gets ane."

FRANK stands still, leaning both her arms against the railing of the suspension-bridge, and gazing with suspended breath down on the falls spanning the whole river above.

Just those three deluging days of steady downpour preceding this one of brilliant sunshine, have done this; covering the hurly-burly of stones strewing the river-bed, and sending a brimming flood from brink to brink. Down into the chasm it thunders; and there, under cover of the rolling clouds of spray, it gathers, and whirls away be-

neath the bridge, and through the winding fastnesses of the gorge beyond.

The bridge is shaking with the clamor of it; and the girl, as she watches, is in a quiver of excitement.

For the sudden rise in all the forest-streams has offered another opportunity this season for the lumber men above to float the logs down into the St. John. The river is almost at half-freshet; and near the bridge, where the rock-walls draw together, a pine-trunk, sucked under by the cataract, is spewed out of that foaming mouth, and goes spinning down the whirlpool, the great mill that grinds away the bark, and leaves it stripped and bare to float on to some boom, it may be a hundred miles below.

There is a boom anchored in the river above the falls — trunk after trunk chained end to end in a long, wavering line, within which the others settle themselves into intricate mosaics. Frank stands watching the busy scene: the hurrying logs; the smooth sheen of the treacherous current drawing them toward the brink; the swift canoe, manned by two lumber men, rushing to the rescue, and here and there dragging into the boom some errant log which they tow by means of a dog and chain made fast to the canoe. How deft they are! How—

The dead trunk of what must once have been

a monarch of the woods, thrusts the other logs aside, and sweeps on past the boom—on and on, straight for the falls, faster and faster as it goes.

The canoe has shot out in pursuit: the "dog" has gripped the log; but the current has it too, and the current at that point is deadly strong.

One breathless moment. Afterward, Frank might know how her clinging to the rail became a passionate grasp, in her suspense, until the tender palms were bruised. But just now she is unconscious of herself—conscious of nothing but that terrible struggle before her.

Man's power against Nature's.

A struggle for life and death it is, after the first.

For life and death it is, that the men in the canoe dip their paddles, striving for every inch of treacherous water that might bear them back again.

One breathing-space, and fate appears to pause. Canoe and log are motionless. The mighty strength of arm put forth by the powerful lumber men, if insufficient to draw them backward out of harm's reach, still holds them from their doom.

And now—slowly, slowly at first—the current, unseen like the resistless forces of Nature, has them in its grip, and draws and draws them on.

Frank's blue eyes, wide with horror, fasten on the man who stands up in the canoe to strike one last blow for life: to break the chain which binds them to the log swimming lightly away with them to the brink of death.

She sees him grasp his axe, and, with all his force, strike at the chain.

But the iron glances on the iron; the axe misses—hurls itself out of his unnerved hands into the sleek water.

The man—Frank sees his heary head bowed down—drops on his knees in the canoe. His comrade, a dark silhouette against the stream beginning to gleam with the first tranquil mother-of-pearl shimmer of sunset, never moves in his seat, except for the strong arms which ply the paddle as resolutely as if, in spite of every stroke, the canoe were not bearing them on swiftly and more swiftly to destruction.

All Frank's powers of hearing, of seeing, are absorbed in the frail birchen thing floating so smoothly yonder. If anything else were floating on that glassy mirror, she would not know whether it were stray log or driftwood tangle.

Stray log or driftwood tangle, or another boat that shoots out from the bank?

Shoots out; speeds like an arrow far across the river, between the canoe and the unseen fate reaching up after it out of the current.

Once more the flash of an axe glints like a spark in the red sunset drifting down-stream; and, this time, it does not miss its mark.

The chain is broken; the log, with nothing now to hold it back, flees to the brink so fast that it is all Frank's eyes can do to follow it.

For she forces her eyes to follow it; the tension of suspense, in watching those two boats, is become more than she can bear.

There is a terror even in this watching of hers: a heart-sickening dread, as she sees the black line sliding over the brink which makes one shining curve as clear and smooth and motionless as a great arch of frozen water. The snow-drifts of spray beat up against it, snatching at that black line, whatever it may be, and burying it deep. Below, the swaths of water fall apart; through the clear brown rapids there heaves up a black something: it may be the jagged peak of a rock below.

The seething waves have gulped it down. For one dizzy instant Françoise catches her breath again, doubting whether the shapeless thing that spins before her eyes is log or canoe.

It is a shout from the bank that reassures her —a thin thread of sound, shrill through the torrent's roar, that makes itself just faintly heard.

She steadies herself, clinging with both hands to the rail, and looks again for the canoes.

They are not where she left them. They have broken that thread of fate which unseen drew them toward the abyss. When she sees them again, they are skimming side by side back to the bank, where a group of villagers already gathers.

The voices can not reach her through the torrent's tumult; but she can see the eager gesticulations, and here and there can recognize some one she knows. She never moves, clinging to the rail, and looking—looking—

. . . . . .

"It is the étlanger," a voice said close beside her, speaking in French.

The stranger—the sent of God, as the Breton forefathers of the Acadians were wont to say.

Frank started and turned.

But the words were not addressed to her. She was hardly even observed by the two, an Indian and a Frenchman, who were passing over the bridge, their tread deadened by the reverberation of the falls. It was the Indian who was speaking as they went by.

The stranger; yes, she knew it was Dallas Fraser whom she had seen flinging his life away to save the two lumber-men.

After a little, she roused herself, and turned away, homeward; for she could see the scattered groups dispersing, and some of these might be coming across the bridge.

But, she was trembling with excitement still; and presently, when she heard steps behind her, round the bend in the road, she turned aside into the bordering thicket, putting up her hands to her hot cheeks, which the branching greenery veiled completely from the passer-by.

When she saw that it was Dallas Fraser sauntering along, his hands in the pockets of his shooting-jacket, his head thrown slightly back with a gesture of which she already knew the trick—the sun in his fair, frank face, and altogether a careless look of happy ease about the whole man—for an instant she doubted the evidence of her own eyes: that he had but just struggled back from the very brink of death.

But, after all, why should he not be at ease with himself and all the world? Had not all gone so well with him, that Heaven and earth must be glad of him?

With a swift impulse, the girl stretched out her hands toward him; then suddenly let them fall, her color brightening, her faint smile deepening mischievously.

For he was whistling, as he went by, beyond the screen of underwood which she had only put forth her hand to part, but had not parted; and the air of the song was one which he had learned from her.

He was doing it very badly, in a way that

spoke ill for his musical memory; but the air he had heard only the other day, down by the wells:

"'Tu t'en vas, tu délaisses ta personne,
Les promesses sont des angros:
Tu in' avas promis la foi bonne—'

What the dickens *are* 'angros,' by-the-way?" he said, breaking off as he perceived that he had lost the tune.

And he passed on, round the fringe of alders.

"But, Marguerite, the child?"

"The child" had crossed the bit of greensward from the farm-road, and now stood on the threshold of Marguite's open door, looking within at the two who were seated before the hearth, in the full light of the dancing fire.

The great iron kettle was humming cheerily, swinging on the crane; a savory stew was simmering away on a glowing bed of coals; there was the smell of bread baking in the brick oven which was hollowed out in the side of the chimney, and had been heated red-hot with a fire kindled in it, now removed to make room for the loaves. Altogether, with the shining floor, and the gay, beflowered home-made mats scattered about it, and the ample dame seated in the firelight at her low spinning-wheel, her bundle of flax at her knee,

the whole was as cozy a picture of homely comfort as one need hope to find.

But the other figure opposite—the one in the seat of honor, the big, upholstered easy-chair—looked far from comfortable. There was a flush on her delicate face, which was evidently less due to the fire than to some plain speech of her companion's; and the slightly drooping figure in its sheeny black, with the gauzy scarf falling back from the soft hair a little faded though not gray, had a deprecating air about it, which was also in the voice that said:

"But, Marguerite, the child—"

"Eh, Madame Jean, the child is well enough. She is with the folk she has always known. She need not be in haste to change—to put herself into the kneading-trough, for mamselle Marie to make what she will of her. Better a bit of good, sound, honest bread, than all those kickshaws mamselle Marie'll twist her into, if she has to break off a pinch here, and a corner there, to shape it to her will."

"Certainly she has corners enough," said the mother, with a faint sigh; really to herself, for she had remarked that the sharp old woman was rather dull of hearing. But the girl in the doorway heard her.

It may be doubted whether Marguite did not see the girl, she was so careful not to glance that

way. But Madame Jean's back was turned upon the hesitating figure.

"Lachuelle? Mamselle Marie, is it?" Marguite asked, in the country *patois*. There was no one who had fewer corners, nor was more smoothly rounded, than this same Marie, as Marguite well knew. "Mamselle Marie, is it? And is that why Madame Jean has not yet married her: *qu'elle sèche sur pied?*"

Madame Jean rose, a little wearily. There was a keen zest for Marguite in these ambushed sorties on the enemy; but Madame Jean did not care even to act on the defensive. She was retreating in order, gathering her draperies about her, and answering absently:

"You were saying—? But it is growing dark; I must not stay to talk. You will say to my girl, for me, Marguite—"

Turning, she faced Françoise.

