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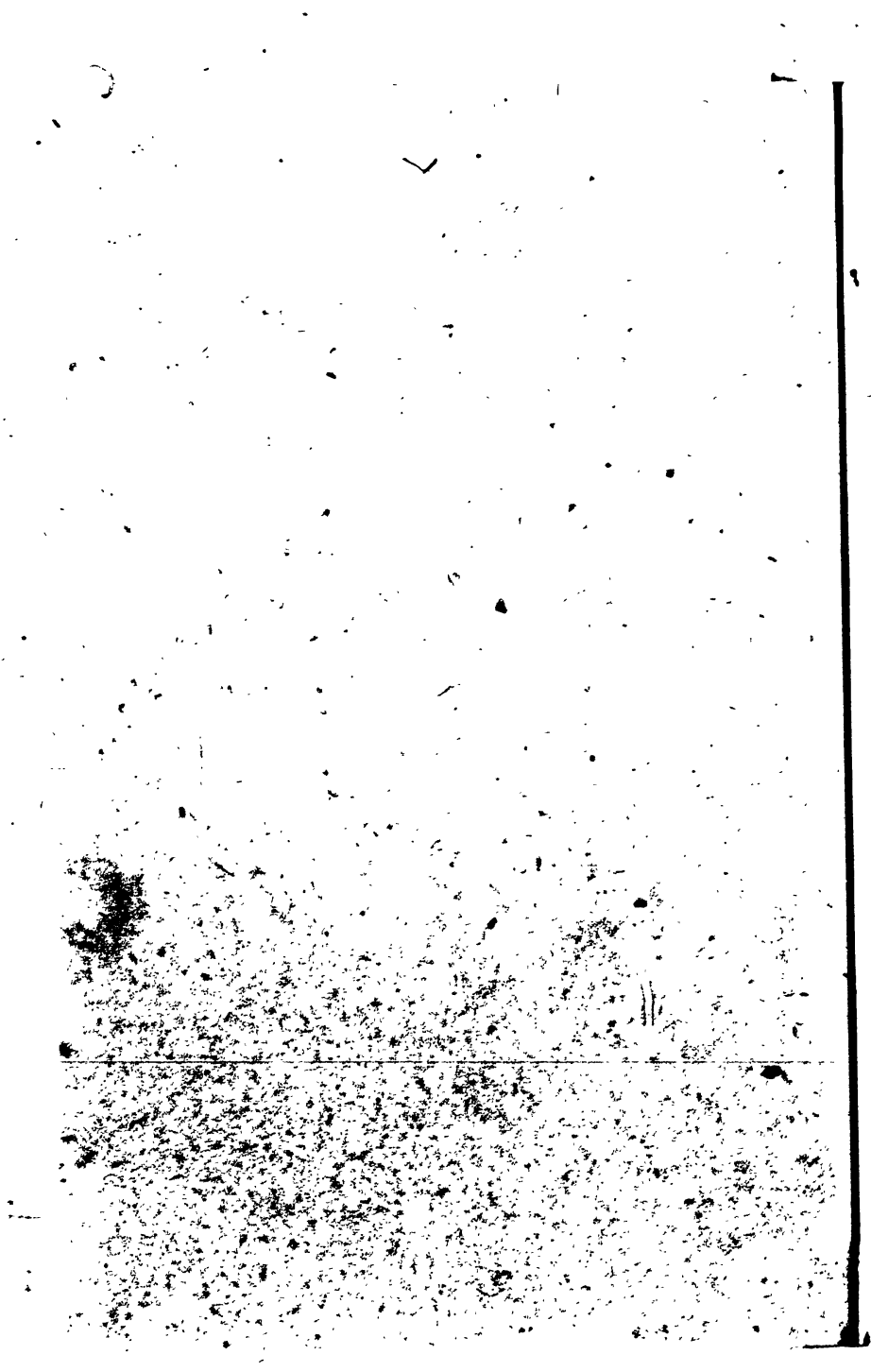
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BORN with a
GOLDEN SPOON

by
Gilbert Parker



New York
Doubleday & McClure Co.
1899



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GOLDEN SPOON*

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Gilbert Parker*



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Doubleday & McClure Co.*

1899

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THE ABSURD ROMANCE OF P'TITE LOUISON

THE five brothers lived with Louison, three miles from Pontiac, and Medallion came to know them first through having sold them, at an auction, a slice of an adjoining farm. He had been invited to their home, intimacy had grown, and afterward, stricken with a severe illness, he had been taken into the household and kept there till he was well again. The night of his arrival, Louison, the sister, stood with a brother on either hand—Octave and Florian—and received him with a courtesy more stately than usual, an expression of the reserve and modesty of her single state. This maidenly dignity was at all times shielded by the five brothers, who treated her with a constant and reverential courtesy. There was something signally suggestive in their homage, and Medallion concluded at last that it was paid not only to the sister but to something that gave her great importance in their eyes.

He puzzled long, and finally decided that Louison had a romance. There was something which suggested it in the way they said "P'tite Louison"; in the manner they avoided all gossip regarding marriages and marriage-feasting; in the way they deferred to her on a question of etiquette (as, for instance, Should the eldest child be given the family name of the wife or a Christian name from her husband's family?) And

P'tite Louison's opinion was accepted instantly as final, with satisfied nods on the part of all the brothers, and with whispers of "How clever! how adorable! such beauty!"

P'tite Louison affected never to hear these remarks, but looked complacently straight before her, stirring the spoon in her cup, or benignly passing the bread and butter. She was quite aware of the homage paid to her, and she gracefully accepted the fact that she was an object of interest.

Medallion had not the heart to laugh at the adoration of the brothers, nor at the outlandish sister, for, though she was angular and sallow and thin, and her hands were large and red, there was a something deep in her eyes, a curious quality in her carriage, commanding respect. She had ruled these brothers, had been worshipped by them, for near half a century, and the romance they had kept alive had produced a grotesque sort of truth and beauty in the admiring "P'tite Louison"—an affectionate name for her greatness, like the "Little Corporal" for Napoleon. She was not little, either, but above the middle height, and her hair was well streaked with gray.

Her manner toward Medallion was not marked by any affectation. She was friendly in a kind, impersonal way, much as a nurse cares for a patient, and she never relaxed a sort of old-fashioned courtesy, which might have been trying in such close quarters, were it not for the real simplicity of the life and the spirit and lightness of their race. One night Florian—there were Florian and Octave and Felix and Isidore and Emile—the eldest, drew Medallion aside from the others, and they walked together by the river. Florian's air suggested confidence and mystery, and soon, with a voice

of hushed suggestion, he told Medallion the romance of P'tite Louison. And each of the brothers at different times during the next fortnight did the same, differing scarcely at all in details or choice of phrase or meaning, and not at all in general facts and essentials. But each, as he ended, made a different exclamation.

"*Voilà!* so sad, so wonderful! She keeps the ring—dear P'tite Louison!" said Florian, the eldest.

"*Alors!* she gives him a legacy in her will! Sweet P'tite Louison," said Octave.

"*Mais!* the governor and the archbishop admire her—P'tite Louison!" said Felix, nodding confidently at Medallion.

"*Bien!* you should see the linen and the petticoats!" said Isidore, the humorous one of the family. "He was great—she was an angel—P'tite Louison!"

"*Attends!* what love! what history! what passion!—the perfect P'tite Louison!" cried Emile, the youngest, the most sentimental. "Ah, Molière!" he added, as if calling on the master to rise and sing the glories of this daughter of romance.

Isidore's tale was after this fashion:

"I ver' well remember the first of it; and the last of it—who can tell? He was an actor—oh, so droll, that! Tall, ver' smârt, and he play in theatre at Montreal. It is in the winter. P'tite Louison visit Montreal. She walk past the theatre and, as she go by, she slip on the snow and fall. Out from a door with a jomp come M'sieu Hadrian, and pick her up. And when he see the purty face of P'tite Louison, his eyes go all afire and he clasp her hand to his breast.

"'Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle!' he say, 'we must meet again!'

"She thank him, and hurry away quick. Next day

we are on the river and P'tite Louison try to do the Dance of the Blue Fox on the ice. While she do it, some one come up swift and catch her hand, and say, 'Ma'm'selle, let's do it together'—like that! It take her breath away. It is M'sieu' Hadrian. He not seem like the other men she know, but he have a sharp look, he is smooth in the face, and he smile kind like a woman. P'tite Louison, she give him her hand, and they run away, and everyone stop to look. It is a gran' sight! M'sieu' Hadrian laugh and his teeth shine, and the ladies say things of him, and he tell P'tite Louison that she look ver' fine and walk like a queen. I am there that day, and I see all and I think it dam good. I say: 'That P'tite Louison, she beat them all'—I am only twelve year old then. When M'sieu' Hadrian leave he give her two seats for the theatre, and we go. Bagosh! that is grand thing, that play, and M'sieu' Hadrian, he is a prince; and when he say to his minister, 'But, no, my lord, I will marry out, of my star, and where my heart go, not as the state wills,' he look down at P'tite Louison, and she go all red, and some of the women look at her, and there is a whisper all roun'.

"Nex' day he come to the house where we stay, but the Curé come also pretty soon and tell her she must go home—he say an actor is not good company. Never mind. And so we come out home. Well, what you think? Nex' day M'sieu' Hadrian come, too, and we have dam good time—Florian, Octave, Felix, Emile, they all sit and say bully good to him all the time. Holy, what fine stories he tell! And he talk about P'tite Louison, and his eyes get wet, and Emile he say his prayers to him—bagosh! yes, I think. Well, at last, what you guess? M'sieu' he come and come,

and at last one day, he say that he leave Montreal and go to New York, where he get a good place in a big theatre—his time in Montreal is finish. So he speak to Florian and say he want to marry P'tite Louison, and he say, of course, that he is not marry and he have money. But he is a Protestan', and the Curé at first ver' mad, bagosh!

"But at last when he give a hunder' dollars to the Church, the Curé say yes. All happy that way for while. P'tite Louison, she get ready quick—*sapré*, what fine things had she! and it is all to be done in a week, while the theatre in New York wait for M'sieu'. He sit there with us, and play on the fiddle, and sing songs, and act plays, and help Florian in the barn, and Octave to mend the fence, and the Curé to fix the grapevines on his wall. He show me and Emile how to play sword sticks; and he pick flowers and fetch them to P'tite Louison, and teach her how to make an omelette and a salad like the *chef* of the Louis Quinze Hotel, so he say. Bagosh, what a good time we have! But first one, then another, he get a choke-throat when he think that P'tite Louison go to leave us, and the more we try, the more we are bagosh fools. And that P'tite Louison, she kiss us hevery one, and say to M'sieu' Hadrian, 'Charles, I love you, but I cannot go!' He laugh at her, and say: '*Voilà!* we will take them all with us,' and P'tite Louison she laugh. That night a thing happen. The Curé come, and he look ver' mad, and he frown and he say to M'sieu' Hadrian before us all, 'M'sieu', you are married!'

"*Sapré!* that P'tite Louison get pale like snow, and we all stan' roun' her close and say to her quick, 'Courage, P'tite Louison!' M'sieu' Hadrian then look at the priest and say: 'No, M'sieu', I was married

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ten years ago; my wife drink and go wrong, and I get divorce. I am free like the wind.'

"'You are not free,' the Curé say quick. 'Once married, married till death. The Church cannot marry you again, and I command Louison to give you up.'

"P'tite Louison stand like stone. M'sieu' turn to her. 'What shall it be, Louison?' he say. 'You will come with me?'

"'Kiss me, Charles,' she say, 'and tell me good-by till—till you are free.'

"He look like a madman. 'Kiss me once, Charles,' she say, 'and let me go.'

"And he come to her and kiss her on the lips once, and he say: 'Louison, come with me. I will never give you up.'

"She draw back to Florian. 'Good-by, Charles!' she say. 'I will wait as long as you will. Mother of God! how hard it is to do right!' she say, and then she turn and leave the room.

"M'sieu' Hadrian, he give a long sigh. 'It was my one chance,' he say. 'Now the devil take it all!' Then he nod and say to the Curé: 'We'll thrash this out at Judgment Day, M'sieu'. I'll meet you there—you and that other woman that spoiled me.'

"He turn to Florian and the rest of us, and shake hands, and say: 'Take care of Louison. Thank you. Good-by!' Then he start toward the door, but stumble, for he look sick. 'Give me a drink,' he say, and begin to cough a little—a queer sort of rattle. Florian give him big drink, and he toss it off—whiff! 'Thank you,' he say, and start again, and we see him walk away over the hill ver' slow—an' he never come back! But every year there come from New York a

box of flowers, and every year P'tite Louison send him a '*Merci, Charles, mille fois. Dieu te garde.*' It is so every year for twenty-five year."

"Where is he now?" asked Medallion.

Isidore shook his head, then lifted his eyes religiously. "Waiting for Judgment Day and P'tite Louison," he answered.

"Dead!" cried Medallion. "How long?"

"Twenty year."

"But the flowers—the flowers?"

"He left word for them to be sent just the same, and the money for it."

Medallion turned and took off his hat reverently as if a soul were passing from the world, but it was only P'tite Louison going out into the garden.

"She thinks him living?" he asked gently as he watched Louison.

"Yes; we have no heart to tell her. And then he wish it so. And the flowers kep' coming."

"Why did he wish it so?"

Isidore mused a while.

"Who can tell? Perhaps a whim. He was a great actor—ah, yes, sublime!" he said.

Medallion did not reply, but walked slowly down to where P'tite Louison was picking berries. His hat was still off.

"Let me help you, Mademoiselle," he said softly. And henceforth he was as foolish as her brothers.

THE LITTLE BELL OF HONOUR

“*SACRÉ baptême!*”

“What did he say?” asked the Little Chemist, stepping from his doorway.

“He cursed his baptism,” answered tall Medallion, the English auctioneer, pushing his way farther into the crowd.

“Ah, the pitiful *vaurien!*” said the Little Chemist’s wife, shudderingly; for that was an oath not to be endured by any one who called the Church mother. *

The crowd that had gathered at the Four Corners were greatly disturbed, for they also felt the repulsion that possessed the Little Chemist’s wife. They babbled, shook their heads, and waved their hands excitedly, and swayed and craned their necks to see the offender.

All at once his voice, mad with rage, was heard above the rest, shouting frenziedly a curse which was a horribly grotesque blasphemy upon the name of God. Men who had used that oath in their insane anger had been known to commit suicide out of remorse afterward.

For a moment there was a painful hush. The crowd drew back involuntarily and left a clear space, in which stood the blasphemer, a middle-sized, athletic fellow, with black beard, thick, waving hair, and flashing brown eyes. His white teeth were showing now in a snarl like a dog’s, his cap was on the ground, his hair

was tumbled, his hands were twitching with passion, his foot was stamping with fury, and every time it struck the ground a little silver bell rang at his knee, a pretty sylvan sound, in no keeping with the scene. It heightened the distress of the fellow's blasphemy and ungovernable anger. For a man to curse his baptism was a wicked thing; but the other oath was not fit for human ears, and horror held the crowd moveless for a moment.

Then, as suddenly as the stillness came, a low, threatening mumble of voices rose, and a movement to close in on the man was made; but a figure pushed through the crowd, and, standing in front of the man, waved the people back. It was the Curé, the beloved M. Fabre, whose life had been spent among them, whom they obeyed as well as they could, for they were but frail humanity, after all—crude, simple folk, touched with imagination.

“Luc Pomfrette, why have you done this? What provocation had you?”

The Curé's voice was stern and cold, his usually gentle face had become severe, his soft eyes were piercing and determined.

The foot of the man still beat the ground angrily, and the little bell kept tinkling. He was gasping with passion, and he did not answer yet.

“Luc Pomfrette, what have you to say?” asked the Curé again. He motioned back Ardenne, the constable of the parish, who had suddenly appeared with a rusty rifle and a more rusty pair of handcuffs.

Still the voyageur did not answer.

The Curé glanced at Lajeunesse the blacksmith, who stood near.

“There was no cause—no,” said Lajeunesse, sagely

shaking his head. "Here stand we at the door of the Louis Quinze in very good humour. Up come the voyageurs, all laughing, and ahead of them is Luc Pomfrette, with the little bell at his knee. Luc, he laugh the same as the rest, and they stand in the door, and the *garçon* bring out the brandy—just a little, but just enough too. I am talking to Henri Beauvin. I am telling him Junie Gauloir have run away with Dicey the Protestant, when all very quick Luc push between me and Henri, jump into the street, and speak like that!"

Lajeunesse looked around, as if for corroboration; Henri and others nodded, and some one said:

"That's true; that's true. There was no cause."

"Maybe it was the drink," said a little hunchbacked man, pushing his way in beside the Curé. "It must have been the drink; there was nothing else—no."

The speaker was Parpon the dwarf, the oddest, in some ways the most foolish, in others the wisest man in Pontiac.

"That is no excuse," said the Curé.

"It is the only one he has, eh?" answered Parpon. His eyes were fixed meaningly on those of Pomfrette.

"It is no excuse," repeated the Curé, sternly. "The blasphemy is horrible, a shame and stigma upon Pontiac forever." He looked Pomfrette in the face. "Foul-mouthed and wicked man, it is two years since you took the Blessed Sacrament. Last Easter day you were in a drunken sleep while high mass was being said; after the funeral of your own father you were drunk again. When you went away to the woods you never left a penny for candles, nor for masses to be said for your father's soul; yet you sold his horse and

his little house, and spent the money in drink. Not a cent for a candle, but——”

“It’s a lie!” cried Pomfrette, shaking with rage from head to foot.

A long horror-stricken “Ah!” broke from the crowd.

The Curé’s face became graver and colder.

“You have a bad heart,” he answered, “and you give Pontiac an evil name. I command you to come to mass next Sunday, to repent and to hear your penance given from the altar. For until——”

“I’ll go to no mass till I’m carried to it,” was the sullen, malevolent interruption.

The Curé turned upon the people.

“This is a blasphemer, an evil-hearted, shameless man,” he said. “Until he repents humbly, and bows his vicious spirit to holy Church, and his heart to the mercy of God, I command you to avoid him as you would a plague. I command that no door be opened to him; that no one offer him comfort or friendship; that not even a *bonjour* or a *bonsoir* pass between you. He has blasphemed against our Father in heaven; to the Church he is a leper.” He turned to Pomfrette. “I pray God that you have no peace in mind or body till your evil life is changed, and your black heart is broken by sorrow and repentance.”

Then to the people he said again: “I have commanded you for your souls’ sake; see that you obey. Go to your homes. Let us leave the leper—alone.” He waved the awed crowd back.

“Shall we take off the little bell?” asked Lajeunesse of the Curé.

Pomfrette heard, and he drew himself together, his jaws shutting with ferocity, and his hand flying to the



belt where his voyageur's case-knife hung. The Curé did not see this. Without turning his head toward Pomfrette, he said:

"I have commanded you, my children. Leave the leper alone."

Again he waved the crowd to be gone, and they scattered, whispering to each other; for nothing like this had ever occurred in Pontiac before, nor had they ever seen the Curé with this granite look in his face, nor heard his voice so bitterly hard.

He did not move until he had seen them all started homewards from the Four Corners. One person remained beside him—Parpon the dwarf.

"I will not obey you, M'sieu' le Curé," said he. "*I'll* forgive him *before* he repents."

"You will share his sin," answered the Curé, sternly.

"No; his punishment, m'sieu'," said the dwarf; and turning on his heel, he trotted to where Pomfrette stood alone in the middle of the road, a dark, morose figure, hatred and a wild trouble in his face.

Already banishment, isolation, seemed to possess Pomfrette, to surround him with loneliness. The very effort he made to be defiant of his fate appeared to make him still more solitary. All at once he thrust a hand inside his red shirt, and, giving a jerk which broke a string tied round his neck, he drew forth a little pad, a flat bag of silk, called an Agnus Dei, worn as a protection and a blessing by the pious, and threw it on the ground. Another little parcel he drew from his belt, and ground it into the dirt with his heel. It contained a woman's hair. Then, muttering, his hands still twitching with savage feeling, he picked up his cap, covered with dirt, put it on, and passed away down the road toward the river, the little bell tinkling as he

went. Those who heard it had a strange feeling, for already to them the man was as if he had some baleful disease, and this little bell told of the passing of a leper.

Yet some one man had worn just such a bell every year in Pontiac. It was the mark of honour conferred upon a voyageur by his fellows, the token of his prowess and his skill. This year Luc Pomfrette had won it, and that very day it had been buckled round his leg with songs and toasts.

For hours Pomfrette walked incessantly up and down the river-bank, muttering and gesticulating, but at last came quietly to the cottage which he shared with Henri Beauvin. Henri had removed himself and his belongings: already the ostracizing had begun. He went to the bedroom of old Mme. Burgoyne, his cousin; she also was gone. He went to a little outhouse and called.

For reply there was a scratching at the door. He opened it, and a dog leaped out and upon him. With a fierce fondness he snatched at the dog's collar, and drew the shaggy head to his knee; then as suddenly shoved him away with a smothered oath, and going into the house, shut the door. He sat down in a chair in the middle of the room, and scarcely stirred for half an hour. At last, with a passionate jerk of the head, he got to his feet, looking about the room in a half-distracted way. Outside, the dog kept running round and round the house, silent, watchful, waiting for the door to open.

As time went by, Luc became quieter, but the look of his face was more desolate. At last he almost ran to the door, threw it open, and called. The dog sprang into the room, went straight to the fireplace, lay down, and with tongue lolling and body panting

looked at Pomfrette with blinking, uncomprehending eyes.

Pomfrette went to a cupboard, brought back a bone well covered with meat, and gave it to the dog, which snatched it and began gnawing it, now and again stopping to look up at his master, as one might look at a mountain moving, be aware of something singular, yet not grasp the significance of the phenomenon. At last, worn out, Pomfrette threw himself on his bed, and fell into a sound sleep. When he awoke it was far into the morning. He lighted a fire in the kitchen, got a "spider," fried himself a piece of pork, and made some tea. There was no milk in the cupboard, so he took a pitcher and walked down the road a few rods to the next house, where lived the village milkman. He knocked, and the door was opened by the milkman's wife. A frightened look came upon her when she saw who it was.

"Non, non," she said, and shut the door in his face.

He stared blankly at the door for a moment, then turned round and stood looking down into the road, with the pitcher in his hand. The milkman's little boy, Maxime, came running round the corner of the house.

"Maxime," he said involuntarily and half eagerly, for he and the lad had been great friends.

Maxime's face brightened, then became clouded; he stood still an instant, and presently, turning round and looking at Pomfrette askance, ran away behind the house, saying, "Non, non!"

Pomfrette drew his rough knuckles across his forehead in a dazed way; then, as the significance of the thing came home to him, he broke out with a fierce oath, and strode away down the yard and into the road.

On the way to his house he met Duclosse the mealman, and Garotte the lime-burner. He wondered what they would do. He could see the fat, wheezy Duclosse hesitate, but the arid, alert Garotte had determination in every motion and look. They came nearer; they were about to pass; there was no sign.

Pomfrette stopped short. "Good day, lime-burner; good day, Duclosse," he said, looking straight at them.

Garotte made no reply, but walked straight on. Pomfrette stepped swiftly in front of the mealman. There was fury in his face—fury and danger; his hair was disordered, his eyes afire.

"Good-day, mealman," he said, and waited.

"Duclosse," called Garotte, warningly, "remember!"

Duclosse's knees shook, and his face became mottled like a piece of soap; he pushed his fingers into his shirt and touched the Agnus Dei that he carried there. That and Garotte's words gave him courage. He scarcely knew what he said, but it had meaning.

"Good-by—leper," he answered.

Pomfrette's arm flew out to throw the pitcher at the mealman's head, but Duclosse, with a grunt of terror, flung up in front of his face the small bag of meal that he carried, the contents pouring over his waistcoat from a loose corner. The picture was so ludicrous that Pomfrette laughed with a devilish humor, and flinging the pitcher at the bag, he walked away toward his own house. Duclosse, pale and frightened, stepped from among the fragments of crockery, and with backward glances toward Pomfrette joined his comrade.

"Lime-burner," he said, sitting down on the bag of meal, and mechanically twisting tight the loose, leaking corner, "the devil's in that leper."

"He was a good enough fellow once," answered Garotte, watching Pomfrette.

"I drank with him at five o'clock yesterday," said Duclosse, philosophically. "He was fit for any company then; now he's fit for none."

Garotte looked wise. "Meaiman," said he, "it takes years to make folks love you; you can make them hate you in an hour. *La! La!* it's easier to hate than to love. Come along, M'sieu' dusty-belly."

Pomfrette's life in Pontiac went on as it began that day. Not once a day, and sometimes not once in twenty days, did any human being speak to him. The village baker would not sell him bread; his groceries he had to buy from the neighbouring parishes, for the grocer's flighty wife called for the constable when he entered the bake-shop of Pontiac. He had to bake his own bread, and do his own cooking, washing, cleaning, and gardening. His hair grew long and his clothes became shabbier. At last, when he needed a new suit,—so torn had his others become at wood-chopping and many kinds of work—he went to the village tailor, and was promptly told that nothing but Luc Pomfrette's grave-clothes would be cut and made in that house.

When he walked down to the Four Corners the street emptied at once, and the lonely man with the tinkling bell of honour at his knee felt the whole world falling away from sight and touch and sound of him. Once when he went into the Louis Quinze every man present stole away in silence, and the landlord himself, without a word, turned and left the bar. At that, with a hoarse laugh, Pomfrette poured out a glass of brandy, drank it off, and left a shilling on the counter. The next morning he found the shilling, wrapped in a piece

of paper, just inside his door; it had been pushed underneath. On the paper was written, "It is cursed."

Presently his dog died, and the day afterward he suddenly disappeared from Pontiac, and wandered on to Ste. Gabrielle, Ribeaux, and Ville Bambord. But his shame had gone before him, and people shunned him everywhere, even the roughest. No one who knew him would shelter him. He slept in barns and in the woods until the winter came and snow lay thick upon the ground. Thin and haggard, and with nothing left of his old self but his deep brown eyes and curling hair, and his unhappy name and fame, he turned back again to Pontiac. His spirit was sullen and hard, his heart closed against repentance. Had not the Church and Pontiac and the world punished him beyond his deserts for a moment's madness brought on by a great shock?

II.

One bright, sunshiny day of early winter, he trudged through the snow-banked street of Pontiac back to his home. Men he once knew well, and had worked with, passed him in a sled on their way to the great shanty in the backwoods. They halted in their singing for a moment when they saw him; then, turning their heads from him, dashed off, carolling lustily:

" Ah, ah, Babette,
 We go away;
 " But we will come
 Again, Babette,—
 Again back home,
 On Easter Day,—
 Back home to play
 On Easter Day,
 Babette ! Babette !"

"Babette! Babette!" The words followed him, ringing in his ears long after the men had become a mere fading point in the white horizon behind him. This was not the same world that he had known, not the same Pontiac. Suddenly he stopped short in the road.

"Curse them! Curse them! Curse them all!" he cried in a cracked, strange voice. A woman hurrying across the street heard him, and went the faster, shutting her ears. A little boy stood still and looked at him in wonder. Everything he saw maddened him. He turned sharp around and hurried to the Louis Quinze. Throwing open the door, he stepped inside. Half a dozen men were there with the landlord. When they saw him, they started, confused and dismayed. He stood still for a moment, looking at them with glowering brows.

"Good day!" he said. "How are you?"

No one answered. A little apart from the others sat Medallion the auctioneer. He was a Protestant, and the curse on his baptism uttered by Pomfrette was not so heinous in his sight. For the other oath, it was another matter. Still, he was sorry for the man. In any case, it was not his cue to interfere, and Luc was being punished according to his bringing up and to the standards familiar to him. Medallion had never refused to speak to him, but he had done nothing more. There was no reason why he should provoke the enmity of the parish unnecessarily; and up to this point Pomfrette had shifted for himself after a fashion, if a hard fashion.

With a bitter laugh, Pomfrette turned to the little bar.

"Brandy!" he said; "brandy, my Bourienne!"

The landlord shrugged his shoulder, and looked the other way.

"Brandy!" he repeated. Still there was no sign.

There was a wicked look in his face, from which the landlord shrank back—shrank so far that he carried himself among the others, and stood there, half frightened, half dumfounded.

Pomfrette pulled out a greasy dollar-bill from his pocket—the last he owned in the world—and threw it on the counter. Then he reached over, caught up a brandy-bottle from the shelf, knocked off the neck with a knife, and, pouring a tumblerful, drank it off at a gasp.

His head came up, his shoulders straightened out, his eyes snapped fire. He laughed aloud, a sardonic, wild, coarse laugh, and he shivered once or twice violently, in spite of the brandy he had drunk.

"You won't speak to me, eh? Won't you? Curse you! Pass me on the other side—so! Look at me. I am the worst man in the world, eh? Judas is nothing—no! Ack! What are you, to turn your back on me? Listen to me! You, there, Muroc, with your charcoal face, who was it walk thirty miles in the dead of winter to bring a doctor to your wife, eh? She die, but that is no matter. Who was it? It was Luc Pomfrette. You, Alphonse Durien, who was it drag you out of the bog at the Côte Chaudière? It was Luc Pomfrette. You, Jacques Baby, who was it that lied for you to the Protestant girl at Faribeau? Just Luc Pomfrette. You two, Jean and Nicolas Mariban, who was it lent you a hundred dollars when you lost all your money at cards? Ha, ha, ha! Only that beast Luc Pomfrette! Mother of heaven! such a beast is he—eh, Limon Rouge?—such a beast that used to give

your Victorine little silver things, and feed her with bread and sugar and buttermilk pop. Ah, my dear Limon Rouge, how is it all different now!"

He raised the bottle and drank long from the ragged neck. When he took it away from his mouth not much more than half remained in the quart bottle. Blood was dripping upon his beard from a cut on his lip, and from there to the ground.

"And you, M'sieu' Bourienne!" he cried hoarsely. "Do I not remember that dear M'sieu' Bourienne, when he beg me to leave Pontiac for a little while that I do not give evidence in court against him? *Eh bien!* you all walk by me now, as if I was the father of small-pox, and not Luc Pomfrette—only Luc Pomfrette, who spits at every one of you for a pack of cowards and hypocrites."

He thrust the bottle inside his coat, went to the door, flung it open with a bang, and strode out into the street, muttering as he went. As the landlord came to close the door Medallion said:

"The leper has a memory, my friends." Then he also walked out, and went to his office depressed, for the face of the man haunted him.

Pomfrette reached his deserted, cheerless house. There was not a stick of fire-wood in the shed, not a thing to eat or drink in cellar or cupboard. The door of the shed at the back was open, and the dog-chains lay covered with frost and half embedded in mud. With a shiver of misery Pomfrette raised the brandy to his mouth, drank every drop, and threw the bottle on the floor. Then he went to the front door, opened it, and stepped outside. His foot slipped, and he tumbled head forward into the snow. Once or twice he half

raised himself, but fell back again, and presently lay still. The frost caught his ears and iced them; it began to creep over his cheeks; it made his fingers white, like a leper's.

He would soon have stiffened forever had not Parpon the dwarf, passing along the road, seen the open door and the sprawling body, and come and drawn Pomfrette inside the house. He rubbed the face and hands and ears of the unconscious man with snow till the whiteness disappeared, and taking off the boots, did the same with the toes; after which he drew the body to a piece of rag carpet beside the stove, threw some blankets over it, and hurrying out, cut up some fence rails, and soon had a fire going in the stove.

Then he trotted out of the house and away to the Little Chemist, who came passively with him. All that day, and for many days, they fought to save Pomfrette's life. The Curé came also, but Pomfrette was in fever and delirium. Yet the good M. Fabre's presence, as it ever did, gave an air of calm and comfort to the place. Parpon's hands alone cared for the house; he did all that was to be done; no woman had entered the place since Pomfrette's cousin, old Mme. Burgoyne, left it on the day of his shame.

When at last Pomfrette opened his eyes, and saw the Curé standing beside him, he turned his face to the wall, and to the exhortation addressed to him he answered nothing. At last the Curé left him, and came no more, and he bade Parpon do the same as soon as Pomfrette was able to leave his bed.

But Parpon did as he willed. He had been in Pontiac only a few days since the painful business in front of the Louis Quinze. Where he had been and what doing no one asked, for he was mysterious in his move-

ments, and always uncommunicative, and people did not care to tempt his inhospitable tongue. When Pomfrette was so far recovered that he might be left alone, Parpon said to him one evening :

“ Pomfrette, you must go to mass next Sunday.”

“ I said I wouldn't go till I was carried there, and I mean it—that's so,” was the morose reply.

“ What made you curse like that—so damnable ? ” asked Parpon, furtively.

“ That's my own business. It doesn't matter to anybody but me.”

“ And you said the Curé lied—the good M'sieu' Fabre—him like a saint.”

“ I said he lied, and I'd say it again, and tell the truth.”

“ But if you went to mass, and took your penance, and——”

“ Yes, I know ; they'd forgive me, and I'd get absolution, and they'd all speak to me again, and it would be, ' Good day, Luc,' and ' Very good, Luc,' and ' What a gay heart has Luc, the good fellow ! ' Ah, I know. They curse in the heart when the whole world go wrong for them ; no one hears. I curse out loud. I'm not a hypocrite, and no one thinks me fit to live. Ack ! what is the good ? ”

Parpon did not respond at once. At last, dropping his chin in his hand and his elbow on his knee, as he squatted on the table, he said :

“ But if the girl got sorry——”

For a time there was no sound save the whirring of the fire in the stove and the hard breathing of the sick man. His eyes were staring hard at Parpon. At last he said slowly and fiercely :

“ What do you know ? ”

"What others might know if they had eyes and sense; but they haven't. What would you do if that Junie come back?"

"I would kill her!" His look was murderous.

"Bah! you would kiss her first, just the same."

"What of that? I would kiss her because—because there is no face like hers in the world; and I'd kill her for her bad heart, and because I hate her bad heart."

"What did she do?"

Pomfrette's hands clinched.

"What is in my own noddle, and not for any one else," he answered sulkily.

"*Tiens! tiens!* what a close mouth! What did she do? Who knows? What you *think* she do, it's this. You think she pretends to love you, and you leave all your money with her. She is to buy masses for your father's soul; she is to pay money to the Curé for the good of the Church; she is to buy a little here, a little there, for the house you and she are going to live in, the wedding and the dancing over. Very well. Ah, my Pomfrette, what is the end you think? She run away with Dicey the Protestant, and take your money with her. Eh, is that so?"

For answer there came a sob, and then a terrible burst of weeping and anger and passionate denunciations—against Junie Gauloir, against Pontiac, against the world.

Parpon held his peace.

The days, weeks, and months went by, and the months stretched to three years.

In all that time Pomfrette came and went through Pontiac, shunned and unrepentant. His silent, gloomy endurance was almost an affront to Pontiac; and if the wiser ones, the Curé, the Avocat, the Little Chemist,

and Medallion, were more sorry than offended, they stood aloof till the man should in some manner redeem himself, and repent of his horrid blasphemy. But one person persistently defied church and people, Curé and voyageur. Parpon openly and boldly walked with Pomfrette, talked with him, and occasionally visited his house.

Luc made hard shifts to live. He grew everything that he ate, vegetables and grains. Parpon showed him how to make his own flour in primitive fashion, for no miller in any parish near would sell him flour, nor had he money to buy it, nor would any one who knew him give him work. And after his return to Pontiac he never asked for it. His mood was defiant, morbid, stern. His wood he chopped from the common known as No-Man's-Land. His clothes he made himself out of the skins of deer that he shot: when his powder and shot gave out he killed the deer with bow and arrow.

III.

The end came at last. Luc was taken ill. For four days, all alone, he lay burning with fever and inflammation, and when Parpon found him he was almost dead. Then began a fight for life again, in which Parpon was the only physician; for Pomfrette would not allow the Little Chemist or a doctor near him. Parpon at last gave up hope; but one night, when he came back from the village, he saw, to his joy, old Mme. Dégardy ("crazy Joan" she was called) sitting by Pomfrette's bedside. He did not disturb her, for she had no love for him, and he waited till she had gone. When he came into the room again he found Pomfrette in a

sweet sleep, and a jug of tincture, with a little tin cup, placed by the bed. Time and again he had sent for Madame Dégardy, but she would not come. She had answered that the dear Luc could go to the devil for all of her; he'd find better company there than in Pontiac. But for a whim, perhaps, she had come at last without asking, and as a consequence Luc returned to the world a mere bundle of bones.

It was still while he was only a bundle of bones that one Sunday morning Parpon, without a word, lifted him up in his arms and carried him out of the house. Pomfrette did not speak at first: it seemed scarcely worth while; he was so weak he did not care.

"Where are you going?" he said at last, as they came well into the village. The bell in St. Saviour's had stopped ringing for Mass, and the streets were almost empty.

"I'm taking you to Mass," said Parpon, puffing under his load, for Pomfrette made an ungainly burden.

"Hand of a little devil, no!" cried Pomfrette, startled. "I said I'd never go to Mass again, and I never will."

"You said you'd never go to Mass till you were carried; so it's all right."

Once or twice Pomfrette struggled, but Parpon held him tight, saying:

"It's no use; you must come; we've had enough. Besides——"

"Besides what?" asked Pomfrette, faintly.

"Never mind," answered Parpon.

At a word from Parpon the shriveled old sexton cleared a way through the aisle, making a stir, through which the silver bell at Pomfrette's knee tinkled, in

answer, as it were, to the tinkling of the acolyte's bell in the sanctuary. People turned at the sound, women stopped telling their beads, some of the choir forgot their chanting. A strange feeling passed through the church, and reached and startled the Curé as he recited the Mass. He turned round and saw Parpon laying Pomfrette down at the chancel steps. His voice shook a little as he intoned the sacred ritual, and as he raised the sacred elements tears rolled down his cheeks.

From a distant corner of the gallery a deeply veiled woman also looked down at Pomfrette, and her hand trembled on the desk before her.

At last the Curé came forward to the chancel steps.

"What is it, Parpon?" he asked gravely.

"It is Luc Pomfrette, M'sieu' le Curé." Pomfrette's eyes were closed.

"He swore that he would never come to Mass again," answered the good priest.

"Till he was carried, M'sieu' le Curé—and I've carried him."

"Did you come of your own free will, and with a repentant heart, Luc Pomfrette?" asked the Curé.

"I did not know I was coming—no." Pomfrette's brown eyes met the priest's unflinchingly.

"You have defied God, and yet he has spared your life."

"I'd rather have died," answered the sick man, simply.

"Died, and been cast to perdition!"

"I'm used to that; I've had a bad time here in Pontiac."

His thin hands moved restlessly. His leg moved,

and the little bell tinkled—the bell that had been like the bell of a leper these years past.

“But you live, and you have years yet before you, in the providence of God. Luc Pomfrette, you blasphemed against your baptism, and horribly against God himself. Luc”—his voice got softer—“I knew your mother, and she was almost too weak to hold you when you were baptized, for you made a great to-do about coming into the world. She had a face like a saint—so sweet, so patient. You were her only child, and your baptism was more to her than her marriage even, or any other thing in this world. The day after your baptism she died. What do you think were her last words?”

There was a hectic flush on Pomfrette's face, and his eyes were intense and burning as they looked up fixedly at the Curé.

“I can't think any more,” answered Pomfrette, slowly. “I've no head.”

“What she said is for your heart, not for your head, Luc,” rejoined the Curé, gently. “She wandered in her mind, and at the last she raised herself up in her bed, and lifting her finger like this”—he made the gesture of benediction—“she said, ‘Luc Michée, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.’ Then she whispered softly: ‘God bless my dear Luc Michée! Holy Mother, pray for him!’ These were her last words, and I took you from her arms. What have you to say, Luc Michée?”

The woman in the gallery was weeping silently behind her thick veil, and her worn hand clutched the desk in front of her convulsively. Presently she arose and made her way down the stair, almost unnoticed.

Two or three times Luc tried to speak, but could not. "Lift me up!" he said brokenly, at last.

Parpon and the Little Chemist raised him to his feet, and held him, his shaking hands resting on their shoulders, his lank body tottering above and between them.

Looking at the congregation, he said slowly: "I'll suffer till I die for cursing my baptism, and God will twist my neck in purgatory for——"

"Luc," the Curé interrupted, "say that you repent."

"I'm sorry, and I ask you all to forgive me, and I'll confess to the Curé, and take my penance, and——" he paused, for breathing hurt him.

At that moment the woman in black who had been in the gallery came quickly forward. Parpon saw her, frowned, and waved her back; but she came on. At the chancel steps she raised her veil, and a murmur of recognition and wonder ran through the church. Pomfrette's face was pitiful to see—drawn, staring.