If she had been prepared, she might have met her after the fashion of the other day; but, taken by surprise as she was, all the mother in her moved her to put out her arms, and draw the child to her breast in a long, close embrace.

And all the child in Françoise for one moment made her cling there.

Then suddenly the pressure of the soft, round arms relaxed, and the mother at once let her go.

Françoise stood apart, looking at her with fire in her eyes.

Had she trapped her into the caress: this fair, soft, gentle mother, whom she could so love, if to love her did not mean to be false to the father?

If these two had been alone with one another, perhaps they might have come together readily enough; but tante Marguite's presence in the background was as if it thrust them apart.

To Frank, she was a breathing warning (rather a hard-breathing, not to say contemptuously sniffing one) not to forget her allegiance to the father who would still have been leal and true to Uncle Frank, if a soft face and a light faith had not tempted him aside.

And Françoise must not be tempted to surrender at a glance.

Though she would not have said this, even to herself, it was this that chilled her manner, while her heart was aglow within her, and the red burning in her cheeks, and a light, half-warm, half-angry, kindling in the blue eyes uplifted to her mother's dark ones.

Yes, they were dark, like Marie's and Arsène's; Frank, the only blue-eyed, fair-haired one among them all, hardly seemed to count among her children.

"Mignonne," her mother was saying (an old name which Frank had half forgotten), "if it had

not been for these stormy days, in which I would not bring you out, I should have come for you before. Marie took too much upon herself—" with a faint, unconscious sigh, as if that were not altogether abnormal for Marie—"too much upon herself, in giving consent for me that you should be away from us. Your place is with your mother now. To be apart from you, mignonne—to have you look upon me as a stranger—child, it is more than I can bear!"

Frank's color came and went. She put her hand to her throat, with a catch in her breath, before she could say, quietly:

"You must give me time, mamma. I—you *have* been a stranger all these years—" she burst forth. "How am I else to think of you? I don't know anything else."

"You can not remember how I loved my youngest, my baby?" the mother said.

"I remember you sent me away."

"You were your father's legacy to his old mother, Françoise. As for me, I knew it would not do. But he thought so."

There was no touch of blame for him in her voice; but the hot flame in Françoise's cheeks was veering, blown by gusts of passion.

"If *he* thought so—"

That was reason enough for Françoise; and for her mother too, for she said meekly:

"*He* thought so; and when he asked me, I could give up my rights to his mother in her old age. Although I knew it would not do."

"If *he* thought so, it must have been best."

Madame Jean slowly shook her head. She was not conscious of the movement. She was only conscious of how often her Jean's impetuous, unconsidered will had gone astray. For when Jean had wanted anything, he had wanted it absolutely; he would never stop to question nor to weigh. From the time he had wooed the young widow in hot haste, putting aside his brother's leisurely beginnings, sweeping her as it were from all her moorings, in his vehemence—

"If *he* thought so, it must have been best," the daughter was saying.

And Madame Jean locked her lips upon those memories of hers.

"That is all over now, mignonne. What we have to do now is to arrange our lives for the present."

"And for the present, mamma, to do as Marie said: to leave me the week out here, to—to get used to things—and to—to be made presentable."

She said this with such a clear imitation of Marie's voice and manner, that Madame Jean, who was not without the fear of Marie before her eyes, faltered.

Frank saw her advantage, and pressed it; which perhaps she would not have done, but for her mother's hesitation.

At any rate, she got the week; Marie's promise was confirmed when her mother turned to go away.

Françoise, as she went, stood in the doorway, looking after the graceful, slightly drooping figure with its fluttering black draperies against the gray twilight. Her mother's kiss was warm upon her lips.

"One takes more flies with honey than with vinegar," old Marguite said, proverbially, over her shoulder, watching the black draperies too.

Frank made no answer; only turned away, and appropriated the old woman's spinning-wheel, which she set briskly in motion. She fell to humming, with a touch of defiance of tears in her voice, as she drew out the shining thread:

"Le grandpère et la grand 'mère,
Ils avaiont dansé ze deux tout vié—
Dansez, fils, et accordez, fi',
Epargnez pas vos souliers—"

IX.

"Little Ellie sits alone
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side, on the grass;
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by,
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow—
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro."

JUST this one more day of freedom!

The girl was saying this to herself, determined to make the most of it. A thoroughly idle day; not even a pretense of a book, to lend it a sensible and profitable air. For monsieur le docteur was away: what was the use of reading?

She sauntered lightly through the wood, swinging the little green and white Indian basket of sweet-hay that held the lunch she had wheedled out of tante Marguite. She thought of the old woman gratefully; but for her, would she still be free to spend this last day in dreaming the golden hours away, as in the olden time?

The olden time lay less than a year behind

her; yet it seemed very long ago, so much had happened since.

Here she was, pushing her way up the stony hollow where she had first seen Kendal floundering in the stream. But how altered since then! The very stream in its course babbled of change, as it poured now in full flood over the rocks between which it had dribbled months ago. The stepping-stones which she had used that evening, were submerged; the long, shingly beeches were nowhere to be seen, and the clear brown water pressed up nearly to the rolled green border of the alder-thicket:

> "Summer is i-cumin',
> Loude singe cuckoo—"

Frank could hear the songster very plainly from the old barrens beyond the alder-brake.

So much was in those barrens! The birds, the thrushes and the warblers, delight in them—and so indeed do the bears, though they prefer the more secluded ones, for their peaceful banquet on the fragrant strawberries, the red raspberries, and the big blueberries with the bloom upon them, so plentifully spread amid the fire-weed. The wild fruits spring up fast in the open, where forest-fire on forest-fire has cleared and cleared again the way for a rotation of such crops. And Frank knew where the asters and the ferns and pitcher-

plant grow best, and the sweet little pink-and-white "twin-sisters" trail close to the ground, at the edge of the damp old hard-wood belt that had refused to burn. The "twin-sisters"—"Mclerente-and-Anne," she had always called them. All these things drew her across to them irresistibly.

But how? There were the stepping-stones; but there, also, was the water over them.

Françoise looked at it and looked at them, and ended by sitting down on the pebbled bank of the stream, and in a moment springing up again, her skirts kilted about her, her shoes and stockings in her hand, and a pair of the prettiest little white feet in the world twinkling through the sunny reach of water on the stepping-stones.

Once she slipped on the smooth-worn rock, but recovered herself instantly. It was more than an instant, however, before she found out that, in righting her balance, she had let fall not only her freshly gathered tuft of bluebells, but one of the shoes tucked, as she thought, safely under her arm.

She did not know, until her careless glance was caught by something bobbing up and down upon the eddy. An odd little black boat, that had a bluebell nodding in it, by way of passenger. At least that is how it gets itself described presently.

But first, she sprang to a stone nearer, and

reached out after it in such haste that she jeopardized her footing again. She might have lost it altogether, with the great start she gave, when round the bend a canoe shot past her, in the narrow channel.

She had reached the nearest bank in haste before she saw the man in the canoe was Dallas Fraser. Less than a moment, and he had captured her runaway craft, and was presenting it to her with a remark as to its sailing qualities.

But the girl had made herself deftly ready to dispossess the bluebell, and thrust her trim little blue-woolen-stockinged foot into its place. Dallas tried not to watch the operation too fixedly, but steadied the canoe on his pole among the eddies, as he said :

"And so at last I have found you again !"

"It comes like March in Lent, monsieur," she said coolly—"to find me in the woods."

"And I did not know that ! I have been watching village and road for a trace of you ; have even been down to your school-room among the rapids—"

"With your fine ladies from the house ?"

"*My* fine ladies !"

"Oh, well, they are yours," she said, lightly, "in the sense of being at hand there for your idle moments, when the serious business of fishing is over for the day. I am glad I was not in my

school-room, as you call it, when you brought them there. They would have found me in the way."

"It was not I who brought them there. Every one goes down to see the wells in the foot-rocks. But why should they have found you in the way?"

"They always have."

"They always have?"

Frank flushed scarlet. What was she saying? Telling her family secrets to this stranger!

"They always have?" he repeated. And then, catching inspiration from the rush of color which dyed the round white throat and the fair outline of her cheek, as she turned her head aside—

"Except Frank!" he cried. "This Frank de Landremont—this youth whom I have chanced to hear his sisters mention once or twice, but who seems somehow mysteriously invisible to his guests—this Frank finds himself in your way very often, does he not?"

A puzzled glance from under the long, dark lashes, at first; and then a sudden smile dimpling about the corner of her mouth.

"Very often—" demurely.

"And—come, confess—it is on this Frank's account that the ladies up at the house—"

He hesitated there. Of course, he could not

echo her own words of a moment ago. But while he hesitated, she said, coolly:

"Find me in the way? Yes, truly; on account of Frank."

"You must know him very well, indeed!"

"But yes, I suppose I must. Rather better than any one else does, at least."

"And—no doubt you are fond of him?"

The words escaped him in a little outburst of jealous impatience, which perhaps he did not understand himself, and certainly the girl did not. She answered in an off-hand way:

"Oh, yes, indeed! Only—isn't it odd?—I do get just a little tired sometimes of the constant companionship. You like to get rid of everybody sometimes, you know; and to have any one perpetually haunting you—"

"I'm unlucky," interposed Fraser, sardonically. "I've not yet seen this ubiquitous Frank. Do you say the same thing to him of me?"

She lifted her brows.

"Of you! How could I, monsieur? Me, who have met you but three times and two halves?"

"Three times and two halves!" he repeated, laughing at her computation. "Pray, how is that? I am sure my memory is at least as good as yours upon that subject, and I am ready to swear to thrice. As for the half-times—"

"But that was when the meeting was only

half-way ; all on one side, monsieur understands ? First, on that same day of the great arrival at the house : the carriages were rolling up to the gate, and I was hiding behind the beaucoup—"

"The beaucoup ?"

"Ça ! I mean what old Niel MacNiel calls the muckle rain-cask, at the corner of the house. I was standing there, watching monsieur."

She was unconscious of the subtle flattery in the admission, or her next words might have had more meaning in them, and not have been said quite carelessly :

"You know it is something to see any stranger at all. Or you would know, if you lived with tante Marguite."

"Poor child, it is a weary life, then ?"

"Oh, not to say weary ; only the same thing, always the same thing over and over again. It is the song of the Korils, those elfish dwarfs away in old Bretagne." And she began to sing :

"Lindi, mardi, mercredi,
Lindi, mardi, mercredi—"

Dallas Fraser glanced at her quickly, when she began, the clear voice like a bird's piercing through the woodland solitudes.

If he had only told her at first that he was not absolutely alone here, as she doubtless supposed him—that nearly the whole house-party

had wandered out here, canoeing, fishing, camping out, as such a party can merrily enough, in the skirts of the forest.

But as he looked at her now, it was impossible for him to speak a word of warning. It would be an impertinence. Why should he warn her? Was not the forest her cathedral, to sing matins in, as the birds were singing them?

Nevertheless, from idly toying with his paddle in the water, he suddenly shot out into the middle of the stream, as the sound of voices reached him round a bend in the alder-thicket.

When Françoise turned her head, it seemed to her there was a flash of color that dazzled her eyes.

A loaded *bateau* sweeping down the stream; a glow of scarlet draperies, as here and there a shawl trailed almost in the water; a flutter of blue-gauze veils and ribbons; a startled exclamation:

"Frank!"

There was Arsène staring across at her, out of the *bateau;* for once surprised into taking the initiative, as Marie sat in the bow, struck speechless by the sight.

But Marie could not be struck speechless for long.

"It is my little sister," she said, rapidly, to

her neighbors in the boat. "I did not suppose she could be with us yet. To-morrow she was promised to us; not to-day. You did not know? But that seems strange! I thought every one knew. What a good child, Frank, to come and join our party!" she cried, putting out her hand to the girl, as the boat pushed in among the bushes on the margin where she stood.

Frank!

Dallas in his canoe sat staring at her as if the sun-dazzle blinded his eyes.

Marie, glancing round her with a helpless air, started slightly, as if she saw him for the first time.

"Mr. Fraser! so here you are! I suppose this wild little singing-bird of ours drew you here as she drew us? I was going to say we were in a difficulty; but now that you are here, I may hope that we are out of it. The truth is, our *bateau* is too full—"

"But my canoe is at your service," cried the young man, eagerly.

"Mr. Fraser, this is my sister Frank, of whom you have heard us speak. And, Frank, Mr. Fraser is our cousin, more or less removed—"

"'Who drags at each remove a lengthening chain,'" said Dallas, as he pushed his canoe alongside. "That is the worst of these cousinships. The best of them is, we have a better claim than

the outside world to be called on to do cousinly offices."

"Then you will take Frank on board, Mr. Fraser? And let me come, too; the *bateau* is rather crowded, and your canoe holds three, I think?"

She made the exchange lightly and swiftly; but Frank was holding back.

"But, Marie, tante Marguite? She will make me a *beau sabbat*, if I stay away, and she does not know."

"And mamma? Yes, I understand your scruples," Marie returned, giving the girl a warning glance not to be too expansive. "One of the guides, however, is going back to the village from our camp, and we'll send word to mother and nurse how we have carried you off. Come, child."

The pretty, imperious air of elder-sisterly authority set very gracefully on the beautiful young woman, who from amidships in the canoe was holding out her hands toward Françoise.

But it was Dallas who helped her in, saying as he did so, under his breath:

"And *this* is Frank!"

"My *néom* is Marie Françoise," the girl answered, demurely.

But there was dimpling sunshine in her face; sunshine and brightness everywhere, as the stream

swept merrily on, and beyond the Fourche the camping-ground came into view.

To Françoise it was laughable enough, the eagerness with which the men were all gathered into a knot on the beach at the water's edge: one tall, brown-bearded fisherman leaning on his rod with one hand, while in the other he held up to view the trophy of that rod—a gleaming salmon, a twenty-five-pounder; at sight of which the sportsman next him let his dwarfed trout trail ignominiously on the ground as he stood. Françoise brightened and nodded as she caught sight of a familiar figure behind him. "That is old Mandé Pig-Eyes," she explained to Fraser. "He is from down Tobique-way; he's one of the very best of the guides, Pacifique says."

But how they are all got up to play at work! all, indeed, but that veritable sportsman, Mandé Pig-Eyes. Pacifique was wont to grumble at the trouble when now and again he would descend below the falls, and up one or other of the tributary streams, in search of salmon, trout, or *pointu noir;* and here were these men making game of toil, and turning their backs upon civilization—for a lark, as Dallas Fraser would say. And the fine ladies too; some of them filling with color the doorway of the big tent on the bank above; two or three of them just stepping from the *bateau* beached a moment later than the canoe.

"You must come and speak to Mrs. Osborne, Frank," Marie said, at once. "It is she who is matronizing us: yonder hero of the big fish—salmon is it, you say?—is her husband.—Ah, thanks, Mr. Fraser; now we are both out dry-shod, we'll run up the bank, and leave you the canoe."

Marie, as she drew her little sister's arm within hers, was wondering why she had not before so clearly seen how charming the young creature was. She was in her own place out here in the woods: blooming and free and natural, where others, some of them, were looking and feeling rather artificial. Marie was quite taken by surprise; no longer shy, and as unconscious as a child, Frank went flitting here, there, everywhere, helping in the camping preparations; even stopping to hold the tent-cord for Mandé Pig-Eyes, while on the sly he makes the sign of the cross over the knot, that it may hold.

X.

"Yes, I will say what mere friends say—
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may—
Or so very little longer."

"MADEMOISELLE! What are you doing here?"

She was on her knees in the *bateau*, her arms crossed on the gunwale. She threw a laughing glance over her shoulder upon Dallas Fraser as he spoke to her.

"Doing? Repeating the paternoster of Saint Do-nothing: that is what tante Marguite says I am usually about. You may come and help me, if you will: the saint has many followers in this camp."

He came down to her, where the boat was drawn up on the stony beach; and as he stood beside her, he could see what had brought her there.

The trees bordering the stream stood aside to give the water room, and so left a clear view of the northern sky.

It was all glorious with northern lights—fold on translucent fold of green and white and crimson flapping and veering about, as if blown to and fro in a strong wind.

"One can almost hear the rustle, as the curtains sweep aside. It seems as if they must open straight up into heaven!" said the girl's low voice.

Dallas had seated himself on the gunwale, not far from where she leaned: it must be confessed his eyes were oftener on the dainty profile turned to him, than on any thing heaven-like.

"May be heaven is not so far off, after all?" she ventured presently, in the same low, half-awed tone. "Bonhomme Pacifique says there are birds that can find the way to the upper sea beyond the clouds—the Sea of Glass, in paradise, you know. I wonder if they could carry a message there? Only, it is an answer we would want. And that, perhaps, would not be what we would be glad to hear."

He could not follow her thought, as Kendal might; nor divine that she was fancying the grandmère's look *de haut en bas*, if she should hear of Madame Jean in the De Landremont homestead, and little Françuaise out here with a gay party from there.

"*Mais oui*, I am going in. It is quite late, I am afraid—" the girl broke the silence by way of closing her ear to the scornful little laugh she could fancy floating down to her through those swaying curtain-folds. For grandmamma would be much the same up there, suppose! "The

lights up yonder are deceiving: one can not tell, sometimes, if sunset is fading, or the aurora beginning, when the whole sky is colored like this. And Marie will be looking for me back to supper. I hope monsieur is hungry?" she said, with a friendly nod. "For I've wheedled old Mandé Pig-Eyes into letting me make the bread, instead of his endless great thick buckwheat-cakes. And let me tell monsieur, though I say it that shouldn't, my bread is well good, if it hasn't been kneaded by an angel, like the baker's of Saint Matthieu."