"Junie Gauloir!" he said hoarsely.

Her eyes were red with weeping, her face was very pale.

"M'sieu' le Curé," she said, "you must listen to me"—the Curé's face had become forbidding—sinner though I am. You want to be just, don't you? Ah, listen! I was to be married to Luc Pomfrette, but I did not love him—then. He had loved me for years, and his father and my father wished it—as you know, M'sieu' le Curé. So after a while I said I would; but I begged him that he wouldn't say anything about it till he come back from his next journey on the river. I did not love him enough—then. He left all his money with me: some to pay for Masses for his father's

soul, some to buy things for—for our home, and the rest to keep till he came back.”

“ Yes, yes,” said Pomfrette, his eyes fixed painfully on her face; “ yes, yes! ”

“ The day after Luc went away John Dicey the Protestant come to me. I'd always liked him; he could talk as Luc couldn't, and it sounded nice. I listened and listened. He knew about Luc and about the money and all. Then he talked to me. I was all wild in the head, and things went round and round, and oh, how I hated to marry Luc—then! So after he had talked a long while I said yes, I would go with him and marry him—a Protestant; for I loved him. I don't know why or how.”

Pomfrette trembled so that Parpon and the Little Chemist made him sit down, and he leaned against their shoulders, while Junie went on.

“ I gave him Luc's money to go and give to Parpon here, for I was too ashamed to go myself. And I wrote a little note to Luc, and sent it with the money. I believed in John Dicey, of course. He came back, and said that he had seen Parpon and had done it all right; then we went away to Montreal and got married. The very first day at Montreal I found out that he had Luc's money. It was awful; I went mad, and he got angry and left me alone, and didn't come back. A week afterwards he was killed, and I didn't know it for a long time. But I began to work, for I wanted to pay back Luc's money. It was very slow, and I worked hard. Will it never be finished, I say. At last Parpon find me, and I tell him all—all except that John Dicey was dead, and I did not know that. I made him promise to tell nobody, but he knows all about my life since then. Then I find out one day that John Dicey is dead,

and I get from the gover'nment a hundred dollars of the money he stole. It was found on him when he was killed. I work for six months longer, and now I come back—with Luc's money."

She drew from her pocket a packet of notes, and put it in Luc's hands. He took it dazedly, then dropped it, and the Little Chemist picked it up; he had no prescription like that in his pharmacopœia.

"That's how I've lived," she said, and she handed a letter to the Curé.

It was from a priest in Montreal, setting forth the history of her career in that city, her repentance for her elopement and the sin of marrying a Protestant, and her good life. She had wished to do her penance in Pontiac, and it remained to M'sieu' le Curé to set it. The Curé's face relaxed, and a rare gentleness came into it.

He read the letter aloud. Luc once more struggled to his feet, eagerly listening.

"You did not love Luc?" the Curé asked Junie, meaningly.

"I did not love Luc—then," she answered, a flush going over her face.

"You loved Junie?" the Curé said to Pomfrette.

"I could have killed her, but I've always loved her," answered Luc. Then he raised his voice excitedly. "I love her, love her, love her—but what's the good! She'd never 've been happy with me. Look what my love drove her to! What's the good, at all!"

"She said she did not love you *then*, Luc Michée," said Parpon, interrupting. "Luc Michée, you're a fool as well as a sinner. Speak up, Junie."

"I used to tell him that I didn't love him; I only

liked him. I was honest. Well, I am honest still. I love him now."

A sound of joy broke from Luc's lips, and he stretched out his arms to her, but the Curé stopped that.

"Not here," he said. "Your sins must first be considered. For penance—" He paused, looking at the two sad yet happy beings before him. The deep knowledge of life that was in him impelled him to continue gently:

"For penance you shall bear the remembrance of each other's sins. And now to God the Father——"

He turned toward the altar, and raised his hands in the ascription.

As he knelt to pray before he entered the pulpit, he heard the tinkling of the little bell of honour at the knee of Luc, as Junie and Parpon helped him from the church.

A SON OF THE WILDERNESS

RACHETTE told the story to Medallion and the Little Chemist's wife on Sunday after Mass, and because he was vain of his English he forsook his own tongue and paid tribute to the Anglo-Saxon.

"Ah, she was so purty, that Norinne, when she drive through the parishes all twelve days, after the wedding, a dance every night, and her eyes and cheeks on fire all the time. And Bargon, bagosh! that Bargon, he have a pair of shoulders like a wall, and five hunder' dollars and a horse and wagon. Bagosh! I say that time, 'Bargon he have put a belt round the world and buckle it tight to him—all right, ver' good.' I say to him: 'Bargon, what you do when you get ver' rich out on the Souris River in the prairie west?' He laugh and throw up liis hands, for he have not many words any kind. And the damn little dwarf Parpon, he say: 'He will have flowers on the table and ice on the butter, and a wheel in his head.'

"And Bargon laugh and say: 'I will have plenty for my friends to eat and drink and a ver' fine time.'

"'Good!' we all say—'Bagosh!'

"So they make the trip through twelve parish, and the fiddles go all the time, and I am what you say best man with Bargon. I go all the time, and Lucette Dargois, she go with me and her brother—holy! what an eye had she in her head, that Lucette! As we go we

sing a song all right, and there is no one sing so better as Norinne :

.' ' C'est la belle Française,
Allons gai !
C'est la belle Française,
Qui vient se marier,
Ma luron lurette !
Qui veut se marier,
Ma luron luré !'

“ Ver' good, bagosh ! Norinne and Bargon they go out to the Souris, and Bargon have a hunder' acre, and he put up a house and a shed not ver' big, and he carry his head high and his shoulders like a wall ; yes, yes. First year it is pretty good time, and Norinne's cheeks—ah, like an apple they. Bimeby a baby laugh up at Bargon from Norinne's lap. I am on the Souris at a sawmill then, and on Sunday sometime I go up to see Bargon and Norinne. I t'ink that baby is so damn funny ; I laugh and pinch his nose ; his name is Marie, and I say I marry him pretty quick some day. We have plenty hot cake, and beans and pork, and a little how-you-are from a jar behin' the door.

“ Next year it is not so good. There is a bad crop and hard times, and Bargon he owe two hunder' dollar, and he pay int'rest. Norinne, she do all the work, and that little Marie, there is damn funny in him, and Norinne, she keep go, go, all the time, early and late, and she get ver' thin and quiet. So I go up from the mill more times, and I bring fol-lols for that Marie, for you know I said I go to marry him some day. And when I see how Bargon shoulders stoop and his eye get dull, and there is nothing in the jar behin' the door, I fetch a horn with me, and my fiddle, and, bagosh ! there is happy sit-you-down. I make Bargon sing ' La Belle

Françoise,' and then just before I go I make them laugh, for I stand by the cradle and I sing to that Marie:

“ ‘ Adieu, belle Françoise ;
Allons gai !
Adieu, belle Françoise !
Moi, je te marierai,
Ma luron lurette !
Moi, je te marierai,
Ma luron luré ! ’ ”

“ So; and another year it go along, and Bargon he know that if there come bad crop it is good-bye-my-lover with themselves. He owe two hunder' and fifty dollar. It is the spring at Easter, and I go up to him and Norinne, for there is no Mass, and Pontiac is too far away off. We stan' at the door and look out, and all the prairie is green, and the sun stan' up high like a light on a pole, and the birds fly by ver' busy looking for the summer and the prairie-flower.

“ ‘ Bargon,' I say—and I give him a horn of old rye—' here's to le bon Dieu ! ’

“ ‘ Le bon Dieu, and a good harvest ! ’ he say.

“ I hear some one give a-long breath behind, and I look round; but, no! it is Norinne with a smile—for she never grumble—bagosh! What purty eyes she have in her head! She have that Marie in her arms, and I say to Bargon it is like the Madonna in the Notre Dame at Montreal. He nod his head. ‘ C'est le bon Dieu—it is the good God,' he say.

“ Before I go I take a piece of palm—it come from the Notre Dame; it is all bless by the Pope—and I nail it to the door of the house. ‘ For luck,' I say. Then I laugh, and I speak out to the prairie: ‘ Come along, good summer; come along, good crop; come two hun-

der' and fifty dollars for Gal Bargon.' Ver' quiet I give Norinne twenty dollar, but she will not take him. 'For Marie,' then I say; 'I go to marry him, bimeby.' But she say, 'Keep it and give it to Marie yourself some day.'

"She smile at me, then she have a little tear in her eye, and she nod to where Bargon stan' houtside, and she say: 'If this summer go wrong, it will kill him. He work and work and fret and worry for me and Marie, and sometimes he just sit and look at me and say not a word.'

"I say to her that there will be good crop, and next year we will be ver' happy. So, the time go on, and I send up a leetla snack of pork and molass' and tabac, and sugar and tea, and I get a letter from Bargon bimeby, and he say that heverything go right, he t'ink, this summer. He say I must come up. It is not damn easy to go in the summer, when the mill run night and day, but I say I will go.

"When I get up to Bargon's I laugh, for all the hunder' acre is ver' fine, and Bargon stan' hin the door, and stretch out his hand, and say: 'Rachette, there is six hunder' dollar for me.' I nod my head, and fetch out a horn, and he have one, his eyes all bright like a lime-kiln. He is thin and square, and his beard grow ver' thick and rough and long, and his hands are like planks. Norinne, she is ver' happy, too, and Marie bite on my finger, and I give him sugar stick to suck.

"Bimeby Norinne say to me, ver' soft: 'If a hail-storm or a hot wind come, that is the end of it all, and of my poor Gal.'

"What I do? I laugh and ketch Marie under the arms, and I sit down, and I put him on my foot, and I sing that damn funny English song—'Here We Go

to Banbury Cross.' An' I say: 'It will be all as happy as Marie pretty quick. Bargon he will have six hunder' dollar, and you a new dress and a hired girl to help you.'

"But all the time that day I think about a hailstorm or a hot wind whenever I look out on that hunder' acre farm. It is so beautébul, as you can guess—the wheat, the barley, the corn, the potatoes, the turnip, all green like sea water, and pigeons and wild ducks flying up and down, and the horse and the ox standing in a field ver' comfer'ble.

"We have good time that day, and go to bed all happy that night. I get up at five o'clock, an' I go hout. Bargon stan' there looking out on his field with the horse bridle in his hand. 'The air not feel right,' he say to me. I t'ink the same, but I say to him: 'Your head not feel right—him too sof.' He shake his head and go down to the field for his horse and ox, and hitch them up together, and go to work making a road.

"It is about ten o'clock when the damn thing come. Piff! go a hot splash of air in my face, and then I know that it is all up with Gal Bargon. A month after it is no matter, for the grain is ripe then, but now, when it is green, it is sure death to it all. I turn sick in my stomach, and I turn round and see Norinne stan' hin the door, all white, and she make her hand go as that, like she push back that hot wind.

"'Where is Gal?' she say. 'I must go to him.' 'No,' I say, 'I will fetch him. You stay with Marie.' Then I go ver' quick for Gal, and I find him, his hands all shut like that! and he shake them at the sky, and he say not a word, but his face, it go wild, and his eyes spin round in his head. I put my hand on his arm

and say: 'Come home, Gal. Come home, and speak kind to Norinne and Marie.'

"I can see that hot wind lean down and twist the grain about—a damn devil thing from the Arzone desert down South. I take Gal back home, and we sit there all day, and all the nex' day, and a leetla more, and when we have look enough, there is no grain on that hunder' acre farm—only a dry-up prairie, all gray and limp. My skin is bake and rough, but when I look at Gal Bargon I know that his heart is dry like a bone, and, as Parpon say that back time, he have a wheel in his head. Norinne she is quiet, and she sit with her hand on his shoulder, and give him Marie to hold.

"But it is no good; it is all over. So I say: 'Let us go back to Pontiac. What is the good for to be rich? Let us be poor and happy once more.'

"And Norinne she look glad, and go up and say: 'Yes, let us go back.' But all at once she sit down with Marie in her arms, and cry—bagosh! I never see a woman cry like that.

"So we start back for Pontiac with the horse and the ox and some pork and bread and molass'. But Gal Bargon never hold up his head, but go silent, silent, and he not sleep at night. One night he walk away on the prairie, and when he come back he have a great pain. So he lie down, and we sit by him, an' he die. But once he whisper to me, and Norinne not hear: 'You say you will marry him, Rachette?' and I say, 'I will.'

"'C'est le bon Dieu!' he say at the last, but he say it with a little laugh. I think he have a wheel in his head. But bimeby, yiste'day, Norinne and Marie and I come to Pontiac."

The Little Chemist's wife dried her eyes, and Medal-

lion said in French: "Poor Norinne! Poor Norinne! And so, Rchette, you are going to marry Marie, by and by?" There was a quizzical look in Medallion's eyes.

Rchette threw up his chin a little. "I'm going to marry Norinne on New Year's Day," he said.

"Bagosh! poor Norinne," said Medallion, in a queer sort of tone. "It is the way of the world," he added. "I'll wait for Marie myself."

It looks as if he meant to, for she has no better friend. He talks to her much of Gal Bargon; of which her mother is glad, for there is but one great love in a woman's life. All others have different names and meanings.

A WORKER IN STONE

AT the beginning he was only a tombstone-cutter. His name was François Lagarre. He was but twenty years old when he stepped into the shop, where the old tombstone-cutter had worked for forty years. Picking up the hammer and chisel which the old man had dropped when he fell dead at the end of a long hot day's labour, he finished the half-carved tombstone, and gave the price of it to the widow. Then, going to the Seigneur and Curé, he asked them to buy the shop and tools for him, and let him pay rent until he could take the place off their hands.

They did as he asked, and in two years he had bought and paid for the place, and had a few dollars to the good. During one of the two years a smallpox epidemic passed over Pontiac, and he was busy night and day. It was during this time that some good Catholics came to him with an heretical Protestant suggestion to carve a couplet or verse of poetry on the tombstones they ordered. They themselves, in most cases, knew none, and they asked François to supply them—as though he kept them in stock like marble and sandpaper. He had no collection of suitable epitaphs, and, besides, he did not know whether it was right to use them. Like all his race in New France he was jealous of any inroads of Protestantism, or what the Little Chemist called “Englishness.” The good M. Fabre, the Curé, saw no harm in it, but said he

could not speak for any one's grief. What the bereaved folk felt they themselves must put in words upon the stone. But still François might bring all the epitaphs to him before they were carved, and he would approve or disapprove, correct or reject, as the case might be.

At first he rejected many, for they were mostly stereotyped verses, taken unknowingly from Protestant sources by mourning Catholics. But presently all that was changed, and the Curé one day had laid before him three epitaphs, each of which left his hand unrevised and untouched; and when he passed them back to François his eyes were moist, for he was a man truly after God's own heart, and full of humanity.

"Will you read them to me, François?" he said, as the worker in stone was about to put the paper back in his pocket. "Give the names of the dead at the same time."

So François read:

"Gustave Narrois, aged seventy-two years——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the Curé, "the unhappy yet happy Gustave, hung by the English, and cut down just in time to save him—an innocent man. For thirty years my sexton. God rest his soul! Well now, the epitaph."

François read it:

" Poor as a sparrow was I,
Yet I was saved like a king;
I heard the death-bells ring,
Yet I saw a light in the sky
And now to my Father I wing."

The Curé nodded his head. "Go on; the next," he said.

“Annette John, aged twenty years——”

“So. The daughter of Chief John. When Queen Anne of England was on the throne she sent Chief John’s grandfather a gold cup and a hundred pounds. The girl loved, but would not marry, that she might keep Chief John from drinking. A saint, François! What have they said of her?”

François smoothed out the paper and read :

“A little while I saw the world go by—
A little doorway that I called my own,
A loaf, a cup of water, and a bed had I,
A shrine of Jesus, where I knelt alone :
And now alone I bid the world good-bye.”

The Curé turned his head away. “Go on,” he said sadly. “Chief John has lost his right hand. Go on.”

“Henri Rouget——”

“Aged thirty years,” again interrupted the Curé. “Henri Rouget, idiot; as young as the morning. For man grows old only by what he suffers, and what he forgives, and what he sins. What have you to say for Henri Rouget, my François?”

And François read :

“I was a fool; nothing had I to know
Of men, and naught to men had I to give.
God gave me nothing; now to God I go,
Now ask for pain, for bread,
Life for my brain: dead,
By God’s love I shall then begin to live.”

The priest rose to his feet and put a hand on the young man’s shoulder.

“Do you know, François,” he said, half sadly, “do you know, you have the true thing in you. Come often

to me, my son, and bring all these things—all you write."

While the Curé troubled himself about his future, François began to work upon a monument for the grave of a dozen soldiers of Pontiac who were killed in the War of the Patriots. They had died for a mistaken cause, and had been buried on the field of battle. Long ago something would have been done to commemorate them but that three of them were Protestants, and difficulties had been raised by the bigoted. But François thought only of the young men in their common grave at St. Eustache. He remembered when they went away one bright morning, full of the joy of an erring patriotism, of the ardor of a weak but fascinating cause: race against race, the conquered against the conquerors, the usurped against the usurpers.

In the space before the parish church it stands—a broken shaft, with an unwound wreath straying down its sides; a monument of fine proportions, a white figure of beaten valour and erring ardour of youth and beautiful had ambition. One Saturday night it was not there, and when next morning the people came to Mass it was there. All night had François and his men worked, and the first rays of the morning sun fell on the tall shivered shaft set firmly in its place. François was a happy man. All else that he had done had been wholly after a crude, staring convention, after rule and measure—an artisan's, a tombstone cutter's labour. This was the work of a man with the heart and mind of an artist. When the people came to Mass they gazed and gazed, and now and then the weeping of a woman was heard, for among them were those whose sons and brothers were made memorable by this stone.

That day at the close of his sermon the Curé spoke of it, and said at the last: "That white shaft, dear brethren, is for us a sign of remembrance and a warning to our souls. In the name of race and for their love they sinned. But yet they sinned; and this monument, the gift and work of one young like them, ardent and desiring like them, is for ever in our eyes the crucifixion of our wrong ambitions and our selfish aims. Nay, let us be wise and let us be good. They who rule us speak with foreign tongue, but their hearts desire our peace and a mutual regard. Pray that this be. And pray for the young and the daring and the foolish. And pray also that he who has given us here a good gift may find his thanks in our better-ordered lives, and that he may consecrate his parts and talents to the redeeming actions of this world."

And so began the awakening of François Lagarre; and so began his ambition and his peril.

For, as he passed from the church, the Seigneur touched him on the shoulder and introduced him to his English grandniece, come on a visit for the summer, the daughter of a London knight bachelor. She had but just arrived, and she was feeling that first home-sickness which succeeds transplanting. The face of the young worker in stone interested her; the idea of it all was romantic; the possibilities of the young man's life opened out before her. Why should not she give him his real start, win his gratitude, help him to his fame, and then, when it was won, be pointed out as a discoverer and a patron?

All these things flashed through her mind as they were introduced. The young man did not read the look in her eyes, but there was one other person in the crowd about the church steps who did read it, whose

heart beat furiously, whose foot tapped the ground angrily—a black-haired, brown-eyed farmer's daughter, who instantly hated the yellow hair and rosy and golden face of the blue-eyed London lady; who could, that instant, have torn the silk gown from her graceful figure.

She was not disturbed without reason. And for the moment, even when she heard impertinent and incredulous fellows pooh-poohing the monument, and sharpening their rather dull wits upon its corners, she did not open her lips, when otherwise she would have spoken her mind with a vengeance; for Jeanne Marchand had a reputation for spirit and temper, and she spared no one when her blood was up. She had a touch of the vixen, an impetuous, loving, forceful mademoiselle, in marked contrast to the rather ascetic Francois, whose ways were more refined than his origin might seem to warrant.

"*Sapré!*" said Duclosse the mealman of the monument; "it's like a timber of cheese stuck up. What's that to make a fuss about?"

"Fig of Eden," muttered Jules Marmotte, with one eye on Jeanne, "any fool could saw a better-looking thing out of ice!"

"Pish," said fat Caroché the butcher, "that Francois has a rattle in his *capote*. He'd spent his time better chipping bones on my meat-block!"

But Jeanne could not bear this—the greasy whopping butcher-man!

"What! what! the messy stupid Caroché, who can't write his name," she said in a fury, "the sausage-potted Caroché, who doesn't remember that Francois Lagarre made his brother's tombstone, and charged him nothing for the verses he wrote for it, nor for the *Agnus*

Dei he carved on it! No, Caroché does not remember his brother Baptiste the fighter, as brave as Caroché is a coward! He doesn't remember the verse on Baptiste's tombstone, does he?"

François heard this speech, and his eyes lighted tenderly as he looked at Jeanne: he loved this fury of defence and championship. Someone in the crowd turned to him and asked him to say the verses. At first he would not; but when Caroché said that it was only his fun, that he meant nothing against François, the young man recited the words slowly—an epitaph on one who was little better than a prize-fighter, a splendid bully.

Leaning a hand against the white shaft of the Patriots' memory, he said:

"Blows I have struck, and blows a-many taken,
Wrestling I've fallen, and I've rose up again;
Mostly I've stood—
I've had good bone and blood;
Others went down though fighting might and main.
Now death steps in—
Death the price of sin.
The fall it will be his; and though I strive and strain,
One blow will close my eyes, and I shall never waken."

"Good enough for Baptiste," said Duclosse the mealman.

The wave of feeling was now altogether with François, and presently he walked away with Jeanne Marchand and her mother, and the crowd dispersed. Jeanne was very happy for a few hours, but in the evening she was unhappy, for she saw François going towards the house of the Seigneur; and during many weeks she was still more unhappy, for every three or four days she saw the same thing.

Meanwhile François worked as he had never before worked in his life. Night and day he was shut in his shop, and for two months he came with no epitaphs for the Curé, and no new tombstones were set up in the graveyard. The influence of the lady at the Seigneury was upon him, and he himself believed it was for his salvation. She had told him of great pieces of sculpture she had seen, had sent and got from Quebec City, where he had never been, pictures of some of the world's masterpieces in sculpture, and he had lost himself in the study of them and in the depths of the girl's eyes. She meant no harm; the man interested her beyond what was reasonable in one of his station in life. That was all, and all there ever was.

Presently people began to gossip, and a story crept round that, in a new shed which he had built behind his shop, François was chiseling out of stone the nude figure of a woman. There were one or two who professed they had seen it. The wildest gossip said that the figure was that of the young lady at the Seigneury.

François saw no more of Jeanne Marchand; he thought of her sometimes, but that was all. A fever of work was on him. Twice she came to the shed where he laboured, and knocked at the door. The first time, he asked who was there. When she told him he opened the door just a little way, smiled at her, caught her hand and pressed it, and, when she would have entered, said, "No, no, another day, Jeanne!" and shut the door in her face.

She almost hated him because he had looked so happy. Still another day she came knocking. She called to him, and this time he opened the door and admitted her. That very hour she had heard again the story of the nude stone woman in the shed, and her

heart was full of jealousy, fury, and suspicion. He was very quiet, he seemed tired. She did not notice that. Her heart had throbbed wildly as she stepped inside the shed. She looked round, all delirious eagerness for the nude figure.

There it was, covered up with a great canvas! Yes, there were the outlines of the figure. How shapely it seemed, even inside the canvas!

She stepped forward without a word, and snatched at the covering. He swiftly interposed and stopped her hand.

"I will see it," she said.

"Not to-day," he answered.

"I tell you I will!" She wrenched her hand free and caught at the canvas. A naked foot and ankle showed. He pinioned her wrists with one hand and drew her towards the door, determination and anger in his face.

"You beast, you liar!" she said. "You beast! beast! beast!"

Then, with a burst of angry laughter, she opened the door herself. "You ain't fit to know," she said; "they told the truth about you! Now you can take the canvas off her. Good-bye!" With that she was gone.

The following day was Sunday. François did not attend Mass, and such strange scandalous reports had reached the Curé that he was both disturbed and indignant. That afternoon, after vespers (which François did not attend), the Curé made his way to the sculptor's workshop, followed by a number of parishioners.

The crowd increased, and when the Curé knocked at the door it seemed as if half the village was there.

The chief witness against François had been Jeanne Marchand. That very afternoon she had told the Curé,

with indignation and bitterness, that there was no doubt about it; all that had been said was true.

François, with wonder and some confusion, admitted the Curé. When M. Fabre demanded that he be taken to the new workshop, François led the way. The crowd pushed after, and presently the place was full. A hundred eyes were fastened upon the canvas-covered statue, which had been the means of the young man's undoing.

Terrible things had been said—terrible things of François, and of the girl at the Seigneury. They knew the girl for a Protestant and an Englishwoman, and that in itself was a sort of sin. And now every ear was alert to hear what the Curé should say, what denunciation should come from his lips when the covering was removed. For that it should be removed was the determination of every man present. Virtue was at its supreme height in Pontiac that day. Lajeunesse the blacksmith, Muroc the charcoal-man, and twenty others were as intent upon preserving a high standard of morality, by force of arms, as if another Tarquin were harbouring shame and crime in this cedar shed.

The whole thing came home to François with a choking smothering force. Art, now in its very birth in his heart and life, was to be garrotted. He had been unconscious of all the wicked things said about him: now he knew all!

"Remove the canvas from the figure," said the Curé sternly. Stubbornness and resentment filled François' breast. He did not stir.

"Do you oppose the command of the Church?" said the Curé, still more severely; "remove the canvas!"

"It is my work—my own: my idea, my stone, and the labour of my hands," said François doggedly.

The Curé turned to Lajeunesse and made a motion towards the statue. Lajeunesse, with a burning righteous joy, snatched off the canvas. There was one instant of confusion in the faces of all—of absolute silence. Then the crowd gasped. The Curé's hat came off, and every other hat followed. The Curé made the sign of the cross upon his breast and forehead, and every other man, woman and child present did the same. Then all knelt, save François and the Curé himself.

What they saw was a statue of Christ, a beautiful benign figure; barefooted, with a girdle about his waist: the very truth and semblance of a man. The type was strong and yet delicate; vigorous and yet refined; crude and yet noble; a leader of men—the God-Man, not the Man-God.

After a moment's silence the Curé spoke. "François, my son," said he, "we have erred. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have followed each after his own way, but God hath laid on Him"—he looked towards the statue—"the iniquity of us all."

François stood still a moment gazing at the Curé, doggedly, bitterly; then he turned and looked scornfully at the crowd, now risen to their feet again. Among them was a girl crying as if her heart would break. It was Jeanne Marchand. He regarded her coldly.

"You were so ready to suspect," he said.

Then he turned once more to the Curé. "I meant it as my gift to the Church, monsieur le Curé—to Pontiac, where I was born again. I waked up here to

what I might do in sculpture, and you—you all were so ready to suspect! Take it, it is my last gift."

He went to the statue, touched the hands of it lovingly, and stooped and kissed the feet. Then, without more words, he turned and left the shed and the house.

Pouring out into the street, the people watched him cross the bridge that led into another parish—and into another world: for from that hour François Lagarre was never seen in Pontiac.

The statue that he made stands upon a little hill above the valley where the beaters of flax come in the autumn, through which the woodsmen pass in winter and in spring. But François Lagarre, under another name, works in another land.

While the Curé lived he heard of him and of his fame now and then, and to the day of his death he always prayed for him. He was wont to say to the little Avocat whenever François' name was mentioned:

"The spirit of a man will support him, but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

THE TRAGIC COMEDY OF ANNETTE

THE chest of drawers, the bed, the bedding, the pieces of linen and the pile of yarn had been ready for many months. Annette had made inventory of them every day since the *dot* was complete—at first with a great deal of pride, after a time more shyly and wistfully: Bénéoit did not come. He had said he would be down with the first drive of logs in the summer, and at the little church of St. Saviour they would settle everything and get the Curé's blessing. Almost anybody would have believed in Bénéoit. He had the brightest scarf, the merriest laugh, the quickest eyes, and the blackest head in Pontiac; and no one among the river drivers could sing like him. That was, he said gaily, because his earrings were gold, and not brass like those of his comrades. Thus Bénéoit was a little vain, and something more; but old ladies such as the Little Chemist's wife said he was *galant*. Probably only Medallion, the auctioneer, and the Curé did not lose themselves in the general admiration; they thought he was to Annette like a gas-jet to a holy candle.

Annette was the youngest of twelve, and one of a family of thirty—for some of her married brothers and sisters and their children lived in her father's long white house by the river. When Bénéoit failed to come in the spring, they showed their pity for her by abusing him; and when she pleaded for him they said things which had an edge. They ended by offering to marry

her to Farette, the old miller, to whom they owed money for flour. They brought Farette to the house at last, and she was patient while he ogled her, and smoked his strong *tabac*, and tried to sing. She was kind to him, and said nothing until, one day, urged by her brother Solime, he mumbled the childish *chanson* Bénéoit sang the day he left, as he passed their house going up the river—

“ High in a nest of the tam'rac tree,
 Swing under, so free, and swing over ;
 Swing under the sun and swing over the world,
 My snow-bird, my gay little lover—
 My gay little lover, *don, don!* . . . *don, don!* ”

“ When the winter is done I will come back home,
 To the nest swinging under and over.
 Swinging under and over and waiting for me,
 Your rover, my snow-bird, your rover—
 Your lover and rover, *don, don!* . . . *don, don!* ”

It was all very well in the mouth of the sprightly, sentimental Bénéoit; it was hateful foolishness in Farette. Annette now came to her feet suddenly, her pale face showing defiance, and her big brown eyes flicking anger. She walked up to the miller and said: “ You are old and ugly and a fool! But I do not hate you; I hate Solime, my brother, for bringing you here. There is the bill for the flour? Well, I will pay it myself—and you can go as soon as you like! ”

Then she put on her coat and *capote* and mittens, and went to the door. “ Where are you going, Ma'm'selle? ” cried Solime, in high rage.

“ I am going to Monsieur Medallion, ” she said.

Hard profane words followed her, but she ran, and

never stopped till she came to Medallion's house. He was not there. She found him at the Little Chemist's.

That night a pony and cart took away from the house of Annette's father the chest of drawers, the bed, the bedding, the pieces of linen, and the pile of yarn which had been made ready so long against Bénéoit's coming. Medallion had said he could sell them at once, and he gave her the money that night; but this was after he had had a talk with the Curé, to whom Annette had told all. Medallion said he had been able to sell the things at once, but he did not tell her that they were stored in a loft of the Little Chemist's house, and that the Little Chemist's wife had wept over them and carried the case to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin.

It did not matter that the father and brothers stormed. Annette was firm; the *dot* was hers, and she would do as she wished. She carried the money to the miller. He took it grimly, and gave her a receipt, grossly mis-spelled, and, as she was about to go, brought his fist heavily down on his leg and said: "*Mon Dieu!* It is brave—it is grand—it is an angel." Then he chuckled: "So, so! It was true! I am old, ugly, and a fool. Eh, well! I have my money." Then he took to counting it over in his hand, forgetting her, and she left him growling gleefully over it.

She had not a happy life, but her people left her alone, for the Curé had said stern things to them. All during the winter she went out fishing every day at a great hole in the ice—bitter cold work, and fit only for a man; but she caught many fish, and little by little had aside pennies to buy things to replace what she had sold. It had been a hard trial to her to sell them. But for the kind-hearted Curé she would have repined. The worst thing happened, however, when the ring

Bénoit had given her dropped from her thin finger into the water where she was fishing. Then a shadow descended on her, and she grew almost unearthly in the anxious patience of her face. The Little Chemist's wife declared that the look was death. Perhaps it would have been if Medallion had not sent a lad down to the bottom of the river and got the ring. He gave it to the Curé, who put it on her finger one day after confession. Then she brightened, and waited on and on patiently.

She waited for seven years. Then the deceitful Bénoit came pensively back to her, a cripple from a timber accident. She believed what he told her: and that was where her comedy ended and her tragedy began.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE MILLER

MEDALLION put it into his head on the day that Bénéoit and Annette were married. "See," said Medallion, "Annette wouldn't have you—and quite right—and she took what was left of that Bénéoit, who'll laugh at you over his mush-and-milk."

"Bénéoit will want flour some day, with no money." The old man chuckled and rubbed his hands.

"That's nothing; he has the girl—an angel!"

"Good enough! That is what I said of her—an angel!"

"Get married yourself, Farette."

For reply Farette thrust a bag of native *tabac* into Medallion's hands. Then they went over the names of the girls in the village. Medallion objected to those for whom he wished a better future, but they decided at last on Julie Lachance, who, Medallion thought, would in time profoundly increase Farette's respect for the memory of his first wife; for Julie was not an angel. Then the details were ponderously thought out by the miller, and ponderously acted upon, with the dry approval of Medallion, who dared not tell the Curé of his complicity, though he was without compunction. He had a sense of humour, and knew there could be no tragedy in the thing—for Julie. But the miller was a careful man and original in his methods. He still possessed the wardrobe of the first wife, carefully preserved by his sister, even to the wonderful grey

watered-poplin which had been her wedding-dress. These he had taken out, shaken free of cayenne, camphor, and lavender, and sent upon the back of Parpon, the dwarf, to the house where Julie lodged (she was an orphan), following himself with a statement on brown paper, showing the extent of his wealth, and a parcel of very fine flour from the new stones in his mill. All was spread out, and then he made a speech, describing his virtues, and condoning his one offence of age by assuring her that every tooth in his head was sound. This was merely the concession of politeness, for he thought his offer handsome.

Julie slyly eyed the wardrobe and as slyly smiled, and then, imitating Farette's manner—though Farette could not see it, and Parpon spluttered with laughter—said:

“ M'sieu', you are a great man. The grey poplin is noble, also the flour, and the writing on the brown paper. M'sieu' you go to Mass, and all your teeth are sound; you have a dog-churn, also three featherbeds, and five rag carpets; you have sat on the grand jury. M'sieu', I have a *dot*; I accept you. M'sieu', I will keep the brown paper, and the grey poplin, and the flour.” Then with a grave elaborate bow, “ M'sieu' ! ”

That was the beginning and end of the courtship. For though Farette came every Sunday evening and smoked by the fire, and looked at Julie as she arranged the details of her dowry, he only chuckled, and now and again struck his thigh and said:

“ *Mon Dieu*, the ankle, the eye, the good child, Julie, there ! ”

Then he would fall to thinking and chuckling again. One day he asked her to make him some potato-cakes of the flour he had given her. Her answer was a

catastrophe. She could not cook; she was even ignorant of buttermilk pudding. He went away overwhelmed, but came back some days afterwards and made another speech. He had laid his plans before Medallion, who approved of them. He prefaced the speech by placing the blank marriage certificate on the table. Then he said that his first wife was such a cook that when she died he paid for an extra Mass and twelve very fine candles. He called upon Parpon to endorse his words, and Parpon nodded to all he said, but, catching Julie's eye, went off into gurgles of laughter, which he pretended were tears, by smothering his face in his *capote*. "Ma'm'selle," said the miller, "I have thought. Some men go to the Avocat or the Curé with great things; but I have been a pilgrimage, I have sat on the grand jury. There, Ma'm'selle! His chest swelled, he blew out his cheeks, he pulled Parpon's ear as Napoleon pulled Murat's. "Ma'm'selle, *allons!* Babette, the sister of my first wife—ah! she is a great cook also—well, she was pouring into my plate the soup—there is nothing like pea-soup with a fine lump of pork, and thick molasses for the buckwheat cakes. Ma'm'selle, *allons!* Just then I thought. It is very good: you shall see; you shall learn how to cook. Babette will teach you. Babette said many things. I got mad and spilt the soup. Ma'm'selle—eh, holy! what a turn has your waist!"

At length he made it clear to her what his plans were, and to each and all she consented; but when he had gone she sat and laughed till she cried, and for the hundredth time took out the brown paper and studied the list of Farette's worldly possessions.

The wedding-day came. Julie performed her last real

act of renunciation when, in spite of the protests of her friends, she wore the grey watered-poplin, made modern by her own hands. The wedding-day was the anniversary of Farette's first marriage, and the Curé faltered in the exhortation when he saw that Farette was dressed in complete mourning, even to the crape hat-streamers, as he said, out of respect for the memory of his first wife, and as a kind of tribute to his second. At the wedding-breakfast, where Medallion and Parpon were in high glee, Farette announced that he would take the honeymoon himself, and leave his wife to learn cooking from old Babette.

So he went away alone cheerfully, with hymeneal rice falling in showers on his mourning garments; and his new wife was as cheerful as he, and threw rice also.

She learned how to cook, and in time Farette learned that he had his one true inspiration when he wore mourning at his second marriage.

MATHURIN

THE tale was told to me in the little valley beneath Dalgrothe Mountain one September morning. Far and near one could see the swinging of the flail, and the laughter of a ripe summer was upon the land. There was a little Calvary down by the river-side, where the flax-beaters used to say their prayers in the intervals of their work; and it was just at the foot of this that Angèle Rouvier, having finished her prayer, put her rosary in her pocket, wiped her eyes with the hem of her petticoat, and said to me:

“Ah, dat poor Mathurin! I wipe my tears for him!” she said to me again.

“Tell me all about him, won’t you, Madame Angèle? I want to hear *you* tell it,” I added hastily, for I saw that she would despise me if I showed ignorance of Mathurin’s story. Her sympathy with Mathurin’s memory was real, but her pleasure at the compliment I paid her was also real.

“Ah! It was ver’ long time ago—yes. My gran’-mudder she remember dat Mathurin ver’ well. He is not ver’ big man. He has a face—oh! not ver’ handsome, not so more handsome as yours—*non!* His clothes, dey hang on him all loose; his hair, it is all some grey, and it blow about him head. He is clean to de face, no beard—no, nosing like dat. But his eye; là! M’sieu’, his eye! It is like a coal which you blow in your hand, whew!—all bright. My gran’-mudder,

she say, *Voilà*, you can light your pipe with de eyes of dat Mathurin! She know. She say dat M'sieu' Mathurin's eyes dey shine in de dark. My gran'-fadder he say he not need any lights on his carriole when Mathurin ride with him in de dark.

"Ah, sure! it is ver' true what I tell you all de time. If you cut off Mathurin at de chin, all de way up, you will say de top of him it is a priest. All de way down from his neck, oh, he is just no better as yoursel' or my Jean—*non!* He is a ver' good man. Only one bad ting he do. Dat is why I pray for him; dat is why everybody pray for him—only one bad ting. *Sapristi!* If I have only one ting to say God-have-mercy for, I tink dat ver' good, I do my penance happy. Well, dat Mathurin him use to teach de school. De Curé he ver' fond of him. All de leetla children, boys and girls, dey all say, '*C'est bon Mathurin!*' He is not ver' cross—*non!* He have no wife, no child; jes live by himself all alone. But he is ver' good friends with everybody in Pontiac. When he go 'long de street, everybody say, 'Ah, dere go de good Mathurin!' He laugh, he tell story, he smoke leetla tabac, he take leetla white wine behin' de door; dat is nosing—*non!*

"He have in de parish five, ten, twenty children all call Mathurin; he is godfadder with dem—yes. So he go about with plenty of sugar and sticks of candy in his pocket. He never forget once de age of every leetla child dat call him godfadder. He have a brain dat work like a clock. My gran'-fadder he say dat Mathurin have a machine in his head. It make de words, make de thoughts, make de fine speech like de Curé, make de gran' poetry—oh, yes!

"When de King of Englan' go to sit on de throne, Mathurin write ver' nice verse to him. And by-and-by

dere come to Mathurin a letter—*voilà*, dat is a letter! It have one, two, three, twenty seals; and de King he say to Mathurin, '*Merci mille fois, M'sieu*'. You are ver' polite. I tank you. I will keep your verses to tell me dat my French subjects are all loyal like M. Mathurin.' Dat is ver' nice, but Mathurin is not proud—*non!* He write six verses for my gran'mudder—*hein!* Dat is someting. He write two verses for de King of Englan' and he write six verses for my gran'mudder—you see! He go on so, dis week, dat week, dis year, dat year, all de time.

“Well, by-and-by dere is trouble in Pontiac. It is ver' great trouble. You see dere is a fight 'gainst de King of Englan', and dat is too bad. It is not his fault; he is ver' nice man; it is de bad men who make de laws for de King in Quebec. Well, one day all over de country everybody take him gun, and de leetla bullets, and say, I will fight de soldier of de King of Englan'—like dat! Ver' well, dere was twenty men in Pontiac, ver' nice men—you will find de names cut in a stone on de church; and den, tree times as big, you will find Mathurin's name. Ah, dat is de ting! You see, dat rebellion you English call it, we call it de War of de Patriot—de first War of de Patriot, not de second—well, call it what you like, *quelle différence?* The King of Englan' smash him Patriot War all to pieces. Den dere is ten men of de twenty come back to Pontiac ver' sorry. Dey are not happy, nobody are happy! All de wives, dey cry; all de children, dey are afraid! Some people say, What fools you are; others say, You are no good; but everybody in him heart is ver' sorry all de time.