There was something too "fey" to be angelic in the laughing, upturned face; nor, evidently, was she looking for the hackneyed compliment which Dallas knew better than to pay her.

Instead, he was avowing himself ready even for Mandé's buckwheats smothered in maple-sirup; how much more for mademoiselle's handiwork! "For the buckwheat-cakes have grown slightly monotonous; even that wonderful dish of the nursery jingle would, if set before the king too often, don't you know?"

Françoise did know—Mother Goose having been instrumental in her early English education. But she was vehement in defense of the buckwheat, which the first Acadians had brought with them from Bretagne. Yet monsieur, look

you, must not suppose there is nothing else that will flourish here: this very autumn, *tchi voine*, bonhomme Pacifique expects to gather in, besides potatoes, four or five hundred bushels of *nevaux*—"*et p'is il tchuillera du blédad, de l'aouen*—"

Françoise had dropped into French, in her eagerness, as a certain personage known to fame dropped into poetry; but she stopped suddenly, seeing the blank of her companion's face.

"Ah, bah!" she said, with a shrug; "monsieur is like Marie, he can understand no French but of the books. Monsieur will not get that, among *nous autres acadiens*. Unless sometimes from the old books, indeed: we broke off with the Grand Monarque."

It was rather a matter-of-fact conversation, to be carried on under the stars and the palpitating northern lights; but grain, and turnips even, may borrow interest from a pair of red lips and two bright eyes. Dallas Fraser was impatient enough of the interruption, when he saw Marie come sauntering down toward them, by the path the turf began to show for these few days of camping here.

Françoise did not see—her back was toward the path.

"Let us go and superintend our *chef* Mandé," Dallas proposed, quickly. "It will never do to have that bread spoiled in the baking. Come;

you owe it to me not to balk me of the promised feast."

He strolled off leisurely with her, crossing the open space in a direction not to face Marie. "Mrs. Grundy," he was calling her to himself, honestly forgetting that it was half for the sake of her bright eyes that he had found the Dallas kinship so easy to trace on shipboard, and the De Landremont house quite in the road of his Canadian tour.

Marie stood looking after them with a faint smile, recognizing his sudden shortness of vision. There was no bitterness in the smile, only a little bland cynicism.

So Miss Innocence was quite capable of her own bit of flirtation?—and could be trusted, unassisted, to forget her monsieur le docteur who reminded her so much of "Uncle Frank!"

"We are all alike, we women," Marie was saying to herself, half scornful, half complacent. "And a good thing, too—for the women. But not for the John Kendals, when once in a while a John Kendal occurs. Ah, bah! what does it matter?—the John Kendals have the best of life, after all; they carve out their own way, and, whether they succeed or fail, they have *lived.* While we women—oh, we women think we take our fate in our own hands! And if we do, once

in a way, we can't keep hold of it; we're afraid or ashamed to keep hold of it, and so we let it drop out of our slack grasp."

She let her hands fall slowly apart before her, with a gesture of surrender. And then she laughed a little, mockingly.

"Let it drop? Ah, but he will think they grasp at his fast enough, now that his are no longer empty and poor. But must he think so? I am no fool, to play my part so ill as that. If I can not manage better than that, I might as well still be silly little Mary Smith, as she was before these dozen years were her schoolmasters to train her into Marie de Landremont. And even silly little Mary Smith was not so silly as that. No, no; it *shall* go well."

The blood had come back to her cheeks, the sparkle to her eyes, as she strolled on into the light from a great fire of logs piled in the midst of the encampment. It threw a ruddy glow far round, beyond which the woodland belt loomed the darker from the contrast, now that the aurora was beginning to flicker out. But in the center, where the brightness was concentrated, a small figure went flitting to and fro, about the wide-mouthed oven.

The red-hot coals from the huge fire had been heaped inside it, and then raked out again, and the bread—Frank's bread—put in to bake. And

now it was drawn out, a very triumph of lightness and whiteness and brown-crustiness.

The first bit must be broken off for Dallas.

He took it quite gravely, and began to munch like a hungry schoolboy, declaring that never was there bread like this before.

Frank stood and watched him with an air of satisfaction, her hands folded placidly before her.

"*Je sus ben benaise,*" she said, complacently. "It might have been baked *pas léong assiz,* you know; or overbaked—"

"Hard as a stone? Yes, I know. Will you always be so good to me, mademoiselle? When I ask you for bread, will you never give me a stone?"

XI.

"Strawberry-leaves and May-dew
In brisk morning air,
Strawberry-leaves and May-dew
Make maidens fair."

"COMMENT-ÇE vous portez 'hord'hui?" cried the girl, standing still with a courtesy, and a laugh in her blue eyes.

It was far up the bend of the stream. Dallas Fraser, paddling along its course, and expecting

to bring back a string of breakfast trout, had looked for nothing better lying in wait for him. And so the girl was a surprise.

Not that she had been lying in wait for him; she was as much taken by surprise as he.

"It is the last morning," she said, half apologetically. "And it is a shame to lose so much of the bright day as they do, Marie and the rest. I stole out for a long ramble. I shall be back before they are half ready for breakfast."

"Not sleepless, eh, mademoiselle, and tired of the rude camp-life?"

"Me, I always sleep like a sabot. And tired of camp-life in a week? Yes, when the week of three Thursdays is come. Softly, monsieur, you will have the canoe aground."

"Can't be helped," he asserted, running it into the bit of bank where she was standing. "There is a mysterious magnetic current hereabout; my compass is all astray; no use in trying to steer away. No, you don't understand, not being nautical. But it's very easily explained. Not while you stand aloof there; you must come into the canoe. No, you will never get that dead trail of bramble disentangled from your dress without my help. And that's a perfectly impervious thicket just beyond you. You will have to go back the way you came, unless you take to the canoe."

She let him hand her in: how could she help

it, with the sun slanting over the freshening water running in blue and gold and airy lines of foam where the breeze strikes it; and the green woods crowding down to the very brink, where they can not stop themselves before a branch trails here and there upon the swaying current?

And there is the praiseworthy sense of being up and doing, while the tents behind are plunged in drowsiness. Nothing could be more meritorious in the eyes of the whole camp, than this laying up of silver treasure against their wakening. At one time, Dallas was catching the trout as fast as he could drop his flies upon the water.

Yet the treasure did not seem to accumulate so very rapidly. Dallas was puzzled—until, turning suddenly, he caught Françoise in the act of leaning softly over the water, letting a young quarter-of-a-pounder flash, with a lively flick of his tail through her slim fingers, back into his element.

"Frank!"

In his angry astonishment, he does not know how he has called her.

"Ah, par exemple!" she says, looking straight at him with a defiant shrug, her eyes flashing, her color rising.

She is taking it so seriously, that Dallas laughs outright.

"Are you furthering sport? Have your

boasted trout-streams so few fish, that you are providing me with the same to take over and over again? That may be fun to you, but I doubt it is to the trout."

She shrugs her shoulder again.

"Best leave the trout and me to arrange that. All you have to do is to catch them. You bade me take care of them. I am doing it, you see. You know our saying, 'Where every one minds one's affairs, the cows are well kept.'"

"And where is that? In this lucky country?"

"But no!" She shakes her head at him gayly. "In the *pays de sapience:* that must be Normandy, you know, where I get my yellow head. Though after all I am less normande than bretonne."

"And American, too? At least, I have heard your sister speak as if she were at home in the States."

"Marie is different." She did not explain how, but went on presently:

"Mamma was born in the States, in St. Louis, where Marie went to school. But then, all mamma's people were Acadian, carried by the English ships down into les Louisianes, at the time of the dispersal, when all Evangéline's people were scattered to the winds along the coast. The Thibodeaux—(I've heard a parish down there still

bears that name)—some of them went higher up the great river, to the new settlement at St. Louis, to which, then, les Louisianes stretched up. Oh, grandmamma has told me all about it. She wished to show me how I must be all acadienne, after all. And the Thibodeaux never altogether lost sight of their kindred here. When mamma was quite a young girl, she came and spent a summer on the St. John; most of it with grandmamma. It was very gay that summer in the old house; it must have been like this."

Dallas Fraser checked a smile. He had found it dull enough there at the house. "But then there was the Thibodeaux-de-Landremont romance going on," he said, tentatively.

That was true enough; but so much of it as Frank knew she was silent upon: otherwise, she was chattering away freely enough. Dallas discovered that she believed in the reality of the poet's Evangéline, and was ready to show him at home, as proof, a prose French version of the poem, which had belonged to grandmamma. "And Evangéline—*pas si bête, moi!*—Evangéline, to run over the universe after a Gabriel who for his part was amusing himself very well with his buying and his selling, and put her in the rank of forgotten sins, to be recalled on his death-bed! Though grandmamma would never have let me say that!"

She ended with a smile and a half sigh, remembering how little grandmamma had ever let her say. But that she did not add; though it did not occur to her how freely already she was talking to this stranger.

It did not occur to her that he was a stranger; with such responsive good-fellowship was he listening, and looking at her in his eager way, as he let the canoe drift with the stream.