“Ver' well, by-and-by dere come to Pontiac what you call a colonel with a dozen men—what for, you

tink? To try de patriots. He will stan' dem against de wall and shoot dem to death—kill dem dead! When dey come, de Curé he is not in Pontiac—*non*, not dat day; he is gone to anudder village. The English soldier he has de ten men drew up before de church. All de childrën and all de wives dey cry and cry, and dey feel so bad. Certainlee, it is a pity. But de English soldier he say he will march dem off to Quebec, and everybody know dat is de end of de patriots.

“All at once de colonel's horse it grow ver' wild, it rise up high and dance on him hind feet, and—*voilà!* he topple him over backwards, and de horse fall on de colonel and smaish him—smaish him till he go to die. Ver' well; de colonel, what does he do? Dey lay him on de steps of de church. Den he say, ‘Bring me a priest, quick, for I go to die!’ Nobody answer. De colonel he say, ‘I have a hundred sins all on my mind; dey are on my heart like a hill. Bring to me de priest!’—he groan like dat. Nobody speak at first; den somebody say de priest is not here. ‘Find me a priest,’ say de colonel; ‘find me a priest.’ For he tink de priest will not come, becos he go to kill de patriots. ‘Bring me a priest,’ he say again, ‘and all de ten shall go free!’ He say it over and over. He is smaish to pieces, but his head it is all right. All at once de doors of de church open behin' him—what you tink? Everybody's heart it stan' still, for dere is Mathurin dress as de priest, with a leetla boy to swing de censer. Everybody say to himself, What is dis? Mathurin is dress as de priest—ah! dat is a sin. It is what you call blasphemé.

“The English soldier he look up at Mathurin and say, ‘Ah, a priest at last! ah, M'sieu' le Curé, comfort me!’

“ Mathurin look down on him and say, ‘ M’sieu’, it is for you to confess your sins, and to have de office of de Church. But first, as you have promise just now, you must give up dese poor men, who have fight for what dey tink is right. You will let dem go free dis moment !’

“ ‘ Yes, yes,’ say de English colonel ; ‘ dey shall go free. Only give me de help of de Church at my last !’

“ Mathurin turn to de other soldiers and say, ‘ Unloose de men.’

“ De colonel nod his head and say, ‘ Unloose de men.’ Den de men are unloose, and dey all go away, for Mathurin tell dem to go quick.

“ Everybody is ver’ ‘fraid becos’ of what Mathurin do. Mathurin he say to de soldiers, ‘ Lift him up and bring him in de church.’ Dey bring him up to de steps of de altar. Mathurin look at de man for a while, and it seem as if he cannot speak to him ; but de colonel say, ‘ I have give you my word. Give me comfort of de Church before I die.’ He is in ver’ great pain, so Mathurin he turn roun’ to everybody dat stan’ by, and tell dem to say de prayers for de sick. Everybody get him down on his knees and say de prayer. Everybody say : ‘ *Lord have mercy. Spare him, O Lord ; deliver him, O Lord, from Thy wrath !*’ And Mathurin he pray all de same as a priest, ver’ soft and gentle. He pray on and on, and de face of de English soldier it get ver’ quiet and still, and de tear drop down his cheek. - And just as Mathurin say at de last his sins dey are forgive, he die. Den Mathurin, as he go away to take off his robes, he say to himself, ‘ *Miserere mei Deus ! miserere mei Deus !*’

“ So dat is de ting dat Mathurin do to save de patriots from de bullets. Ver’ well, de men dey go

free, and when de Governor at Quebec he hear de truth, he say it is all right. Also de English soldier die in peace and happy, becos' he tink his sins are forgive. But den—dere is Mathurin and his sin to pretend he is a priest! The Curé he come back, and dere is a great trouble.

“ Mathurin he is ver' quiet and still. Nobody come near him in him house; nobody go near to de school. But he sit alone all day in de school, and he work on de blackboar' and he write on de slate; but dere is no child come, becos' de Curé has forbid any one to speak to Mathurin. Not till de next Sunday, den de Curé send word for Mathurin to come to de church. Mathurin come to de steps of de altar; den de Curé say to him:

“ ‘ Mathurin, you have sin a great sin. If it was two hundred years ago you would be put to death for dat.’

“ Mathurin he say very soft, ‘ Dat is no matter, I am ready to die now. I did it to save de fadders of de children and de husbands of de wives. I did it to make a poor sinner happy as he go from de world. De sin is mine!’

“ Den de Curé he say, ‘ De men are free, dat is good; de wives have dere husbands and de children dere fathers. Also de man who confess his sins—de English soldier—to whom you say de words of a priest of God, he is forgive. De Spirit of God it was upon him when he die, becos' you speak in de name of de Church. But for you, blasphemmer, who take upon you de holy ting, you shall suffer! For penance, all your life you shall teach a child no more!’

“ Ah! M'sieu' le Curé he know dat is de greatest penance for de poor Mathurin! Den he set him other tings to do; and every month for a whole year

Mathurin come on his knees all de way to de church, but de Curé say, 'Not yet are you forgive.' At de end of de year Mathurin he look so thin, so white, you can blow through him. Every day he go to him school and write on de blackboar', and mark on de slate, and call de roll of de school. But dere is no answer, for dere is no child. But all de time de wives of de men dat he have save, and de children, dey pray for him. And by-and-by all de village pray for him, so sorry.

"It is so for two years; and den dey say dat Mathurin he go to die. He cannot come on his knees to de church; and de men whose life he save, dey come to de Curé and ask him to take de penance from Mathurin. De Curé say, 'Wait till nex' Sunday.' So nex' Sunday Mathurin is carry to de church—he is too weak to walk on his knees. De Curé he stan' at de altar, and he read a letter from de Pope, which say dat Mathurin his penance is over, and he is forgive; dat de Pope himself pray for Mathurin, to save his soul! So.

"Mathurin all at once he stan' up, and his face it smile and smile, and he stretch out his arms as if dey are on a cross, and he say, 'Lord, I am ready to go,' and he fall down. But de Curé catch him as he fall, and Mathurin say, 'De children—let dem come to me dat I teach dem before I die!' An' all de children in de church dey come close to him, and he sit up and smile at dem, and he say:

"'It is de class in 'rithmetic. How much is three times four?' And dem all answer, 'Three times four is twelve.' And he say, 'May de Twelve Apostles pray for me!' Den he ask, 'Class in geography—how far is it roun' de world?' And dey answer, 'Twenty-four thousand miles.' He say, 'Good; it is

not so far to God! De school is over all de time,' he say, and dat is only everyting of poor Mathurin. He is dead.

"When de Curé lay him down, after he make de Sign upon him, he kiss his face and say: 'Mathurin, now you are a priest unto God!'"

That was Angèle Rouvier's story of Mathurin, the Master of the School, for whom the women and the children pray in the parish of Pontiac, though the school has been dismissed these hundred years and more.

THE STORY OF THE LIME-BURNER.

FOR a man in whose life there had been tragedy he was cheerful. He had a habit of humming vague notes in the silence of conversation, as if to put you at your ease. His body and face were lean and arid, his eyes oblique and small, his hair straight and dry and straw-colored; and it flew out crackling with electricity, to meet his cap as he put it on. He lived alone in a little hut near his lime-kiln by the river, with no near neighbours, and few companions save his four dogs; and these he fed sometimes at expense of his own stomach. He had just enough crude poetry in his nature to enjoy his surroundings. For he was well placed. Behind the lime-kiln rose knoll on knoll, and beyond these, the verdant hills, all converging to Dalgrothe mountain. In front of it was the river with its banks dropping forty feet, and below, the rapids, always troubled and sportive. On the farther side of the river lay peaceful areas of meadow and corn land, and low-roofed, hovering farm-houses, with one larger than the rest, having a windmill and a flagstaff. This building was almost large enough for a manor, and indeed it was said that it had been built for one just before the conquest in 1759, but the war had destroyed the ambitious owner, and it had become a farm-house. Paradis always knew the time of the day by the way the light fell on the windmill. He had owned this farm once, he and his brother Fabian, and he had loved

it as he loved Fabian, and he loved it now as he loved Fabian's memory. In spite of all, they were cheerful memories, both of brother and house.

At twenty-three they had become orphans, with two hundred acres of land, some cash, horses and cattle, and plenty of credit in the parish, or in the county, for that matter. Both were of hearty dispositions, but Fabian had a taste for liquor, and Henri for pretty faces and shapely ankles. Yet no one thought the worse of them for that, especially at first. An old servant kept house for them and cared for them in her honest way both physically and morally. She lectured them when at first there was little to lecture about. It is no wonder that when there came a vast deal to reprove, the *bonne* desisted altogether, overwhelmed by the weight of it.

Henri got a shock the day before their father died when he saw Fabian lift the brandy used to mix with the milk of the dying man, and pouring out the third of a tumbler, drink it off, smacking his lips as he did so as though it were a cordial. That gave him a cue to his future and to Fabian's. After their father died Fabian gave way to the vice. He drank in the taverns, he was at once the despair and the joy of the parish; for, wild as he was, he had a gay temper, a humorous mind, a strong arm, and was the universal lover. The Curé, who did not, of course, know one-fourth of his wildness, had a warm spot for him in his heart. But there was a vicious strain in him somewhere, and it came out one day in a perilous fashion.

There was in the hotel of the Louis Quinze an English servant from the west called Nell Barraway. She had been in a hotel in Montreal, and it was there Fabian had seen her as she waited at table. She was

a splendid-looking creature, all life and energy, tall, fair-haired, and with a charm above her kind. She was also an excellent servant, could do as much as any two women in any house, and was capable of more airy *diablerie* than any ten of her sex in Pontiac. When Fabian had said to her in Montreal that he would come to see her again, he told her where he lived. She came to see him instead, for she wrote to the landlord of the Louis Quinze, enclosed fine testimonials, and was at once engaged. Fabian was stunned when he entered the Louis Quinze and saw her waiting at table, alert, busy, good to see. She nodded at him with a quick smile as he stood bewildered just inside the door, then said in English: "This way, monsieur."

As he sat down he said in English also, with a laugh and with snapping eyes: "Good Lord, what brings you here, ladybird?"

As she pushed a chair under him she almost hissed through his hair, "You!" and then was gone away to fetch pea soup for six hungry men.

The Louis Quinze did more business now in three months than it had done before in six. But it became known among a few in Pontiac that Nell was notorious. How it had crept up from Montreal no one guessed, and, when it did come, her name was very intimately associated with Fabian's. No one could say that she was not the most perfect of servants, and also no one could say that her life in Pontiac had not been exemplary. Yet wise people had made up their minds that she was determined to marry Fabian, and the wisest declared that she would do so in spite of everything—religion (she was a Protestant), character, race. She was clever, as the young Seigneur found, as the little Avocat was forced to admit, as the Curé allowed

with a sigh, and she had no airs of badness at all and very little of usual coquetry. Fabian was enamoured, and it was clear that he intended to bring the woman to the manor one way or another.

Henri admitted the fascination of the woman, felt it, despaired, went to Montreal, got proof of her career, came back, and made his final and only effort to turn his brother from the girl.

He had waited an hour outside the hotel for his brother, and when Fabian got in, he drove on without a word. After a while, Fabian, who was in high spirits, said:

"Open your mouth, Henri. Come along, sleepy-head."

Straightway he began to sing a rollicking song, and Henri joined in with him heartily, for the spirit of Fabian's humour was contagious:

" There was a little man,
The foolish Guilleri
Carabi.
He went unto the chase,
Of partridges the chase.
Carabi.
Titi Carabi,
Toto Carabo,
You're going to break your neck,
My lovely Guilleri."

He was about to begin another verse when Henri stopped him, saying:

" You're going to break *your* neck, Fabian."

" What's up, Henri?" was the reply.

" You're drinking hard, and you don't keep good company."

Fabian laughed. "Can't get the company I want, so what I can get I have, Henri, my dear."

"Don't drink." Henri laid his free hand on Fabian's knee.

"Whiskey-wine is meat and drink to me—I was born on New Year's Day, old coffin-face. Whiskey-wine day, they ought to call it. Holy! the empty jars that day."

Henri sighed. "That's the drink, Fabian," he said patiently. "Give up the company. I'll be better company for you than that girl, Fabian."

"Girl? What the devil do you mean?"

"She, Nell Barraway was the company I meant, Fabian."

"Nell Barraway—you mean her? Bosh! I'm going to marry her, Henri."

"You mustn't, Fabian," said Henri, eagerly clutching Fabian's sleeve.

"But I must, my Henri. She's the best-looking, wittiest girl I ever saw—splendid. Never lonely with her."

"Looks and brains isn't everything, Fabian."

"Isn't it, though! Isn't it? You just try it."

"Not without goodness." Henri's voice weakened.

"That's bosh. Of course it is, Henri, my dear. If you love a woman, if she gets hold of you, gets into your blood, loves you so that the touch of her fingers sets your pulses flying, you don't care a sou whether she is good or not."

"You mean whether she *was* good or not?"

"No, I don't. I mean *is* good or not. For if she loves you she'll travel straight for your sake. Pshaw! You don't know anything about it."

"I know all about it."

"Know all about it! You're in love—you?"

"Yes."

Fabian sat open-mouthed for a minute. "Godam!" he said. It was his one English oath.

"Is she good company?" he asked after a minute.

"She's the same as you keep—the very same."

"You mean Nell—Nell?" asked Fabian, in a dry, choking voice.

"Yes, Nell. From the first time I saw her. But I'd cut my hand off first. I'd think of you; of our people that have been here for two hundred years; of the rooms in the old house where mother used to be."

Fabian laughed nervously. "Holy heaven, and you've got her in your blood, too!"

"Yes, but I'd never marry her. Fabian, at Montreal I found out all about her. She was as bad——"

"That's nothing to me, Henri," said Fabian, "but something else is. Here you are now. I'll make a bargain." His face showed pale in the moonlight. "If you'll drink with me, do as I do, go where I go, play the devil when I play it, and never squeal, never hang back, I'll give her up. But I've got to have you, got to have you all the time, everywhere, hunting, drinking, or letting alone. You'll see me out, for you're stronger, had less of it. I'm for the little low house in the grass, *bientôt*. Stop the horses.

Henri stopped them and they got out. They were just opposite the lime-kiln, and they had to go a few hundred yards before they came to the bridge to cross the river to their home. The light of the fire shone in their faces as Fabian handed the flask to Henri, and said: "Let's drink to it, Henri. You half, and me half." He was deadly pale.

Henri drank to the finger-mark set, and then Fabian lifted the flask to his lips.

"Good-bye, Nell," he said. "Here's to the good times we've had!" He emptied the flask, and threw it over the bank into the burning lime, and Garotte, the old lime-burner, being half asleep, did not see or hear.

The next day the two went on a long hunting expedition, and the following month Nell Barraway left for Montreal.

Henri kept to his compact, drink for drink, sport for sport. One year the crops were sold before they were reaped, horses and cattle went little by little, then came mortgage, and still Henri never wavered, never weakened, in spite of the Curé and all others. The brothers were always together, and never from first to last did Henri lose his temper, or openly lament that ruin was coming surely on them. What money Fabian wanted he got. The Curé's admonitions availed nothing, for Fabian would go his gait. The end came on the very spot where the compact had been made, for, passing the lime-kiln one dark night, as the two rode home together, Fabian's horse shied, the bank of the river gave way, and with a startled "*Ah, Henri!*" the profligate and his horse were gone into the river below.

Next month the farm and all were sold, Henri Paradis succeeded the old lime-burner at his post, drank no more ever, and lived his life in sight of the old home.

THE WOODSMAN'S STORY OF THE GREAT WHITE CHIEF

THE old woodsman shifted the knife with which he was mending his fishing-rod from one hand to the other, and looked at it musingly, before he replied to Medallion. "Yes, m'sieu', I knew the White Chief, as they called him: this was his"—holding up the knife; "and this"—taking a watch from his pocket. "He gave them to me; I was with him in the Circle on the great journey."

"Tell us about him, then," Medallion urged; "for there are many tales, and who knows which is the right one?"

"The right one is mine. Holy, he was to me like a father then! I know more of the truth than any one." He paused a moment, looking out on the river where the hot sun was playing with all its might, then took off his cap with deliberation, laid it beside him, and speaking as it were into the distance, began:

"He once was a trader of the Hudson's Bay Company. Of his birth some said one thing, some another; I know he was *beaucoup gentil*, and his heart, it was a lion's! Once, when there was trouble with the Chipp'ways, he went alone to their camp, and say he will fight their strongest man, to stop the trouble. He twist the neck of the great fighting man of the tribe, so that it go with a snap, and that ends it, and he was made a chief, for, you see, in their hearts they all hated their

strong man. Well, one winter there come down to Fort o' God two Esquimaux, and they said that three white men are wintering by the Coppermine River; they had travelled down from the frozen seas when their ship was lock in the ice, but can get no farther. They were sick with the evil skin, and starving. The White Chief say to me: ' Galloir, will you go to rescue them?' I would have gone with him to the ends of the world—and this was near one end."

The old man laughed to himself, tossed his jet-black hair from his wrinkled face, and, after a moment, went on: " There never was such a winter as that. The air was so still by times that you can hear the rustle of the stars and the shifting of the northern lights; but the cold at night caught you by the heart and clamp it—*Mon Dieu!* how it clamp! We crawl under the snow and lay in our bags of fur and wool, and the dogs hug close to us. We were sorry for the dogs; and one died, and then another, and there is nothing so dreadful as to hear the dogs howl in the long night—it is like ghosts crying in an empty world. The circle of the sun get smaller and smaller, till he only travel along the high edge of the northwest. We got to the river at last, and found the camp. There is one man dead—only one; but there were bones—ah, m'sieu', you not guess what a thing it is to look upon the bones of men, and know *that*——!"

Medallion put his hand on the old man's arm. " Wait a minute," he said. Then he poured out coffee for both, and they drank before the rest was told.

" It's a creepy story," said Medallion, " but go on."

" Well, the White Chief look at the dead man as he sit there in the snow, with a book and a piece of paper beside him, and the pencil in the book. The face

is bent forward to the knees. The White Chief pick up the book and pencil, and then kneel down and gaze up in the dead man's face, all hard like stone and crusted with frost. I thought he would never stir again, he look so long. I think he was puzzled. Then he turn and say to me: 'So quiet, so awful, Galloir!' and got up. Well, but it was cold then, and my head seemed big and running about like a ball of air. But I light a spirit-lamp, and make some coffee, and he open the dead man's book—it is what they call a diary—and begin to read. All at once I hear a cry, and I see him drop the book on the ground, and go to the dead man and jerk his fist as if to strike him in the face. But he did not strike."

Galloir stopped, and lighted his pipe, and was so long silent that Medallion had to jog him into speaking. He puffed the smoke so that his face was in the cloud, and he said through it: "No, he did not strike. He get to his feet, and spoke: 'God forgive her!' like that! and come and take up the book again, and read. He eat and drunk, and read the book again, and I know by his face that something more than cold was clamp his heart.

"'Shall we bury him in the snow?' I say. 'No,' he spoke, 'let him sit there till the judgment. This is a wonderful book, Galloir,' he went on. 'He was a brave man, but the rest!—the rest!'—then under his breath almost: 'She was so young—but a child.' I not understand that. We start away soon, leaving *the thing* there: for four days, and then I see that the White Chief will never get back to Fort Pentecost; but he read the dead man's book much. . . ."

"I cannot forget that one day. He lay looking at the world—nothing but the waves of snow, shining

blue and white, on and on. The sun lift an eye of blood in the north, winking like a devil as I try to drive Dèath away by calling in his ear. He wake all at once; but his eyes seem asleep. He tell me to take the book to a great man in Montreal—he give me the name. Then he take out his watch—it is stop—and this knife, and put them into my hands, and then he pat my shoulder. He motion to have the bag drawn over his head. I do it. . . . Of course that was the end!”

“But what about the book?” Medallion asked.

“That book? It was strange. I took it to the man in Montreal—*Tonnerre*, what a fine house and good wine had he!—and told him all. He whip out a scarf, and blow his nose loud, and say very angry: ‘So, she’s lost both now. What a scoundrel he was! . . .’ Which one did he mean? I not understand ever since.”

UNCLE JIM

HE was no uncle of mine, but it pleased me that he let me call him Uncle Jim.

It seems only yesterday that, for the first time, on a farm "over the border," not far from Pontiac, I saw him standing by a log outside the wood-house door, splitting maple knots. He was all bent by years and hard work, with muscles of iron, hands gnarled and lumpy, but clinching like a vise; grey head thrust forward on shoulders which had carried forkfuls of hay and grain, and leaned to the cradle and the scythe, and been heaped with cordwood till they were like hide and metal; white straggling beard and red watery eyes, which, to me, were always hung with an intangible veil of mystery—though that, maybe, was my boyish fancy. Added to all this he was so very deaf that you had to speak clear and loud into his ear; and many people he could not hear at all, if their words were not sharp-cut, no matter how loud. A silent, withdrawn man he was, living close to Mother Earth, twin-brother of Labour, to whom Morning and Daytime were sounding-boards for his axe, scythe, saw, flail, and milking-pail, and Night a round hollow of darkness into which he crept, shutting the doors called Silence behind him, till the impish page of Toil came tapping again, and he stepped awkwardly into the working world once more. Winter and summer saw him putting the kettle on the fire a few minutes after four o'clock, in winter issuing

with lantern from the kitchen door to the stable and barn to feed the stock; in summer sniffing the grey dawn and looking out on his fields of rye and barley before he went to gather the cows for milking and take the horses to water.

For forty years he and his worn-faced wife bowed themselves beneath the yoke, first to pay for the hundred-acre farm, and then to bring up and educate their seven children. Something noble in them gave them ambitions for their boys and girls which they had never had for themselves; but when had gone the forty years, in which the little farm had twice been mortgaged to put the eldest son through college as a doctor, they faced the bitter fact that the farm had passed from them to Rodney, the second son, who had come at last to keep a hotel in a town fifty miles away. Generous-hearted people would think that these grown-up sons and daughters should have returned the old people's long toil and care by buying up the farm and handing it back to them, their rightful refuge in the decline of life. But it was not so. They were tenants where they had been owners, dependents where they had been givers, slaves where once they were masters. The old mother toiled without a servant, the old man without a helper, save in harvest time.

But the great blow came when Rodney married the designing milliner who flaunted her wares opposite his bar-room; and, somehow, from the date of that marriage, Rodney's good fortune and the hotel declined. When he and his wife first visited the little farm after their marriage the old mother shrank away from the young woman's painted face, and ever afterwards an added sadness showed in her bearing and in her patient smile. But she took Rodney's wife through the

house, showing her all there was to show, though that was not much. There was the little parlour with its hair-cloth chairs, rag carpet, centre table, and iron stove with black pipes, all gaily varnished. There was the parlour bedroom off it, with the one feather-bed of the house bountifully piled up with coarse home-made blankets, topped by a silk patchwork quilt, the artistic labour of the old wife's evening hours while Uncle Jim peeled apples and strung them to dry from the rafters. There was a room, dining-room in summer, and kitchen dining-room in winter, as clean as aged hands could scrub and dust it, hung about with stray pictures from illustrated papers, and a good old clock in the corner ticking life, and youth, and hope away. There was the buttery off that, with its meagre china and crockery, its window looking out on the field of rye, the little orchard of winter apples, and the hedge of cranberry bushes. Upstairs were rooms with no ceilings, where, lying on a corn-husk bed, you reached up and touched the sloping roof, with windows at the end only, facing the buckwheat field, and looking down two miles toward the main road—for the farm was on a concession or side-road, dusty in summer, and in winter sometimes impassable for weeks together. It was not much of a home, as anyone with the mind's eye can see, but four stalwart men and three fine women had been born, raised, and quartered there, until, with good clothes, and speaking decent English and tolerable French, and with money in their pockets, hardly got by the old people, one by one they issued forth into the world.

The old mother showed Rodney's wife what there was for eyes to see, not forgetting the three hives of bees on the south side, beneath the parlor window.

She showed it with a kind of pride, ~~for it all~~ seemed good to her, and every dish, and every chair, and every corner in the little house had to her a glory of its own, because of those who had come and gone—the firstlings of her flock, the roses of her little garden of love, blooming now in a rougher air than ranged over the little house on the hill. She had looked out upon the pine-woods to the east and the meadow-land to the north, the sweet valley between the rye-field and the orchard, and the good honest air that had blown there for forty years, bracing her heart and body for the battle of love and life, and she had said through all, Behold it is very good.

But the pert milliner saw nothing of all this; she did not stand abashed in the sacred precincts of a home where seven times the Angel of Death had hovered over a birth-bed. She looked into the face which Time's finger had anointed, and motherhood had etched with trouble, and said:

“Tisn't much, is it? Only a clap-board house, and no ceilings upstairs, and rag carpets—pshaw!”

And when she came to wash her hands for dinner, she threw aside the unscented, common bar-soap, and, shrugging her narrow shoulders at the coarse towel, wiped her fingers on her cambric handkerchief. Any other kind of a woman, when she saw the old mother going about with her twisted wrist—a doctor's bad work with a fracture—would have tucked up her dress, and tied on an apron, to help. But no, she sat and preened herself with the tissue-paper sort of pride of a vain milliner, or nervously shifted about, lifting up this and that, curiously supercilious, her tongue rattling on to her husband and to his mother in a shallow, foolish way. She couldn't say, however, that anything

was out of order or ill-kept about the place. The old woman's rheumatic fingers made corners clean, and wood as white as snow, the stove was polished, the tins were bright, and her own dress, no matter what her work, neat as a girl's, although the old graceful poise of the body had shifted out of drawing.

But the real crisis came when Rodney, having stood at the wood-house door, and blown the dinner-horn as he used to do when a boy, the sound floating and crying away across the rye-field, the old man came—for, strange to say, that was the one sound he could hear easily, though, as he said to himself, it seemed as small as a pin, coming from ever so far away. He came heavily up from the barn-yard, mopping his red face and forehead, and now and again raising his hand to shade his eyes, concerned to see the unknown visitors, whose horse and buggy were in the stable-yard. He and Rodney greeted outside warmly enough, but there was some trepidation too in Uncle Jim's face—he felt trouble brewing; and there is no trouble like that which comes between parent and child. Silent as he was, however, he had a large and cheerful heart, and nodding his head he laughed the deep, quaint laugh which Rodney himself of all his sons had—and he was fonder of Rodney than any. He washed his hands in the little basin outside the wood-house door, combed out his white beard, rubbed his red, watery eyes, tied a clean handkerchief round his neck, put on a rusty but clean old coat, and a minute afterwards was shaking hands for the first time with Rodney's wife. He had lived much apart from his kind, but he had a mind that fastened upon a thought and worked it down until it was an axiom. He felt how shallow was this thin, flaunting woman of flounces and cheap rouge; he saw her

sniff at the brown sugar—she had always had white at the hotel; and he noted that she let Rodney's mother clear away and wash the dinner things herself. He felt the little crack of doom before it came.

It came about three o'clock. He did not return to the rye-field after dinner, but stayed and waited to hear what Rodney had to say. Rodney did not tell his little story well, for he foresaw trouble in the old home; but he had to face this and all coming dilemmas as best he might. With a kind of shame-facedness, yet with an attempt to carry the thing off lightly, he told Uncle Jim, while, inside, his wife told the old mother, that the business of the hotel had gone to pot (he did not say who was the cause of that) and they were selling out to his partner and coming to live on the farm.

"I'm tired anyway of the hotel job," said Rodney. "Farming's a better life. Don't you think so, dad?"

"It's better for me, Rod," answered Uncle Jim, "it's better for me."

Rodney was a little uneasy. "But won't it be better for me?" he asked.

"Mebbe," was the slow answer, "mebbe, mebbe so."

"And then there's mother, she's getting too old for the work, ain't she?"

"She's done it straight along," answered the old man, "straight along till now."

"But Millie can help her and we'll have a hired girl, eh?"

"I dunno, I dunno," was the brooding answer; "the place ain't going to stand it."

"Oh, we'll get more out of it," answered Rodney. "I'll stock it up, I'll put more under barley. All the thing wants is working, dad. Put more in, get more out. Now ain't that right?"

The other was looking off towards the rye-field, where for forty years, up and down the hill-side, he had travelled with the cradle and the scythe, putting all there was in him into it, and he answered, blinking along the avenue of the past—

“Mebbe, mebbe!”

Rodney fretted under the old man's vague replies, and said, “But darn it all, can't you tell us what you think?”

His father did not take his eyes off the rye-field. “I'm thinking,” he answered, in the same old-fashioned way, “that I've been 'working here since you were born, Rod. I've blundered along somehow, just boggling my way through. I ain't got anything more to say. The farm ain't mine any more, but I'll keep my scythe sharp and my axe ground just as I always did, and I'm for workin' as I've always worked as long as I'm let to stay.”

“Good Lord, dad, don't talk that way. Things ain't going to be any different for you and mother than they are now. Only, of course——” He paused.

The old man pieced out the sentence: “Only, of course, there can't be two women rulin' one house, Rod, and you know it as well as I do.”

Exactly how Rodney's wife told the old mother of the great change Rodney never knew; but when he went back to the house the grey look in his mother's face told him more than her words ever told. Before they left that night the pink milliner had already planned the changes which were to celebrate her coming and her ruling.

So Rodney and his wife came, all the old man prophesied in a few brief sentences to his wife proving true. There was no great struggle on the mother's part; she

stepped aside from governing, and became as like a servant as could be. An insolent servant girl came, and she and Rodney's wife started a little drama of incompetency, which should end as the hotel-keeping ended. Wastefulness, cheap luxury, tawdry living, took the place of the old, frugal, simple life. But the mother went about with that unchanging sweetness of face, and a body withering about a fretted soul. She had no bitterness, only a miserable distress. But every slight that was put upon her, every change, every new-fangled idea, from the white sugar to the scented soap and the yellow buggy, rankled in the old man's heart. He had resentment both for the old wife and himself, and he hated the pink milliner for the humiliation that she heaped upon them both. Rodney did not see one-fifth of it, and what he did see lost its force, because, strangely enough, he loved the gaudy wife who wore gloves on her bloodless hands as she did the housework and spent numberless afternoons in trimming her own bonnets. Her peevishness grew apace as the newness of the experience wore off. Uncle Jim seldom spoke to her, as he seldom spoke to anybody, but she had an inkling of the rancour in his heart, and many a time she put blame upon his shoulders to her husband, when some unavoidable friction came.

A year, two years, passed, which were as ten upon the shoulders of the old people, and then, in the dead of winter, an important thing happened. About the month of March Rodney's first child was expected. At the end of January Rodney had to go away, expecting to return in less than a month. But, in the middle of February, the woman's sacred trouble came before its time. And on that day there fell such a storm as

had not been seen for many a year. The concession road was blocked before day had well set in; no horse could go ten yards in it. The nearest doctor was miles away at Pontiac, and for any man to face the journey was to connive with death. The old mother came to Uncle Jim, and, as she looked out of a little unfrosted spot on the window at the blinding storm, told him that the pink milliner would die. There seemed no other end to it, for the chances were a hundred to one against the strongest man making a journey for the doctor, and another hundred to one against the doctor's coming.

No one knows whether Uncle Jim could hear the cries from the torture-chamber, but, after standing for a time mumbling to himself, he wrapped himself in a heavy coat, tied a muffler about his face, and went out. If they missed him they must have thought him gone to the barn, or in the drive-shed sharpening his axe. But the day went on and the old mother forgot all the wrongs that she had suffered, and yearned over the trivial woman who was hurrying out into the Great Space. Her hours seemed numbered at noon, her moments measured as it came towards sundown, but with the passing of the sun the storm stopped, and a beautiful white peace fell on the world of snow, and suddenly out of that peace came six men; and the first that opened the door was the doctor. After him came Uncle Jim supported between two others.

Uncle Jim had made the terrible journey, falling at last in the streets of Pontiac with frozen hands and feet, not a dozen rods from the doctor's door. They brought him to, he told his story, and, with the abating of the storm, the doctor and the villagers drove down to the concession road, and then made their way slowly

up across the fields, carrying the old man with them, for he would not be left behind.

An hour after the doctor entered the parlour bedroom the old mother came out to where the old man sat, bundled up beside the fire with bandaged hands and feet.

"She's safe, Jim, and the child too," she said softly.

The old man twisted in his chair, and blinked into the fire. "Dang my soul!" he said.

The old woman stooped and kissed his grey tangled hair. She did not speak, and she did not ask him what he meant; but there and then they took up their lives again and lived them out.

THE HOUSE WITH THE TALL PORCH

NO one ever visited the House except the Little Chemist, the Avocat, and Medallion; and Medallion, though merely an auctioneer, was the only person on terms of intimacy with its owner, the old Seigneur, who for many years had never stirred beyond the limits of his little garden. At rare intervals he might be seen sitting in the large stone porch which gave overweighted dignity to the house, itself not very large.

An air of mystery surrounded the place: in summer the grass was rank, the trees seemed huddled together in gloom about the houses, the vines appeared to ooze on the walls, and at one end, where the window-shutters were always closed and barred, a great willow drooped and shivered; in winter the stone walls showed naked and grim among the gaunt trees and furtive shrubs.

None who ever saw the Seigneur could forget him—a tall figure with stooping shoulders; a pale, deeply lined, clean-shaven face; and a forehead painfully white, with blue veins showing; the eyes handsome, penetrative, brooding, and made indescribably sorrowful by the dark skin around them. There were those in Pontiac, such as the Curé, who remembered when the Seigneur was constantly to be seen in the village; and then another person was with him always, a tall, handsome youth, his son. They were fond and proud

of each other, and were religious, and good citizens in a high-bred, punctilious way.

At that time the Seigneur was all health and stalwart strength. But one day a rumour went abroad that he had quarrelled with his son because of the wife of Farette the miller. No one outside knew if the thing was true, but Julie, the miller's wife, seemed rather to plume herself that she had made a stir in her little world. Yet the curious *habitants* came to know that the young man had gone, and after a few years his having once lived there had become a mere memory. But whenever the Little Chemist set foot inside the tall porch he remembered; the Avocat was kept in mind by papers which he was called upon to read and alter from time to time; the Curé never forgot, because when the young man went he lost not one of his flock, but two; and Medallion, knowing something of the story, had wormed a deal of truth out of the miller's wife. Medallion knew that the closed, barred rooms were the young man's; and he knew also that the old man was waiting, waiting, in a hope which he never even named to himself.

One day the silent old housekeeper came rapping at Medallion's door, and simply said to him, "Come—the Seigneur!"

Medallion went, and for hours sat beside the Seigneur's chair, while the Little Chemist watched and sighed softly in a corner, now and again rising to feel the sick man's pulse or to prepare a draught. The housekeeper hovered behind the high-backed chair, and when the Seigneur dropped his handkerchief—now, as always, of the exquisite fashion of a past century—she put it gently in his hand.

Once when the Little Chemist touched his wrist, his

dark eyes rested on him with inquiry, and he said: "Soon?"

It was useless trying to shirk the persistency of that look. "Eight hours, perhaps, sir," the Little Chemist answered, with painful shyness.

The Seigneur seemed to draw himself up a little, and his hand grasped his handkerchief tightly for an instant; then he said: "Soon. Thank you."

After a little, his eyes turned to Medallion and he seemed about to speak, but still kept silent. His chin dropped on his breast, and for a time he was motionless and shrunken; but still there was a strange little curl of pride—or disdain—on his lips. At last he drew up his head, his shoulders came erect, heavily, to the carved back of the chair, where, strange to say, the Stations of the Cross were figured, and he said, in a cold, ironical voice: "The Angel of Patience has lied!"

The evening wore on, and there was no sound, save the ticking of the clock, the beat of rain upon the windows, and the deep breathing of the Seigneur. Presently he started, his eyes opened wide, and his whole body seemed to listen.

"I heard a voice," he said.

"No one spoke, my master," said the housekeeper.

"It was a voice without," he said.

"Monsieur," said the Little Chemist, "it was the wind in the eaves."

His face was almost painfully eager and sensitively alert. "Hush!" he said; "I hear a voice in the tall porch!"

"Sir," said Medallion, laying a hand respectfully on his arm, "it is nothing."

With a light on his face and a proud, trembling

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energy, he got to his feet. "It is the voice of my son," he said. "Go—go, and bring him in."

No one moved. But he was not to be disobeyed. His ears had been growing keener as he neared the subtle atmosphere of that Brink where man strips himself to the soul for a lonely voyaging, and he waved the woman to the door.

"Wait," he said, as her hand fluttered at the handle. "Take him to another room. Prepare a supper such as we used to have. When it is ready I will come. But, listen, and obey. Tell him not that I have but four hours of life. Go, good woman, and bring him in."

It was as he said. They found the son weak and fainting, fallen within the porch—a worn, bearded man, returned from failure and suffering and the husks of evil. They clothed him and cared for him, and strengthened him with wine, while the woman wept over him, and at last set him at the loaded, well-lighted table. Then the Seigneur came in, leaning his arm very lightly on that of Medallion with a kind of kingly air; and, greeting his son before them all, as if they had parted yesterday, sat down. For an hour they sat there, and the Seigneur talked gaily with a colour to his face, and his great eyes glowing. At last he rose, lifted his glass, and said: "The Angel of Patience is wise. I drink to my son!"

He was about to say something more, but a sudden whiteness passed over his face. He drank off the wine, and as he put the glass down shivered, and fell back in his chair.

"Two hours short, Chemist!" he said, and smiled, and was Still.

PARPON THE DWARF

I

PARPON perched in a room at the top of the mill. He could see every house in the village, and he knew people a long distance off. He was a merry dwarf, and, in his way, had good times in the world. He turned the misery of the world into a game, and grinned at it from his high little eyrie with the dormer window. He had lived with Farette, the miller, for some years, serving him with a kind of humble insolence.

It was not a joyful day for Farette when he married Julie. She led him a pretty travel. He had started as her master; he ended by being her slave and victim. She was a wilful wife. She had made the Seigneur de la Rivière, of the House with the Tall Porch, to quarrel with his son Armand, so that Armand disappeared from Pontiac for years.

When that happened she had already stopped confessing to the good Curé; so it may be guessed there were things she did not care to tell, and for which she had no repentance. But Parpon knew, and Medallion the auctioneer guessed; and the Little Chemist's wife hoped that it was not so. When Julie looked at Parpon, as he perched on a chest of drawers, with his head cocked and his eyes blinking, she knew that he read the truth. But she did not know all that was in his

head; so she said sharp things to him, as she did to everybody, for she had a very poor opinion of the world, and thought all as flippant as herself. She took nothing seriously; she was too vain. Except that she was sorry Armand was gone, she rather plumed herself on having separated the Seigneur and his son—it was something to have been the pivot in a tragedy. There came others to the village, as, for instance, a series of clerks to the Avocat; but she would not decline from Armand upon them. She merely made them miserable.

But she did not grow prettier as time went on. Even Annette, the sad wife of the drunken Bénéoit, kept her fine looks; but then, Annette's life was a thing for a book, and she had a beautiful child. You cannot keep this from the face of a woman. Nor can you keep the other: when the heart rusts the rust shows.

After a good many years, Armand de la Rivière came back in time to see his father die. Then Julie picked out her smartest ribbons, capéred at the mirror, and dusted her face with oatmeal, because she thought that he would ask her to meet him at the Bois Noir, as he had done long ago. The days passed, and he did not come. When she saw Armand at the funeral—a tall man with a dark beard and a grave face, not like the Armand she had known, he seemed a great distance from her, though she could almost have touched him once as he turned from the grave. She would have liked to throw herself into his arms, and cry before them all, "Mon Armand!" and go away with him to the House with the Tall Porch. She did not care about Farette, the mumbling old man who hungered for money, having ceased to hunger for anything else

—even for Julie, who laughed and shut her door in his face, and cowed him.

After the funeral Julie had a strange feeling. She had not much brains, but she had some shrewdness, and she felt her romance askew. She stood before the mirror, rubbing her face with oatmeal and frowning hard. Presently a voice behind her said, "Madame Julie, shall I bring another bag of meal?"

She turned quickly, and saw Parpon on a table in the corner, his legs drawn up to his chin, his black eyes twinkling.

"Idiot!" she cried, and threw the meal at him. He had a very long, quick arm. He caught the basin as it came, but the meal covered him. He blew it from his beard, laughing softly, and twirled the basin on his finger-point.

"Like that, there will need two bags!" he said.