It is so easy to drift, without a thought of the way back; without a thought of whither one is being borne on in the sunshine, when the trees and blossoming shrubs are alike at every bend, and the same ferns and mosses stoop down for the clear brown ripple to wash through them; and when one is looking into a pair of eyes as blue and bright as the morning.

It was just then that the current twisted the canoe round unawares into the branching stream that ran dancing and dimpling mischievously away with these careless *voyageurs*, into the very heart of the wood.

XII.

"Song-birds of passage, days of youth."

THE merry, dimpling, mischievous stream might do what it would with them both: neither Françoise nor Dallas was heeding the way. When they came to the forks, and the current twisted them round, he was telling her of sailing up the great sea-lochs at home.

"In England?"

"What, you take me for a southron, with my Scottish name, forbye my gude Scots tongue?"

"*Mais oui*, I took you for the rich, rich English cousin—"

Dallas laughed outright; but the girl saw nothing either to laugh at, or to be embarrassed by. She sat trailing her hand in the water, looking at him with a puzzled air, until he had explained.

"It is not that I *am*, but that I *had*, a rich, rich English cousin. Otherwise I should have had no more gear than the unlucky Master of Ravenswood, without a Caleb Balderstone to keep up the credit of the house. And being only a cousin, and so with no great expectations, I had, don't you know, to make my own way in the world."

"By way of the sea-lochs?" she inquired, mischievously.

"That was earlier. I dare say the roughing it helped to train me in the way I—rather stumbled into than chose. You see, I chanced to be abroad—"

"Oh, yes, I know, making the Grand Tour," Frank put in, with a wise nod. She remembered reading about the Grand Tour in that old-time diary which grandmamma had laid hands on, as she told Kendal.

Dallas stared, and then he laughed.

"It was not exactly the grand tour; rather, a tramp abroad. I was doing it on foot, knapsack on back, and sometimes a forced march and a hungry one, if a lean purse made half-rations: when I chanced to stumble on the genuine thing, the knapsack-and-forced-march gentry. It was on the borders of the inexpressible Turk, down by Bosnia and Herzegovina, where all was in the tumult of war. And so I—"

Frank's dripping hand flashed up out of the water and clasped the other eagerly.

"You became a soldier!"

A soldier, a hero, she might have said; her eyes spoke for her.

Dallas reddened, and threw her a disconcerted glance.

"I became—a newspaper correspondent."

"Oh!" Her face fell.

Dallas's, also. He paddled on without speaking, staring dully down into the water for one moment of profound discouragement, before he plucked up heart of grace to prove to her that newspaper correspondents can be heroes as well as soldiers.

He did not take himself and his own exploits for the text of his proof; it was clear that he presently forgot himself, in telling of the daring of a certain well-known countryman of his. It was not his fault if the girl, listening eager-eyed, and with the quick blood flickering in her cheeks, saw two bold adventurers where the story-teller named but one.

She drew a long, deep breath, when they reached that crest of the Balkans, and saw the battle going on beneath them, in the mountain mists.

"Oh, and is *that* being a newspaper correspondent? and I who thought you must be a soldier to be a hero! Eh, you must be as brave—"

He colored high.

"'I the little hero of each tale?' But I was not speaking of myself."

She nodded at him confidently.

"As if I did not know; as if I could not tell! *Et p'is?*—go on!" impatient of the interruption.

It is not in man, from Othello's day to Dallas Fraser's, to tell a story the more coldly because a Desdemona listens :

> "'She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
> And I loved her that she did pity them,'"

Dallas presently caught himself saying, under his breath.

"What is that, Mr. Fraser? Tell me again. I won't lose anything that happened."

He looked at her with a quizzical gleam in his eyes, half laughter, half embarrassment.

"But I am not at all sure it happened—the first part of it, I mean."

"Is it that you have been telling me something that did not actually happen? And I listening and believing all, trying of all my best to remember the vatz, and niks, and nitzas of those dreadful names!"

"Will you really remember anything about them and me?" he cried. "May I, indeed, hope you will not forget me altogether?"

"Monsieur took care to prevent that, the first time we met," she said, dryly.

She caught hold of the chain about her throat, and drew out a round and shining something which had been hidden under her kerchief's folds.

"Monsieur remembers this?"

He stared at the coin; then, with a rush of blood to his face, put out his hand confusedly.

"Give it me. How shall I ever explain? What a fool, what a fool I was! and that you should keep the remembrance of my folly like that! No, you *must* give it back."

For she was slowly settling it again into its hiding-place under the white muslin folds.

She shook her head at him, laughing.

"Folly? But why should it have been folly? Unless, indeed, a sixpence might have done?"

"Frank!"

The hurt tone checked her at once. She just touched his sleeve lightly, with a friendly nod.

"But I won't have a sixpence instead of it. I won't have anything but just this that you have given me. I mean to keep it, and wear it, since it has the most convenient hole to hold my bit of chain."

After all, need he feel unalloyed annoyance that she wore his gift? It was half doubtfully that he said again:

"I wish you would let me have it back."

But he seemed to have lost her attention. She was glancing about her; the sun looked higher than it should be, as it filtered through the branches overhead.

"We certainly have come too far. I am

afraid your trout will hardly be for breakfast. We must turn."

What can be easier? The stream was running merrily, hurrying them along. When, on a sudden, the girl turned on Dallas with a sharp ring in her voice:

"The alders! We never came this way."

There they are, the alders: no longer a rolled edge along the border of the river; but a choking brake, laying branches low upon the glossy surface, leaning together across it.

Back the canoe went, to avoid them; up and down another silvery loop: presently entangled in just such another network.

But there was the tinkle of clear water ahead: the day had grown so still, it could be heard.

"The river is calling to us," Dallas said, cheerily. "We'll try if this branch is a guide to it."

Not a very willing guide, apparently; thrusting obstacles of overlapping boughs in the way, until the two voyagers had to lean low in the canoe, abandon pole and paddle, and grope through the green smother by catching at the boughs overhead, and so pulling themselves along.

When with the last pull they shot out into the widened stream rushing clear and free over its rocky bed, the sense of relief was so great that it left them leisure to discover it was long past

breakfast-time, and nothing could be better than a trout broiled on the pebbly beach. Françoise must heap a platter of green leaves with fragrant red wild berries on the border of the wood. "Now, if we had that plump wild pigeon—"

But Françoise put herself between Dallas and the canoe, in the bottom of which lay his gun.

"It is not loaded? I am glad. I won't have the birds shot. If we only had some tea, now, to keep it from being a dry *repas de brebis!*"

There was the river-water, amber-clear, and sparkling over the pebbles in a rift of sunshine. Elsewhere the trees put their heads together to shut the two in, as if to make a happy secret of the hour that went by so fast.

But, also, they shut out the sky; there was no hint of how the day was changing, until a mutter of thunder told it.

Françoise paled a little at the sound. "*Ça m'apeurit!*" she said, startled into forgetting her English—"*Ça m'apeurit!*"

"The thunder? The only danger is of a wetting. That is bad enough for you. And see, here comes the first sharp patter on the leaves overhead. It is well that they are so thick. But we must find better shelter than this."

Happily it was not far to seek, when they pushed into the brushwood—a great, hollow

cedar, aged as if it might have been one of those into which the Indian wizard Glooscap metamorphosed the two brothers who came begging from him length of days and strength and stature, all for themselves, and not to serve their fellow-men. This cedar served Françoise with a sort of sentry-box refuge now, as Dallas told her. He stood leaning against the trunk, speaking to her encouragingly from time to time, when there was a lull in the fury of the storm.

"This is pretty well in its way. But if you had ever seen what it can do, in this line, in India—"

Crash! went the bushes, a stone's-throw away. Frank clasped her hands and leaned forward: was it a tree flung down so close to this? Dallas turned, and stared straight into a pair of black, fiery eyes.

Stared straight into them, before he took in the shaggy black body hurling its cumbrous length over a fallen trunk—tearing through the vines, crashing down the branches; his snarling lip curled up over the sharp white teeth, his hoarse bear's growl thrilling the hush.

There is not a moment. Dallas reaches out mechanically for his shot-gun leaning against the tree, unloaded as it is.

Not a moment; but, when he turns again to fling himself forward between the brute and

Françoise in her hiding-place, she stands before him.

"Frank!"

A thunder-crash, that deadens his hoarse cry; a lightning-glare, tearing the very heavens in two, and kindling all the glooming forest with a lurid glow, against which trunk and twig stand out in black, and the great black brute—

The great black brute is cowering for fear; like a whipped hound, is slinking away through the underbrush: as though that grand outburst of wrathful Nature were planned for his own individual confusion.

And Françoise and Dallas stood clasping hands, as if that outburst were for their own individual salvation.

Without a word. But what need could there be of words between them any more? Dallas seemed to think that there was none, for presently he had her in his arms.

When, glowing with confusion, she made a movement to withdraw herself, he released her at once.

"Sweetheart, I can let you go, because I have you fast! You would have given your life for mine? But don't you know, then, Frank, that yours *is* mine?"