"Imbecile!" she cried, standing angry in the centre of the room.

"Ho, ho! what a big word! See what it is to have the tongue of fashion!"

She looked helplessly round the room.

"I will kill you!"

"Let us die together," answered Parpon; "we are both sad."

She snatched the poker from the fire, and ran at him. He caught her wrists with his great hands, big enough for tall Medallion, and held her.

"I said 'together,'" he chuckled; "not one before the other. We might jump into the flume at the mill, or go over the dam at the Bois Noir; or, there is Farette's musket which he is cleaning—gracious! but it will kick when it fires, it is so old!"

She sank to the floor. "Why does he clean the

musket?" she asked; fear, and something wicked too, in her eye. Her fingers ran forgetfully through the hair on her forehead, pushing it back, and the marks of small-pox showed. The contrast with her smooth cheeks gave her a weird look. Parpon got quickly on the table again and sat like a Turk, with a furtive eye on her.

"Who can tell?" he said at last. "That musket has not been fired for years. It would not kill a bird; the shot would scatter: but it might kill a man; a man is bigger."

"Kill a man!" She showed her white teeth with a savage little smile.

"Of course it is all guess. I asked Fârette what he would shoot, and he said, 'Nothing good to eat.' I said I would eat what he killed. Then he got pretty mad, and said I couldn't eat my own head. Holy! that was funny for Fârette. Then I told him there was no good going to the Bois Noir, for there would be nothing to shoot. Well, did I speak true, Madame Julie?"

She was conscious of something new in Parpon. She could not define it. Presently she got to her feet and said: "I don't believe you—you're a monkey!"

"A monkey can climb a tree quick; a man has to take the shot as it comes." He stretched up his powerful arms, with a swift motion as of climbing, laughed, and added: "Madame Julie, Fârette has poor eyes, he could not see a hole in a ladder. But he has a kink in his head about the Bois Noir. People have talked——"

"Pshaw!" Julie said, crumpling her apron and throwing it out; "he is a child and a coward. He

should not play with a gun; it might go off and hit him."

Parpon hopped down and trotted to the door. Then he turned and said, with a sly gurgle: "Farette keeps at that gun. What is the good? There will be nobody at the Bois Noir any more. I will go and tell him."

She rushed at him with fury, but seeing Annette Bénéoit in the road, she stood still and beat her foot angrily on the doorstep. She was ripe for a quarrel, and she would say something hateful to Annette; for she never forgot that Farette had asked Annette to be his wife before herself was considered. She smoothed out her wrinkled apron, and waited.

"Good day, Annette," she said loftily.

"Good day Julie," was the quiet reply.

"Will you come in?"

"I am going to the mill for flax-seed. Bénéoit has rheumatism."

"Poor Bénéoit!" said Julie, with a meaning toss of her head.

"Poor Bénéoit!" responded Annette gently. Her voice was always sweet. One would never have known that Bénéoit was a drunken idler.

"Come in. I will give you the meal from my own. Then it will cost you nothing," said Julie, with an air.

"Thank you, Julie, but I would rather pay."

"I do not sell my meal," answered Julie. "What's a few pounds of meal to the wife of Farette? I will get it for you. Come in, Annette."

She turned towards the door, then stopped all at once. There was the oatmeal which she had thrown at Parpon, the basin, and the poker. She wished she had not asked Annette in. But in some things she had

a quick wit, and she hurried to say: "It was that yellow cat of Parpon's. It spilt the meal, and I went at it with the poker."

Perhaps Annette believed her. She did not think about it one way or the other; her mind was with the sick Bénéoit. She ~~nodded~~ and said nothing, hoping that the flax-seed would be got at once. But when she saw that Julie expected an answer, she said, "Cecilia, my little girl, has a black cat—so handsome. It came from the house of the poor Seigneur de la Rivière a year ago. We took it back, but it would not stay."

Annette spoke simply and frankly, but her words cut like a knife.

Julie responded, with a click of malice: "Look out that the black cat doesn't kill the dear Cecilia."

Annette started, but she did not believe that cats sucked the life from children's lungs, and she replied calmly: "I am not afraid; the good God keeps my child." She then got up and came to Julie, and said: "It is a pity, Julie, that you have not a child. A child makes all right."

Julie was wild to say a fierce thing, for it seemed that Annette was setting off Bénéoit against Farette; but the next moment she grew hot, her eyes smarted, and there was a hint of trouble at her throat. She had lived very fast in the last few hours, and it was telling on her. She could not rule herself—she could not play a part so well as she wished. She had not felt before the thing that gave a new pulse to her body and a joyful pain at her breasts. Her eyes got blurred so that so that she could not see Annette, and, without a word, she hurried to get the meal. She was silent when she came back. She put the meal into Annette's hands. She felt that she would like to talk of Armand. She

knew now there was no evil thought in Annette. She did not like her more for that, but she felt she must talk, and Annette was safe. So she took her arm. "Sit down, Annette," she said. "You come so seldom."

"But there is Bénéoit, and the child——"

"The child has the black cat from the House!" There was again a sly ring to Julie's voice, and she almost pressed Annette into a chair.

"Well, it must only be a minute."

"Were you at the funeral to-day?" Julie began.

"No; I was nursing Bénéoit. But the poor Seigneur! They say he died without confession. No one was there except M'sieu' Medallion, the Little Chemist, old Sylvie, and M'sieu' Armand. But, of course, you have heard everything."

"Is that all you know?" queried Julie.

"Not much more. I go out little, and no one comes to me except the Little Chemist's wife—she is a good woman."

"What did she say?"

"Only something of the night the Seigneur died. He was sitting in his chair, not afraid, but very sad, we can guess. By-and-by he raised his head quickly. 'I hear a voice in the Tall Porch,' he said. They thought he was dreaming. But he said other things, and cried again that he heard his son's voice in the Porch. They went and found M'sieu' Armand. Then a great supper was got ready, and he sat very grand at the head of the table, but died quickly, when making a grand speech. It was strange he was so happy, for he did not confess—he hadn't absolution!"

This was more than Julie had heard. She showed excitement.

"The Seigneur and M'sieu' Armand were good friends when he died?" she asked.

"Quite."

All at once Annette remembered the old talk about Armand and Julie. She was confused. She wished she could get up and run away; but haste would look strange.

"You were at the funeral?" she added after a minute.

"Everybody was there."

"I suppose M'sieu' Armand looks very fine and strange after his long travel," said Annette shyly, rising to go.

"He was always the grandest gentleman in the province," answered Julie, in her old vain manner. "You should have seen the women look at him to-day! But they are nothing to him—he is not easy to please!"

"Good day," said Annette, shocked and sad, moving from the door. Suddenly she turned, and laid a hand on Julie's arm. "Come and see my sweet Cecilia," she said. "She is gay; she will amuse you."

She was thinking again what a pity it was that Julie had no child.

"To see Cecilia and the black cat? Very well—some day."

You could not have told what she meant. But, as Annette turned away again, she glanced at the mill; and there, high up in the dormer window, sat Parpon, his yellow cat on his shoulder, grinning down at her.

She wheeled and went into the house.

II

Parpon sat in the dormer window for a long time, the cat purring against his head, and not seeming the least afraid of falling, though its master was well out on the window-ledge. He kept mumbling to himself:

“Ho! ho! Farette is below there with the gun, rubbing and rubbing at the rust! Holy Mother, how it will kick! But he will only meddle. If she set her eye at him and come up bold and said, ‘Farette, go and have your whiskey-wine, and then to bed!’ he would sneak away. But he has heard something. Some fool, perhaps that Bénéoit—no, he is sick,—perhaps the herb-woman has been talking, and he thinks he will make a fuss. But it will be nothing. And M’sieu’ Armand, will he look at her!” He chuckled at the cat, which set its head back and hissed in reply. Then he sang something to himself.

Parpon was a poor little dwarf with a big head, but he had one thing which made up for all, though no one knew it—or, at least, he thought so. The Curé himself did not know. He had a beautiful voice. Even in speaking it was pleasant to hear, though he roughened it in a way. It pleased him that he had something of which the finest man or woman would be glad. He had said to himself many times that even Armand de la Rivière would envy him.

Sometimes Parpon went away off into the Bois Noir, and, perched there in a tree, sang away—a man, shaped something like an animal, with a voice like a muffled silver bell.

Some of his songs he had made himself: wild things, broken thoughts, not altogether human; the language

of a world between man and the spirits. But it was all pleasant to hear, even when, at times, there ran a weird, dark thread through the woof. No one in the valley had ever heard the thing he sang softly as he sat looking down at Julie:—

“ The little white smoke blows there, blows here,

The little blue wolf comes down—

C'est là !

And the hill-dwarf laughs in the young wife's ear,

When the devil comes back to town—

C'est là ! ”

It was crooned quietly, but it was distinct and melodious, and the cat purred an accompaniment, its head thrust into his thick black hair. From where Parpon sat he could see the House with the Tall Porch, and, as he sang, his eyes ran from the miller's doorway to it.

Off in the grounds of the dead Seigneur's manor he could see a man push the pebbles with his foot, or twist the branch of a shrub thoughtfully as he walked. At last another man entered the garden. The two greeted warmly, and passed up and down together.

III

“ My good friend,” said the Curé, “ it is too late to mourn for those lost years. Nothing can give them back. As Parpon the dwarf said—you remember him, a wise little man, that Parpon—as he said one day, ‘ For everything you lose you get something, if only how to laugh at yourself ! ’ ”

Armand nodded thoughtfully, and answered, “ You are right,—you and Parpon. But I cannot forgive

myself; he was so fine a man: tall, with a grand look, and a tongue like a book. Ah, yes, I can laugh at myself—for a fool.”

He thrust his hands into his pockets, and tapped the ground nervously with his foot, shrugging his shoulders a little. The priest took off his hat and made the sacred gesture, his lips moving. Armand caught off his hat also, and said, “You pray—for him?”

“For the peace of a good man’s soul.”

“He did not confess; he had no rites of the Church; he had refused you many years.”

“My son, he had a confessor.”

Armand raised his eyebrows. “They told me of no one.”

“It was the Angel of Patience.”

They walked on again for a time without a word. At last the Curé said, “You will remain here?”

“I cannot tell. This ‘here’ is a small world, and the little life may fret me. Nor do I know what I have of this”—he waved his hands towards the house—“or of my father’s property. I may need to be a wanderer again.”

“God forbid! Have you not seen the will?”

“I have got no farther than his grave,” was the sombre reply.

The priest sighed. They paced the walk again in silence. At last the Curé said: “You will make the place cheerful, as it once was.”

“You are persistent,” replied the young man, smiling. “Whoever lives here should make it less gloomy.”

“We shall soon know who is to live here. See, there is Monsieur Garon, and Monsieur Medallion also.”

“The Avocat to tell secrets, the auctioneer to sell

them—eh?" Armand went forward to the gate. Like most people, he found Medallion interesting; and the Avocat and he were old friends.

"You did not send for me, Monsieur," said the Avocat timidly, "but I thought it well to come, that you might know how things are; and Monsieur Medallion came because he is a witness to the will, and, in a case,"—here the little man coughed nervously,—"joint executor with Monsieur le Curé."

They entered the house. In a businesslike way Armand motioned them to chairs, opened the curtains, and rang the bell. The old housekeeper appeared, a sorrowful joy in her face, and Armand said, "Give us a bottle of the white-top, Sylvie, if there is any left."

"There is plenty, Monsieur," she said; "none has been drunk these twelve years."

The Avocat coughed, and said hesitatingly to Armand: "I asked Parpon the dwarf to come, Monsieur. There is a reason."

Armand raised his eyebrows in surprise. "Very good," he said. "When will he be here?"

"He is waiting at the Louis Quinze hotel."

"I will send for him," said Armand, and gave the message to Sylvie, who was entering the room.

After they had drunk the wine placed before them, there was silence for a moment, for all were wondering why Parpon should be remembered in the Seigneur's will.

"Well," said Medallion at last, "a strange little dog is Parpon. I could surprise you about him—and, there isn't any reason why I should keep the thing to myself. One day I was up among the rocks, looking for a strayed horse. I got tired, and lay down in the shade of the Rock of Red Pigeons—you know it. I fell

asleep. Something waked me. I got up and heard the finest singing you can guess: not like any I ever heard; a wild, beautiful, shivery sort of thing. I listened for a long time. At last it stopped. Then something slid down the rock. I peeped out, and saw Parpon toddling away."

The Curé stared incredulously, the Avocat took off his glasses and tapped his lips musingly, Armand whistled softly.

"So," said Armand at last, "we have the jewel in the toad's head. The clever imp hid it all these years—even from you, Monsieur le Curé."

"Even from me," said the Curé, smiling. Then, gravely: "It is strange, the angel in the stunted body."

"Are you sure it's an angel?" said Armand.

"Whoever knew Parpon do any harm?" queried the Curé.

"He has always been kind to the poor," put in the Avocat.

"With the miller's flour," laughed Medallion: "a pardonable sin." He gave a quizzical look at the Curé.

"Do you remember the words of Parpon's song?" asked Armand.

"Only a few lines; and those not easy to understand, unless one had an inkling."

"Had you the inkling?"

"Perhaps, Monsieur," replied Medallion, seriously. They eyed each other.

"We will have Parpon in after the will is read," said Armand suddenly, looking at the Avocat. The Avocat drew the deed from his pocket. He looked up hesitatingly, and then said to Armand, "You insist on it being read now?"

Armand nodded coolly, after a quick glance at Medallion. Then the Avocat began, and read to that point where the Seigneur bequeathed all his property to his son, should he return—on a condition. When the Avocat came to the condition Armand stopped him.

“I do not know in the least what it may be,” he said; “but there is only one by which I could feel bound. I will tell you. My father and I quarrelled”—here he paused for a moment, clenching his hands before him on the table—“about a woman; and years of misery came. I was to blame in not obeying him. I ought not to have given any cause for gossip. Whatever the condition as to that matter may be, I will fulfil it. My father is more to me than any woman in the world; his love of me was greater than that of any woman. I know the world—and women.”

There was a silence. He waved his hand to the Avocat to go on, and, as he did so, the Curé caught his arm with a quick, affectionate gesture. Then Monsieur Garon read the conditions: That Farette, the miller, should have a deed of the land on which his mill was built, with the dam of the mill—provided that Armand should never so much as by a word again address Julie, the miller’s wife. If he agreed to the condition, with solemn oath before the Curé, his blessing would rest upon his dear son, whom he still hoped to see before he died.

When the reading ceased there was silence for a moment, then Armand stood up, and took the will from the Avocat; but instantly, without looking at it, handed it back. “The reading is not finished,” he said. “And if I do not accept the condition, what then?”

Again Monsieur Garon read, his voice trembling a little. "The words of the will ran:—" But if this condition be not satisfied, I bequeath to my son Armand the house known as the House with the Tall Porch and the land, according to the deed thereof; and the residue of my property—with the exception of two thousand dollars, which I leave to the Curé of the parish, the good Monsieur Fabre—I bequeath to Parpon the dwarf."

Then followed a clause providing that in any case Parpon should have in fee simple the land known as the Bois Noir, and the hut thereon.

Armand sprang to his feet in surprise, blurting out something, then sat down, quietly took the will, and read it through carefully. When he had finished he looked inquiringly, first at Monsieur Garon, then at the Curé.

"Why Parpon?" he said, searchingly.

The Curé, amazed, spread out his hands in a helpless way. At that moment Sylvie announced Parpon. Armand asked that he should be sent in. "We'll talk of the will afterwards," he added.

Parpon trotted in, the door closed, and he stood blinking at them. Armand put a stool on the table. "Sit here, Parpon," he said. Medallion caught the dwarf under the arms and lifted him on the table.

Parpon looked at Armand furtively. "The wild hawk comes back to its nest," he said. "Well, well, what is it you want with the poor Parpon?"

He sat down and dropped his chin in his hands, looking round keenly. Armand nodded to Medallion, and Medallion to the priest, but the priest nodded back again. Then Medallion said, "You and I know the Rock of Red Pigeons, Parpon. It is a good place to

perch. One's voice is all to one's self there, as you know. Well, sing us the song of the little brown diver."

Parpon's hands twitched in his beard. He looked fixedly at Medallion. Presently he turned towards the Curé, and shrank so that he looked smaller still.

"It's all right, little son," said the Curé kindly.

Turning sharply on Medallion: "When was it you heard?" he said.

Medallion told him. He nodded, then sat very still. They said nothing, but watched him. They saw his eyes grow distant and absorbed, and his face took on a shining look, so that its ugliness was almost beautiful. All at once he slid from the stool and crouched on his knees. Then he sent out a low long note, like the toll of the bell-bird. From that time no one stirred as he sang, but sat and watched him. They did not even hear Sylvie steal in gently and stand in the curtains at the door.

The song was weird, with a strange thrilling charm; it had the slow dignity of a chant, the roll of an epic, the delight of wild beauty. It told of the little good Folk of the Scarlet Hills, in vague allusive phrases: their noiseless wanderings; their sojourning with the eagle, the wolf, and the deer; their triumph over the winds, the whirlpools, and the spirits of evil fame. It filled the room with the cry of the west wind; it called out of the frozen seas ghosts of forgotten worlds; it coaxed the soft breezes out of the South; it made them all to be at the whistle of the Scarlet Hunter who ruled the North.

Then, passing through veil after veil of mystery, it told of a grand Seigneur whose boat was overturned in a whirlpool, and was saved by a little brown diver.

And the end of it all, and the heart of it all, was in the last few lines, clear of allegory :

“ And the wheel goes round in the village mill,
And the little brown diver he tells the grain
And the grand Seigneur he has gone to meet
The little good Folk of the Scarlet Hills ! ”

At first, all were so impressed by the strange power of Parpon's voice, that they were hardly conscious of the story he was telling. But when he sang of the Seigneur they began to read his parable. Their hearts throbbed painfully.

As the last notes died away Armand got up, and, standing by the table, said, “ Parpon, you saved my father's life once ? ”

Parpon did not answer.

“ Will you not tell him, my son ? ” said the Curé, rising. Still Parpon was silent.

“ The son of your grand Seigneur asks you a question, Parpon,” said Medallion soothingly.

“ Oh, my grand Seigneur ! ” said Parpon, throwing up his hands. “ Once he said to me, ‘ Come, my brown diver, and live with me. ’ But I said, ‘ No, I am not fit. I will never go to you at the House with the Tall Porch. ’ And I made him promise that he would never tell of it. And so I have lived sometimes with old Farette. ” Then he laughed strangely again, and sent a furtive look at Armand.

“ Parpon,” said Armand gently, “ our grand Seigneur has left you the Bois Noir for your own. So, the hills and the Rock of Red Pigeons are for you—and the little good people, if you like. ”

Parpon, with fiery eyes, gathered himself up with a quick movement, then broke out, “ Oh, my grand

Seigneur! my grand Seigneur!" and fell forward, his head in his arms, laughing and sobbing together.

Armand touched his shoulder. "Parpon!" But Parpon shrank away.

Armand turned to the rest. "I do not understand it, gentlemen. Parpon does not like the young Seigneur as he liked the old."

Medallion, sitting in the shadow, smiled. He understood. Armand continued: "As for this testament, gentlemen, I will fulfil its conditions; though I swear, were I otherwise minded regarding the woman,"—here Parpon raised his head swiftly,—“I would not hang my hat for an hour in the Tall Porch.”

They rose and shook hands, then the wine was poured out, and they drank it off in silence. Parpon, however, sat with his head in his hands.

"Come, little comrade, drink," said Medallion, offering him a glass.

Parpon made no reply, but caught up the will, kissed it, put it into Armand's hand, and then, jumping down from the table, ran to the door and disappeared through it.

IV

The next afternoon the Avocat visited old Farette. Farette was polishing a gun, mumbling the while. Sitting on some bags of meal was Parpon, with a fierce twinkle in his eye. Monsieur Garon told Farette briefly what the Seigneur had left him. With a quick, greedy chuckle Farette threw the gun away.

"Man alive!" said he; "tell me all about it. Ah, the good news!"

"There is nothing to tell: he left it; that is all."

"Oh, the good Seigneur!" cried Farette, "the grand Seigneur!"

Some one laughed scornfully in the doorway. It was Julie.

"Look there!" she cried: "he gets the land, and throws away the gun! Brag and coward, miller! It is for *me* to say 'the grand Seigneur!'"

She tossed her head: she thought the old Seigneur had relented towards her. She turned away to the house with a flaunting air, and got her hat. At first she thought she would go to the House with the Tall Porch, but she changed her mind, and went to the Bois Noir instead. Parpon followed her a distance off. Behind, in the mill, Farette was chuckling and rubbing his hands.

Meanwhile, Armand was making his way towards the Bois Noir. All at once, in the shade of a great pine, he stopped. He looked about him astonished.

"This is the old place! What a fool I was, then!" he said.

At that moment Julie came quickly, and lifted her hands towards him. "Armand—beloved Armand!" she said.

Armand looked at her sternly, from her feet to her pitted forehead, then wheeled, and left her without a word.

She sank in a heap on the ground. There was a sudden burst of tears, and then she clenched her hands with fury.

Some one laughed in the trees above her—a shrill, wild laugh. She looked up, frightened. Parpon presently dropped down beside her.

"It was as I said," whispered the dwarf, and he

touched her shoulder. This was the full cup of shame. She was silent.

"There are others," he whispered again. She could not see his strange smile; but she noticed that his voice was not as usual. "Listen," he urged, and he sang softly over her shoulder for quite a minute. She was amazed.

"Sing again," she said.

"I have wanted to sing to you like that for many years," he replied; and he sang a little more. "*He* cannot sing like that," he wheedled, and he stretched his arm around her shoulder.

She hung her head, then flung it back again as she thought of Armand.

"I hate him!" she cried: "I hate him!"

"You will not throw meal on me any more, or call me idiot?" he pleaded.

"No, Parpon," she said.

He kissed her on the cheek. She did not resent it. But now he drew away, smiled wickedly at her, and said: "See, we are even now, poor Julie!" Then he laughed, holding his little sides with huge hands. "Imbecile!" he added, and, turning, trotted away towards the Rock of Red Pigeons.

She threw herself, face forward, in the dusty needles of the pines.

When she rose from her humiliation, her face was as one who has seen the rags of harlequinade stripped from that mummer *Life*, leaving only naked being. She had touched the limits of the endurable; her sordid little hopes had split into fragments. But when a human soul faces upon its past, and sees a gargoyle at every milestone where an angel should be, and in one flash of illumination—the touch of genius to the small-

est mind—understands the pitiless comedy, there comes the still stoic outlook.

Julie was transformed. All the possible years of her life were gathered into the force of one dreadful moment—dreadful and wonderful. Her mean vanity was lost behind the pale sincerity of her face—she was sincere at last! The trivial commonness was gone from her coquetting shoulders and drooping eyelids; and from her body had passed its flexuous softness. She was a woman; suffering, human, paying the price.

She walked slowly the way that Parpon had gone. Looking neither to right nor left, she climbed the long hillside, and at last reached the summit, where, bundled in a steep corner, was the Rock of Red Pigeons. As she emerged from the pines, she stood for a moment, and leaned with outstretched hand against a tree, looking into the sunlight. Slowly her eyes shifted from the Rock to the great ravine, to whose farther side the sun was giving bastions of gold. She was quiet. Presently she stepped into the light and came softly to the Rock. She walked slowly round it, as though looking for some one. At the lowest side of the Rock, rude narrow hollows were cut for the feet. With a singular ease she climbed to the top of it. It had a kind of hollow, in which was a rude seat, carved out of the stone. Seeing this, a set look came to her face: she was thinking of Parpon, the master of this place. Her business was with him.

She got down slowly, and came over to the edge of the precipice. Steadying herself against a sapling, she looked over. Down below was a whirlpool, rising and falling—a hungry funnel of death. She drew back. Presently she peered again, and once more withdrew. She gazed round, and then made another

tour of the hill, searching. She returned to the precipice. As she did so she heard a voice. She looked and saw Parpon seated upon a ledge of rock not far below. A mocking laugh floated up to her. But there was trouble in the laugh too—a bitter sickness. She did not notice that. She looked about her. Not far away was a stone, too heavy to carry but perhaps not too heavy to roll!

Foot by foot she rolled it over. She looked. He was still there. She stepped back. As she did so a few pebbles crumbled away from her feet and fell where Parpon perched. She did not see or hear them fall. He looked up, and saw the stone creeping upon the edge. Like a flash he was on his feet, and, springing into the air to the right, caught a tree steadfast in the rock. The stone fell upon the ledge and bounded off again. The look of the woman did not follow the stone. She ran to the spot above the whirlpool, and sprang out and down.

From Parpon there came a wail such as the hills of the north never heard before. Dropping upon a ledge beneath, and from that to a jutting tree, which gave way, he shot down into the whirlpool. He caught Julie's body as it was churned from life to death: and then he fought. There was a demon in the whirlpool, but God and demon were working in the man. Nothing on earth could have unloosed that long, brown arm from Julie's drenched body. The sun lifted an eyelid over the yellow bastions of rock, and saw the fight. Once, twice, the shaggy head was caught beneath the surface—but at last the man conquered!

Inch by inch, foot by foot, Parpon, with the lifeless Julie clamped in one arm, climbed the rough wall, on, on, up to the Rock of Red Pigeons. He bore her to

the top of it. Then he laid her down, and pillowed her head on his wet coat.

It is pitiful to see life hungering over death. The huge hands came slowly down Julie's soaked hair, along her blanched cheek and shoulders, caught her arms and held them. He peered into her face. The eyes had the film which veils Here from Hereafter. On the lips was a mocking smile. He stooped as if to kiss her. The smile stopped him. He drew back for a time, then he leaned forward, shut his eyes, and her cold lips were his.

Twilight—dusk—night came upon Parpon and his dead—the woman whom an impish fate had put into his heart with mockery and futile pain.

TIMES WERE HARD IN PONTIAC

IT was soon after the Rebellion, and there was little food to be had and less money, and winter was at hand. Pontiac, ever most loyal to old France, though obedient to the English, had herself sent few recruits to be shot down by Colborne, but she had emptied her pockets in sending to the front the fullness of her barns and the best cattle of her fields. She gave her all, she was frank in giving, hid nothing; and when her own trouble came there was no voice calling on her behalf. And Pontiac would rather starve than beg. So, as the winter went on, she starved in silence, and no one had more than sour milk and bread and a potato now and then. The Curé, the Avocat and the Little Chemist fared no better than the "habitants," for they gave all they had right and left, and themselves often went hungry to bed. And the truth is that few outside Pontiac knew of her suffering; she kept the secret of it close.

It seemed at last, however, to the Curé that he must, after all, write to the world outside for help. That was when he saw the faces of the children get pale and drawn. There never was a time when there were so few fish in the river and so little game in the woods. At last, from the altar steps one Sunday, the Curé, with a calm, sad voice, told the people that, for "the dear children's sake," they must sink their pride and ask help from without. He would write first to the Bishop

of Quebec; "for," said he, "Mother Church will help us; she will give us food, and money to buy seed in the spring; and, please God, we will pay all back in a year or two." He paused a minute, then continued: "Some one must go, to speak plainly and wisely of our trouble, that there be no mistake—we are not beggars, we are only borrowers. Who will go? I may not myself, for who would give the Blessed Sacrament, and speak to the sick, or say Mass and comfort you?"

There was silence in the church for a moment, and many faces meanwhile turned instinctively to M. Garon the Avocat, and some to the Little Chemist.

"Who will go?" asked the Curé again. "It is a bitter journey, but our pride must not be our shame in the end. Who will go?"

Every one expected that the Avocat, or the Little Chemist would rise; but while they looked at each other, waiting and sorrowful, and the Avocat's fingers fluttered to the seat in front of him, to draw himself up, a voice came from the corner opposite, saying:

"M'sieu' le Curé, I will go."

A strange, painful silence fell on the people for a moment, and then went round an almost incredulous whisper: "Parpon, the dwarf!"

Parpon's deep eyes were fixed on the Curé, his hunched body leaning on the railing in front of him, his long, strong arms stretched out as if he were begging for some good thing. The murmur among the people increased, but the Curé raised his hand to command silence, and his eyes gazed steadily at the dwarf. It might seem that he was noting the huge head, the shaggy hair, the overhanging brows, the weird face of this distortion of a thing made in God's own image.

But he was thinking instead of how the angel and the devil may live side by side in a man and neither be entirely driven out—and the angel conquer in great times and seasons.

He beckoned to Parpon to come over, and the dwarf trotted with a sidelong motion to the chancel steps. Every face in the congregation was eager, and some were mystified, even anxious. They all knew the singular power of the little man—his knowledge, his deep wit, his judgment, his occasional fierceness, his infrequent malice; but he was kind to children and the sick, and the Curé and the Avocat and their little coterie respected him. Once everybody had worshipped him: that was when he had sung in the Mass, the day of the funeral of the wife of Farette the miller, for whom he worked. It had been rumored that in his hut by the Rock of Red Pigeons, up at Dalgrothe Mountain, a voice of most wonderful power and sweetness had been heard singing; but this was only rumor. Yet when the body of the miller's wife lay in the church, he had sung so that men and women wept and held each other's hands for joy. He had never sung since, however; his voice of silver was locked away in the cabinet of secret purposes which every man has in his own soul somewhere.

"What will you say to the Bishop, Parpon?" asked the Curé.

The congregation stirred in their seats, for they saw that the Curé intended Parpon to go.

Parpon went up two steps of the chancel quietly and caught the arm of the Curé, drawing him down to whisper in his ear.

A flush and then a peculiar soft light passed over the Curé's face, and he raised his hand over Parpon's head

in benediction and said: "Go, my son, and the blessing of God and of His dear Son be with you."

Then suddenly he turned to the altar, and, raising his hands, he tried to speak, but only said: "O Lord, Thou knowest our pride and our vanity, hear us, and——"

Soon afterward, with tearful eyes, he preached from the text:

"And the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

Five days later a little, uncouth man took off his hat in the chief street of Quebec, and began to sing a song of Picardy to an air which no man in French Canada had ever heard. Little farmers on their way to the market by the Place de Cathedral stopped, listening, though every moment's delay lessened their chances of getting a stand in the market place. Butchers and milkmen loitered, regardless of waiting customers; a little company of soldiers caught up the chorus, and, to avoid involuntary revolt, their sergeant halted them, that they might listen. Gentlemen strolling by—doctor, lawyer, officer, idler—paused and forgot the raw climate, for this marvellous voice in the unshapely body warmed them, and they pushed in among the fast-gathering crowd. Ladies hurrying by in their sleighs lost their hearts to the thrilling notes of:

" Little gray fisherman,
Where is your daughter?
Where is your daughter so sweet?
Little gray man who comes
Over the water,
I have knelt down at her feet,
Knelt at your Gabrielle's feet—*ci ci!*"



Presently the wife of the governor stepped out from her sleigh, and, coming over, quickly took Parpon's cap from his hand and went round among the crowd with it, gathering money.

"He is hungry, he is poor," she said with tears in her eyes. She had known the song in her childhood, and he who used to sing it to her was in her sight no more. In vain the gentlemen would have taken the cap from her; she gathered the money herself, and others followed, and Parpon sang on.

A night later a crowd gathered in the great hall of the city, filling it to the doors, to hear the dwarf sing. He came on the platform dressed as he had entered the city, with heavy, home-made coat and trousers, and moccasins, and a red woollen comforter about his neck—but this comforter he took off when he began to sing. Old France and New France, and the loves and hates and joys and sorrows of all lands, met that night in the soul of this dwarf with the divine voice, who did not give them his name, so that they called him, for want of a better title, the Provençal. And again two nights afterwards it was the same, and yet again a third night and a fourth, and the simple folk, and wise folk also, went mad after Parpon the dwarf.

Then, suddenly, he disappeared from Quebec City, and, the next Sunday morning, while the Curé was saying the last words of the Mass, he entered the Church of St. Saviour at Pontiac. Going up to the chancel steps he waited. The murmuring of the people drew the Curé's attention, and then, seeing Parpon, he came forward.

Parpon drew from his breast a bag, and put it in his hands, and beckoning down the Curé's head, he whispered.

The Curé turned to the altar and raised the bag towards it in ascription and thanksgiving, then he turned to Parpon again, but the dwarf was trotting away down the aisle and from the church.

“Dear children,” said the Curé, “we are saved, and we are not shamed.” He held up the bag. “Parpon has brought us two thousand dollars: we shall have food to eat, and there shall be more money against seed-time. The giver of this good gift demands that his name be not known. Such is all true charity. Let us pray.”

So hard times passed from Pontiac as the months went on, but none save the Curé and the Avocat knew who had helped her in her hour of need. \

MEDALLION'S WHIM

WHEN the Avocat began to lose his health and spirits, and there crept through his shrewd gravity and kindliness a petulance and dejection, Medallion was the only person who had an inspiring effect upon him. The Little Chemist had decided that the change in him was due to bad circulation and failing powers: which was only partially true.

Medallion made a deeper guess. "Want to know what's the matter with him?" he said. "Ha! I'll tell you: Woman."

"Woman! God bless me!" said the Little Chemist, in a frightened way.

"Woman, little man; I mean the want of a woman," said Medallion.

The Curé, who was present, shrugged his shoulders. "He has an excellent cook, and his bed and jackets are well aired; I see them constantly at the windows."

A laugh gurgled in Medallion's throat. He loved these innocent folk; but himself went twice a year to Quebec city, and had more expanded views.

"Woman, Padre"—nodding to the priest, and rubbing his chin so that it rasped like sand-paper—"Woman! my druggist"—throwing a sly look at the Chemist—"woman, neither as cook nor bottle-washer, is what he needs. Every man—out of holy orders"—this in deference to his good friend the Curé—"arrives

at the time when his youth must be renewed or he becomes as dry bones—like an empty house—furniture sold off. Can only be renewed one way—Woman. Well, here's our Avocat, and there's his remedy. He's got the cooking and the clean fresh linen, he must have a wife, the very best."

"Ah, my friend, you are droll," said the Curé, arching his long fingers at his lips and blowing gently through them, but not smiling in the least; rather serious, almost reproving.

"It is such a whim, such a whim!" said the Little Chemist, shaking his head and looking through his glasses sideways like a wise bird.

"Ha! You shall see. The man must be saved; our Curé shall have his fees; our druggist shall provide the finest essences for the feast—no more pills. And we shall dine with our Avocat once a week—with asparagus in season for the Curé, and a little good wine for all. Ha!"

His *Ha!* was never a laugh; it was unctuous, abrupt, an ejaculation of satisfaction, knowledge, solid enjoyment, final solution.

The Curé shook his head doubtfully; he did not see the need; he did not believe in Medallion's whim; still he knew that the man's judgment was shrewd in most things, and he would be silent and wait. But he shrank from any new phase of life likely to alter the conditions of that old companionship, which included themselves, the Avocat, and the young Doctor, who, like the Little Chemist, was married.

The Chemist sharply said: "Well, well, perhaps. I hope. There is a poetry (his English was not perfect, and at times he mixed it with French in an amusing manner), a little *charçon*, which runs:

“ Sorrowful is the little house,
The little house by the winding stream ;
All the laughter has died away
 Out of the little house,
But down there come from the lofty hills
Footsteps and eyes agleam,
Bringing the laughter of yesterday
 Into the little house,
By the winding stream and the hills.
Di ron, di ron, di ron, di ron-don !”

The Little Chemist blushed faintly at the silence that followed his timid, quaint recital. The Curé looked calm and kind and drawn away as if in thought; but Medallion presently got up, stooped, and laid his long fingers on the shoulder of the apothecary.

“ Exactly, little man,” he said, “ we’ve both got the same idea in our heads; I’ve put it hard fact, you’ve put it soft sentiment, and it’s God’s truth either way.”

Presently the Curé asked, as if from a great distance, so meditative was his voice, “ Who will be the woman, Medallion?”

“ I’ve got one in my eye—the very right one for our Avocat; not here, not out of Pontiac, but from St. Jean in the hills—fulfilling your verses, gentle apothecary. She must bring what is fresh—he must feel that the hills have come to him, she that the valley is hers for the first time. A new world for them both. Ha!”

“ *Regardez ça!* you are a great man,” said the Little Chemist.

There was a strange, inscrutable look in the kind priest’s eyes. The Avocat had confessed to him in his time.

Medallion took up his hat.

“ Where are you going?” said the Little Chemist.

"To our Avocat, and then to St. Jean."

He opened the door and vanished. The two that were left shook their heads and wondered.

Chuckling softly to himself, Medallion strode away through the lane of white-board houses and the smoke of strong *tabac* from these houses, now and then pulling suddenly up to avoid stumbling over a child, where children are numbered by the dozen to every house. He came at last to a house unlike the others, in that it was of stone and larger. He leaned for a moment over the gate, and looked through a window into a room where the Avocat sat propped up with cushions in a great chair, staring gloomily at two candles burning on the table before him. Medallion watched him for a long time. The Avocat never changed his position; he only stared at the candle, and once or twice his lips moved. A woman came in and put a steaming bowl before him, and laid a pipe and matches beside the bowl. She was a very little, thin old woman, quick and quiet and watchful—his housekeeper. The Avocat took no notice of her. She looked at him several times anxiously, and passed backwards and forwards behind him as a hen moves upon the flank of her brood. All at once she stopped. Her small, white fingers with their large rheumatic knuckles lay flat on her lips as she stood for an instant musing; then she trotted lightly to a bureau, got pen and paper and ink, reached down a bunch of keys from the mantel, and came and put them all beside the bowl and the pipe. Still the Avocat did not stir, or show that he recognized her. She went to the door, turned, and looked back, her fingers again at her lips, then slowly sidled out of the room. It was long before the Avocat moved. His

eyes had not wavered from the space between the candles. At last, however, he glanced down. His eye caught the bowl, then the pipe. He reached out a slow hand for the pipe, and was taking it up, when his glance fell on the keys and the writing material. He put the pipe down, looked up at the door through which the little old woman had gone, gazed round the room, took up the keys, but soon put them down again with a sigh, and settled back in his chair. Now his gaze alternated between that long lane, sloping into shadow between the candles, and the keys.

Medallion threw a leg over the fence and came in a few steps to the door. He opened it quietly and entered. In the dark he felt his way along the wall to the door of the Avocat's room, opened it, and thrust in his ungainly, whimsical face.

"Ha!" he laughed with quick-winking eyes. "Evening, Garon. Live the Code Napoleon! Pipes for two."

A change came slowly over the Avocat. His eyes drew away from that vista between the candles, and the strange distant look faded out of them.

"Great is the Code Napoleon!" he said mechanically. Then presently: "Ah, my friend, Medallion!"

His first words were the answer to a formula which always passed between them on meeting. As soon as Garon had said them, Medallion's lanky body followed his face, and in a moment he had the Avocat's hand in his, swallowing it, of purpose crushing it, so that Monsieur Garon waked up smartly and gave his visitor a pensive smile. Medallion's cheerful nervous vitality seldom failed to inspire whom he chose to inspire with something of his own life and cheerfulness. In a few moments both the Avocat and himself were smoking,

and the contents of the steaming bowl were divided between them. Medallion talked on many things. The little old housekeeper came in, chirped a soft good-evening, flashed a small thankful smile at Medallion, and, after renewing the bowl and lighting two more tall candles, disappeared. Medallion began with the parish, passed to the law, from the law to Napoleon, from Napoleon to France, and from France to the world, drawing out from the Avocat something of his old vivacity and fire. At last Medallion, seeing that the time was ripe, turned his glass round musingly in his fingers before him, and said:

“Bénoît, Annette’s husband, died to-day, Garon. You knew him. He went singing—gone in the head, but singing as he used to do before he married—or got drunk! Perhaps his youth came back to him when he was going to die, just for a minute.”

The Avocat’s eye gazed at Medallion earnestly now, and Medallion went on:

“As good singing as you want to hear. You’ve heard the words of the song—the river-drivers sing it:

“What is there like to the cry of the bird
That sings in its nest in the lilac tree?
A voice the sweetest you ever have heard;
It is there, it is here, *ci, ci!*
It is there, it is here, it must roam and roam,
And wander from shore to shore,
Till I go forth and bring it home,
And enter and close my door—
Row along, row along home, *ci, ci!*”

When Medallion had finished saying the first verse he waited, but the Avocat said nothing; his eyes were now fastened again on that avenue between the candles

leading out into the immortal part of him—his past; he was busy with a life that had once been spent in the fields of Fontainebleau and the shadow of the Pantheon.

Medallion went on:

“ What is there like to the laughing star,
Far up from the lilac tree?
A face that's brighter and finer far;
It laughs and it shines, *ci, ci!*
It laughs and it shines, it must roam and roam
And travel from shore to shore,
Till I go forth and bring it home,
And house it within my door—
Row along, row along home, *ci, ci!*”

When Medallion had finished he raised his glass and said: “Garon, I drink to home and woman!”

He waited. The Avocat's eyes drew away from the candles again, and he came to his feet suddenly, swaying slightly as he did so. He caught up a glass and, lifting it, said: “I drink to home and——” a little cold burst of laughter came from him, he threw his head back with something like disdain—“and the Code Napoleon!” he added abruptly.

Then he put the glass down without drinking, wheeled back, and dropped into his chair. Presently he got up, took his keys, went over, opened the bureau, and brought back a well-worn note-book which looked like a diary. He seemed to have forgotten Medallion's presence, but it was not so; he had reached the moment of disclosure which comes to every man, no matter how secretive, when he must tell what is on his mind or die. He opened the book with trembling fingers, took a pen and wrote, at first slowly, while Medallion smoked:

“September 13th.—It is five-and-twenty years ago to-day—*Mon Dieu*, how we danced that night on the flags before the Sorbonne! How gay we were in the *Maison Bleu*! We were gay and happy—Julie and I—two rooms and a few francs ahead every week. That night we danced and poured out the light wine because we were to be married to-morrow. Perhaps there would be a child, if the priest blessed us, she whispered to me as we watched the soft-travelling moon in the gardens of the Luxembourg. Well, we danced. There was an artist with us. I saw him catch Julie about the waist, and kiss her on the neck. She was angry, but I did not think of that; I was mad with wine. I quarrelled with her, and said to her a shameful thing. Then I rushed away. We were not married the next day; I could not find her. One night, soon after, there was a revolution of students in Mont Parnasse. I was hurt. I remember that she came to me then and nursed me, but when I got well she was gone. Then came the secret word from the Government that I must leave the country or go to prison. I came here. Alas! it is long since we danced before the Sorbonne, and supped at the *Maison Bleu*. I shall never see again the gardens of the Luxembourg. Well, that was a mad night five-and-twenty years ago!”

His pen went faster and faster. His eyes lighted up, he seemed quite forgetful of Medallion's presence. When he finished a fresh change came over him. He gathered his thin fingers in a bunch at his lips, and made an airy salute to the warm space between the candles. He drew himself together with a youthful air, and held his grey head gallantly. Youth and age in him seemed almost grotesquely mingled. Sprightly notes from the song of a *café chantant* hovered on his

thin, dry lips. Medallion, amused, yet with a hushed kind of feeling through all his nerves, pushed the Avocat's tumbler till it touched his fingers. The thin fingers twined round it, and once more he came to his feet. He raised the glass. "To—" for a minute he got no further—"To the wedding-eve!" he said, and sipped the hot wine. Presently he pushed the little well-worn book over to Medallion. "I have known you fifteen years—read!" he said. He gave Medallion a meaning look out of his now flashing eyes.

Medallion's bony face responded cordially. "Of course," he answered, picked up the book, and read what the Avocat had written. It was on the last page. When he had finished reading, he held the book musingly. His whim had suddenly taken on a new colour. The Avocat, who had been walking up and down the room, with the quick step of a young man, stopped before him, took the book from him, turned to the first page, and handed it back silently. Medallion read:—

"Quebec: September 13th, 18—: It is one year since. I shall learn to laugh some day."

Medallion looked up at him. The old man threw back his head, spread out the last page in the book which he had just written, and said defiantly, as though expecting contradiction to his self-deception: "I have learned."

Then he laughed, but the laugh was dry and hollow and painful. It suddenly passed from his wrinkled lips, and he sat down again; but now with an air as of shyness and shame. "Let us talk," he said, "of—of the Code Napoleon."

The next morning Medallion visited St. Jean in the hills. Five years before he had sold to a new-comer

at St. Jean—Madame Lecyr—the furniture of a little house, and there had sprung up between them a quiet friendship, not the less admiring on Medallion's part because Madame Lecyr was a good friend to the poor and sick. She never tired, when they met, of hearing him talk of the Curé, the Little Chemist and the Avocat; and in the Avocat she seemed to take the most interest, making countless inquiries—countless when spread over many conversations—upon his life during the time Medallion had known him. He knew also that she came to Pontiac, occasionally, but only in the evening; and once of a moonlight night he had seen her standing before the window of the Avocat's house. Once also he had seen her veiled in the little crowded court-room of Pontiac when an interesting case was being tried, and noticed how she watched Monsieur Garon, standing so very still that she seemed lifeless; and how she stole out as soon as he had done speaking.

Medallion had acute instincts, and was supremely a man of self-counsel. What he thought he kept to himself until there seemed necessity to speak. A few days before the momentous one herebefore described he had called at Madame Lecyr's house, and in course of conversation told her that the Avocat's health was breaking; that, the day before, he had got completely fogged in court over the simplest business, and was quite unlike his old, shrewd, kindly self. By this time he was almost prepared to see her turn pale and her fingers flutter at the knitting-needles she held. She made an excuse to leave the room for a moment. He saw a little book lying near the chair from which she had risen. Perhaps it had dropped from her pocket. He picked it up. It was a book of French songs—Béranger's and others less notable. On the fly-leaf

was written: "From Victor to Julie, September 13th, 18—."

Presently she came back to him quite recovered and calm, inquired how the Avocat was cared-for, and hoped he would have every comfort and care. Medallion grew on the instant bold. He was now certain that Victor was the Avocat, and Julie was Madame Lecyr. He said abruptly to her: "Why not come and cheer him up?—such old friends as you are!"

At that she rose with a little cry, and stared anxiously at him. He pointed to the book of songs. "Don't be angry—I looked," he said.

She breathed quick and hard, and said nothing, but her fingers laced and interlaced nervously in her lap.

"If you were friends why don't you go to him?" he said.

She shook her head mournfully. "We were more than friends, and that is different."

"You were his wife?" said Medallion, gently.

"It was different," she replied, flushing. "France is not the same as here. We were to be married, but on the eve of our wedding day there was an end to it all. Only five years ago I found out he was here."

Then she became silent, and would, or could, speak no more; only, she said at last before he went: "You will not tell him, or any one?"

She need not have asked Medallion. He knew many secrets and kept them—which is not the usual way of good-humoured people.

But now, with the story told by the Avocat himself in his mind, he saw the end of the long romance. He came once more to the house of Madame Lecyr, and,

being admitted, said to her: "You must come at once with me."

She trembled towards him. "He is worse—he is dying!"

He smiled. "Not dying at all. He needs you; come along. I'll tell you as we go."

But she hung back. Then he told her all he had seen and heard the evening before. Without a word further she prepared to go. On the way he turned to her, and said, "You are *Madame Lecyr?*"

"I am as he left me," she replied timidly, but with a kind of pride, too.

"Don't mistake me," he said. "I thought perhaps you had been married since."

The Avocat sat in his little office, feebly fumbling among his papers, as Medallion entered on him and called to him cheerily: "We are coming to see you to-night, Garon—the Curé, our Little Chemist, and the Seigneur; coming to supper."

The Avocat put out his hand courteously; but he said in a shrinking, pained voice, "No, no, not to-night, Medallion. I would wish no visitors this night—of all."

Medallion stooped over him, and caught him by both arms gently. "We shall see," he said. "It is the anniversary," he whispered.

"Ah, *pardon*," said the Avocat, with a reproving pride, and shrank back as if all his nerves had been laid bare. But Medallion turned, opened the door, went out, and let in a woman, who came forward and timidly raised her veil.

"Victor!" Medallion heard, then "Julie!" and then he shut the door, and, with supper in his mind, went into the kitchen to see the housekeeper—who, in

this new joy, had her own tragedy—humming to himself:

“ But down there come from the lofty hills
Footsteps and eyes agleam,
Bringing the laughter of yesterday
Into the little house.”

THE PRISONER

HIS chief occupation in the daytime was to stand on the bench by the small barred window and watch the pigeons on the roof and in the eaves of the house opposite. For five years he had done this. In the summer a great fire seemed to burn beneath the tin of the roof, for a quivering hot air rose from them, and the pigeons never alighted on them, save in the early morning or in the evening. Just over the peak could be seen the topmost branch of a maple, too slight to bear the weight of the pigeons, but the eaves were dark and cool, and there his eyes rested when he tired of the hard blue sky and the glare of the slates.

In winter the roof was covered for weeks and months by a blanket of snow which looked like a shawl of impacted wool, white and restful, and the windows of the house were spread with frost. But the pigeons were always gay, walking on the ledges or crowding on the shelves of the lead pipes. He studied them much, but he loved them more. His prison was less a prison because of them, and during those long five years he found himself more in touch with them than with the wardens of the prison or with any of his fellow-prisoners. To the former he was respectful, and he gave them no trouble at all; with the latter he had nothing in common, for they were criminals, and he—So wild and mad with drink and anger was he at the time, that he

had no remembrance, absolutely none, of how Jean Gamache lost his life.

He remembered that they had played cards far into the night; that they had quarrelled, then made their peace; that the others had left; that they had begun gaming and drinking and quarrelling again—and then everything was blurred, save for a vague recollection that he had won all Gamache's money and had pocketed it. Afterwards came a blank.

He waked to find two officers of the law beside him, and the body of Jean Gamache, stark and dreadful, a few feet away.

When the officers put their hands upon him he shook them off; when they did it again he would have fought them to the death had it not been for his friend tall Medallion, the auctioneer, who laid a strong hand on his arm and said, "Steady, Turgeon, steady!" and he had yielded to the firm friendly pressure.

Medallion had left no stone unturned to clear him at the trial, had himself played detective unceasingly. But the hard facts remained, and on a chain of circumstantial evidence Louis Turgeon was convicted of manslaughter and sent to prison for ten years. Louis himself had said that he did not remember, but he could not believe that he had committed the crime. Robbery? He shrugged his shoulders at that, he insisted that his lawyer should not reply to the foolish and insulting suggestion. But the evidence went to show that Gamache had all the winnings when the other members of the party retired, and this very money had been found in Louis's pocket. There was only Louis's word that they had played cards again. Anger? Possibly. Louis could not recall, though he knew they had quarrelled. The judge himself, charg-

ing the jury, said that he never before had seen a prisoner so frank, so outwardly honest, but he warned them that they must not lose sight of the crime itself, the taking of a human life, whereby a woman was made a widow and a child fatherless. The jury found him guilty.

With few remarks the judge delivered his sentence, and then himself, shaken and pale, left the court-room hurriedly, for Louis Turgeon's father had been his friend from boyhood.

Louis took his sentence calmly, looking the jury squarely in the eyes, and when the judge stopped, he bowed to him, and then turned to the jury, and said:

"Gentlemen, you have ruined my life. You don't know, and I don't know, who killed the man. You have guessed, and I take the penalty. Suppose I'm innocent—how will you feel when the truth comes out? You've known me more or less these twenty years, and you've said, with evidently no more knowledge than I've got, that I did this horrible thing. I don't know but that one of you did it. But you are safe, and I take my ten years!"

He turned from them, and, as he did so, he saw a woman looking at him from a corner of the court-room, with a strange, wild expression. At the moment he saw no more than an excited, bewildered face, but afterwards this face came and went before him, flashing in and out of dark places in a kind of mockery.

As he went from the court-room another woman made her way to him in spite of the guards. It was the Little Chemist's wife who, years before, had been his father's housekeeper, who knew him when his eyes first opened on the world.

“ My poor Louis ! my poor Louis ! ” she said, clasping his manacled hands.

In prison he refused to see all visitors, even Medallion, the Little Chemist's wife, and the good Father Fabre. Letters, too, he refused to accept and read. He had no contact, wished no contact with the outer world, but lived his hard, lonely life by himself, silent, studious—for now books were a pleasure to him. He had entered his prison a wild, excitable, dissipated youth, and he had become a mature, brooding man. Five years had done the work of twenty.

The face of the woman who looked at him so strangely in the court-room haunted him so that at last it became a part of his real life, lived largely at the window where he looked out at the pigeons on the roof of the hospital.

“ She was sorry for me, ” he said many a time to himself. He was shaken with misery often, so that he rocked to and fro as he sat on his bed, and a warder heard him cry out even in the last days of his imprisonment :

“ O God, canst thou do everything but speak ! ”
And again : “ That hour ! the memory of that hour, in exchange for my ruined life ! ”

One day the gaoler came to him and said : “ Monsieur Convers, you are free. The Governor has cut off five years from your sentence. ”

Then he was told that people were waiting without—Medallion, the Little Chemist and his wife, and others more important. But he would not go to meet them, and he stepped into the open world alone at dawn the next morning, and looked out upon a still sleeping village. Suddenly there stood before him a

woman, who had watched by the prison gates all night; and she put out her hand in entreaty, and said with a breaking voice: "You are free at last!"

He remembered her—the woman who had looked at him so anxiously and sorrowfully in the courtroom.

"Why did you come to meet me?" he asked.

"I was sorry for you."

"But that is no reason."

"I once committed a crime," she whispered, with shrinking bitterness.

"That's bad," he said. "Were you punished?" He looked at her keenly, almost fiercely, for a curious suspicion shot into his mind.

She shook her head and answered, no.

"That's worse."

"I let someone else take my crime upon him and be punished for it," she said, an agony in her eyes.

"Why was that?"

"I had a little child," was her reply.

"And the man who was punished instead?"

"He was alone in the world," she said.

A bitter smile crept to his lips, and his face was afire. He shut his eyes, and when they opened again discovery was in them.

"I remember you now," he said. "I remember now I waked and saw you looking at me *that night!* Who was the father of your child?"

"Jean Gamache," she replied. "He ruined me and left me to starve."

"I am innocent of his death!" he said quietly and gladly.

She nodded. He was silent for a moment. "The child still lives?" he asked. She nodded again. "Well,

let it be so," he said. "But you owe me five years—and a good name."

"I wish to God I could give them back!" she cried, tears streaming down her cheeks. "It was for my child; he was so young."

"It can't be helped now," he said, sighing, and he turned away from her.

"Won't you forgive me?" she asked bitterly.

"Won't you give me back those five years?"

"If the child did not need me I would give my life," she answered. "I owe it to you."

Her haggard, hunted face made him sorry; he, too, had suffered.

"It's all right," he answered gently. "Take care of your child."

Again he moved away from her, and went down the little hill, with a cloud gone from his face that had rested there five years. Once he turned to look back. The woman was gone, but over the prison a flock of pigeons were flying. He took off his hat to them.

Then he went through the town, looking neither to right nor left, and came to his own house, where the summer morning was already entering the open windows, though he had thought to find the place closed and dark.

The Little Chemist's wife met him in the doorway. She could not speak, nor could he, but he kissed her as he had done when he went condemned to prison. Then he passed on to his own room, and, entering, sat down before the open window, and peacefully drank in the glory of a new world. But more than once he choked down a sob rising in his throat.

AN UPSET PRICE

ONCE Secord was as fine a man to look at as you would care to see: with a large, intelligent eye, a clear, healthy skin, and a full, brown beard. He walked with a spring, had the gift of conversation, and took life as he found it: never too seriously, yet never carelessly. That was before he left the village of Pontiac in Quebec to offer himself as a surgeon to the American Army. When he came back there was a change in him. He was still handsome, but something of the spring had gone from his walk, the quick light of his eye had given place to a dark, dreamy expression, his skin became a little dulled, and his talk slower, though not less musical or pleasant. Indeed, his conversation was distinctly improved. Previously there was an undercurrent of self-consciousness; it was all gone now. He talked as one knowing his audience. His office became again, as it had been before, a rendezvous for the few interesting men of the place, including the Avocat, the Curé, the Little Chemist, and Medallion. They played chess and écarté for certain hours of certain evenings in the week at Secord's house. Medallion was the first to notice that the wife—whom Secord had married soon after he came back from the war—occasionally put down her work and looked with a curious inquiring expression at her husband as he talked. It struck

Medallion that she was puzzled by some change in Secord.

Secord was a brilliant surgeon, and with the knife in his hand, or beside a sick bed, was admirable. His intuitive perception, so necessary in a physician, was very fine: he appeared to get at the core of a patient's trouble, and to decide upon necessary action with instant and absolute confidence. Some delicate operation performed by him was recorded and praised in the *Lancet*, and he was offered a responsible post in a medical college and, at the same time, the good-will of a valuable practice. He declined both, to the lasting astonishment, yet personal joy, of the Curé and the Avocat; but, as time went on, not so much to the surprise of the Little Chemist and Medallion. After three years, the sleepy Little Chemist waked up suddenly in his chair one day and said: "*Parbleu!* God bless me!" (he loved to mix his native language with English) got up and went over to Secord's office, adjusted his glasses, looked at Secord closely, caught his hand with both of his own, shook it with shy abruptness, came back to his shop, sat down, and said: "God bless my soul! *Regardez ça!*"

Medallion made his discovery sooner. Watching closely he had seen a pronounced deliberation infused through all Secord's indolence of manner, and noticed that often before doing anything the big eyes debated steadfastly, and the long, slender fingers ran down the beard softly. At times there was a deep meditativeness in the eye; again a dusky fire. But there was a certain charm through it all—a languid precision, a slumbering look in the face, a vague undercurrent in the voice, a fantastical flavour to the thought. The change had come so gradually that only Medallion

and the wife had a real conception of how great it was. Medallion had studied Secord from every standpoint. At the very first he wondered if there was a woman in it. Much thinking on a woman, whose influence on his life was evil or disturbing, might account somewhat for the change in Secord. But, seeing how fond the man was of his wife, Medallion gave up that idea. It was not liquor, for Secord never touched it. One day, however, when Medallion was selling the furniture of a house, he put up a feather bed, and, as was his custom—for he was a whimsical fellow—let his humour have play. He used many metaphors as to the virtue of the bed, crowning them with the statement that you slept in it dreaming as delicious dreams as though you had eaten poppy, or mandragora, or— He stopped short, said "By heaven, that's it!" knocked the bed down instantly, and was an utter failure for the rest of the day.

The wife was longer in discovering the truth, but a certain morning as her husband lay sleeping after an all-night sitting with a patient, she saw lying beside him—it had dropped from his waistcoat pocket—a little bottle full of a dark liquid. She knew that he always carried his medicine-phials in a pocket-case. She got the case, and saw that none was missing. She noticed that the cork of the phial was well-worn. She took it out and smelled the liquid. Then she understood. She waited and watched. She saw him after he waked look watchfully round, quietly take a wineglass, and let the liquid come drop by drop into it from the point of his forefinger. Henceforth she read with understanding the changes in his manner, and saw behind the mingled abstraction and fanciful meditation of his talk.

She had not yet made up her mind what to do. She saw that he hid it from her assiduously. He did so more because he wished not to pain her than from furtiveness. By nature he was open and brave, and had always had a reputation for plainness and sincerity. She was in no sense his equal in intelligence or judgment, nor even in instinct. She was a woman of more impulse and constitutional good-nature than depth. It is probable that he knew that, and refrained from letting her into the knowledge of this vice, contracted in the war when, seriously ill, he was able to drag himself about from patient to patient only by the help of opium. He was alive to his position and its consequences, and faced it. He had no children, and he was glad of this for one reason. He could do nothing now without the drug; it was as necessary as light to him. The little bottle had been his friend so long, that, with his finger on its smooth-edged cork, it was as though he held the tap of life.

The Little Chemist and Medallion kept the thing to themselves, but they understood each other in the matter, and wondered what they could do to cure him. The Little Chemist only shrank back, and said: "No, no, *pardon*, my friend!" when Medallion suggested that he should speak to Secord. But the Little Chemist was greatly concerned—for had not Secord saved his beloved wife by a clever operation? and was it not her custom to devote a certain hour every week to the welfare of Secord's soul and body, before the shrine of the Virgin? Her husband told her now that Secord was in trouble, and though he was far from being devout himself, he had a shy faith in the great sincerity of his wife. She did her best, and increased her offerings of flowers to the shrine; she, also, in her

simplicity, sent Secord's wife little jars of jam to comfort him.

One evening the little *coterie* met by arrangement at the house of Secord. After waiting an hour or two for Secord, who had been called away to a critical case, the Avocat and the Curé went home, leaving polite-old-fashioned messages for their absent host; but the Little Chemist and Medallion remained. For a time Mrs. Secord remained with them, then retired, begging them to wait for Secord, who, she knew, would be grateful if they stayed. The Little Chemist, with timid courtesy, showed her out of the room, then came back and sat down. They were very silent. The Little Chemist took his glasses a half dozen times, wiped them, and put them back. Then suddenly turned on Medallion. "You mean to speak to-night?"

"Yes, that's what I intend, just here."

☞ "Regardez ça—well, well!"

Medallion never smoked harder than he did then. The Little Chemist looked at him nervously again and again, listened towards the door, fingered with his tumbler, and at last hearing the sound of sleigh-bells, suddenly came to his feet, and said: "*Voilà*, I will go to my wife." And catching up his cap, and forgetting his overcoat, he trotted away in a frightened manner to his home.

What Medallion did or said to Secord that night neither ever told. But it must have been a singular scene, for when the humourist pleads or prays there is no pathos like it; and certainly Medallion's eyes were red when he rapped up the Little Chemist at dawn, caught him by the shoulders, turned him round several times, thumped him on the back, and called him a bully old boy; and then, seeing the old wife in her

quaint padded nightgown, suddenly hugged her, threw himself into a chair and almost shouted for a cup of coffee.

At the same time Mrs. Secord was alternately crying and laughing in her husband's arms, and he was saying to her: "I'll make a fight for it, Lesley, a big fight; but you must be patient, for I expect I'll be a devil sometimes without it. Why, I've eaten a drachm a day of the stuff, or drunk its equivalent in the tincture. No, never mind praying; be a brick and fight with me: that's the game, my girl."

He did make a fight for it, such an one as few men have made and come out safely. For those who dwell in the Pit never suffer as do they who struggle with this appetite. He was too wise to give it up all at once. He diminished the dose gradually, but still very perceptibly. As it was it made a marked change in him. The necessary effort of the will gave a kind of hard coldness to his face, and he used to walk his garden for hours at night in conflict with his enemy. His nerves were uncertain, but, strange to say, when (it was not often) any serious case of illness came under his hands, he was somehow able to pull himself together and do his task gallantly enough. But he had had no important surgical case since he began his cure. In his heart he lived in fear of one; for he was not quite sure of himself. In spite of effort to the contrary he became irritable, and his old pleasant fantasies changed to gloomy and bizarre imaginings.

The wife never knew what it cost her husband thus, day by day, to take a foe by the throat and hold him in check. She did not guess that he knew if he dropped back even once he could not regain himself: this was his idiosyncrasy. He did not find her a great help to

him in his trouble. She was affectionate, but she had not much penetration even where he was concerned, and she did not grasp how much was at stake. She thought indeed that he should be able to give it up all at once. He was tender with her, but he wished often that she could understand him without explanation on his part. Many a time he took out the little bottle with a reckless hand, but conquered himself. He got most help, perhaps, from the honest, cheerful eye of Medallion and the stumbling, timorous affection of the Little Chemist. They were perfectly disinterested friends—his wife at times made him aware that he had done her a wrong, for he had married her with this appetite on him. He did not defend himself, but he wished she would—even if she had to act it—make him believe in himself more. One morning against his will he was irritable with her, and she said something that burnt like caustic. He smiled ironically and pushed his newspaper over to her, pointing to a paragraph. It was the announcement that an old admirer of hers (whom she had passed by for her husband) had come into a fortune. "Perhaps you've made a mistake," he said.

She answered nothing, but the look she gave was unfortunate for both. He muffled his mouth in his long, silken beard as if to smother what he felt impelled to say, then suddenly rose and left the table.

At this time he had reduced his dose of the drug to eight drops twice a day. With a grim courage he resolved to make it five all at once. He did so, and held to it. Medallion was much with him in these days. One morning in the Spring he got up, went out in his garden, drew in the fresh, sweet air with a great gulp, picked some lovely crab-apple blossoms, and,

with a strange glowing look in his eyes, came in to his wife, put them into her hands, and kissed her. It was the anniversary of their wedding-day. Then, without a word, he took from his pocket the little phial that he had carried so long, rolled it for an instant in his palm, felt its worn, discoloured cork musingly, and threw it out of the window.

"Now, my dear," he whispered, "we will be happy again."

He held to his determination with a stern anxiety. He took a month's vacation, and came back better. He was not so happy as he hoped to be; yet he would not whisper to himself the reason why. He felt that something had failed him somewhere.

One day a man came riding swiftly up to his door to say that his wife's father had met with a bad accident in his great mill. Secord told his wife. A peculiar troubled look came into his face as he glanced carefully over his instruments and through his medicine case.

"God! I must do it alone," he said.

The old man's injury was a dangerous one: a skilful operation was necessary. As Secord stood beside the sufferer, he felt his nerves suddenly go—just as they did in the War before he first took the drug. His wife was in the next room,—he could hear her; he wished she would make no sound at all. Unless this operation was performed successfully the sufferer would die—he might die anyhow. Secord tried to gather himself up to his task, but he felt it was of no use. A month later when he was more recovered physically he would be able to perform the operation, but the old man was dying now, while he stood helplessly stroking his big brown beard. He took up his pocket medicine-case, and went out where his wife was.

Excited and tearful, she started up to meet him, painfully inquiring. "Can you save him?" she said. "Oh, James, what is the matter? You are trembling."

"It's just this way, Lesley: my nerve is broken; I can't perform the operation as I am, and he will die in an hour if I don't."

She caught him by the arm. "Can you not be strong? You have a will. Will you not try to save my father, James? Is there no way?"

"Yes, there is one way," he said. He opened the pocket-case and took out a phial of laudanum. "This is the way. I can pull myself together with it. It will save his life." There was a dogged look in his face.

"Well? well?" she said. "Oh, my dear father!—will you not keep him here?"

A peculiar cold smile hovered about his lips. "But there is danger to me in this . . . and remember, he is very old!"

"Oh," she cried, "how can you be so shocking, so cruel!" She rocked herself to and fro. "If it will save him—and you need not take it again, ever!"

"But, I tell you——"

"Do you not hear him—he is dying!" She was mad with grief; she hardly knew what she said.

Without a word he dropped the tincture swiftly in a wineglass of water, drank it off, shivered, drew himself up with a start, gave a sigh as if some huge struggle was over, and went in to where the old man was. Three hours after he told his wife that her father was safe.

When, after a hasty kiss, she left him and went into the room of sickness, and the door closed after her, standing where she had left him he laughed a hard crackling laugh, and said between his teeth—

"An upset price!"

Then he poured out another portion of the dark tincture—the largest he had ever taken—and tossed it off.

That night he might have been seen feeling about the grass in a moon-lit garden. At last he put something in his pocket with a quick, harsh chuckle of satisfaction. It was a little black bottle with a well-worn cork.

A FRAGMENT OF LIVES

THEY met at last, Dubarre and Villiard, the man who had stolen from him the woman he loved. Both had wronged the woman, but Villiard most, for he had let her die because of jealousy.

They were now in a room alone in the forest of St. Hyacinth. Both were quiet, and both knew that the end of their hatred was near.

Going to a cupboard Dubarre brought out four glasses and put them on the table. Then from two bottles he poured out what looked like red wine, two glasses from each bottle. Putting the bottles back he returned to the table.

"Do you dare to drink with me?" Dubarre asked, nodding towards the glasses. "Two of the glasses have poison in them, two have good red wine only. We will move them about and then drink. Both may die, or only one of us."

Villiard looked at the other with contracting, questioning eyes.

"You would play that game with me?" he asked in a mechanical voice.

"It would give me great pleasure." The voice had a strange, ironical tone. "It is a grand sport—as one would take a run at a crevasse and clear it, or fall. If we both fall, we are in good company; if you fall, I have the greater joy of escape; if I fall, you have the same joy."

"I am ready," was the answer. "But let us eat first."

A great fire burned in the chimney, for the night was cool. It filled the room with a gracious heat and with huge, comfortable shadows. Here and there on the wall a tin cup flashed back the radiance of the fire, the barrel of a gun glistened soberly along a rafter, and the long, wiry hair of an otter-skin in the corner sent out little needles of light. Upon the fire a pot was simmering, and a good savour came from it. A wind went lilting by outside the hut in tune with the singing of the kettle. The ticking of a huge, old-fashioned repeating-watch on the wall was in unison with these.

Dubarre rose from the table, threw himself upon the little pile of otter-skins, and lay watching Villiard and mechanically studying the little room.

Villiard took the four glasses filled with the wine and laid them on a shelf against the wall, then began to put the table in order for their supper and to take the pot from the fire.

Dubarre noticed that just above where the glasses stood on the shelf a crucifix was hanging, and that red crystal sparkled in the hands and feet where the nails should be driven in. There was a painful humour in the association. He smiled, then turned his head away, for old memories flashed through his brain—he had been an acolyte once: he had served at the altar.

Suddenly Dubarre rose, took the glasses from the shelf and placed them in the middle of the table—the death's head for the feast.

As they sat down to eat, the eyes of both men unconsciously wandered to the crucifix, attracted by the red sparkle of the rubies. They drank water with the

well-cooked meat of the wapiti, though red wine faced them on the table. Each ate heartily; as though a long day were before them and not the shadow of the Long Night. There was no speech save that of the usual courtesies of the table. The fire, and the wind, and the watch seemed the only living things besides themselves, perched there between heaven and earth.

At length the meal was finished, and the two turned in their chairs towards the fire. There was no other light in the room, and on the faces of the two, still and cold, the flame played as upon marble.

"When?" said Dubarre at last.

"Not yet," was the quiet reply.

"I was thinking of my first theft—an apple from my brother's plate," said Dubarre with a dry smile. "You?"

"I, of my first lie."

"That apple was the sweetest fruit I ever tasted."

"And I took the penalty of the lie, but I had no sorrow."

Again there was silence.

"Now?" asked Villiard, after an hour had passed.

"I am ready."

They came to the table.

"Shall we bind our eyes?" asked Dubarre. "I do not know the glasses that hold the poison."

"Nor I the bottles that held it. I will turn my back, and do you change about the glasses."

Villiard turned his face towards the timepiece on the wall. As he did so it began to strike—a clear, silvery chime: "One! two! three——"

Before it had finished striking both men were facing the glasses again.

"Take one," said Dubarre.

Villiard took the one nearest himself. Dubarre took one also. Without a word they lifted the glasses and drank.

"Again," said Dubarre.

"You choose," responded Villiard.

Dubarre lifted the one nearest himself, and Villiard picked up the other. Raising their glasses again, they bowed to each other and drank.

The watch struck twelve, and stopped its silvery chiming.

They both sat down, looking at each other, the light of an enormous chance in their eyes, the tragedy of a great stake in their clenched hands; but the deeper, intenser power was in the face of Dubarre, the explorer.

There was more than power; malice drew down the brows and curled the sensitive upper lip. Each man watched the other for knowledge of his own fate. The glasses lay straggling along the table, emptied of death and life.

All at once a horrible pallor spread over the face of Villiard, and his head jerked forward. He grasped the table with both hands, twitching and trembling. His eyes stared wildly at Dubarre, to whose face the flush of wine had come, whose look was now maliciously triumphant.

Villiard had drunk both glasses of the poison!

"I win!" Dubarre stood up. Then, leaning over the table towards the dying man, he added: "You let her die—well! Would you know the truth? She loved you—always!"

Villiard gasped, and his look wandered vaguely along the opposite wall.

Dubarre went on. "I played the game with you

honestly, because—because it was the greatest man could play. And I, too, sinned against her. Now die! She loved you—murderer!”

The man's look still wandered distractedly along the wall. The sweat of death was on his face; his lips were moving spasmodically.

Suddenly his look became fixed; he found voice.

“*Pardon—Jésu!*” he said, and stiffened where he sat.

His eyes were fixed on the jewelled crucifix. Dubarre snatched it from the wall, and hastening to him held it to his lips: but the warm sparkle of the rubies fell on eyes that were cold as frosted glass. Dubarre saw that he was dead.

“Because the woman loved him!” he said, gazing curiously at the dead man.

He turned, went to the door and opened it, for his breath choked him.

All was still on the wooded heights and in the wide valley.

“Because the woman loved him he repented,” said Dubarre again with a half-cynical gentleness as he placed the crucifix on the dead man's breast.

THE MAN THAT DIED AT ALMA

THE man who died at Alma had a Kilkenny brogue that you could cut with a knife, but he was called Kilquhanity, a name as Scotch as Mac-Gregor. Kilquhanity was a retired soldier, on pension, and Pontiac was a place of peace and poverty. The only gentry were the Curé, the Avocat, and the young Seigneur, but of the three the only one with a private income was the young Seigneur.

What should such a common man as Kilquhanity do with a private income! It seemed almost suspicious, instead of creditable, to the minds of the simple folk at Pontiac; for they were French, and poor and laborious, and Kilquhanity drew his pension from the headquarters of the English Government, which they only knew by legends wafted to them over great tracts of country from the city of Quebec.

When Kilquhanity first came with his wife, it was without introductions from anywhere—unlike everybody else in Pontiac, whose family history could be instantly reduced to an exact record by the Curé. He had a smattering of French, which he turned off with oily brusqueness, he was not close-mouthed, he talked freely of events in his past life, and he told some really wonderful tales of his experiences in the British army. He was no braggart, however, and his one great story which gave him the nickname by which he was called at Pontiac, was told far more in a spirit

of laughter at himself than in praise of his own part in the incident.

The first time he told the story was in the house of Medallion the auctioneer.

"Aw the night it was!" said Kilquhanity, after a pause, blowing a cloud of tobacco smoke into the air. "the night it was, me darlins! Bitther cowld in that Roosian counthry, though but late summer, and nothin' to ate but a lump of bread, no bigger than a dicky-bird's skull; nothin' to drink but wather. Turrible! turrible! and for clothes to wear—Mother of Moses! that was a bad day for clothes! We got betune no barrick quilts that night. No stockin' had I insoide me boots, no shirt had I but a harse's quilt sewed an to me; no heart I had insoide me body; nothin' at all but duty an' shtandin' to orders, me b'ys!

"Says Sergeant-Major Kilpatrick to me, 'Kilquhanity,' says he, 'there's betther places than River Alma to live by,' says he. 'Faith! an' by the Liffey I wish I was this moment'—Liffey's in ould Ireland, Frenchies! 'But, Kilquhanity,' says he, 'faith, an' it's the Liffey we'll never see again, an' put that in yer pipe an' smoke it!' And thrue for him.

"But that night, aw that night! Ivery bone in me body was achin', and shure me heart was achin' too, for the poor b'ys that were fightin' hard an' gettin' little for it. Bitther cowld it was, aw, bitther cowld! and the b'ys droppin' down, droppin', droppin', droppin', wid the Roosian bullets in thim!

"'Kilquhanity,' says Sergeant-Major Kilpatrick to me, 'it's this shtandin' still, while we do be droppin', droppin', that girds the soul av yer.' Aw! the sight it was, the sight it was! The b'ys of the rigimint shtandin' shoulder to shoulder, an' the faces av 'm blue wid

powder, an' red wid blood, an' the bits o' b'ys droppin' round me loike twigs of an ould tree in a shtorm. Just a cry an' a bit av a gurgle thro' the teeth, an' divil the wan o' thim would see the Liffey side anny more.

“‘The Roosians are chargin’!’ shouts Sergeant-Major Kilpatrick. ‘The Roosians are chargin’—here they come!’ Shtandin’ besoide me was a bit of a lump of a b’y, as foine a lad as ever shtood in the boots of me rigimint—aw! the look of his face was the look o’ the dead. ‘The Roosians are comin’! they’re chargin’!’ says Sergeant-Major Kilpatrick, and the bit av a b’y, that had nothin’ to eat all day, throws down his gun and turns round to run. Eighteen years old he was, only eighteen! just a straight slip of a lad from Malahide. ‘Hould on! Teddie,’ says I, ‘hould on! How’ll yer face yer mother if yer turn yer back on the inimy of yer counthry?’ The b’y looks me in the eyes long enough to wink three times, picks up his gun, an’ shtood loike a rock, he did, till the Roosians charged us, roared on us, an’ I saw me slip of a b’y go down under the sabre of a damned Cossack! ‘Mother!’ I heard him say, ‘Mother!’ an’ that’s all I heard him say—and the mother waitin’ away aff there by the Liffey soide! Aw! wurra! wurra! the b’ys go down to battle and the mothers wait at home. Some of the b’ys came back, but the most of thim shtay where the battle laves ’em. Wurra! wurra! many’s the b’y wint down that day by Alma River, an’ niver come back!

“There I was shtandin’, when hell broke loose on the b’ys of me rigimint, and divil the wan o’ me knows if I killed a Roosian that day or not. But Sergeant-Major Kilpatrick—a bit of a liar was the Sergeant-Major—says he, ‘It was tin ye killed, Kilquhanity.’ He says that to me the noight that I left the rigimint

for ever, and all the b'ys shtandin' round and liftin' glasses an' saying, 'Kilquhanity! Kilquhanity! Kilquhanity!' as if it was sugar and honey in their mouths. Aw! the sound of it! 'Kilquhanity,' says he, 'it was tin ye killed!' but aw, b'ys, the Sergeant-Major was an awful liar. If he could be doin' annybody anny good by lyin', shure he would be lyin' all the time.

"But it's little I know how many I killed, for I was killed meself that day. A Roosian sabre claved the shoulder and neck av me, an' down I wint, and over me trampled a squadron of Roosian harses, an' I stopped thinkin'! Aw! so aisy, so aisy, I slipped away out av the fight. The shriekin' and the roarin' kept dwindlin' and dwindlin', an' I dropped all into a foine shlape, so quiet, so aisy! An' I thought that slip av a lad from the Liffey soide was houlding me hand, and sayin' 'Mother! Mother!' and we both wint ashlape; an' the b'ys of the rigimint when Alma was over, they said to each other, the b'ys they said, 'Kilquhanity's dead!' An' the trinches was dug, an' all we foine dead b'ys was laid in long rows loike candles in the trinches. An' I was laid in among thim, and Sergeant-Major Kilpatrick shtandin' there an' looking at me an' sayin', 'Poor b'y! poor b'y!'

"But when they threw another man on tap of me, I waked up out o' that beautiful shlape, and give him a kick. 'Yer not polite,' says I to mesilf. Shure, I couldn't shpake—there was no strength in me. An' they threw another man on, an' I kicked again, and the Sergeant-Major he sees it, an' shouts out: 'Kilquhanity's leg is kickin'!' says he. An' they pulled aff the two poor divils that had been thrown o' tap o' me, and the Sergeant-Major lifts me head, an' he says, 'Yer not killed, Kilquhanity?' says he.

Divil a word could I shpake, but I winked at him, and Captain Masham shtandin' by whips out a flask. 'Put that betune his teeth,' says he. Whin I got it there, trust me fur not lettin' it go. An' the Sergeant-Major says to me, 'I have hopes of you, Kilquhanity, when you do be drinkin' loike that!'

"An' a foine healthy corpse I am; an' a foine thirsty healthy corpse I am!"

A dozen hands stretched out to give Kilquhanity a drink, for even the best story-teller of Pontiac could not have told his tale so well.

Yet the success achieved by Kilquhanity at such moments was discounted through long months of mingled suspicion and doubtful tolerance. Although both he and his wife were Catholics (so they said, and so it seemed), Kilquhanity never went to confession or took the Blessed Sacrament. The Curé spoke to Kilquhanity's wife about it, and she said she could do nothing with her husband. Her tongue once loosed, she spoke freely, and what she said was little to the credit of Kilquhanity. Not that she could urge any horrible things against him; but she railed at minor faults till the Curé dismissed her with some good advice upon wives rehearsing their husband's faults, even to the parish priest.

Mrs. Kilquhanity could not get the Curé to listen to her, but she was more successful elsewhere. One day she came to get Kilquhanity's pension, which was sent every three months through M. Garon, the Avocat. After she had handed over the receipt prepared beforehand by Kilquhanity, she replied to M. Garon's inquiry concerning her husband, in these words: "Misther Garon, sir, such a man it is—enough to break the heart of anny woman. And the timper of

him—Misther Garon, the timper of him that awful, awful! No consideration, and that ugly-hearted, got whin a soldier b'y! The things he does—my, my, the things he does!” She threw up her hands with an air of distraction.

“Well, and what does he do, Madame?” asked the Avocat simply.

“An' what he says, too—the awful of it! Ah, the bad sour heart in him! What's he lyin' in his bed for now—an' the New Year comin' on, whin we ought to be praisin' God an' enjoyin' each other's company in this blessed wurruld? What's he lying betune the quilts now fur, but by token of the bad heart in him! It's a wicked cowl'd he has, an' how did he come by it? I'll tell ye, Misther Garon. So wild was he, yesterday it was a week, so black mad wid somethin' I'd said to him and somethin' that shlipped from me hand at his head, that he turns his back on me, throws opin the dure, shteps out into the shnow, and shtandin' there alone he curses the wide wurruld—oh, dear Misther Garon, he cursed the wide wurruld, shtandin' there in the snow. God forgive the black heart of him, shtandin' out there cursin' the wide wurruld!”