"I—it was only—it was all my fault—" she stammered, blushing painfully. "For I

would not let you load your gun this morning."

He pulled out his powder-flask now, and proceeded to load.

"Not that we will need it again; the very heavens—thank God—" he lifted his hat reverently—"fought for us. Master Bruin will never venture to show his snarling black muzzle in this spot again."

He laughed a little unsteadily. "It's a case of 'after death the doctor,' with these leaden pills of mine."

The doctor!

Françoise's lips whitened again. She stole a swift, guilty glance at this new lover of hers, standing bareheaded in the rain, a glow of triumph about him, a look of success, and confidence in fortune, and will to have his own way.

"I have you fast."

But he did not repeat it; and if, in the hours that followed, he told her he loved her, it was only by a glance, or a thrill in some commonplace word. These, while they spoke plainly enough, need not frighten the poor little fluttered girl with pressing for an answer.

The storm soon raved itself out; the sun, shining toward its setting, beamed cheerfully upon the twisting streams that rushed on from their suddenly overflowing springs. The pebbled sand-

bars, the wide beaches, were all hidden now; Françoise and Dallas might float over them, without a recognition of the shallows which this morning had threatened the canoe with grounding. When the forest-ways are water-ways, a deluge like this is sure to confuse them.

Here and there the foliage made a dense roof overhead, shutting out the sun that might have given them some guidance as to the direction of the camp. But then, as Frank pointed out, his guidance was superfluous while the trees by the way gave them so many hints—the thickest moss upon the north side of the trunks, the heaviest spruce-boughs always on the south.

They were hints which could not always be followed, however: the course of the streams often forbidding. For the canoe was not to be abandoned, even when now and again the hoarse brawling of a rapid threatened to stop the way. Then Dallas found the girl fearless and cool, and ready to do her part in steering, paddling quietly in the stern, while in the bow the skilled canoer was free to watch the current, his paddle grasped in his two hands, the blade straight under water, turned rudder-like now this way and now that. The water curling alongside, the handful of diamond-spray flung glittering into the sunshine, the giddy descent, and triumph of the floating into a smooth stretch beyond: the girl was glowing and

sparkling with it all, and quite forgetting everything except the present moment.

"We shall come upon the camp itself presently, without knowing it," Dallas declared, gayly, determined not to betray his anxiety at the situation. "It would be too bad to take them unawares, in the midst of discussing us and our escapade; *les absens ont toujours tort*, you know. So I am going to fire a blank cartridge now and then, as our herald."

Would it be answered? It was a forlorn hope; and half a dozen times it failed.

But on the seventh, there was a faint, far-away reverberation; it might have been an echo, but an Irish one, that gave a cheery answer.

When it was repeated again and yet again, the canoe was turned and headed for the sound; although the sun pointed out the fact that it was straight away from the direction in which the camp ought to lie.

XIII.

"Hélas, je sais un chant d'amour
Triste ou gai tour à tour—
Ce chant, qui de mon cœur s'élève,
D'où vient qu'en pleurant je l'achève?"

YONDER, on the green bank, it is not the usual cozy cottage of the pioneer *habitant*, that stands with gayly paneled doors and sloping whitewashed roofs; but the log-cabin of a lumber-camp, with wooden table nailed to the floor, and bunk-like beds against the wall. In one of these, on a mattress of springy spruce-boughs, was lying a lumberman with a leg fractured by the falling of a tree; waiting, in what patience he might, for the doctor who had been sent for. His more patient wife was with him, and there was nothing for any one else to do. So Françoise wandered out-of-doors; smiling a little, tremulously, to herself, as she reflected that, in Dr. Kendal's absence, the doctor must be the one down Tobique-way, who, according to bonhomme Pacifique, sends his patients so promptly on the short-cut into the other world.

Far more desirable than the inside of the cabin, was the outside, with the softest of evening winds

blowing, and the moon throwing its faint white light into the very midst of the sunset still glimmering on the lake.

It is a bit of winding water that well deserves its flowing Indian name, as it bends and turns between the gaps of ferny hills stripped bare of timber by the lumbermen. Just here, a ledge of broken rock runs out into the water, offering Françoise an elbow-chair, with the gleaming ripple twinkling at her feet. She thought she was well hidden there; until at the sound of her own name she turned—to find Dallas leaning with arms folded on the high back of her chair.

"I have been looking for you every—"

He broke off; surely there were tears in the eyes slowly averted from him?

"Frank, you are not frightened?—you are not unhappy? This is a safe bield until they come for us: which they may any hour, now that a messenger is gone to the camp. And that is a canny gudewife in yonder, who will have you in charge until your friends are here."

She answered nothing. Perhaps she was trying to steady her voice.

It did not help her, that he swung himself over the ledge and stood beside her.

"Sweetheart, look up! Why do you turn from me? Are you angry with me for what I said to you awhile ago?"

She did look up now, not understanding. "Awhile ago?"

He laughed rather unsteadily.

"Do we keep up the French fashions here in the forest? Ought I to wait for some one to speak for me? Can I not say, in the straightforward Saxon way: Frank, I love you; be my wife!"

The words might seem confident; the voice was not, the eyes were not, though he had taken her hands masterfully in his.

She hardly heard him. She was not, indeed, thinking of him.

She had come out here to fight her battle by herself: that battle which her mother had given up in a cowardly fashion Françoise had so scorned.

Her lip curled now; but it was in scorn of herself, not of her mother. "'Blood can not lie,' grandmamma always said—"

She turned to Dallas in a passion of haste, snatching her hands away.

"I am not going back to the camp. I am going home to my mother. My mother! She can understand, she can forgive."

"Frank—Frank, my darling—"

She had started to her feet; her face was white, her whole frame was in a quiver.

"No—not that, not that! It can not matter to you long. For what am I but a poor little,

ignorant girl, unfit— But I will go back to my mother. *She* will understand."

She moved away sharply, as if to seek her mother that same moment. She pushed past Dallas, and round beyond the elbow of that ledge of rock.

In her hurry to escape—not from Dallas only, but from herself, ready enough to play the traitor and yield to him—it did not work against her, that beyond that ledge they were no longer alone. Three men were coming down the hill that bristled with the ghosts of dead trees, some of them girdled and white as birch-stems, others charred and blackened by old forest-fires.

Foremost was the guide, who stepped out briskly ahead: a grotesque figure, with head and shoulders thrust forward out of the canoe slung on his back for the portage. Behind him tramped the other two men, silently, though side by side.

Frank—picking her way over the stones, with Dallas Fraser following somewhat sulkily behind her, his hands in his pockets, not offering to help her as she turned her back on him—Frank glanced at the two, and saw they were not lumbermen. The nearest one was a stranger to her; the other, with the wallet across his shoulder, was probably the doctor from down Tobique-way? But surely this man was taller, broader—

"Dr. Kendal!" she cried out suddenly.

He looked as if he could not trust his eyes.

Yet, after all, there was no one like Françoise.

He stood still, and sent the guide on with a hasty—

"Tell Laforest I will be with him presently."

Then he turned to the girl.

She put out both her hands to him; laughing with the sound of tears in her voice, and a strange, unmirthful look on her white face. There was light enough yet in the sky shining down on them to show him that.

"What has happened?" he asked her eagerly.

But for a shade of anxiety for the look on her face, his own was beaming, eager; in his eyes a gladness, almost a triumph, new to her. He glanced at Dallas Fraser; it was easy to see he found him in the way, though he tried not to show it, as Françoise mentioned Mr. Fraser's name, and hurriedly sketched the day's adventures.

The stranger stood by listening, and looking at the girl somewhat intently while she was speaking. When Kendal would have drawn him into the conversation, he stopped him with a warning hand upon his shoulder.

But when she had finished, the stranger him-

self came a step nearer, and held out his hand to Fraser with bluff heartiness.

"No doubt my little maid has been properly grateful to Mr. Fraser; but she must let me add my thanks for losing the way, and so bringing Frank to meet me here."

"Frank?"—She was staring at him, her eyes rounded, her lips parted.

With a glad cry she sprang into his arms, held out for her.

"Uncle Frank! Can it possibly be Uncle Frank?"

"Can it possibly be any one else for my little maid? Or how many knights-errant has she roaming through the woods in search of her?"

She was sure of Uncle Frank now, when he mocked at her gayly, as in the old days; and she locked her hands over his arm, while the four moved on in the direction of the cottage.

After all, the years had wrought less change in carrying the man from the edge of the forties into the fifties, than they had with the girl. They had blurred the likeness between the two Franks, which now was little more than a blondness brought down from a common Norman inheritance. Françoise's childish remembrance of him began to come back vividly, as they sauntered on together.

Kendal and Dallas were not sauntering; so

that these two behind were presently *tête-à-tête*. As soon as De Landremont perceived this, he grew graver.

"Little maid, why should I wait for a more convenient opportunity to disabuse you of an impression which my friend Kendal tells me has been rankling in your small breast almost ever since you and I parted? It is old Marguite who has put it there. The mother and I are good friends enough, little maid—not at all the enemies Marguite would make us out."