The Avocat looked at the Sergeant's wife musingly, the fingers of his hands tapping together, but he did not speak: he was becoming wiser all in a moment as to the ways of women.

“An' now, he's in bed, the shtrappin' blasphemer, fur the cowl'd he got shtandin' there in the snow cursin' the wide wurruld. Ah, Misther Garon, pity a poor woman that has to live wid the loikes o' that!”

The Avocat still did not speak. He turned his face away and looked out of the window, where his eyes could see the little house on the hill, which to-day had

the Union Jack flying, in honour of some battle or some victory, dear to Kilquhanity's heart. It looked peaceful enough, the little house lying there in the waste of snow, banked up with earth, and sheltered on the northwest by a little grove of pines. At last M. Garon rose, and lifting himself up and down on his toes as if about to deliver a legal opinion, he coughed slightly, and then said in a dry little voice:

"Madame, I shall have pleasure in calling on your husband. You have not seen the matter in the true light. Madame, I bid you good-day!"

That night the Avocat, true to his promise, called on Sergeant Kilquhanity. Kilquhanity was alone in the house. His wife had gone to the village for the Little Chemist. She had been roused at last to the serious nature of Kilquhanity's illness.

M. Garon knocked. There was no answer. He knocked again more loudly, and still no answer. He opened the door and entered into a clean, warm living room, so hot that the heat came to him in waves buffet- ing his face. Dining, sitting, and drawing room, it was also a sort of winter kitchen; and side by side with relics of Kilquhanity's soldier-life were clean, bright tins, black saucepans, strings of dried fruit, and well-cured hams. Certainly the place had the air of home; it spoke for the absent termagant.

M. Garon looked round and saw a half-opened door, through which presently came a voice speaking in a laboured whisper. The Avocat knocked gently at the door. "May I come in, Sergeant?" he asked, and entered. There was no light in the room, but the fire in the kitchen stove threw a glow over the bed where

the sick man lay. The big hands of the soldier moved restlessly on the quilt.

"Aw, it's the koind av ye!" said Kilquhanity, with difficulty, out of the half shadows.

The Avocat took one burning hand in both of his, held it for a moment, and pressed it two or three times. He did not know what to say.

"We must have a light," said he at last, and taking a candle from a shelf he lighted it at the stove and came into the bedroom again. This time he was startled. Even in this short illness, Kilquhanity's flesh had dropped away from him, leaving him but a bundle of bones, on which the skin quivered with fever. Every word the sick man tried to speak cut his chest like a knife, and his eyes half started from his head with the agony of it. The Avocat's heart sank within him, for he saw that a life was hanging in the balance. Not knowing what to do, he tucked in the bedclothes gently.

"I do be thinkin'," said the strained, whispering voice—"I do be thinkin' I could shmoke!"

The Avocat looked round the room, saw the pipe on the window, and cutting some tobacco from a "plug," he tenderly filled the old black corn-cob. Then he put the stem in Kilquhanity's mouth and held the candle to the bowl. Kilquhanity smiled, drew a long breath, and blew out a cloud of thick smoke. For a moment he puffed vigorously, then, all at once, the pleasure of it seemed to die away, and presently the bowl dropped down on his chin. M. Garon lifted it away. Kilquhanity did not speak, but kept saying something over and over again to himself, looking beyond M. Garon abstractedly.

At that moment the front door of the house opened,

and presently a shrill voice came through the door. "Shmokin,' shmokin', are ye, Kilquhanity? As soon as me back's turned, it's playin' the fool——" She stopped short, seeing the Avocat.

"Beggin' yer pardon, Misther Garon," she said, "I thought it was only Kilquhanity here, an' he wid no more sense than a babby."

Kilquhanity's eyes closed, and he buried one side of his head in the pillow, that her shrill voice should not pierce his ears.

"The Little Chemist 'll be comin' in a minit, dear Misther Garon," said the wife presently, and she began to fuss with the bedclothes and to be nervously and uselessly busy.

"Aw, lave thim alone, darlin'," whispered Kilquhanity, tossing. Her officiousness seemed to hurt him more than the pain in his chest.

M. Garon did not wait for the Little Chemist to arrive, but after pressing the Sergeant's hand he left the house and went straight to the house of the Curé, and told him in what condition was the black sheep of his flock.

When Monsieur Garon returned to his own home he found a visitor in his library. It was a woman, and between forty and fifty years of age, who rose slowly to her feet as the Avocat entered, and, without preliminary, put into his hands a document.

"That is who I am," she said. "Mary Muddock that was, Mary Kilquhanity that is."

The Avocat held in his hands the marriage lines of Matthew Kilquhanity of the parish of Malahide and Mary Muddock of the parish of St. Giles, London. The Avocat was completely taken back. He blew nervously through his pale fingers, raised himself up and

down on his toes, and grew pale through suppressed excitement. He examined the certificate carefully, though from the first he had no doubt of its accuracy and correctness.

"Well!" said the woman, with a hard look in her face and a hard note in her voice. "Well!"

The Avocat looked at her musingly for a moment. All at once there had been unfolded to him Kilquhanity's story. In his younger days Kilquhanity had married this woman with a face of tin and a heart of leather. It needed no confession from Kilquhanity's own lips to explain by what hard paths he had come to the reckless hour when, at Blackpool, he had left her for ever, as he thought. In the flush of his criminal freedom he had married again—with the woman who shared his home on the little hillside, behind the Parish Church, she believing him a widower. Mary Mud-dock, with the stupidity of her class, had never gone to the right quarters to discover his whereabouts until a year before this day when she stood in the Avocat's library. At last, through the War Office, she had found the whereabouts of her missing Matthew. She had gathered her little savings together, and, after due preparation, had sailed away to Canada to find the soldier boy whom she had never given anything but bad hours in all the days of his life with her.

"Well," said the woman, "you're a lawyer—have you nothing to say? You pay his pension—next time you'll pay it to me. I'll teach him to leave me and my kid and go off with an Irish cook!"

The Avocat looked her steadily in the eyes, and then delivered the strongest blow that was possible from the opposite side of the case. "Madame," said

he, "Madame, I regret to inform you that Matthew Kilquhanity is dying."

"Dying, is he?" said the woman with a sudden change of voice and manner, but her whine did not ring true. "The poor darlin'! and only that Irish hag to care for him! Has he made a will?" she added eagerly.

Kilquhanity had made no will, and the little house on the hillside, and all that he had, belonged to this woman who had spoiled the first part of his life, and had come now to spoil the last part.

An hour later the Avocat, the Curé, and the two women stood in the chief room of the little house on the hillside. The door was shut between the two rooms, and the Little Chemist was with Kilquhanity. The Curé's hand was on the arm of the first wife and the Avocat's upon the arm of the second. The two women were glaring eye to eye, having just finished as fine a torrent of abuse of each other and of Kilquhanity as can be imagined. Kilquhanity himself, with the sorrow of death upon him, though he knew it not, had listened to the brawl, his chickens come home to roost at last. The first Mrs. Kilquhanity had sworn, with an oath that took no account of the Curé's presence, that not a stick nor a stone nor a rag nor a penny should that Irish slattern have of Matthew Kilquhanity's!

The Curé and the Avocat had quieted them at last, and the Curé spoke sternly now to both women:

"In the presence of death," said he, "have done with your sinful clatter. Stop quarrelling over a dying man. Let him go in peace! Let him go in peace! If I hear one word more," he added sternly, "I will

turn you both out of the house into the night. I will have the man die in peace!"

Opening the door of the bedroom, the Curé went in and shut the door, bolting it quietly behind him. The Little Chemist sat by the bedside, and Kilquhanity lay as still as a babe upon the bed. His eyes were half closed, for the Little Chemist had given him an opiate to quiet the terrible pain.

The Curé saw that the end was near. He touched Kilquhanity's arm: "My son," said he, "look up. You have sinned, you must confess your sins and repent."

Kilquhanity looked up at him with dazed but half-smiling eyes. "Are they gone? Are the women gone?"

The Curé nodded his head. Kilquhanity's eyes closed and opened again. "They're gone thin! Oh, the foine of it! the foine of it!" he whispered. "So quiet, so aisy, so quiet! Faith, I'll just be shlapping! I'll be shlapping now!"

His eyes closed, but the Curé touched his arm again. "My son," said he, "look up. Do you throughly and earnestly repent you of your sins?"

His eyes opened again. "Yis, father, oh, yis. There's been a dale o' noise—there's been a dale o' noise in the wurruld, father," said he. "Oh, so quiet, so quiet now! I do be shlapping!"

A smile crossed his face. "Oh, the foine of it! I do be shlapping—shlapping."

And he fell into a noiseless Sleep.

THE BARON OF BEAUGARD

“**T**HE Manor House at Beaugard, Monsieur? Ah, certainle—I mind it very well. It was the first in Quebec, and there are many tales. It had a chapel and a gallows. Its baron, he had the power of life and death, and the right of the seigneur—you understand? which he used only once; and then what trouble it made for him and the woman, and the barony, and the parish, and all the country!”

“What is the whole story, Larue?” said Medallion, who had spent months in the seigneur’s company, stalking game, and tales, and legends of the St. Lawrence.

Larue spoke English very well—his mother was English.

“*Mais*, I do not know for sure; but the Abbé Frontone, he and I were snowed up together in that same house which now belongs to the Church, and in the big fireplace, where we sat on a bench toasting our knees and our bacon, he told me the tale as he knew it. He was a great scholar—there is none greater. He had found papers in the wall of the house, and from the Gover’nment chest he got more. Then there were the tales handed down, and the records of the Church—for she knows the true story of every man that has come to New France from first to last. So, because I have a taste for tales, and gave him some, he told me of the

Baron of Beaugard and that time he took the right of the seigneur, and the end of it all.

“Of course it was a hundred and fifty years ago, when Bigot was Intendant—ah, what a rascal was that Bigot, robber and deceiver! He never stood by a friend, and never fought fair a foe—so the Abbé said. Well, Beaugard was no longer young. He had built the Manor House, he had put up his gallows, he had his vassals, he had been made a lord. He had quarrelled with Bigot, and had conquered, but at great cost; for Bigot had such power, and the Governor had trouble enough to care for himself against Bigot, though he was Beaugard’s friend.

“Well, there was a good lump of a fellow who had been a soldier, and he picked out a girl in the Seignury of Beaugard to make his wife. It is said the girl herself was not set for the man, for she was of finer stuff than the peasants about her, and showed it. But her father and mother had a dozen other children, and what was this girl, this Falise, to do? She said yes to the man, the time was fixed for the marriage, and it came along.

“So. At the very hour of the wedding Beaugard came by, for the church was in mending, and he had given leave it should be in his own chapel. Well, he rode by just as the bride was coming out with the man—Garoche. When Beaugard saw Falise he gave a whistle, then spoke in his throat, reined up his horse, and got down. He fastened his eyes on the girl’s. A strange look passed between them—he had never seen her before, but she had seen him often, and when he was gone had helped the housekeeper with his rooms. She had carried away with her a stray glove of his. Of course it sounds droll, and they said of her when all

came out that it was wicked; but evil is according to a man's own heart, and the girl had hid this glove as she hid whatever was in her soul—hid it even from the priest.

“Well, the Baron looked and she looked, and he took off his hat, stepped forward, and kissed her on the cheek. She turned pale as a ghost, and her eyes took the colour that her cheeks lost. When he stepped back he looked close at the husband. ‘What is your name?’ he said. ‘Garoche, M’sieu’ le Baron,’ was the reply. ‘Garoche! Garoche!’ he said, eyeing him up and down. ‘You have been a soldier?’ ‘Yes, M’sieu’ le Baron.’ ‘You have served with me?’ ‘Against you, M’sieu’ le Baron . . . when Bigot came fighting.’ ‘Better against me than for me,’ said the Baron, speaking to himself, though he had so strong a voice that what he said could be heard by those near him—that is, those who were tall, for he was six and a half feet, with legs and shoulders like a bull.

“He stooped and stroked the head of his hound for a moment, and all the people stood and watched him, wondering what next. At last he said: ‘And what part played you in that siege, Garoche?’ Garoche looked troubled, but answered: ‘It was in the way of duty, M’sieu’ le Baron—I with five others captured the relief-party sent from your cousin the Seigneur of Vadrome.’ ‘Oh,’ said the Baron, looking sharp, ‘you were in that, were you? Then you know what happened to the young Marmette?’ Garoche trembled a little, but drew himself up and said: ‘M’sieu’ le Baron, he tried to kill the Intendant—there was no other way.’ ‘What part played you in *that*, Garoche?’ Some trembled, for they knew the truth, and they feared the mad will

of the Baron. 'I ordered the firing-party, M'sieu' le Baron,' he answered.

"The Baron's eyes got fierce and his face hardened, but he stooped and drew the ears of the hound through his hand softly. 'Marmette was my cousin's son, and had lived with me,' he said. 'A brave lad, and he had a nice hatred of vileness—else he had not died.' A strange smile played on his lips for a moment, then he looked at Falise steadily. Who can tell what was working in his mind? 'War is war,' he went on, 'and Bigot was your master, Garoche; but the man pays for his master's sins this way or that. Yet I would not have it different, no, not a jot.' Then he turned round to the crowd, raised his hat to the Curé, who stood on the chapel steps, once more looked steadily at Falise, and said: 'You shall all come to the Manor House, and have your feastings there, and we will drink to the home-coming of the fairest woman in my barony. With that he turned round, bowed to Falise, put on his hat, caught the bridle through his arm, and led his horse to the Manor House.

"This was in the afternoon. Of course, whether they wished or not, Garoche and Falise could not refuse, and the people were glad enough, for they would have a free hand at meat and wine, the Baron being liberal of table. And it was as they guessed, for though the time was so short, the people at Beaugard soon had the tables heavy with food and drink. It was just at the time of candle-lighting the Baron came in, and gave a toast. 'To the dwellers in Eden to-night,' he said—'Eden against the time of the Angel and the Sword.' I do not think that any except the Curé and the woman understood, and she, maybe, only because a woman feels the truth about a thing, even when

her brain does not. After they had done shouting to his toast, he said a good-night to all, and they began to leave, the Curé among the first to go, with a troubled look in his face.

“As the people left, the Baron said to Garoche and Falise, ‘A moment with me before you go.’ The woman started, for she thought of one thing, and Garoche started, for he thought of another—the siege of Beaugard and the killing of young Marmette. But they followed the Baron to his chamber. Coming in, he shut the door on them. Then he turned to Garoche. ‘You will accept the roof and bed of Beaugard to-night, my man,’ he said, ‘and come to me here at nine to-morrow morning.’ Garoche stared hard for an instant. ‘Stay here!’ said Garoche, ‘Falise and me stay here in the manor, M’sieu’ le Baron!’ ‘Here, even here, Garoche; so good-night to you,’ said the Baron. Garoche turned towards the girl. ‘Then come, Falise,’ he said, and reached out his hand. ‘Your room shall be shown you at once,’ the Baron added softly, ‘the lady’s at her pleasure.’

“Then a cry burst from Garoche, and he sprang forward, but the Baron waved him back. ‘Stand off,’ he said, ‘and let the lady choose between us.’ ‘She is my wife,’ said Garoche. ‘I am your Seigneur,’ said the other. ‘And there is more than that,’ he went on; ‘for damn me, she is too fine stuff for you, and the Church shall untie what she has tied to-day!’ At that Falise fainted, and the Baron caught her as she fell. He laid her on a couch, keeping an eye on Garoche the while. ‘Loose her gown,’ he said, ‘while I get brandy.’ Then he turned to a cupboard, poured liquor, and came over. Garoche had her dress open at the neck and bosom, and was staring at something

on her breast. The Baron saw also, stooped with a strange sound in his throat, and picked it up. 'My glove!' he said. 'And on her wedding-day!' He pointed. 'There on the table is its mate, fished this morning from my hunting coat, a pair the Governor gave me. You see, man, you see her choice.'

"At that he stooped and put some brandy to her lips. Garoche drew back sick and numb, and did nothing, only stared. Falise came to herself soon, and when she felt her dress open, gave a cry. Garoche could have killed her then, when he saw her shudder from him, as if afraid, over towards the Baron, who held the glove in his hand, and said: 'See, Garoche, you had better go. In the next room they will tell you where to sleep. To-morrow, as I said, you will meet me here. We shall have things to say, you and I.' Ah, that Baron, he had a queer mind, but in truth he loved the woman, as you shall see.

"Garoche got up without a word, went to the door and opened it, the eyes of the Baron and the woman following him, for there was a devil in his eye. In the other room there were men waiting, and he was taken to a chamber and locked in. You can guess what that night must have been to him!

"What was it to the Baron and Falise?" asked Medallion.

"M'sieu', what do you think? Beaugard had never had an eye for women; loving his hounds, fighting, quarrelling, doing wild, strong things. So, all at once, he was face to face with a woman who has the look of love in her face, who was young, and fine of body, so the Abbé said, and was walking to marriage, at her father's will and against her own, carrying the Baron's glove in her bosom. What should Beaugard do?"

But no, ah, no, M'sieu', not as you think, not quite. Wild, with the bit in his teeth, yes; but at heart—well, here was the one woman for him. He knew it all in a minute, and he would have her once and for all, and till death should come their way. And so he said to her, as he raised her, she drawing back afraid, her heart hungering for him, yet fear in her eyes, and her fingers trembling as she softly pushed him from her. You see, she did not know quite what was in his heart. She was the daughter of a tenant vassal, who had lived in the family of a grand seigneur in her youth, the friend of his child—that was all, and that was where she got her manners and her mind.

“She got on her feet and said: ‘M'sieu' le Baron, you will let me go—to my husband. I cannot stay here. Oh, you are great, you are noble, you would not make me sorry, make me to hate myself—and you. I have only one thing in the world of any price—you would not steal my happiness?’ He looked at her steadily in the eyes, and said: ‘Will it make you happy to go to Garoche?’ She raised her hands and wrung them. ‘God knows, God knows, I am his wife,’ she said helplessly, ‘and he loves me.’ ‘And God knows, God knows,’ said the Baron, ‘it is all a question of whether one shall feed and two go hungry, or two gather and one have the stubble. Shall not he stand in the stubble? What has he done to merit you? What would he do? You are for the master, not the man; for love, not the feeding on; for the manor house and the hunt, not the cottage and the loom.’

“She broke into tears, her heart thumping in her throat. ‘I am for what the Church did for me this day,’ she said. ‘Oh, sir, I pray you, forgive me and let me go. Do not punish me, but forgive me—and let me

go. I was wicked to wear your glove—wicked, wicked.’
 ‘But no,’ was his reply, ‘I shall not forgive you so good a deed, and you shall not go. And what the Church did for you this day she shall undo—by all the saints, she shall! You came sailing into my heart this hour past on a strong wind, and you shall not slide out on an ebb-tide. I have you here, as your Seigneur, but I have you here as a man who will—’

“He sat down by her at that point, and whispered softly in her ear: at which she gave a cry which had both gladness and pain. ‘Surely, even that,’ he said, catching her to his breast. ‘And the Baron of Beau-gard never broke his word. What should be her reply? Does not a woman when she truly loves, always believe? That is the great sign. She slid to her knees and dropped her head into the hollow of his arm. ‘I do not understand these things,’ she said, ‘but I know that the other was death, and this is life. And yet I know, too, for my heart says so, that the end—the end, will be death.’

“‘Tut, tut, my flower, my wild-rose,’ he said. ‘Of course the end of all is death, but we will go a-Maying first, come October and the breaking of the world when it must. We are for Maying now, my rose of all the world!’ It was as if he meant more than he said, as if he saw what would come in that October which all New France never forgot, when, as he said, the world broke over them.

“The next morning the Baron called Garoche to him. The man was like some mad buck harried by the hounds, and he gnashed his teeth behind his shut lips. The Baron eyed him curiously, yet kindly, too, as well he might, for when was ever man to hear such a speech as came to Garoche the morning after

his marriage. 'Garoche,' the Baron said, having waved his men away, 'as you see, the lady made her choice—and for ever. You and she have said your last farewell in this world—for the wife of the Baron of Beaugard can have nothing to say to Garoche the soldier.' At that Garoche snarled out, 'The *wife* of the Baron of Beaugard! That is a lie to shame all hell.' The Baron wound the lash of a riding-whip round and round his fingers quietly, and said: 'It is no lie, my man, but the truth.' Garoche eyed him savagely, and growled: 'The Church made her my wife yesterday. And you!—you!—you!—ah, you who had all—you with your money and place, which could get all easy, you take the one thing I have. You, the grand seigneur, are only a common robber! Ah, Jésus—if you would but fight me!'

"The Baron, very calm, said, 'First, Garoche, the lady was only your wife by a form which the Church shall set aside—it could never have been a true marriage. Second, it is no stealing to take from you what you did not have. I took what was mine—remember the glove! For the rest—to fight you? No, my churl, you know that's impossible. You may shoot me from behind a tree or a rock, but swording with you?—Come, come, a pretty gossip for the Court! Then, why wish a fight? Where would you be, as you stood before me—you?' The Baron stretched himself up, and smiled down at Garoche. 'You have your life, man; take it and go—to the farthest corner of New France, and show not your face here again. If I find you ever again in Beaugard, I will have you whipped from parish to parish. Here is money for you—good gold coins. Take them, and go.'

"Garoche got still and cold as stone. He said in a

low, harsh voice, 'M'sieu' le Baron, you are a common thief, a wolf, a snake. Such men as you come lower than Judas. As God has an eye to see, you shall pay all one day. I do not fear you nor your men nor your gallows. You are a jackal, and the woman has a filthy heart—a ditch of shame.'

"The Baron drew up his arm like lightning, and the lash of his whip came singing across Garoche's pale face. Where it passed, a red welt rose, but the man never stirred. The arm came up again, but a voice behind the Baron said, 'Ah, no, no, not again!' There stood Falise. Both men looked at her. 'I have heard Garoche,' she said. 'He does not judge me right. My heart is no filthy ditch of shame. But it was breaking when I came from the altar with him yesterday. Yet I would have been a true wife to him after all. A ditch of shame—ah, Garoche—Garoche! And you said you loved me, and that nothing could change you!'"

"The Baron said to her: 'Why have you come, Falise? I forbade you.' 'Oh, my lord,' she answered, 'I feared—for you both. When men go mad they know not what they do. A devil enters into them.' The Baron, taking her by the hand, said, 'Permit me,' and he led her to the door for her to pass out. She looked back sadly at Garoche, standing for a minute very still. Then Garoche said, 'I command you, come with me; you are my wife.' She did not reply, but shook her head at him. Then he spoke out high and fierce: 'May no child be born to you. May a curse fall on you. May your fields be barren, and your horses and cattle die. May you never see nor hear good things. May the waters leave their courses to drown you, and the hills their bases to bury you, and no hand lay you in decent graves!'

“ The woman put her hands to her ears and gave a little cry, and the Baron pushed her gently on, and closed the door after her. Then he turned on Garoche. ‘ Have you said all you wish ? ’ he asked. ‘ For, if not, say on, and then go ; and go so far you cannot see the sky that covers Beaugard. We are even now—we can cry quits. But that I have a little injured you, you should be done for instantly. But hear me : if I ever see you again, my gallows shall end you straight. Your tongue has been gross before the mistress of this manor ; I will have it torn out if it so much as syllables her name to me or to the world again. She is dead to you. Go, and go for ever ! ’

“ He put a bag of money on the table, but Garoche turned away from it, and without a word left the room, and the house, and the parish, and said nothing to any man of the evil that had come to him.

“ But what talk was there, and what dreadful things, were said at first !—that Garoche had sold his wife to the Baron ; that he had been killed and his wife taken ; that the Baron kept him a prisoner in a cellar under the Manor House. And all the time there was Falise with the Baron—very quiet and sweet and fine to see, and going to Chapel every day, and to Mass on Sundays—which no one could understand, any more than they could see why she should be called the Baroness of Beaugard ; for had they all not seen her married to Garoche ? And there were many people who thought her vile. Yet truly, at heart, she was not so—not at all. Then it was said that there was to be a new marriage ; that the Church would let it be so, doing and undoing, and doing again. But the weeks and the months went by, and it was never done. For, powerful as the Baron was, Bigot, the Intendant, was powerful also,

and fought the thing with all his might. The Baron went to Quebec to see the Bishop and the Governor, and though promises were made, nothing was done. It must go to the King and then to the Pope, and from the Pope to the King again, and so on. And the months and the years went by as they waited, and with them came no child to the Manor House of Beaugard. That was the only sad thing—that and the waiting, so far as man could see. For never were man and woman truer to each other than these, and never was a lady of the manor kinder to the poor, or a lord freer of hand to his vassals. He would bluster sometimes, and string a peasant up by the heels, but his gallows was never used, and, what was much in the minds of the people, the Curé did not refuse the woman the sacrament.

“At last, the Baron, fierce because he knew that Bigot was the cause of the great delay, so that he might not call Falise his wife, seized a transport on the river, which had been sent to brutally levy upon a poor gentleman, and when Bigot’s men resisted, shot them down. Then Bigot sent against Beaugard a company of artillery and some soldiers of the line. The guns were placed on a hill looking down on the Manor House across the little river. In the evening the canons arrived, and in the morning the fight was to begin. The guns were loaded and everything was ready. At the Manor all was making ready also, and the Baron had no fear.

“But Falise’s heart was heavy, she knew not why. ‘Eugene,’ she said, ‘if anything should happen!’ ‘Nonsense, my Falise,’ he answered; ‘what should happen?’ ‘If—if you were taken—were killed!’ she said. ‘Nonsense, my rose,’ he said again, ‘I shall not be killed. But if I were, you should be at peace here.’

'Ah, no, no,' said she. 'Never. Life to me is only possible with you. I have had nothing but you—none of those things which give peace to other women—none. But I have been happy—oh, yes, very happy. And, God forgive me! Eugene, I cannot regret, and I never have. But it has been always and always my prayer that, when you die, I may die with you—at the same moment. For I cannot live without you, and, besides, I would like to go to the good God with you to speak for us both; for oh, I loved you, I loved you, and I love you still, my husband, my adored!'

"He stooped—he was so big, and she but of middle height—kissed her, and said, 'See, my Falise, I am of the same mind. We have been happy in life, and we could well be happy in death together.' So they sat long, long into the night and talked to each other—of the days they had passed together, of cheerful things, she trying to comfort herself, and he trying to bring smiles to her lips. At last they said good-night, and he lay down in his clothes; and after a few moments she was sleeping like a child. But he could not sleep, for he lay thinking of her and of her life—how she had come from humble things and fitted in with the highest. At last, at break of day, he arose and went outside. He looked up at the hill where Bigot's two guns were. Men were already stirring there. One man was standing beside the gun, and another not far behind. Of course the Baron could not know that the man behind the gunner said: 'Yes, you may open the dance with an early salute'; and he smiled up boldly at the hill and went into the house, and stole to the bed of his wife to kiss her before he began the day's fighting. He looked at her a moment,

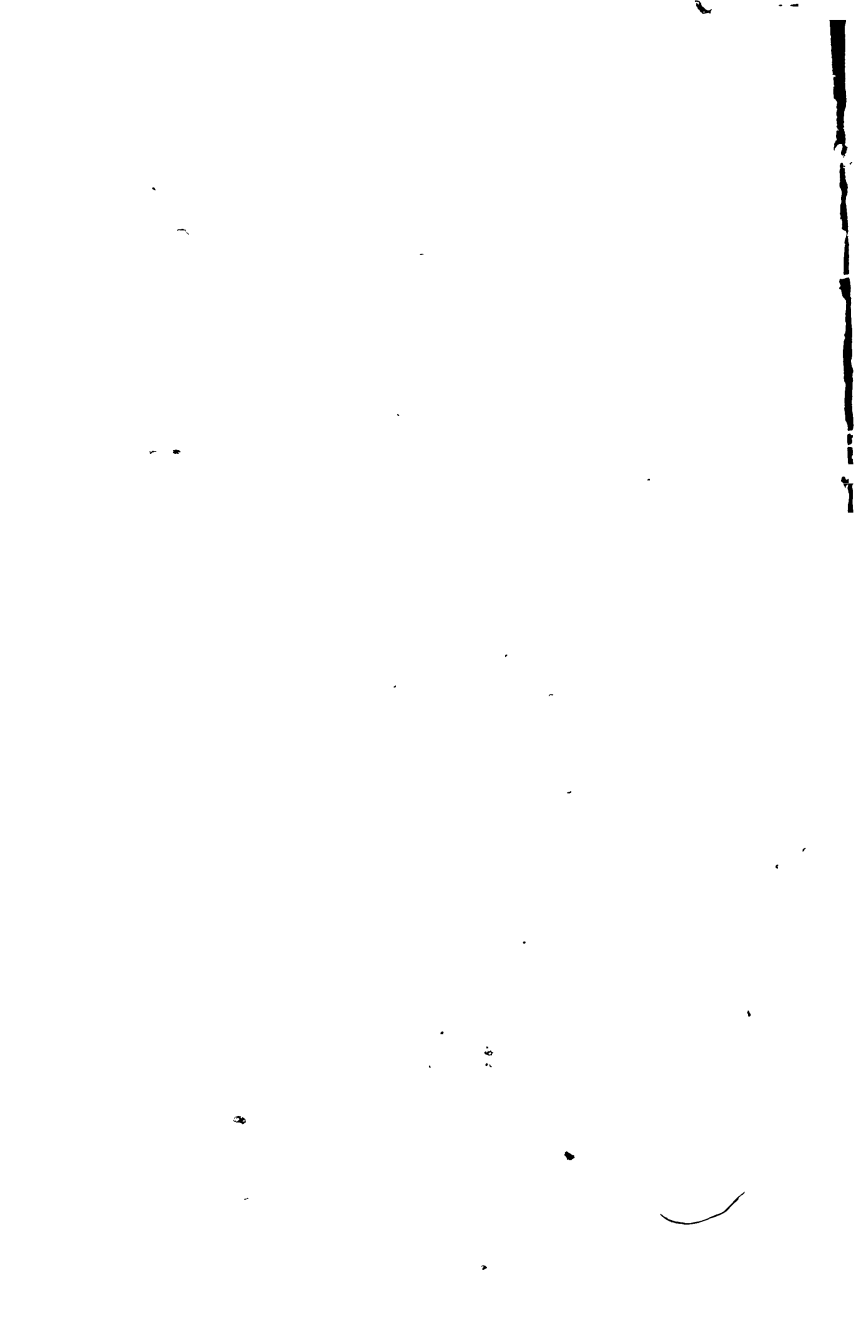
standing over her, and then stooped and softly put his lips to hers.

“At that moment the gunner up on the hill used the match, and an awful thing happened. With the loud roar the whole hillside of rock and gravel and sand split down, not ten feet in front of the gun, moved with horrible swiftness upon the river, filled its bed, turned it from its course, and, sweeping on, swallowed the Manor House of Beaugard. There had been a crack in the hill, the water of the river had sapped its foundations, and it needed only this shock to send it down.

“And so, as the woman wished: the same hour for herself and the man! And when at last their prison was opened by the willing hands of Bigot’s men, they were found cheek by cheek, free for ever from all mortal bonds, but bound in the sacred marriage of Death.

“But another had gone the same road, for, at the awful moment, beside the bursted gun, the dying gunner, Garoche, lifted up his head, saw the loose travelling hill, and said with his last breath: ‘The waters drown them, and the hills bury them, and——’. He had his way with them, and after that perhaps the great God had His way with him—perhaps.”

PARABLES OF A PROVINCE.



THE GOLDEN PIPES

THEY hung all bronzed and shining, on the side of Margath Mountain—the tall and perfect pipes of the organ, which was played by some son of God when the world was young. At least, Hepnon the cripple said this was so, when he was but a child, and when he got older he said that even now a golden music came from the pipes at sunrise and sunset. And no one laughed at Hepnon, for you could not look into the dark warm eyes, dilating with his fancies, nor see the transparent temper of his face, the look of the dreamer over all, without believing him, and reproving your own judgment. You felt that he had travelled ways you could never travel, that he had had dreams beyond you, that his fanciful spirit had had adventures you would give years of your dull life to know.

And yet he was not made only as women are made, fragile and trembling in his nerves. For he was strong of arm, and there was no place in the hills to be climbed by venturesome man, which he could not climb with crutch and shrivelled leg. And he was a gallant horseman, riding with his knees and one foot in stirrup, his crutch slung behind him. It may be that was why rough men listened to his fancies about the Golden Pipes. Indeed they would go out at sunrise and look across to where the pipes hung, taking the rosy glory of the morning, and steal away alone at sunset, and in some lonely spot lean out towards the flaming instru-

ment to hear if any music rose from them. The legend that one of the Mighty Men of the Kimash Hills came here to play, with invisible hands, the music of the first years of the world, became a truth, though a truth that none could prove. And by-and-by, no man ever travelled the valley without taking off his hat as he passed the Golden Pipes—so had a cripple with his whimsies worked upon the land.

Then too perhaps his music had to do with it. As a child he had only a poor concertina, but by it he drew the traveller and the mountaineer and the worker in the valley to him like a magnet. Some touch of the mysterious, some sweet fantastical melody in all he played, charmed them, even when he gave them old familiar airs. From the concertina he passed to the violin, and his skill and mastery over his followers grew; and then there came a notable day when up over a thousand miles of country a melodeon was brought him. Then a wanderer, a minstrel outcast from a far country, taking refuge in those hills, taught him, and there was one long year of loving labour together, and merry whisperings between the two and secret drawings, and worship of the Golden Pipes; and then the minstrel died, and left Hepnon alone.

And now they said that Hepnon tried to coax out of the old melodeon the music of the Golden Pipes. But a look of sorrow grew upon his face, and stayed for many months. Then there came a change, and he went into the woods, and began working there in the perfect summer weather, and the tale went abroad that he was building an organ, so that he might play for all who came, the music he heard on the Golden Pipes—for they had ravished his ear since childhood, and now

he must know the wonderful melodies all by heart, they said

With consummate patience Hepnon dried the wood and fashioned it into long tuneful tubes, beating out soft metal got from the forge in the valley to case the lips of them, tanning the leather for the bellows, stretching it, and exposing all his work to the sun of early morning, which gave every fibre and valve a rich sweetness, like a sound fruit of autumn. People also said that he set all the pieces out at sunrise and sunset that the tone of the Golden Pipes might pass into them, so that when the organ was built, each part should be saturated with such melody as it had drawn in, according to its temper and its fibre.

And so the building of the organ went on, and a year passed, and then another, and it was summer again, and soon Hepnon began to build also—while yet it was sweet weather—a home for his organ, a tall nest of cedar added to his father's house. And in it every piece of wood, and every board had been made ready by his own hands, and set in the sun and dried slowly to a healthy soundness; and he used no nails of metal, but wooden pins of the ironwood or hickory tree, and it was all polished, and there was no paint or varnish anywhere, and when you spoke in this nest your voice sounded pure and strong.

At last the time came when, piece by piece, the organ was set up in its home; and as the days and weeks went by, and autumn drew to winter, and the music of the Golden Pipes stole down the flumes of snow to their ardent lover, and spring came with its sap, and small purple blossoms, and yellow apples of mandrake, and summer stole on luxurious and dry; the face of Hepnon became thinner and thinner, a

strange deep light shone in his eyes, and all his person seemed to exhale a kind of glow. He ceased to ride, to climb, to lift weights with his strong arms as he had—poor cripple—been once so proud to do. A delicacy came upon him, and more and more he withdrew himself to his organ, and to those lofty and lonely places where he could see—and hear—the Golden Pipes boom softly over the valley.

At last it all was done, even to the fine-carved stool of cedar whereon he should sit when he played his organ. Never yet had he done more than sound each note as he made it, trying it, softening it by tender devices with the wood; but now the hour was come when he should gather down the soul of the Golden Pipes to his fingers, and give to the ears of the world the song of the morning stars, the music of Jubal and his comrades, the affluent melody to which the sons of men in the first days paced the world in time with the thoughts of God. For days he lived alone in the cedar-house,—and who may know what he was doing: dreaming, listening, or praying? Then the word went through the valley and the hills, that one evening he would play for all who came;—and that day was "Toussaint" or the Feast of All Souls.

So they came both old and young, and they did not enter the house, but waited outside, upon the mossy rocks, or sat among the trees, and watched the heavy sun roll down and the Golden Pipes flame in the light of evening. Far beneath in the valley the water ran lightly on, but there came no sound from it, none from anywhere; only a general pervasive murmur quieting to the heart.

Now they heard a note come from the organ, a soft low sound that seemed to rise out of the good earth

and mingle with the vibrant air left by the song of birds, the whisper of trees, and the flowing water. Then came another, and another note, then chords, and chords upon these, and by-and-by rolling tides of melody, until, as it seemed to the listeners, the air ached with the incomparable song; and men and women wept, and children hid their heads in the laps of their mothers, and young men and maidens dreamed dreams never to be forgotten. For one short hour the music went on, then twilight fell. Presently the sounds grew fainter, and exquisitely painful, and now a low sob seemed to pass through all the heart of the organ, and then silence fell, and in the sacred pause, Hepnon came out among them all, pale and desolate. He looked at them a minute most sadly, and then lifting up his arms towards the Golden Pipes, now hidden in the dusk, he cried low and brokenly:

“O, my God, give me back my dream!”

And then his crutch seemed to give way beneath him, and he sank upon the ground, faint and gasping.

They raised him up, and women and men whispered in his ear:

“Ah, the beautiful, beautiful music, Hepnon!”

But he only said:

“O, my God, O, my God, give me back my dream!”

When he had said it thrice, he turned his face to where his organ was in the cedar-house, and then his eyes closed, and he fell Asleep. And they could not wake him. But at sunrise the next morning a shiver passed through him, and then a cold quiet stole over him, and Hepnon and the music of the Golden Pipes departed from the Voshti Hills, and came again no more.

THE GUARDIAN OF THE FIRE

"Height unto height answereth knowledge."

• **H**IS was the first watch, the farthest fire, for Shaknon Hill towered above the great gulf, and looked back also over thirty leagues of country towards the great city. There came a time again when all the land was threatened. From sovereign lands far off, two fleets were sailing hard to reach the wide basin before the walled city, the one to save, the other to destroy. If Tinoir, the Guardian of the Fire, should sight the destroying fleet, he must light two fires on Shaknon Hill, and then, at the edge of the wide basin, in a treacherous channel, the people would send out fire-rafts to burn the ships of the foe. Five times in the past had Tinoir been the Guardian of the Fire, and five times had the people praised him; but praise and his scanty wage were all he got.

The hut in which he lived with his wife on another hill, ten miles from Shaknon, had but two rooms, and their little farm and the garden gave them only enough to live, no more. Elsewhere there was good land in abundance, but it had been said years ago to Tinoir by the great men, that he should live not far from Shaknon, so that in times of peril he might guard the fire, and be the sentinel for all the people. Perhaps Tinoir was too dull to see that he was giving all and getting naught; that while he waited and watched he was always poor, and also was getting old. There was no

house or home within fifty miles of them, and only now and then some wandering Indians lifted the latch, and drew in beside their hearth, or a good priest with a soul of love for others, came and said Mass in the room where a little Calvary had been put up. Two children had come and gone, and Tinoir and Dalice had dug their graves and put them in a warm nest of maple leaves, and afterwards lived upon the memories of them. But after these two, children came no more; and Tinoir and Dalice grew close and closer to each other, coming to look alike in face, as they had long been alike in mind and feeling. None ever lived nearer to nature than they, and wild things grew to be their friends; so that you might see Dalice at her door, tossing crumbs with one hand to birds, and with the other bits of meat to foxes, martins, and wild dogs, that came and went unharmed by them. Tinoir shot no wild animals for profit—only for food and for skins and furs to wear. Because of this he was laughed at by all who knew, save the priest of St. Sulpice, who, on Easter Day, when the little man came yearly to Mass over two hundred miles of country, praised him to his people and made much of him, though Tinoir was not vain enough to see it.

When word came down the river, and up over the hills to Tinoir that war was come and that he must go to watch for the hostile fleet and for the friendly fleet as well, he made no murmur, though it was the time of harvest, and Dalice had had a sickness from which she was not yet recovered.

“Go, my Tinoir,” said Dalice, with a little smile, “and I will reap the grain. If your eyes are sharp you shall see my bright sickle moving in the sun.”

“There is the churning of the milk too, Dalice,”

answered Tinoir; "you are not strong, and sometimes the butter comes slow, and there's the milking also."

"Strength is coming to me fast, Tinoir," she said, and drew herself up; but her dress lay almost flat on her bosom. Tinoir took her arm and felt it above the elbow.

"It is like the muscle of a little child," he said.

"But I will drink those bottles of red wine the Governor sent the last time you watched the fire on Shaknon," she said, brightening up, and trying to cheer him.

He nodded, for he saw what she was trying to do, and said: "And a little of the gentian and orange root three times a day—eh, Dalice?"

After arranging for certain signs, by little fires, which they were to light upon the hills and so speak with each other, they said, "Good day, Dalice," and "Good day, Tinoir," drank a glass of the red wine, and added, "Thank the good God;" then Tinoir wiped his mouth with his sleeve, and went away, leaving Dalice with a broken glass at her feet, and a look in her eyes which it is well that Tinoir did not see.

But as he went he was thinking how, the night before, Dalice had lain with her arm round his neck hour after hour as she slept, as she did before they ever had a child; and that even in her sleep, she kissed him as she used to kiss him before he brought her away from the parish of Ste. Geneviève to be his wife. And the more he thought about it the happier he became, and more than once he stopped and shook his head in pleased retrospection. And Dalice thought of it too as she hung over the churn, her face drawn and tired and shining with sweat; and she shook her head, and tears came into her eyes, for she saw further into things

than Tinoir. And once as she passed his coat on the wall, she rubbed it softly with her hand, as she might his curly head when he lay beside her.

From Shaknon Tinoir watched, but of course, he could never see her bright sickle shining, and he could not know whether her dress still hung loose upon her breast, or whether the flesh of her arms was still like a child's. If all was well with Dalice a little fire should be lighted at the house door just at the going down of the sun, and it should be at once put out. If she were ill, a fire ~~should~~ be lit and then put out two hours after sundown. If she should be ill beyond any help, this fire should burn on till it went out.

Day after day Tinoir, as he watched for the coming fleet, saw the fire lit at sundown, and then put out. But one night the fire did not come till two hours after sundown, and it was put out at once. He fretted much, and he prayed that Dalice might be better, and he kept to his post, looking for the fleet of the foe. Evening after evening was this other fire lighted and then put out at once, and a great longing came to him to leave this guarding of the fire, and go to her—"For half a day," he said—"just for half a day." But in that half day the fleet might pass, and then it would be said that Tinoir had betrayed his country. At last sleep left him and he fought a demon night and day, and always he remembered Dalice's arm about his neck, and her kisses that last night they were together. Twice he started away from his post to go to her, but before he had gone a hundred paces he came back.

One afternoon at last he saw ships, not far off, rounding the great cape in the gulf, and after a time, at sunset, he knew by their shape and sails it was the fleet of the foe, and so he lighted his great fires, and

they were answered leagues away towards the city by another beacon.

Two hours after sunset of this day the fire in front of Tinoir's home was lighted, and was not put out, and Tinoir sat and watched it till it died away. So he lay in the light of his own great war-fire till morning, for he could not travel at night, and then, his duty over, he went back to his home. He found Dalice lying beside the ashes of her fire, past hearing all he said in her ear, unheeding the kiss he set upon her lips.

Two nights afterwards, coming back from laying her beside her children, he saw a great light in the sky towards the city, as of a huge fire. When the courier came to him bearing the Governor's message and the praise of the people, and told of the enemy's fleet destroyed by the fire-rafts, he stared at the man, then turned his head to a place where a pine cross showed against the green grass, and said:

"Dalice—my wife—is dead."

"You have saved your country, Tinoir," answered the courier kindly.

"What is that to me!" he said, and fondled the rosary Dalice used to carry when she-lived; and he would speak to the man no more



BY THAT PLACE CALLED PERAD-
VENTURE

BY that place called Peradventure in the Voshti Hills dwelt Golgothar the strong man, who, it was said, could break an iron pot with a blow, or pull a tall sapling from the ground.

“If I had a hundred men so strong,” said Golgothar, “I would go and conquer Noonni the city of our foes.”

Because he had not the hundred men he did not go, and Noonni still sent insults to the country of Golgothar, and none could travel safe between the capitals. And Golgothar was sorry.

“If I had a hundred men so strong,” said Golgothar, “I would build a dyke to keep the floods back from the people crowded on the lowlands.”

Because he had not the hundred men, now and again the floods came down, and swept the poor folk out to sea, or laid low their habitations. And Golgothar pitied them.

“If I had a hundred men so strong,” said Golgothar, “I would clear the wild boar from the forests, that the children should not fear to play among the trees.”

Because he had not the hundred men the graves of children multiplied, and countless mothers sat by empty beds and mourned. And Golgothar put his head between his knees in trouble for them.

“If I had a hundred men so strong,” said Golgothar, “I would with great stones mend the broken

pier, and the bridge between the islands should not fall."

Because he had not the hundred men, at last the bridge gave way, and a legion of the King's army were carried to the whirlpool, where they fought in vain. And Golgothar made a feast of remembrance to them, and tears dripped on his beard when he said, "Hail and Farewell!"

"If I had a hundred men so strong," said Golgothar, "I would go against the walls of chains our rebels built, and break them one by one."

Because he had not the hundred men the chain walls blocked the only pass between the hills, and so cut in two the kingdom: and they who pined for corn went wanting, and they who wished for fish went hungry. And Golgothar, brooding, said his heart bled for his country.

"If I had a hundred men so strong," said Golgothar, "I would go among the thousand brigands of Mirnan, and bring again the beloved daughter of our city."

Because he had not the hundred men the beloved lady languished in her prison, for the brigands asked as ransom the city of Talgone which they hated. And Golgothar carried in his breast a stone image she had given him, and for very grief let no man speak her name before him.

"If I had a hundred men so strong—" said Golgothar, one day, standing on a great point of land and looking down the valley.

As he said it, he heard a laugh, and looking down he saw Sapphire, or Laugh of the Hills, as she was called. A long staff of ironwood was in her hands, with which she jumped the dykes and streams and

rocky fissures; in her breast were yellow roses, and there was a tuft of pretty feathers in her hair. She reached up and touched him on the breast with her staff, then she laughed again, and sang a snatch of song in mockery:

“ I am a king,
I have no crown,
I have no throne to sit in—”

“ Pull me up, boy,” she said. She wound a leg about the staff, and, taking hold, he drew her up as if she had been a feather.

“ If I had a hundred mouths I would kiss you for that,” she said, still ~~mocking~~, “ but having only one I’ll give it to the cat, and weep for Golgothar.”

“ Silly jade,” he said, and turned towards his tent.

As they passed a slippery and dangerous place, where was one strong solitary tree, she suddenly threw a noose over him, drew it fast and sprang far out over the precipice into the air. Even as she did so, he jumped behind the tree, and clasped it, else on the slippery place he would have gone over with her. The rope came taut, and presently he drew her up again to safety, and while she laughed at him and mocked him, he held her tight under his arm, and carried her to his lodge, where he let her go.

“ Why did you do it, devil’s madcap?” he said.

“ Why didn’t you wait for the hundred men so strong?” she laughed. “ Why did you jump behind the tree?”

“ If I had a hundred men, higho,
I would buy my corn for a penny a gill.
If I had a hundred men or so,
I would dig a grave for the maid of the hill, higho!”

He did not answer her, but stirred the soup in the pot and tasted it, and hung a great piece of meat over the fire. Then he sat down, and only once did he show anger as she mocked him, and that was when she thrust her hand into his breast, took out the little stone image, and said :

“ If a little stone god had a hundred hearts,
Would a little stone goddess trust in one ? ”

Then she made as if she would throw it into the fire, but he caught her hand and crushed it, so that she cried out for pain and anger, and said :

“ Brute of iron, go break the posts in the brigands' prison-house, but leave a poor girl's wrist alone. If I had a hundred men—” she added, mocking wildly again, and then, springing at him, put her two thumbs at the corners of his eyes, and cried : “ Stir a hand, and out they will come—your eyes—for my bones ! ”

He did not stir till her fury was gone. Then he made her sit down and eat with him, and afterwards she said softly to him, and without a laugh : “ Why should the people say, ‘ Golgothar is our shame, for he has great strength and yet he does nothing, but throw great stones for sport into the sea ’ ? ”

He had the simple mind of a child, and he listened to her patiently, and at last got up and began preparing for a journey, cleaning all his weapons, and gathering them together. She understood him, and she said, with a little laugh like music : “ One strong man is better than a hundred—a little key will open a great door easier than a hundred hammers. What is the strength of a hundred bullocks without this ? ” she added, tapping him on the forehead.

Then they sat down and talked together quietly for a long time, and at sunset she saw him start away upon great errands.

Before two years had gone, Noonni, the city of their foes, was taken, the chain wall of the rebels opened to the fish and corn of the poor, the children wandered in the forest without fear of wild boars, the dyke was built to save the people in the lowlands, and Golgothar carried to the castle the King had given him the daughter of the city, freed from Mirnan.

"If Golgothar had a hundred wives—" said a voice to the strong man as he entered the castle gates.

Looking up he saw Sapphire. He stretched out his hand to her in joy and friendship.

"—I would not be one of them," she added with a mocking laugh, as she dropped from the wall, leaped the moat by the help of her staff, and danced away laughing. There are those who say, however, that tears fell down her cheeks as she laughed.

THE SINGING OF THE BEES

MOTHER, did'st thou not say thy prayers last night?"

"Twice, my child."

"Once before the little shrine, and once beside my bed,—is it not so?"

"It is so, my Fanchon. What hast thou in thy mind?"

"Thou did'st pray ~~that~~ the storm die in the hills, and the flood cease, and that my father come before it was again the hour of prayer. It is now the hour. Can'st thou not hear the storm and the wash of the flood? And my father does not come!"

"My Fanchon, God is good."

"When thou wast asleep, I rose from my bed, and in the dark I kissed the feet of—Him—on the little Calvary, and I did not speak, but in my heart I called."

"What did'st thou call, my child?"

"I called to my father,—'Come back! come back!'"

"Thou should'st have called to God, my Fanchon."

"I loved my father, and I called to him."

"Thou should'st love God."

"I knew my father first. If God loved thee, He would answer thy prayer. Dost thou not hear the cracking of the cedar trees and the cry of the wolves—they are afraid? All day and all night the rain and wind come down, and the birds and wild fowl have no peace. I kissed—His feet, and my throat was full of

tears, but I called in my heart. Yet the storm and the dark stay, and my father does not come."

"Let us be patient, my Fanchon."

"He went to guide the priest across the hills. Why does not God guide him back?"

"My Fanchon, let us be patient."

"The priest was young, and my father has grey hair."

"Wilt thou not be patient, my child!"

"He filled the knapsack of the priest with food better than his own, and—thou did'st not see it—put money in his hand."

"My own, the storm may pass."

"He told the priest to think upon our home as a little nest God set up here for such as he."

"There are places of shelter in the hills for thy father, my Fanchon."

"And when the priest prayed, 'That Thou may'st bring us safely to this place where we would go,' my father said so softly, '*We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!*'"

"My Fanchon, thy father hath gone this trail many times."

"The prayer was for the out-trail, not the in-trail, my mother."

"Nay, I do not understand thee."

"A swarm of bees came singing through the room last night, my mother. It was dark and I could not see, but there was a sweet smell, and I heard the voices."

"My child, thou art tired with watching, and thy mind is full of fancies. Thou must sleep."

"I am tired of watching. Through the singing of the bees as they passed over my bed, I heard my father's

voice. I could not hear the words, they seemed so far away, like the voices of the bees; and I did not cry out, for the tears were in my throat. After a moment the room was so still that it made my heart ache."

"Oh, my Fanchon, my child, thou dost break my heart! Dost thou not know the holy words?—

"And their souls do pass like singing bees, where no man may follow. These are they whom God gathereth out of the whirlwind and the desert, and bringeth home in a goodly swarm."

Night drew close to the earth, and as suddenly as a sluice-gate drops and holds back a flood, the storm ceased. Along the crest of the hills there slowly grew a line of light, and then the serene moon came up and on, persistent to give the earth love where it had had punishment. Divers flocks of clouds, camp-followers of the storm, could not abash her. But once she drew shrinking back behind a slow troop of them, for down at the bottom of a gorge lay a mountaineer, face upward and unmoving, as he had lain since a rock loosened beneath him, and the depths swallowed him. If he had had ears to hear, he would have answered the soft, bitter cries which rose from a hut on the Voshti Hills above him—

"Michel, Michel, art thou gone?"

"Come back, oh, my father, come back!"

But perhaps it did avail that there were lighted candles before a little shrine, and that a mother, in her darkness, kissed the feet of One on a Calvary.

THERE WAS A LITTLE CITY

IT lay between the mountains and the sea, and a river ran down past it, carrying its good and ill news to a pacific shore, and out upon soft winds, traveling lazily to the scarlet east. All white and a tempered red, it nestled in a valley with other valleys on lower steppes, which seemed as if built by the gods, that they might travel easily from the white-topped mountains, Margath, Shaknon, and the rest, to wash their feet in the sea. In the summer a hot but gracious mistiness softened the green of the valleys, the varying colours of the hills, the blue of the river, the sharp outlines of the cliffs. Along the high shelf of the mountain, mule-trains travelled like a procession seen in dreams—slow, hazy, graven, yet moving, a part of the ancient hills themselves; upon the river great rafts, manned with scarlet-vested crews, swerved and swam, guided by the gigantic oars which needed five men to lift and sway—argonauts they from the sweet-smelling forests to the salt-smelling main. In winter the little city lay still under a coverlet of pure white, with the mists from the river and the great falls above frozen upon the trees, clothing them as graciously as with white samite, so that far as eye could see there was a heavenly purity upon all, covering every mean and distorted thing. There were days when no wind stirred anywhere, and the gorgeous sun made the little city and all the land roundabout a pretty silver king-

dom, where Oberon and his courtiers might have danced and been glad.

Often, too, you could hear a distant woodcutter's axe make a pleasant song in the air, and the woodcutter himself, as the hickory and steel swung in a shining half-circle to the bole of balsam, was clad in the bright livery of a frost, his breath issuing in gray smoke like life itself, mystic and peculiar, man, axe, tree, and breath, one common being. And when, by-and-by, the woodcutter added a song of his own to the song his axe made, the illusion was not lost, but rather heightened; for it, too, was part of the unassuming pride of nature, child-like simplicity, primeval in its suggestion and expression. The song had a soft monotony, swinging back and forth to the waving axe like the pendulum of a clock. It began with a low humming, as one could think man made before he heard the Voice which taught him how to speak. And then came the words:—

“None shall stand in the way of the lord,
 The lord of the Earth—of the rivers and trees,
 Of the cattle and fields and vines!
 Hew!
 Here shall I build me my cedar home,
 A city with gates, a road to the sea—
 For I am the lord of the Earth!
 Hew! Hew!
 Hew and hew, and the sap of the tree
 Shall be yours, and your bones shall be strong,
 Shall be yours, and your heart shall rejoice,
 Shall be yours, and the city be yours,
 And the key of its gates be the key
 Of the home where your little ones dwell.
 Hew, and be strong! Hew and rejoice!
 For man is the lord of the Earth,
 And God is the Lord over all!”

And so long as the little city stands will this same woodcutter's name and history stand also. He had camped where it stood now, when nothing was there save the wild duck in the reeds, the antelopes upon the hills, and all manner of furred and feathered things; and it all was his. He had seen the yellow flashes of gold in the stream called Pipi, and he had not gathered it, for his life was simple, and he was young enough to cherish in his heart the love of the open world beyond the desire of cities and the stir of the market-place. In those days there was not a line in his face, not an angle in his body—all smoothly rounded and lithe and alert, like him that was called "the young lion of Dedan." Day by day he drank in the wisdom of the hills and the valleys, and he wrote upon the dried barks of trees the thoughts that came as he lay upon the bearskin in his tent, or cooled his hands and feet, of a hot summer day, in the moist, sandy earth, and watched the master of the deer lead his cohorts down the passes of the hills.

But by-and-by mule-trains began to crawl along the ledges of Margath Mountain, and over Shaknon came adventurers, and after them, wandering men seeking a new home, women and children coming also. But when these came he had passed the spring-time of his years, and had grown fixed in the love of the valley, where his sole visitors had been passing tribes of Indians, who knew his moods and trespassed not at all on his domain. The adventurers hungered for the gold in the rivers, and they made it one long washing-trough, where the disease that afflicted them passed on from man to man-like poison down a sewer. Then the little city grew, and with the search for gold came other seekings and findings and toilings, and men who

came as one stops at an inn to feed, stayed to make their home, and women made the valley cheerful, and children were born, and the pride of the place was as great as that of some village of the crimson East, where every man has ancestors to Mahomet and beyond.

And he, Felion, who had been lord and master of the valley, worked with them, but did not seek for riches, and more often drew away into the hills to find some newer place unspoiled by man. But again and again he returned, for no fire is like the old fire, and no trail like the old trail. And at last it seemed as if he had driven his tent-peg in the Pipi Valley forever; for from among the women who came he chose one comely and wise and kind, and for five years the world grew older, and Felion did not know it. When he danced his little daughter on his knee, he felt that he had found a new world.

But a day came when trouble fell upon the little city, for of a sudden the reef of gold was lost, and the great crushing mills stood idle, and the sound of the hammers was stayed. And they came to Felion, because in his youth he had been of the best of the schoolmen; and he got up from his misery—only the day before his wife had taken a great and lonely journey to that Country which welcomes, but never yields again—and, leaving his little child behind, he went down to the mines. And in three days they found the reef once more; for it had curved like the hook of a sickle, and the first arc of the yellow circle had dropped down into the bowels of the earth.

And so he saved the little city from disaster, and the people blessed him at the moment; and the years went on.

Then there came a time when the little city was threatened with a woeful flood, because of a breaking flume; but by a simple and wise device Felion stayed the danger.

And again the people blessed him; and the years went on.

By-and-by an awful peril came, for two score children had set a great raft loose upon the river, and they drifted down towards the rapids in the sight of the people; and mothers and helpless fathers wrung their hands, for on the swift tide no boat could reach them, and none could intercept the raft. But Felion, seeing, ran out upon the girders of a bridge that was being builded, and there, before them all, as the raft passed under, he let himself fall, breaking his leg as he dropped among the timbers of the fore-part of the raft; for the children were all gathered at the back, where the great oars lay motionless, one dragging in the water behind. Felion drew himself over to the huge oar, and with the strength of five men, while the people watched and prayed, he kept the raft straight for the great slide, else it had gone over the dam and been lost, and all that were thereon. A mile below, the raft was brought to shore, and again the people said that Felion had saved the little city from disaster.

And they blessed him for the moment; and the years went on.

Felion's daughter grew towards womanhood, and her beauty was great, and she was welcome everywhere in the valley, the people speaking well of her for her own sake. But at last a time came when of the men of the valley one called, and Felion's daughter came quickly to him, and with tears for her father, and smiles for her husband, she left the valley and journeyed into

the east, having sworn to love and cherish him while she lived. And her father, left solitary, mourned for her, and drew away into a hill above the valley in a cedar house that he built; and having little else to love, loved the earth, and sky, and animals, and the children from the little city when they came his way. But his heart was sore; for by-and-by no letters came from his daughter, and the little city, having prospered, concerned itself no more with him. When he came into its streets there were those who laughed, for he was very tall and rude, and his grey hair hung loose on his shoulders, and his dress was still a hunter's. They had not long remembered the time when a grievous disease, like a plague, fell upon the place, and people died by scores, as sheep fell in a murrain. And again they had turned to him, and he, because he knew of a miraculous medicine got from Indian sachems, whose people had suffered of this sickness, came into the little city, and by his medicines and fearless love and kindness he stayed the plague.

And thus once more he saved the little city from disaster, and they blessed him for the moment; and the years went on.

In time they ceased to think of Felion at all, and he was left alone; even the children came no more to visit him, and he had pleasure only in hunting and shooting and in felling trees, with which he built a high stockade and a fine cedar house within it. And all the work of this he did with his own hands, even to the polishing of the floors and the carved work of the large fireplaces. Yet he never lived in the house, nor in any room of it, and the stockade gate was always shut; and when any people passed that way they stared and shrugged their shoulders, and thought Felion mad or

a fool. But he was wise in his own way, which was not the way of those who had reason to bless him forever, and who forgot him, though he had served them through so many years. Against the little city he had an exceeding bitterness; and this grew, and had it not been that his heart was kept young by the love of the earth, and the beasts about him in the hills, he must needs have cursed the place and died. But the sight of a bird in the nest with her young, and the smell of a lair, and the light of the dawn that came out of the east, and the winds that came up from the sea, and the hope that would not die kept him from being of those who love not life for life's sake, be it in ease or in sorrow. He was of those who find all worth the doing, even all worth the suffering; and so, though he frowned and his lips drew tight with anger when he looked down at the little city, he felt that elsewhere in the world there was that which made it worth the saving.

If his daughter had been with him he would have laughed at that which his own hands had founded, protected, and saved. But no word came from her, and laughter was never on his lips—only an occasional smile when, perhaps, he saw two sparrows fighting, or watched the fish chase each other in the river, or a toad, too lazy to jump, walk stupidly like a convict, dragging his long, green legs behind him. And when he looked up towards Shakon and Margath, a light came in his eyes, for they were wise and quiet, and watched the world, and something of their grandeur drew about him like a cloak. As age cut deep lines in his face and gave angles to his figure, a strange, settled dignity grew upon him, whether he swung his axe by the balsams or dressed the skins of the animals he had

killed, piling up the pelts in a long shed in the stockade, a goodly heritage for his daughter, if she ever came back. Every day at sunrise he walked to the door of his house and looked eastward steadily, and sometimes there broke from his lips the words, "My daughter—Malise!" Again, he would sit and brood with his chin in his hand, and smile, as though remembering pleasant things.

One day at last, in the full tide of summer, a man, haggard and troubled, came to Felion's house, and knocked, and, getting no reply, waited, and whenever he looked down at the little city he wrung his hands, and more than once he put them up to his face and shuddered, and again looked for Felion. Just when the dusk was rolling down, Felion came back, and, seeing the man, would have passed him without a word, but that the man stopped with an eager, sorrowful gesture and said: "The plague has come upon us again, and the people, remembering how you healed them long ago, beg you to come."

At that Felion leaned his fishing-rod against the door, and answered: "What people?"

The other then replied: "The people of the little city below, Felion."

"I do not know your name," was the reply; "I know naught of you or of your city."

"Are you mad?" cried the man. "Do you forget the little city down there? Have you no heart?"

A strange smile passed over Felion's face, and he answered: "When one forgets why should the other remember?"

He turned and went into the house and shut the door, and though the man knocked, the door was not opened, and he went back angry and miserable, and

the people could not believe that Felion would not come to help them, as he had done all his life. At dawn three others came, and they found Felion looking out towards the east, his lips moving as though he prayed. Yet it was no prayer, only a call, that was on his lips. They felt a sort of awe in his presence, for now he seemed as if he had lived more than a century, so wise and old was the look of his face, so white his hair, so set and distant his dignity. They begged him to come, and, bringing his medicines, save the people, for death was galloping through the town, knocking at many doors.

"One came to heal you," he answered—"the young man of the schools, who wrote mystic letters after his name; it swings on a brass by his door—where is he?"

"He is dead of the plague," they replied, "and the other also that came with him, who fled before the sickness, fell dead of it on the roadside, going to the sea."

"Why should I go?" he replied, and he turned threateningly to his weapon, as if in menace of their presence.

"You have no one to leave behind," they answered eagerly, "and you are old."

"Liars!" he rejoined, "let the little city save itself," and he wheeled and went into his house, and they saw that they had erred in not remembering his daughter, whose presence they had once prized. They saw that they had angered him beyond soothing, and they went back in grief, for two of them had lost dear relatives by the fell sickness. When they told what had happened, the people said: "We will send the women; he will listen to them—he had a daughter."

That afternoon, when all the hills lay still and dead,

and nowhere did bird or breeze stir, the women came, and they found him seated with his back turned to the town. He was looking into the deep woods, into the hot shadows of the trees.

"We have come to bring you to the little city," they said to him; "the sick grow in numbers every hour."

"It is safe in the hills," he answered, not looking at them. "Why do the people stay in the valley?"

"Every man has a friend, or a wife, or a child, ill or dying, and every woman has a husband, or a child, or a friend, or a brother. Cowards have fled, and many of them have fallen by the way."

"Last summer I lay sick here many weeks and none came near me; why should I go to the little city?" he replied austerely. "Four times I saved it, and of all that I saved none came to give me water to drink, or food to eat, and I lay burning with fever, and thirsty and hungry—God of Heaven, how thirsty!"

"We did not know," they answered humbly; "you came to us so seldom, we had forgotten; we were fools."

"I came and went fifty years," he answered bitterly, "and I have forgotten how to rid the little city of the plague!"

At that one of the women, mad with anger, made as if to catch him by his beard, but she forbore, and said: "Liar! the men shall hang you to your own roof-tree."

His eyes had a wild light, but he waved his hand quietly, and answered: "Begone, and learn how great a sin is ingratitude."

He turned away from them gloomily, and would have entered his home, but one of the women, who

was young, plucked his sleeve, and said sorrowfully: "I loved Malise, your daughter."

"And forgot her and her father. I am three score and ten years, and she has been gone fifteen, and for the first time I see your face," was his scornful reply.

She was tempted to say: "I was ever bearing children and nursing them, and the hills were hard to climb, and my husband would not go;" but she saw how dark his look was, and she hid her face in her hands and turned away to follow after the others. She had five little children, and her heart was anxious for them and her eyes full of tears.

Anger and remorse seized on the little city, and there were those who would have killed Felion, but others saw that the old man had been sorely wronged in the past, and these said: "Wait until the morrow and we will devise something."

That night a mule-train crept slowly down the mountain side and entered the little city, for no one who came with them knew of the plague. The caravan had come from the east across the great plains, and not from the west, which was the travelled highway to the sea. Among them was a woman who already was ill of a fever, and knew little of what passed round her. She had with her a beautiful child; and one of the women of the place devised a thing.

"This woman," she said, "does not belong to the little city, and he can have nothing against her; she is a stranger. Let one of us take this beautiful lad to him, and he shall ask Felion to come and save his mother."

Every one approved the woman's wisdom, and in the early morning she herself, with another, took the child and went up the long hillside in the gross heat; and when they came near Felion's house the women

stayed behind, and the child went forward, having been taught what to say to the old man.

Felion sat just within his doorway, looking out into the sunlight which fell upon the red and white walls of the little city, flanked by young orchards, with great, oozy meadows beyond these, where cattle ate, knee-deep in the lush grass and cool reed-beds. Along the riverside, far up on the high banks, were the tall couches of dead Indians, set on poles, their useless weapons laid along the deerskin pall. Down the hurrying river there passed a raft, bearing a black flag on a pole, and on it were women and children who were being taken down to the sea from the doomed city. These were they who had lost fathers and brothers, and now were going out alone with the shadow of the plague over them, for there was none to say them nay. The tall oarsmen bent to their task, and Felion felt his blood beat faster when he saw the huge oars swing high, then drop and bend in the water, as the raft swung straight in its course and passed on safe through the narrow slide into the white rapids below, which licked the long timbers as with white tongues, and tossed spray upon the sad voyagers. Felion remembered the day when he left his own child behind and sprang from the bridge to the raft whereon were the children of the little city, and saved them.

And when he tried to be angry now, the thought of the children as they watched him, with his broken leg striving against their peril, softened his heart. He shook his head, for suddenly there came to him the memory of a time, three score years before, when he and the foundryman's daughter had gone hunting flag-flowers by the little trout stream, of the songs they sang together at the festivals, she in her sweet

Quaker garb and demure Quaker beauty, he lithe, alert, and full of the joy of life and loving. As he sat so, thinking, he wondered where she was, and why he should be thinking of her now, facing the dreary sorrow of this pestilence and his own anger and vengeance. He nodded softly to the waving trees far down in the valley, for his thoughts had drifted on to his wife as he first saw her. She stood bare-armed among the wild grapevines by a wall of rock, the dew of rich life on her lip and forehead, her grey eyes swimming with a soft light; and looking at her he had loved her at once, as he had loved, on the instant, the little child that came to him later; as he had loved the girl into which the child grew, till she left him and came back no more. Why had he never gone in search of her?

He got to his feet involuntarily and stepped towards the door, looking down into the valley. As his eyes rested on the little city his face grew dark, but his eyes were troubled and presently grew bewildered, for out of a green covert near there stepped a pretty boy, who came to him with frank, unabashed face and a half-shy smile.

Felion did not speak at first, but stood looking, and presently the child said: "I have come to fetch you."

"To fetch me where, little man?" asked Felion, a light coming into his face, his heart beating faster.

"To my mother. She is sick."

"Where is your mother?"

"She's in the village down there," answered the boy, pointing.

In spite of himself, Felion smiled in a sour sort of way, for the boy had called the place a village, and he enjoyed the unconscious irony.

"What is the matter with her?" asked Felion, beckoning the lad inside.

The lad came and stood in the doorway, looking round curiously, while the old man sat down and looked at him, moved, he knew not why.

The bright steel of Felion's axe, standing in the corner, caught the lad's eye and held it. Felion saw, and said: "What are you thinking of?"

The lad answered: "Of the axe. When I'm bigger I will cut down trees and build a house, a bridge, and a city. Aren't you coming quick to help my mother? She will die if you don't come."

Felion did not answer, and from the trees without two women watched him anxiously.

"Why should I come?" asked Felion, curiously.

"Because she's sick, and she's my mother."

"Why should I do it because she's your mother?"

"I don't know," the lad answered, and his brow knitted in the attempt to think it out, "but I like you." He came and stood beside the old man and looked into his face with a pleasant confidence. "If your mother was sick, and I could heal her, I would—I know I would—I wouldn't be afraid to go down into the village."

Here were rebuke, love, and impeachment, all in one, and the old man half started from his seat.

"Did you think I was afraid?" he asked of the boy, as simply as might a child of a child, so near are children and wise men in their thoughts.

"I knew if you didn't it'd be because you were angry or were afraid, and you didn't look angry."

"How does one look when one is angry?"

"Like my father."

"And how does your father look?"

"My father's dead."

"Did he die of the plague?" asked Felion, laying his hand on the lad's shoulder.

"No," said the lad quickly, and shut his lips tight.

"Won't you tell me?" asked Felion, with a strange inquisitiveness.

"No. Mother'll tell you, but I won't;" and the lad's eyes filled with tears.

"Poor boy! poor boy!" said Felion, and his hand tightened on the small shoulder.

"Don't be sorry for me; be sorry for mother, please," said the boy, and he laid a hand on the old man's knee, and that touch went to a heart long closed against the little city below; and Felion rose and said: "I will go with you to your mother."

Then he went into another room; and the boy came near the axe and ran his fingers along the bright steel, and fondled the handle, as does a hunter the tried weapon which has been his through many seasons. When the old man came back he said to the boy: "Why do you look at the axe?"

"I don't know," was the answer; "maybe because my mother used to sing a song about the woodcutters."

Without a word, and thinking much, he stepped out into the path leading to the little city, the lad holding one hand. Years afterwards men spoke with a sort of awe or reverence of seeing the beautiful stranger lad leading old Felion into the plague-stricken place, and how, as they passed, women threw themselves at Felion's feet, begging him to save their loved ones. And a drunkard cast his arm round the old man's shoulder and sputtered foolish pleadings in his ear; but Felion only waved them back gently, and said: "By-and-by, by-and-by—God help us all!"

Now a fevered hand snatched at him from a doorway, moanings came from everywhere, and more than once he almost stumbled over a dead body; others he saw being carried away to the graveyard for hasty burial. Few were the mourners that followed, and the faces of those who watched the processions go by were set and drawn. The sunlight and the green trees seemed an insult to the dead.

They passed into the house where the sick woman lay, and some met him at the door with faces of joy and meaning; for now they knew the woman and would have spoken to him of her; but he waved them by, and put his fingers upon his lips and went where a fire burned in a kitchen, and brewed his medicines. And the child entered the room where his mother lay, and presently he came to the kitchen and said: "She is asleep—my mother."

The old man looked down on him a moment steadily, and a look of bewilderment came into his face. But he turned away again to the simmering pots. The boy went to the window, and, leaning upon the sill, began to hum softly a sort of chant, while he watched a lizard running hither and thither in the sun. As he hummed the old man listened, and presently, with his medicines in his hands and a half-startled look, he came over to the lad.

"What are you humming?" he asked.

The lad answered: "A song of the woodcutters."

"Sing it again," said Felion.

The lad began to sing:

"Here shall I build me my cedar house,
A city with gates, a road to the sea—
For I am the lord of the Earth!
Hew! Hew!"

The old man stopped him. "What is your name?"

"My name is Felion," answered the lad, and he put his face close to the jug that held the steaming tinctures, but the old man caught the little chin in his huge hand and bent back the head, looking long into the lad's eyes. At last he caught little Felion's hand and hurried into the other room, where the woman lay in a stupor. The old man came quickly to her and looked into her face. Seeing, he gave a broken cry and said: "Malise, my daughter! Malise!"

He drew her to his breast, and as he did so he groaned aloud, for he knew that inevitable Death was waiting for her at the door. He straightened himself up, clasped the child to his breast, and said: "I, too, am Felion, my little son."

And then he set about to defeat that dark, hovering Figure at the door.

For three long hours he sat beside her, giving her little by little his potent medicines; and now and again he stopped his mouth with his hand, lest he should cry out; and his eyes never wavered from her face, not even to the boy, who lay asleep in the corner.

At last his look relaxed its vigilance, for a dewy look passed over the woman's face, and she opened her eyes and saw him, and gave a little cry of "Father!" and was straightway lost in his arms.

"I have come home to die," she said.

"No, no, to live," he answered firmly. "Why did you not send me word all these long years?"

"My husband was in shame, in prison, and I in sorrow," she answered sadly. "I could not."

"He is——" he paused. "He did evil?"

"He is dead," she said. "It is better so." Her eyes wandered round the room restlessly, and then

fixed upon the sleeping child, and a smile passed over her face. She pointed to the lad.

The old man nodded. "He brought me here," he said gently. Then he got to his feet. "You must sleep now," he added, and he gave her a cordial. "I must go forth and save the sick."

"It is a plague?" she asked.

He nodded. "They said you would not come to save them," she continued reproachfully. "You came to me because I was your Malise, only for that?"

"No, no," he answered; "I knew not who you were; I came to save a mother to her child."

"Thank God, my father," she said.

With a smile she hid her face in the pillow. At last leaving her and the child asleep, old Felion went forth into the little city, and the people flocked to him, and for many days he came and went ceaselessly. And once more he saved the city, and the people blessed him; and the years go on.

THE WHITE OIEN

“A H, Monsieur, Monsieur, come quick!”

“My son, wilt thou not be patient?”

“But she—my Fanchon—and the child!”

“I knew thy Fanchon, and her father, when thou wast yet a child.”

“But they may die before we come, Monsieur.”

“These things are in God’s hands, Gustave.”

“You are not a father; you have never known what makes the world seem nothing!”

“I knew thy Fanchon’s father.”

“Is that the same?”

“There are those who save, and those who die for others. Of thy love thou would’st save—the woman hath lain in thy arms, the child is of this. But to thy Fanchon’s father I was merely a priest—we had not hunted together, nor met often about the fire, and drew fast the curtains for the tales which bring men close. He took me safely on the out-trail, but on the home-trail was cast away. Dost thou not think the love of him that stays as great as the love of him that goes?”

“Ah, thou would’st go far to serve my wife and child!”

“Love knows not distance; it hath no continent; its eyes are for the stars, its feet for the swords; it continueth, though an army lay waste the pasture; it comforteth when there are no medicines; it hath

the relish of manna, and by it men do live in the desert."

"But if it pass from a man, that which he loves, and he is left alone, Monsieur?"

"That which is loved may pass, but love hath no end."

"Thou did'st love my Fanchon's father?"

"I prayed him not to go, for a storm was on, but there was the thought of wife and child on him,—the good Michel!—and he said, 'It is the home-trail, and I must get to my nest!' Poor soul, poor soul! I who carry my life as a leaf in autumn for the west wind was saved—and he——"

"We are on the same trail now, Monsieur?"

"See! how soft a night, and how goodly is the moon."

"It is the same trail now as then, Monsieur?"

"And how like velvet are the shadows in the gorge there below—like velvet—velvet!"

"Like a pall. He travelled this trail, Monsieur?"

"I remember thy Fanchon that night—so small a child was she, with deep brown eyes, a cloud of hair that waved about her head, and a face that shone like spring. I have seen her but once since then, and yet thou say'st thy Fanchon has now her great hour, that she brings forth?"

"Yes. In the morning she cried out to me twice, for I am not easy of waking,—shame to me!—and said, 'Gustave, thou shalt go for the priest over the hills, for my time is at hand, and I have seen the White Omen on the wall.' The White Omen—you know, Monsieur?"

"What does such as she with the legend of the White Omen, Gustave?"

"Who can tell what is in the heart of a mother? Their eyes are not the eyes of such as we."

"Neither the eyes of man or priest,—thou sayest well. How did she see it?"

"She was lying in a soft sleep, when something like a pain struck through her eyes, and she waked. There upon the wall, over the shrine, was the white arrow with the tuft of fire. It came and went three times, and then she called me."

"What tale told the arrow to thy Fanchon, Gustave?"

"That for the child which cometh into the world, a life must go from the world."

"The world is wide, and souls are many, Gustave."

"Most true, but her heart was heavy, and it came upon her that the child might be spared and herself taken."

"Is not that the light in thy home—yonder against the bunch of firs?"

"Yes, yes, good father, they have put a light in the window. See, see, there are two lights! Ah, *merci, merci*, they both live—she hath had her hour! That was the sign our mother promised me!"

"Michel's wife—ah, yes, Michel's wife! Blessed be God. A moment, Gustave, let us kneel here . . ."

". . . Monsieur, did you not see a white arrow shoot down the sky as the prayer ended?"

"My son, it was a falling star."

"It seemed to have a tuft of fire."

"Hast thou also the mind of a woman, Gustave?"

"I cannot tell. If it was not a human soul, it was a world, and death is death."

"Thou shalt think of life, Gustave. In thy nest there are two birds, where was but one. Keep in thy

heart the joy of life and the truth of love, and the White Omen shall be naught to thee."

"May I say 'thou,' as I speak?"

"Thou shalt speak to me as I speak to thee."

"Thy face is pale, art thou ill, *mon père*?"

"I have no beard, and the moon shines in my face."

"Thy look is as that of one without sight."

"Nay, nay, I can see the two lights in thy window, my son."

"Joy! joy! a little while, and I shall clasp my Fanchon in my arms!"

"Thy Fanchon, and the child—and the child."

The fire sent a trembling glow through the room of a hut on a Voshti hill, and the smell of burning fir and camphire wood filtered through the air with a sleepy sweetness. So delicate and faint between the quilts lay the young mother, the little Fanchon, a shining wonder still in her face, and the exquisite touch of birth on her—for when a child is born, the mother also is born again! So still she lay, until one who gave her into the world, stooped, and drawing open the linen at her breast nestled a little life there, which presently gave a tiny cry, the first since it came forth. Then Fanchon's arms drew up, and with eyes all tenderly burning, she clasped the babe to her breast, and as silk breast touched silk cheek, there sprang up in her the delight and knowledge that the doom of the White Omen was not for herself. Then she called the child by its father's name, and said into the distance:

"Gustave, Gustave, come back!"

And the mother of Fanchon, remembering one night so many years before, said under her breath:

"Michel, Michel, thou art gone so long!"

With their speaking Gustave and the priest entered on them, and Fanchon, crying out for joy, said:

"Kiss thy child, thy little Gustave, my husband." Then to the priest:

"Last night I saw the White Omen, my father, and one could not die, nor let the child die, without a blessing. But, behold! we shall both live now."

The priest blessed all, and long time he talked with the wife of the lost Michel. When he rose to go to bed, she said to him: "The journey has been too long. Your face is pale and you tremble. Youth has no patience. Gustave hurried you, O father."

"Gustave yearned for thy Fanchon and the child. The White Omen made him afraid."

"But the journey was too much. It is a hard, a bitter trail."

"I have come gladly as I went once with thy Michel. But as thou say'st, I am tired—at my heart. I will get to my rest."

Near dawn Gustave started from the bed where he sat watching, for he saw the White Omen over against the shrine, and then a voice said, as it were out of a great distance:

"Even me also, O my father!"