"You are so good, Uncle Frank!"

"And the mother so—? No, no, that won't quite do. Marguite, I see, has been representing me as a suffering victim. But let me tell you, child, I've been my own worst enemy; and in taking Jean, instead of me, little Anne—"

"Broke her word and your heart," Françoise said impetuously, hanging her head as if the shame of the confession were her own.

"Neither the one nor the other: 'Men have died and worms have eaten them—' you know enough English to fill out the rest of that truism? Little Anne's word to me was broken long before, when her people overruled her with a high hand, and married her off to Smith's money-bags. Afterward, when my mother fancied the rich young widow would make even a better match for me than the little Thibodeau would have been, and

brought her to revisit us, it was not to be supposed that the old pledge would hold, however it might in my mother's imagination and Marguite's. This time she met Jean, who before had been away at college; for you know he was younger than I. And just as I flattered myself I was winning her— I was disappointed at the time," he broke off. "Furiously disappointed at the time, Frank, I own it to you; I flung away from home in an angry outburst my mother never forgot. But disappointed is the word, *not* broken-hearted. And Anne was right: Jean's love was better worth her having than such a thing as mine. A paltry thing, that could not even keep me from going wrong, with the memory of a sweet woman like that."

He had been speaking in a superficial, almost careless way, which seemed in keeping with the whole man. Now, as if something deeper stirred for a breathing-space the shallow nature, his voice fell so that the girl pressed his arm.

"I am sure you did not go far wrong, Uncle Frank."

He started a little, and brought his absent gaze back from the wooded horizon to the small, fair head almost nestling against him.

"Farther than I would have you know of, child. But you must understand, once for all (for I've come many a mile now that you should under-

stand it), that it was never little Anne's shortcoming that drove me there. And, on the other hand, it was not my fault," he added, "that my mother quarreled with Jean. I was off before that. There must have been some *coureur des bois* away back in those early Acadian days; some wildness of the blood that flowed in through the La Tour veins to us De Landremonts. For I was never quite content until I had broken bonds, away out of hearing of a sound from home. The gold-fever was then at its height, and rumors of the California wonders had reached even here. It was not the gold, but the novelty of it all, that intoxicated me. I went out there; but had drifted half-way East at the time the war between the States broke out—"

"Oh, I remember, Uncle Frank! Just after it was all over, you came to us at Liverpool: small as I was, I can recollect your battle-stories and adventures. I used to wonder why you didn't still wear a sword, and pistols in your boots, as you told us the—what did you call them?—bushwhackers!—did. Oh, you see I have forgotten nothing!"

"Remembering so much, little maid, you ought to remember more: that the mother and I met as sister and brother then, and not as enemies. It was because we did so meet, that my mother refused to receive me at home afterward.

She had quarreled with Jean and his wife on my account: she could not forgive me for deserting my own standard; and that I should have cared to fight in a war between the States—should actually have entered the army in Missouri, Anne Thibodeau's old home—it was altogether an offense so great, that nothing would atone, but my turning my back on what she called the Madame Jean faction."

"Poor grandmamma!" the girl said, softly.

De Landremont stopped, and looked at her.

"Eh? Well, perhaps you are right. But I had forgotten to be sorry for her. I had been away so long, it only needed that bitter letter of hers, received at Liverpool, to drive me out a wanderer again. And whether I should ever have come back, if I had not met my old friend Kendal the other day in St. Louis—"

"Your—old—friend? And he heard me speak of Uncle Frank, and never told me that he knew him!"

"He never knew me as De Landremont. When first I went away, in my disgust I left behind me everything that bound me to the past. We fought shoulder to shoulder through a long campaign, and he knew nothing earlier in my life than its California episode. From what he heard from you and others here, he began to sus-

pect the identity of Frank Latour with Frank La Tour de Landremont; and from that moment he set to work to trace me through old army friends. The other day—that is, ten days or two weeks ago—business of his own, in connection with getting back his confiscated estate, took him to St. Louis, where I came to meet him, having heard of his search for me. He told me something of his story; and perhaps I guessed at more, my little maid," De Landremont added, smiling down on her significantly. "It was then that I learned from him all about this unfortunate misconception of yours; and I thought the shortest way to lay that ugly bogey forever, was just to come back with him."

"Uncle Frank, O Uncle Frank, if you had come back to grandmamma before it was too late!"

How the child must have loved the grandmother! She was so white, and the small hands holding by his arm shook so! De Landremont was touched by her agitation.

"But it would always have been too late, little maid. My poor dear mother—rest her soul!" he put in piously—"would have nothing by halves. To come back and settle down in the house she had built for me on a strip of the old farm; to speculate a trifle in lumber; to dabble a little in politics; to be returned, perhaps, as French mem

ber of the provincial Parliament—such a career, Heaven save the mark!—in place of that of cattle-king, silver-king, American citizen, and might-be senator—and who knows what thereafter, if Jack of clubs should turn out the right bower? Eh, little maid, I'm afraid you don't quite understand," he said, catching her puzzled glance. "But this you will: that even the Madame Jean affair would have been easier for the dear old mother to forgive, than my bright little western American wife and couple of small native Americans that are stubborn facts not to be blinked. You must make acquaintance with them all, one of these days, my little maid of Acadie."

Frank did not answer. Her heart was too full. She seemed to be looking at that lowly grave on the hill-side. If he had come back to see that—to cast himself face downward on the sod, praying, striving that some breath of his loving duty might yet reach his mother in the place of shades!

That, she could have understood: not this breezy, easy-going man of the world, with his mild regrets for what had happened, and his so ready owning to faults, that confession and atonement seemed much the same thing in his mind.

And for years she had been making a tragedy out of this comedy!

"Poor grandmamma!" she said to herself again.

She was not listening to De Landremont's next words; which, indeed, were rather in pursuance of his own train of thought than for her. Jean's family should have it all—the old home-place, the estate which in François de Landremont's enlarged vision was the merest bagatelle. Françoise, stumbling on at his side, and thinking over and over, "Poor grandmamma!" was brought back to the present by the voice of Dallas Fraser, who stood still, a few yards in advance.

"That black streak on the lake is a canoe, and that speck farther over yonder is another. Can the messenger I sent have come already upon a party in search of us?"

A few moments, and the foremost of the canoes had run up to the bank, and the guide was helping his one passenger ashore.

"Marie!"

Françoise ran forward, glad for an instant to escape from the eyes of the men, who followed more slowly.

"Marie! I did not think you would come so soon."

"My dear child! it has been long enough to me, I can assure you. How much longer it might have been, if we had not, in our wandering search for you, met your messenger—"

Françoise had drawn her forward.

"Uncle Frank—Dr. Kendal—this is my sister Marie—"

"John!"

It was Marie's voice that cut her short.

With a flutter of her two white hands outstretched, Marie had turned to Kendal.

"John, John, have you forgotten me?"

He stood staring at her, like a man half roused in the midst of a dream.

She was brilliant, there in the waning light; no vision of a dream could be brighter. But what is that to Kendal? Just so a man might look who sees a ghost.

And then she smiled. She was beautiful before; but now her beauty was bewildering. She came a pace nearer to him.

"Have you never a word of welcome for me, John?"

He drew a long, hard breath, passing his hand heavily over his eyes. He never once glanced Françoise's way, though somehow she felt he saw her all the while. He answered slowly:

"How is it you are not dead, Mary? For twelve years you have allowed me to believe you were."

She glanced from him to the bystanders, shrugging her shoulders.

"Can we not wait to go into all that until we are alone?" she said, lowering her voice.

But he answered sternly:

"I have done with secrets. It is late to say it; but at least I will have none of them now. If you are my wife—"

Marie—her face glowing and brilliant with what old Marguite called her "*beauté du jeoble*," which made naught of those twelve years, and changed her almost into the girl of barely seventeen, whom Kendal well remembered—Marie was turning now from Kendal to where Françoise and Dallas had drawn insensibly together, standing on the outside of this scene; and De Landremont, not without a certain twinkle of expectancy in his eyes, as at the anticipated hit of a well-known actress in a new *rôle*, was looking curiously over Françoise's shoulder.

"Ah, is that you, monsieur François?" Marie nodded at him gayly. "I always knew some day you would reappear. The hour for *les revenants*, is it not so? Though I planned my coming back from the dead after a more romantic fashion, befitting the old story," she said, her eyes alive with mocking spirits. "Only, you see, John *will* bring me down to the blunt facts. When I proposed to mamma to come back from Europe for Frank, instead of sending for her, it was because the child's letters were full of a cer-

tain Dr. John Kendal, of whom I had lost sight, but whom I was sure I recognized, though I had not seen him since my school-girl days in St. Louis. I fancied if we met again, it might be as old friends—lovers, perhaps—"

The dark look on Kendal's face cut her short.

"Only, you see—" she said again, "John will bring me down to the blunt fact that every man has a skeleton in his closet. I present you to John's."

She made a sweeping courtesy as she spoke. "He thought it was laid away underground. Perhaps he has told you, Frank, of his foolish marriage with a school-girl, when he was a young medical student in St. Louis, on the eve of making his way South into the army? Oh, it was foolish, very. I think, even at such an age, I should have seen that, if it had not been for my romantic Elise (my maid, you know, Frank), who aided and abetted the whole affair. I wrote you what I thought of it, you remember, John, when I lay, as every one believed, ill unto death, a few months later."

"I remember." Kendal's face was stern and set. That death-bed letter was safe never to be forgotten. There were sentences in it which he could have repeated, word for word, even now: "It is well I am dying—wretched girl, trapped into a marriage that can mean nothing but mis-

ery! You were older than I: you should have known better. Perhaps you did know, John Kendal. Perhaps, bent as you were on going South, you counted on my fortune when your own should be confiscated? And now my guardian has lost mine for me—and it is as well I am dying—"

"It was a lie, then!" Kendal said between his set teeth.

"Yes." Marie put up a deprecating hand. "But not mine, John. You remember Elise? She is still with me; such a clever soul— But too clever for once," she corrected herself. "You see, she was romantic, as I said: she pictured to herself the terrible suspense the poor young gentleman would have to bear, and the months and months before another letter could get through the lines to him. And so, when the opportunity came to send this one, and I was lying between life and death, she added her little postscript, which said this was the last day of her poor young lady's life, and the dear angel's last words were to send monsieur this lock of her beautiful hair."

Marie said it with a mocking ring in her voice, which showed she was quoting Elise.

"And so I died; and then I went abroad. For one must die, must not one, to go to paradise? Mamma and my good step-father, Frank's

father (you never heard me speak of them, John, for my Smith kindred had frightened me with that bogey of a step-father), sent for me to Europe when my fortune was lost; and of course such a prospect was enough to keep a girl from dying outright."

There was an utter silence for a moment.

Marie broke it, turning, with one of her charming smiles, to Kendal.

"Have I sinned past forgiveness, John? The doing of it was not mine. As for the undoing—Elise never told me of her postscript until we were on the other side of the ocean. And then I had lost all trace of you. The first I heard, you had been captured on the battle-field; imprisoned, I could not tell where. I was young and inexperienced; poor Elise was always at my elbow, begging me not to betray her and have her sent adrift into the world. When at last Frank, writing freely to me, after the old lady's death, often mentioned you, it was I who planned that we should come for the child ourselves, instead of sending for her. I thought I should see for myself if it were really John!"

She had put her hands together, looking up at him pleadingly.

But Kendal's face was set as a flint.

"And as a preliminary step," he said—"it was you, then, who had the papers sent me, show-

ing that by a little effort on my part I could recover my lost fortune? I am sorry I could not have guessed the sender. I am sorry my journey has been successful. It was nothing to you that I should chafe myself near to death in prison—that, escaping to Canada just before the war ended, I should spend weary years in poverty and friendlessness. But as soon as the tide of fortune turns—"

"Mais, monsieur le docteur, mon huomme—"

The voice behind him, breaking in on him, was that of Laforest's patient wife.

"My man is restless, monsieur; there is no keeping him still since Jean has told him monsieur le docteur is come."

Without a word, Kendal turned on his heel and followed the woman indoors.

No one spoke at first; his swift step echoed in the stillness, on the gravelly slope.

Then Marie, rather pale, but with a resolute gleam in her eyes, faced round on the three standing together.

"You have a homely saying, Françoise, that one may not hope to save the hare and the cabbages. Yet that is what I am going to do," she said, with a gay little nod of defiance to Dame Fortune, who, with a turn of her wheel, had made the task so much more difficult than Marie had expected. "As we are all *en famille*—"

with a covert glance at Dallas Fraser—"I may as well say that, now the *choux* are safe, I shall devote my attention to the *lièvre.*"

De Landremont made an impatient movement.

"Take care what you are about, Marie! Kendal is no dull creature, to be caught in a springe. If you don't know a man when you see one, let me tell you what he is. The bravest comrade a man ever fought side by side with, in the ranks; the gentlest soul to pain and suffering of others; the stoutest heart to bear his own—"

To Frank, half putting out her hand with a rush of sympathy toward the speaker: then letting it fall, in a sudden sense of shame that only through another's witness did she know this friend of hers at last—to Frank, in a vivid flash of memory, came back a certain passage which Kendal himself had read to her one winter evening, out of an old-time book, for which he had sent away. She was startled by Marie's voice demurely taking up De Landremont's tone:

"'A syr Launcelot, ther thou lyest, that were head of all crysten knyghtes! And thou were neuer matched of none erthly knyghtes hands. And thou were the curtoyste knyghte that euer bare shelde. And thou were the truest frend to thy louer that euer bestradde hors, and thou were the truest louer of a synfull man that euer loued

woman. And thou were the kyndest man that euer stroke with swerde. And thou were the mekest man and the gentyllest that euer ete in halle amonge ladyes. And thou were the sternest knyghte to thy mortall foo that euyr put spere in the reyst.'"

"I got it by heart, you see," she added, lightly—"in those old days when I was an apt pupil, and John a young enthusiast, who would have me admire his heroes, not foreseeing he would be dubbed Sir Launcelot himself. But only see, while we stand here romancing, yonder comes the *bateau* across the lake, with Arsène in it!"

On the mention of Arsène, De Landremont strolled down to the bank, half expectant, and more than half glad of the break in a scene which was to him rather embarrassing, though Marie did not seem to find it so.

"Mrs. Osborne is with Arsène; but you see I did not wait for a chaperon," she went on, mockingly, "but hurried on with the guide, when he told me my husband was sent for, to a wounded man here. Perhaps the wounded man will be the better for a nurse as well as a doctor. So I shall stay to see what I can do to help the doctor. —Cousin Dallas, you will take Frank out in the canoe to meet the others, and turn them back with you to the camp. And you can tell them

better than Frank, what has happened : the happy meeting that has taken place ; odd bit of melodrama out of real life. Explain it all for me, there's a good brother."

She broke off abruptly, throwing up her hands with a deprecating gesture, as if she had used that word inadvertently.

And so, indeed, Françoise supposed she had.

But there was a twinkle in Dallas Fraser's eyes, as if he saw through the pretense. He rejoined at once :

"Your brother indeed, if Frank will have it so. She has not told me; though I have asked her, and am still waiting for my answer."

He had turned to Frank, holding out his hand.

When, flushed and downcast, she made no movement to meet it, he took hers with gentle force, and drew it in his arm.

Marie stood and looked at them, a faint smile veiling certain bitter lines about her mouth. Then, "Bless you, my children !" she said, gayly, waving them a stage-benediction ; and flitted from them into the cottage.

For a long moment, Françoise never moved, her eyes fixed on the doorway through which her sister had vanished. Then with a shiver her fingers closed unconsciously on Dallas's arm.

"How can we go away, and leave—them—so? And yet—"

She was thinking of monsieur le docteur. And yet must it not be better she should go?

Dallas decided the question for her.

De Landremont was already paddling off to meet Arsène, in the pirogue which had brought Marie. Without further loss of time, Dallas pushed off his canoe into the water, and lifted Frank in.

"Your sister is a very clever woman, my darling; we must leave it to her. One of these days, sweetheart, you will know it never does to intervene between husband and wife."

Nevertheless, he was very slow in moving off from shore; dipping his paddle idly in the water, and lingering there in full view from the cottage.

Suddenly in the open doorway, with the moonlight shining down on them, and the glow of the hearth-fire making a bright background, Marie and Kendal appeared. She was leaning with one hand on his arm, the other fluttering her handkerchief in gay farewell.

Almost a word had done it.

"That child, John—she stood staring after me as if she expected a bit of spider-and-fly business when I ventured in to you. Can not you manage—(she says you have been so good to

her!)—to give her a cheerful send-off, by way of happy omen? She is just engaged to Dallas Fraser."

So, without word or glance, and with a face as set as death, he followed, and let Marie act her little farce with him by way of puppet.

Would it always be a farce—a tragedy? or a mere comedy of modern life, in which the tragedy is so well masked that no one need suspect the grim traits underneath?

. . . . . .

Out there, before they reach the path of moonlight on the lake, Dallas turns round on Frank.

"It is he who is the hero," he says.

"Head of all crysten knights, and never matched by earthly knight's hands. But, Frank—the truest lover of a sinful man, that ever loved woman!"

A sudden dimness gathers in the girl's eyes; but they do not fall under his own.

Dallas shifts his paddle into his left hand, and reaches out his right for Frank's.

"They'll be upon us in another moment—those people yonder—and yet you have not told me if you love me, Frank?"

How fair she looks, with that soft shining on her bright, uncovered head, as a sudden current sweeps them on into the moon's path. Lighted up so, they are in full view from the other canoes.

Dallas, with an air of disgust, grips his paddle again; and Françoise is half glad of the respite for to-night—until she catches sight of his face.

Then she leans forward slightly, as she trails her hand in the water:

"Have I not, Dallas?" she says.

THE END.