With awed footsteps, going to see, he found that a man had passed out upon that trail, by which no hunter from life can set a mark to guide a comrade; leaving behind the bones and flesh which God set up, too heavy to carry on so long a journey.

THE TENT OF THE PURPLE MAT

THE Tent stands on the Mount of Lost Winters, in that bit of hospitable land called the Fair Valley, which is like no other in the North. Whence comes the soft wind that comforts it, who can tell? It swims through the great gap in the mountains, and passing down the Valley, sinks upon the prairie of the Ten Stars, where it is lost. And what man first placed the Tent on the Mount, none knows, though legends are many. It has a clear outlook to the north whence comes the gracious wind, and it is sheltered at the south by a stout wall of commendable trees; yet these are at some small distance, so that the Tent has a space all about it, and the figure of the general land is as that of an amphitheatre.

The Tent is made of deerskin, dyed by a strange process, which turned it white, and, doctored by some cunning medicine it is like a perfect parchment, and shows no decay. It has a centre-pole of excellent fir, and from its peak flies a strip of snake-skin, dyed a red that never fades. For the greater part of the year the plateau whereon the Tent stands is covered with a sweet grass, and when the grass dies there comes a fine white frost, ungoverned by the sun, in which the footstep sinks, as into unfilled honeycomb.

The land has few clouds, and no storms, save of the lightest—rain which is as mist, and snow which is as frosty haze. The sun cherishes the place continually, and the moon rises on it with a large rejoicing.

Yet no man dwells in the Valley. It is many scores of leagues from any habitation, from the lodges of the Indians or the posts of the Great Company's people. There are few tribes that know of it, and these go not to it as tribes, but as one man or one woman has need. Men say that beyond it, in another amphitheatre of the hills, is White Valley, where the Sleepers are, and the Scarlet Hunter is sentinel. Yet who knows!—since any that have been there are constrained to be silent, or forget what they have seen.

But this Valley where the Tent stands is for those who have broken the commandment, "Thou shalt not sell thy soul." Hither they come and wait and desire continually, and this delightful land is their punishment, for they have no relish for goodly things, the power to enjoy going from them when they bargained their souls away. The great peace, the noble pasturage, the equal joy of day and night, wherein is neither heat nor cold, where life is like the haze on a harvest-field, are for chastisement, till, that by great patience and striving, someone, having the gift of sacrifice, shall give his life to buy back that soul. For it is in the minds of this people of the North that for every life that comes into the world, one passes out, and for every soul which is bartered away, another must be set free, ere it can be redeemed.

Men and women whom life and their own sins had battered, came seeking the Tent, but they were few, and they were chiefly old, for conscience cometh mostly when man can work and wanton no more. Yet one day, when the sight of the Valley was most fair to the eyes, there came out of the southmost corner a girl who, as soon as she set foot in the Valley, laid aside her knapsack in the hollow of a tree, also her

moccasins, and a little cap of fur, and came on with bare head and feet towards the Mount of the Lost Winters.

She was of good stature, ripely made, not beautiful of face, but with a look which would make any man turn twice to see; a very glory of fine hair, and a hand which spoke oftener than the lips. She had come a month's travel, scarcely halting from sunrise to sunset, and she was as worn in body as in spirit. Now as she passed up the Valley, she stood still several times, and looked round in a kind of dream, as well one might who had come out of an inclement south country to this sweet nourishment. Yet she stood not still for joy and content, but for pain. Once or twice she lifted up her hands above her head as though appealing, but these pauses were only for brief moments, for she kept moving on towards the Mountain with a swift step. When she had climbed the plateau where the delicate grass yielded with a tender spring to the feet, she paused long and gazed round, as though to take a last glance at all, then, turning to the Tent, looked steadfastly at it, awe and wonder, and something more difficult of interpretation, in her face. At last she slowly came to the curtain of the Tent, and lifting it without a pause, stepped inside, the curtain falling behind her.

The Tent was empty save for the centre-pole, a wooden trough of dried fruit, a jar of water, and a mat of the most delectable purple colour, which was laid between the centre-pole and the tent-curtain. The mat was of exquisite make, of chosen fibres of some perfect wood, and the hue was as that of a Tyrian dye. A soft light pervaded the place, filtering through the parchment-like white skin of the Tent.

Upon the farther side a token was drawn in purple on the tent skin, and the girl seeing it, turned quickly to the curtain through which she had passed. Upon the curtain were other signs. She read them slowly, and repeated them out loud in a low, uncertain voice, like a bird's note blundering in a flute :

“ Four hours shalt thou look Northward, kneeling on the Mat of Purple, and thinking of the Camp of the Delightful Fires, round which is the Joyous City; four hours shalt thou lie prone, thy face upon the soothing earth, desiring sleep; and four hours shalt thou look within thine own breast, thinking of thy sin; four hours also shalt thou go through the Valley, calling out that thou art lost, and praying the Scarlet Hunter to bring thee home. Afterwards thou shalt sleep, and thou shalt comfort thyself with food when thou wilt. If the Scarlet Hunter come not, and thy life fail for very misery, and none comprehending thy state offereth his life, that thy soul may be free once more,—then thou shalt gladly die, and yielding thine own body, shall purchase back thy soul: but this last is not possible until thou hast dwelt here a year and a day.”

Having read, the girl threw herself face forward on the ground, her body shaking with grief, and she cried out a man's name many times with great bitterness.

“ Ambrose! Ambrose! Ambrose!”

A long time she lay prone, crying so, but at last arose, and folding back the curtain with hot hands, began her vigil for the redemption of a soul.

And while her sorrow grew, a father mourned for his daughter, and called his God to witness that he was guiltless of her loss, though he had said hard words to her, by reason of a man called Ambrose. Then,

too, the priest had exhorted her late and early, till her mind was in a maze—it is enough to have the pangs of youth and love, to be awakened by the pain of mere growth and knowledge, without the counsel of the overwise to go jolting through the soul.

The girl was only eighteen. She had never known her mother, she had lived as the flowers do, and when her hour of trial came, she felt herself cast like a wandering bird out of the nest. In her childhood she had known no teaching save the wholesome catechism of a father's love and the sacred intimacy of Nature. Living so, learning by signs the language of law and wisdom, she had indrawn the significance of legend, the power of the awful natural. She had made her own commandments.

When Ambroise, the courier, came, she looked into his eyes and saw her own—indeed it was most wonderful, for those two pairs of eyes were as of one person. Yet, they were different, he a man, she a woman; he versed in evil, she taught in good; he a vagrant of the snows, the fruit of whose life was like the contemptible stones of the desert, she the keeper of a goodly lodge, past which flowed a water that went softly, making rich the land—the fountain of her perfect deeds. He, looking into her eyes, saw himself when he had no sin on his soul, and she into his—as it seemed, her own always—saw herself as it were in a cobweb of evils, which she could not understand. As his heart grew lighter, hers grew sick, even when she knew that these were the only eyes in which she could ever see happiness.

It grew upon her that Ambroise's sins were hers, and not his; that she, not he, had bartered a soul for the wages of sin. When they said at the Fort that her eyes and Ambroise's, and her face and his, were

as of one piece, the pain of the thought deepened, the more because her father and the priest urged that a man who had sold himself to the devil was no comrade for her in little or much. Yet she loved him as only they can who love for the first time, and with the deep primitive feelings, which are out of the core of nature. But her heart had been cloven as by a wedge, and she would not and could not lie in his arms, nor rest her cheek to his, nor seek that haven where true love is fastened like a nail on the wall of that inn called Home. He was herself, he must be bought back; and so, one night, while yet the winter was on, she stole away out of the Fort, pausing at his door a moment only, laying her hand upon it, as one might tenderly lay it on the brow of a sick sleeper. Then she stepped away out on the plains, pointing her course by the moon, for the Mount of Lost Winters.

When the people of the Fort waked, and it was found that she was gone, searchers sallied out, but returned as they went after many days. And at last, because Ambroise suffered as one ground between rolling stones, even the preacher and the father of the girl relented towards him. After some weeks there came word through a wandering tribe that the body of a girl had been found on the Child o' Sin River, and black pelts were hung as mourning on the lodges and houses and walls at the Fort, and the father shut himself in his room, admitting no one.

But if the girl had taken the sins of Ambroise with her, she had left him beside that soft, flowing river of her goodness, and the savour of the herbs on its banks was to him like the sun on a patch of pennyroyal, bringing medicine to the sick body through the nostrils. So, one morning, after months, having crept

from the covert of remorse, he took a guide to start him on the right trail, and began his journey to the Valley whither she had gone before him, though he knew it not. From the moment that his guide left him, dangers beset him, and those spirits called the Mockers, which are the evil deeds of a man, crying to heaven, came crying about him from the dead white trees, breathing through the powdery air, whistling down the moonlight; so that to cheer himself he called out again and again like any heathen:

“ Keeper, O Keeper of the Kimash Hills!

I am as a dog in the North Sea,

I am as a bat in a cave,

As a lizard am I on a prison wall,

As a tent with no pole,

As a bird with one wing;

I am as a seal in the desert,

I am as a wild horse alone.

O Scarlet Hunter of the Kimash Hills!

Thou hast an arm like a shooting star,

Thou hast an eye like the North Sky fires,

Thou hast a pouch for the hungry,

Thou hast a tent for the lost,

Hear me, O Keeper of the Kimash Hills!”

And whether or not this availed him, who can tell? There be many names of the One Thing, and the human soul hath the same north and south, if there be any north and south and east and west, save in the words of men. But something availed; and one day a foot-worn traveller entering the Valley at the southmost corner, laid his cap and bag, moccasins, bow and arrow, and an iron weapon, away in a hollow log, seeing not that there were also another bag and cap and a pair of moccasins there. Then, barefooted

and bareheaded, he marched slowly up the Valley, and all its loveliness smote him as a red iron is buffeted at the forge; and an exquisite agony coursed through his veins, so that he cried out, hiding his face. And he needs must look and look, all his sight aching with this perfection, never overpowering him, but keeping him ever in the relish of his torture.

At last he came to the door of the Tent in the late evening; and intent now only to buy back the soul he had marketed,—for the sake of the memory of the woman, and believing that none would die for him, and that he must die for himself, he lifted the curtain and entered. Then he gave a great cry, for there she lay asleep, face downward, her forehead on the Purple Mat:

“Sherah! Sherah!” he cried, dropping on his knees beside her, and lifting up her head.

“Ambroise!” she called out faintly, her pale face drawing away from his breast.

“Sherah, why hast thou come here?” he said. “Thou! Thou!”

“To buy back my soul, Ambroise. And this is the last day of the year that I have spent here.—Oh, why, why didst thou come? To-morrow all should have been well!”

“To buy back thy soul—thou didst no wrong!”

But at that minute their eyes drew close, and changed, and he understood.

“For me! For me!” he whispered.

“Nay, for me!” she replied.

Then they noticed that the Purple Mat on which they knelt was red under their knees, and a goodly light shone through the Tent, not of the day or night. And as they looked amazed, the curtain of the Tent

drew open, and One entered, clothed in red from head to foot; and they knew him to be the Scarlet Hunter, the lover of the lost, the Keeper of the Kimash Hills.

Looking at them steadfastly, he said to Sherah, "Thou hast prevailed. To-night at the setting of the sun an old man died in Syria, who uttered thy name as in a dream when he passed. The soul of Ambroise hath been bought back by thee."

Then he spoke to Ambroise. "Because thy spirit was willing, and for the woman's sake, thou shalt have peace; but this year which she hath spent for thee shall be taken from thy life, and added to hers. Come, and I will start ye on the swift trail to your own country, and ye shall come here no more."

As they rose, obeying him, they saw that the red of the Mat had gone a perfect white, and they knew not what to think, for they had acted after the manner of the heathen; but, that night, as they travelled with joy towards that inn called Home, down at the Fort, a priest cried to those who would hear him,

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become whiter than snow."

THE SOJOURNERS

“MY father, shall we soon be there?”

The man stopped, and shading his eyes with his hand, looked long before him into the silver haze. They were on the southern bank of a wide valley, flanked by deep hills looking wise as greyheaded youth, a legion of close comrades, showing no gap in their ranks. These hills seemed to breathe; to sit, looking down into the valley, with heads dropped on their breasts, and deep overshadowed eyes, that never changed, in midst of snow, or sun, or any kind of weather; dark brooding lights that knew the secrets of the world, watchful, yet kind. Races, ardent with longing, had come and gone through the valley, had passed the shining porches in the North, on the way to the Quiet Country; and they had never come again, though shadows flitted backwards and forwards when the mists came down; visiting spirits, hungering on the old trail for some that had dropped by the way. As the ages passed, fewer and fewer travelled through the Valley—no longer a people or a race, but twos and threes, and sometimes a small company, like soldiers of a battered guard; and, oftener still, solitary pilgrims, broken with much travel and bowed with loneliness. But they always cried out with joy when they beheld, far off in the North, at the end of the long trail, this range of grey and violet hills break into golden gaps with scarlet walls, and rivers of water ride through

them pleasantly. Then they hurried on to the opal haze that hung at the end of the valley—and who heard ever of any that wished to leave the Scarlet Hills and the Quiet Country beyond!

The boy repeated his question, "My father, shall we soon be there?"

The man withdrew his hand from over his eyes, and a strange smile came to his lips.

"My son," he answered, "can'st thou not see! Yonder through the gentle mist are the Scarlet Hills; our journey is near done."

The boy lifted his head, and looked. "I can see nothing but the mist, my father; not the Scarlet Hills. I am tired, I would sleep."

"Thou shalt sleep soon. The wise man told us of the Delightful Château at the gateway of the hills. Courage, my son. If I gave thee the golden balls to toss, would it cheer thee?"

"My father, I care not for the golden balls, but if I had horse and sword and a thousand men, I would take a city."

The man laid his hand upon the boy's shoulder. "If I, my son," he said, "had a horse and sword, and a thousand men, I would build a city."

"Why dost thou not fly thy falcon, or write thy thoughts upon the sand as thou did'st yesterday, my father?"

The man loosed the falcon from his wrist, and watched it rise. "My son, I care not for the falcon, nor any more for writing on the sands."

There was a long silence, and then the lad said:

"My father, if thou did'st build a city I would not tear it down, but I would keep it with my thousand men."

"Thou hast well said, my son," and the man stooped and kissed the lad on the forehead.

They travelled on in silence again, and slowly they came to the opal haze, which smelled sweet as floating flowers, and gave their hearts a halcyon restfulness. And, glancing down at him many times, the father saw the lad's face look serenely wise, without becoming old, and his brown hair clustered on his forehead with all the life of youth in it. Yet in his eyes, the lad seemed as old as himself.

"My father," said the lad again, "would'st thou then build a city?"

And the father answered: "Nay, my son, I would sow seed and gather it into harvest, enough for my needs, not more; and sit quiet in my doorway when my work was done, and be grateful to the gods above me."

The lad waited a moment, then answered: "When thou wast a governor in our own country, thou had'st serfs and retainers without number, and fifty men to beat upon the shields of brass to tell of the coming through the gates of the King's house; now thou would'st sow a field and sit quiet in thy doorway, like the blind seller of seed-cakes 'gainst the temple."

"Even so, my son." Then he stooped down, knelt upon his knees, and kissed the earth solemnly, and when he rose there was a smile upon his face.

Then the lad said: "When I was the son of a governor I loved to play with the golden balls, to shoot at the target for pearls, and to ride the flamingo down; now I would grind the corn which thou did'st reap, and with oil make seed-cakes for our supper, and sit quiet with thee in thy doorway." Then he too stooped down and kissed the earth, and got up again with a smile upon his face.

As they went, the earth seemed suddenly to blossom anew, the glory of the Scarlet Hills burst upon them, they could hear bugles calling far off, and they could see giant figures trooping along the hills, all scarlet too with streaming hair. And presently, near to a lake, there was a great gateway, and perched upon a rock near it, a chateau of divine proportions, on which was written above the perfect doorway :

"The Keeper of the house awaits thee : Enter into Quiet."

They entered, and were possessed of an incomparable peace. And there came to them an old man of noble countenance, with eye neither dimmed nor sunken, and cheek dewy as a child's, and his voice was like an organ when it plays the soft thanksgiving of a mother.

"Why did ye kiss the earth, as ye travelled?" he said.

They told him, each with his own tongue, and he smiled upon them, and questioned them of all their speech by the way, and they answered him all honestly, and with gladness, for the searching of their hearts was a joy and relief. But he looked most lovingly upon the lad.

"Would'st thou then, indeed, go to the Quiet Country?" he asked.

And the lad answered: "I have lived so long in the noise!"

"Thou hast learned all, thou hast lived all," he answered the boy. "Beyond the Hills of Scarlet there is quiet, and thou shalt dwell there, thou and he. Ye have the perfect desire. Go in peace, and know that though ye are of different years, as men count time, God's clock strikes the same for both, for both are

of equal knowledge, and have the same desire at last."

Then, lifting up his hands, he said: "O children of men, O noisy world, when will ye learn the delectable way?"

Slowly they all three came from the Château, and through the great gateway, and passed to the margin of the shining lake, and the two stepped into a boat that waited for them, of which the rowers were nobly fashioned, like the Keeper of the House, and as they bowed their heads to a melodious blessing, the boat drew away. In the sweet haze they looked transfigured and enlarged, majestic figures moving through the Scarlet Hills to the Quiet Country.

The valley through which they had passed was the Valley of Death, where the young become old and the old young, and all become wise.

" I WAS A STRANGER "

ON the great day of the year in New France—that is, St. John the Baptist's Day—a thing came to pass which sent a thrill through the whole parish of Pontiac, and touched, not at all remotely, some parishes beyond its borders. This thrill of excitement and surprise became a pulse of gossip presently, but the first vibration of it was pure human nature. It was not a bit sentimental, it was of temperament—racial, tribal, primitive.

The heart of the thing was that Octave Bontemps and Zoé Lajoie were to be married. Octave Bontemps, Zoé Lajoie! The very names suggested romance. They had the rhythm of verse, they sounded well in the ear, they were picturesque.

Not two hours after the betrothal had been declared, Parpon the dwarf had arranged two verses which were sung to an old tune that very afternoon of St. John the Baptist's Day. The refrain was—

" Chez toi, chez moi, la maison d'or—
Octave Bontemps, Zoé Lajoie ! "

And this was the reason why Pontiac was unusually interested: Octave Bontemps and Zoé Lajoie were both foundlings. Twenty-two years before, Octave had been found one autumn morning, nearly dead with cold, on the steps of the house of the Seigneur: a sturdy, well-knit child for all that, coarsely dressed, plainly of humble parentage.

Two years later, Zoé Lajoie was found at the door of the Curé's house. As he came from the bedside of a dying parishioner, he had stumbled over the basket, had stooped in the dark and touched it, and something had laughed beneath his hand—such a little laugh of comfort and the gay heart, that at the moment the Curé lifted up the little bundle of fine linen and silk, and tender flesh, finer than silk or any linen, with two bright eyes and laughing lips encouraging the kiss he put upon the pink forehead, the name *Lajoie* came to his lips; and Zoé Lajoie the child was called.

So it had been with Octave Bontemps. When the old housekeeper of the Seigneur lifted the half-frozen man-child from the little quilt which wrapped it round, she said, "God save my heart, but this is in good time!" and so Bontemps the child was called. The two children were also called Octave and Zoé respectively, because those were the names of the people in whose houses they had been brought up.

Octave, the foster-father, was a farmer and a horse-dealer; and Zoé, the foster-mother, was a widow who had lost a child—the dressmaker and milliner of the village.

The whole parish had contributed to their support for a time, but at last the foster-father and the foster-mother, having grown fond of the outcasts, treated them as if they were their own children, and did by them accordingly; and both grew up handsome as ever were children in this world.

The girl was dark, refined, and graceful; quick-tempered and passionate, in keeping with her name Zoé; full of laughter, lightness, and air, with a little undercurrent of melancholy, as befitted the conjunction of the names and her own mysterious origin. The

boy was light-haired, rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed as any Norman or Briton. His nature was full, content, strong; and he had a slumberous sort of temper and spirit, which seldom sprang above the surface of his physical good-nature. He was like some ripe product of the field; he seemed when with horses, in the orchard, at the plough, and among the cut grain, like a fine union of animal and vegetable life. There was no melancholy in him. He was too simple, too unconscious, too full of sound health.

He knew his origin and did not mind it. He was taunted with it but once, and then he broke a leg and arm of the man who took the pains to tell him of it. He did it, too, in the sight of the whole village—that is, before the little hotel Louis Quinze, at the four corners. He was not even reproved for it by the Curé, the good M. Fabre. Naturally, the women thought it a very admirable display of spirit, and some younger women, who, until that day, had not known his history, grew romantical and plaintive over it.

There is nothing that so appeals to the heart of a woman as the loneliness of a man. By nature she is gregarious, and she only judges men by her judgment of herself—that is, when she is primitive, as the women of Pontiac were.

In Octave's childhood many and many a woman had stopped him in the road, and picked him up and kissed him because he was lonely. It was nothing to them that he did not know he was lonely; that his mother, now living or dead, had abandoned him, was enough for them. Long ago they had gone over the character of every woman in the parish, and they had not been able to lay his existence to anybody's account.

Madame Angèle, the wife of the village tinsmith,

was both tender-hearted and talkative, and had summed the matter up many times. She had said in English to Medallion, the English auctioneer:

"She is not alive, no—that woman! If she have once look at that chile, he is never to leave her, no. Sure, if I have a chile like that, I love him to death. He never cry in the night, he, have a leetla smile all the day, he take the smallpox, and it leave on him just one mark—very purty, like a dimple, in his cheek. He fall from the roof of the kitchen, an' he fall soft, and break nosing. Ver' well, he eat—oh, he eat everyting, and he smile while he eat all the time.

"If a chile eat and have no pain on him, and cry not in the night, and laugh all day, and say his prayer, and look like a leetla prince all time—ver' well, that is enough, that is a chile for to thank the good God. Greshus, if the woman was a wolf, not a woman, she would love that chile.

"I smaick him once, becos' he sit down on my basket of eggs an' smaish 'em all to pieces. Ver' well, I would smaick all the saints of heaven if they do that!"

Concerning Zoé Lajoie, the milliner, her foster-mother (and she spoke for all the good-hearted women of Pontiac), said to Medallion:

"When she was christen, she just cry sof' without a soun'—so pitiful, so sweet, that the Curé he say over it, 'Hush, hush, my leetla dear, here are ten good women will be mothers with you when you need; every man will say that joy come with you, and the Church will watch the travel of your feet and the way of your heart. Hush, my leetla lamb'—the Curé speak like that.

"She is not like any child of Pontiac, she have ways so differen'. When one speak quick an' angry at her,

she get ver' still, an' look so steady at you, as if she will ask what you mean. Once or a few time she get angry, an' then her eyes snap fire, an' you see her throat all swell, an' her leetla hands they bang at the air—so! She is kin' to the other children. She is so smart, so—what you call clever, that she is first among them all.

“But one day—well, that one day she leave the house all laughing and gay, for there is a feast of the good Ste. Anne. She is like a flower, like a leetla imp of joy, an' she dance away—oh, she can dance so sof', so sof', an' her body it is slim like a willow rod. *Bien*: in an hour she come back, all pale and col', an' her hands they hang like the dead at her side. I am sitting in the shop all alone, an' I am thinking that Zoé she is sixteen years ole, an' that ver' soon someone will come to me an' ask for her. It make me purty sorry. I drop a tear on my work, for the trouble of her, it is not so much as my love an' the place she have in my heart, the good she is to me. When I wake up in the morning there is Zoé, when I go to sleep at night there is Zoé. I have that for sixteen year. You think the shop and the dresses and the bonnets is enough. Look: a woman needs someone to be sorry for, someone to love, someone to fuss for. *Alors*, I have fuss for Zoé Lajoie for sixteen year, an' now—!

“Just then, that day, I see her standing in the door, an' she look at me so strange, so like a piece of stone. ‘What is it, Zoé?’ I say. She do not answer, but she come up to me, gaze me in the face—ah, her purty black eyes!—an' she say, ‘Tell me, dear mine,’ she say—ah, she alway call me *chère mienne!*—‘tell me, dear mine, are you my aunt? Who was my mother?’

“I laugh ver' silly, an' ‘Dove’ I say—I always call

her that—‘ Dove,’ I say, ‘ I am your aunt.’ I have no heart enough to tell her the truth.

“ ‘ My mother was your sister?’ she ask, an’ I feel myself go hot and col’, as she look at me. I feel for my beads in my pocket, an’ I say, ‘ Yes, dove, she was my sister.’ ‘ Tell me about my mother,’ she say.

“ That break my heart, an’ I feel something take me by the throat, so I cannot breathe. But I have no time to think, so I sit there an’ I tell her a long story—you see, it had to be a long—of her mother, an’ a great quarrel, an’ how her mother marry a young seigneur, an’ how he is not kin’, an’ she get ill, an’ she is afraid to come to my fadder or me, an’ so she lay Zoé on the Curé’s step, an’ go the hospital at Quebec an’ die.

“ ‘ Dat is all the truth?’ she ask.

“ ‘ Dat is all,’ I answer.

“ ‘ Dear mine,’ she say, ‘ I knew that girl out there lie. Now, if any one dare say a word to me, I will make them sorry.’

“ That is her way. When she make up her mind, it is just like a wall—it will not move. I am glad of that.”

When the little milliner confessed to the Curé what she had told Zoé, the Curé found himself in a quandary, because his kind heart ached for the child. And yet the woman had sinned. The humanity in him condoned that which saved the child from a great pain; while the priest in him condemned the false thing. He compromised by fixing a penance for the milliner which occupied her leisure hours for quite three months; and he left the girl ignorant of the truth. In doing so he gave himself a penance which made his

days sadder for twice as long as the milliner was occupied with her repentance.

So Zoé went on her way, and those who knew her obscure and humiliating beginning never spoke of it to her. And there were many who knew nothing. They were the younger folk. Meanwhile the girl grew in beauty, in stature, and in grace. She wore the *habitant* dress, like the other girls of the village, yet somehow she always touched it off with distinction. Her hands were large, but they were fine and firm. Her feet were small, and they were slim and graceful, and very swift, and she was lithe and sinuous. While speaking little, she had a way of saying the right thing to everybody, and at the right time.

When nobody dare go near Farette the miller, by reason of his bad temper over domestic infelicities, she often sat upon the white bags beside the great doorway, and talked to him in her simple, musing sort of way, as if unconscious that their minds had little in common.

Now and again her eyes would shine with merriment, and her lips burst with laughter, and any one who heard her laugh seldom forgot it. It was not cultured, or toned to the note of a drawing-room, but it was silvery, impetuous, and gaily loud. Once at the convent, where she had been educated, her teacher—who spoke both English and French, said that her laugh was vulgar. This was when she was not more than eight years old. The next time she laughed, she immediately reproved herself, saying, “Now I am *vuglar!*”

As she grew older, she cherished this mispronunciation, and whenever she did wrong or was reproved she said, “Now I am *vuglar!*” When Octave Bontemps

first told her bluntly, confusedly, yet with a manly eagerness, of his love, she laughed in his face; and then she said, immediately repenting, "Now I am *vuglar!*" Whereupon she caught his hand, seeing that she had hurt him, and begged him to forgive her. The truth was, she was so taken aback that her laugh was more nervous than humorous or unkind.

Octave told her his love a second time. This was one day when he picked her up in the road by the river, and drove her home upon his bags of meal. She told him now that she could not, that she did not wish to marry. Yet once again he asked her, and that was one very happy morning when they had both been to Mass, and with the little milliner Zoé had wandered off into the maple woods, picking the yellow mandrake apples by the way, speaking more freely and gaily than she had done for weeks and weeks.

There never was such a colour as covered her cheek that day: she was like some flower that turned to the sun and drew in the air and light, giving it out again in fragrance and in beauty. It is possible that the little milliner was in the secret, and, with charming deception, remained behind to rest, while the girl went on and picked the flag-flowers growing by the little stream which flowed into the larger river beyond. As Zoé stretched her arm out to get a tall flower, springing from a boggy bit of ground, an arm suddenly stretched out beyond hers, a shoulder touched her own, and in an instant the fine purple beauty was put into her hands by Octave Bontemps. She was startled, she was pleased, she was bewildered—she was beloved. There and then his words blundered forth, and with a burst of impulsive consent she threw her two arms round his neck, and took his kiss with eyes

that wept and laughed at the same instant. But an instant after, woman-like, as if repenting of her loving forwardness, she said in her old gay formula of self-condemnation, "Now I am *vuglar!*"

This was on the eve of St. John the Baptist's Day, and on the day itself the parish was agog about it, and Parpon made up his song:

" My home, thy home, dear house of gold—
Octave Bontemps, Zoé Lajoie ! "

That night candles burned in every window, and there was a procession upon the water—a hundred boats or more, winding, like a sinuous living thing upon the stream—in honour of the patron saint of the province.

In one boat was Octave Bontemps and a dozen of his friends, and in a long Indian canoe was Zoé Lajoie, with the little milliner. Zoé paddled deftly, the blade clipping the water with smooth precision; and when, at last, her boat was approached by that of Octave, all who saw struck up the song Parpon had made. Blushing, Octave bowed right and left, and waved his hand in pleasure. Zoé merely gave Octave a low greeting and good-night; and turning her canoe round, paddled down the stream swiftly, getting well away from the others. At last Zoé sent the boat into the shore at a point of the Curé's garden from which they could see the myriad candles in the windows of the village, and the fires burning in the cranes at the bows of the boats; the pine torches, the lanterns, the links, the lights from which, trembling and glowing in the shadows of the pine woods on the banks, made the night shine with living fires. They watched it all in silence for some time, and then the little milliner said softly in French:

" Are you very happy, dove? "

" Yes, if it is so that happiness also makes you a little sad somehow, dear mine."

" Yes, that is always so."

" Why is it so? "

" It is because when you come to some new joy, you leave some old joy behind, dove."

" What have I left behind? "

" That peace which is with not knowing love—the first love of a life."

" Dear mine, I don't think that is the cause with me—not altogether."

" What else could it be? " asked the faded, worn little milliner anxiously, for all at once she felt a sudden sinking at her heart—who could tell of what Zoé might be thinking? One thing always haunted her since she had told Zoé the lie which had never been replaced by the truth: the truth might come out! Yet it always had seemed so safe, for Zoé had believed her and there was an end of it!

But to-night there was a hovering sense of premonition in the air. " What else could it be, dove? " she asked again.

At that moment voices sounded near them from the Curé's garden. They came nearer. Zoé made a motion towards her paddle, but stopped short on hearing her own name. The Curé was speaking.

" She is called Zoé Lajoie; she has had a happy, if humble home, and she is to be married soon." The Curé's voice was very grave and kind.

A strange voice answered.

" Oh! Does the man *know*—the man who is to marry her? "

" Yes, yes! He also was a foundling."

" Perhaps of even more unconventional origin than

the girl's—eh?" said the stranger again. There was a note of sarcasm in the tone.

"Perhaps," the Curé answered austerely.

Zoé sat as still as death. The little milliner trembled, and rocked back and forth in dumb misery.

"Well, then, there's little need to interfere—eh? Both are dead. The few thousand francs her father left her I'll send to you, and you can hand it to her—'A gift for a good girl from her papa'—eh, Monsieur le Curé?"

Zoé did not hear the priest's words in reply, but she caught the reproving coldness of his tone as the two walked on.

* Then Zoé turned to the little milliner, who was shrunk to a little heap in the stern of the canoe, and coming near, she spoke in a voice of such bitterness, anger, and passion, that at the first sound her foster-mother cowered down.

"You lied to me!" she said. "You lied to me! Ah, do you know what you have done? You've killed me. If I'd have known the truth I'd have lived different, been different. If I'd known the truth I'd—I'd have been dead long ago. Now I learn it just when I've found out the only thing worth living for—ah, how I hate you! You lied to me. You gave me a mother, and now she's been taken away from me—all by your lying!" She paused in the fury of her words, and the little milliner raised her head.

"I loved you, dove," she answered. "You were like my very own, and—and I wanted to spare you. I've done a long penance for the lie. Ah, dove, don't turn against me. I love you, indeed I do—indeed!"

All at once the girl's passion stilled. She stooped and touched the woman's shoulder kindly.

" Poor dear mine!" she said. " Perhaps you couldn't help it. Let us go—home!"

Then she turned wearily to the paddle, picked it up, and with quiet strokes drove the canoe up the river to where the candles flickered in the windows of the milliner's little house on the bank.

Next morning the voice which had called Zoé Lajoie from sleep to the waking world every sunrise, called in vain. Her place was empty. The little milliner closed her shop that day and mourned and wept, and all the village knew that Zoé Lajoie had run away from home, because she had come to know she was a foundling.

On the third day a letter came to her foster-mother, dated at Montreal, which said, and said only—

" Chère mienne,—Do not look for me. Tell Octave he can do better than to fret. I would not shame him by marrying him. I love you, dear mine, but it is better that I go.—Thy poor

" ZOÉ LAJOIE."

To Octave there came no word. He waited a month—hoping, sickening, losing his colour and his flesh, and drawing to him the sympathy of every kind heart in the parish. This last was hardest for him to bear.

One day he set forth to find her. His foster-father said to him at the last—

" See you, my Octave, you are a fool, but you have been a good boy, and you shall have all the money you need. But you must come back. Be off with you now, my Octave, and never walk when you can ride. Here's money for you!"

It was the old story of hunting the lost. From town

to town, from village to village he travelled, searching, and not finding—an intent, warm-faced, silent man, who never spoke, save to ask questions, who never smiled for months, save one day, when sick and disheartened he stood abstractedly watching the traffic in the streets of Quebec. His attention was presently attracted by a dog hunting for its owner. He saw it run from door to door, then, baffled, hurry along the pavement, backwards and forwards, this side of the street and that side. At last it recovered the scent, and then it ran swiftly, nose to the ground, never shifting until it stopped at a door which it had passed a half-dozen times before, and began scratching at it.

Octave smiled. How stupid he had been! He went back to Pontiac, got Zoé's terrier, which had followed her and loved her for five years, and then he began his search anew, going from city to city—for he had searched the villages well before, and everybody in them knew everybody else. Sometimes it crossed his mind that she might have left the country and gone to some big city of the United States; but he put that from him, and with blind faith went on his way through the French province, patient and persistent.

One day as he passed through the market-place of Quebec city, the dog barked and sprang away from him. He followed hard, looking about sharply; but the face he hoped to see he did not find. Presently he came up with the dog, which had stopped, bewildered. It whined pitifully, and he hastened back with it the way they had come. Presently the terrier rushed upon the scent, and they wound in and out of the crowd into a narrow street.

Here there was another break, but at last the trail was again taken up, and now the dog led the man

straight to a door which he had passed a score of times—a tailor's shop.

Here, in a little back room, he found Zoé Lajoie, and without a word she came out from her staring fellow-workpeople and followed him into the street. He led her to the Cathedral, and sitting down on a bench just outside the door, they were silent for a moment. The girl broke silence first, as it is ever the woman's lot to do the hardest thing, in all events of the affections.

"Why have you come; Octave?" she said.

"I have come to bring my wife home," he answered.

"Your wife!" she said, a little bitterly, a little softly, for his words were the words of possession; yet, too, they were the words of a simple nature which would go straight to the truth, and cleave to it.

"It was just the same," he answered. "I had got to think of you that way; I'd kissed you" (she trembled); "I'd planned to do things with you; I'd sworn on my crucifix to be a good husband to you. That's the way I feel—but yes, that's it!"

"I'm nobody!" she said; "you know that—a girl whose mother left her to die—yes, to die! Who knows what my mother was! And for eighteen years I've lived there in Pontiac, and everybody knew I had no name, and nothing—nothing at all!"

There was no passion, no tears now; only passive, heart-breaking acceptance of a bitterness that poisoned a life.

"Well, well, Zoé, who am I? The same. Who dares say anything against me? Nobody. In Pontiac everybody loves you. When you're my wife, everybody will be happy. The Curé and all told me to say to you, that if you didn't come back they'd fancy you

thought they hadn't been kind to you and loved you. When you were christened ten women promised the Curé they'd be a mother to you, when you needed them. And the milliner, Madame Beaufond—ah, there you are not kind, no——”

“The dear mine! The dear mine!” interposed Zoé softly. “Does she care so much?”

“She will not live long; she has a bad cold, consumption, I think,” answered Octave. In this his imagination had a flight, but Zoé was the only person concerned in this excess, and she would probably forgive him in time.

“You won't leave her alone any longer, will you?” urged Octave. “And me—the farm needs me. My—father—needs me” (he said *father* slowly and for a purpose), “and I can't do right by either if you don't do right by me.”

“Do right?” she faltered.

“Come back with me. If we're happy together, what need we care for all the world? And, Zoé, if you and I feel lonely sometimes when we *remember*, can't we comfort each other better than any one else?”

“You think it's right for a woman that's got no name——”

“One name between us is enough,” he interrupted, with a little laugh, for he saw the end of it all now.

“You don't mind my being *vuglar*, then?” she asked, with a tearful smile, lifting her head from his shoulder.

“I'm more *vuglar*,” he answered, laughing; and he kissed her again.

The verger came out of the Cathedral door, but, seeing them, with a touch of nice courtesy hurriedly

turned and went back again, saying to himself, "No place for me—a little delicate affair, that!"

A child grinned vaguely round a corner, but they did not see him; a white pigeon cooed down at them as they passed under the arch of the Cathedral doorway, where it perched, but they did not know. They only knew that they had found each other again. God has no foundlings, and in a simple way they came to feel it.

THE TUNE MCGILVRAY PLAYED

MCGILVRAY has been dead for over a hundred years, but there is a parish in Quebec where his tawny-haired descendants still live. They have the same sort of freckles on their faces as had their ancestor, the band-master of Anstruther's Regiment, and some of them have his taste for music, yet none of them speak his language or with his brogue, and the name of McGilvray has been gallicised to *Magille*.

In Pontiac one of the Magilles, the fiddler of the parish, made the following verse in English as a tribute of admiration for an heroic deed of his ancestor, of which the Curé of the parish, the good M. Fabre, had told him.

“ Piff ! poum ! kazoon, kazoon !
That is the way of the organ tune—
And the ships are save that day !
Piff ! poum ! kazoon, kazoon !
And the A'miral light his pipe and say :
' Bully for us, we are not kill !
Who is it make the organ play—
Make it say zoon-kazoon ?
You with the corunet come this way—
You are the man, Magille !
Piff ! poum ! kazoon, kazoon ! ”

Now this is the story of McGilvray the band-master. It was at the time of the taking of Quebec, the summer of 1759. The English army had lain at Mont-

morenci at the Island of Orleans, and at Point Levis : the English fleet lay in the basin opposite the town, since June of that great year, attacking and retiring, bombarding and besieging. To no great purpose. For within the walls of the city, and on the shore of Beauport, protected by its mud flats—a splendid moat—the French more than held their own.

In all the hot months of that summer, when parishes were ravaged with fire and sword and the heat was an excuse for any lapse of virtue, McGilvray had not been drunk once—not once. It was almost unnatural. Previous to that McGilvray's career had been checkered. No man had received so many punishments in the whole army, none had risen so superior to them as had he, none had ever been shielded from wrath present and to come as had this band-master of Anstruther's Regiment. He had no rivals for promotion in the regiment—perhaps that was one reason ; he had a good temper and an overwhelming spirit of fun—perhaps that was another.

He was not remarkable to the vision—scarcely more than five feet four ; with an eye like a gimlet, red hair tied in a *queue*, a big mouth, and a chest thrown out like the breast of a partridge—as fine a figure of a man in miniature as you could see. When intoxicated his tongue rapped out fun and fury like a trip-hammer. Alert-minded drunk or sober, drunk he was lightning-tongued. He could play as well drunk as sober, too, and more than once a sympathetic officer altered the tactics that McGilvray might not be compelled to march and so expose his condition. Standing still, he was quite fit for duty. He never really got drunk “at the top.” His brain was always clear, no matter how useless were his legs.

But the wonderful thing was that for six months McGilvray's legs were as steady as his head was right. At first the regiment was unbelieving, and his resolution to drink no more was scoffed at in the non-com. mess. He stuck to it, however, and then the cause was searched for—and not found. He had not turned religious, he was not fanatical, he was of sound mind—what was it? When the sergeant-major suggested a woman, they howled him down, for McGilvray had made love to women since the day of his weaning, and had drunk consistently all the time.

Yet it was a woman.

A fortnight or so after Wolfe's army and Saunder's fleet had sat down before Quebec, McGilvray, having been told by a sentry at Montmorenci, where Anstruther's Regiment was camped, that a French girl on the other side of the stream had kissed her hand to him and sung across in laughing insolence, "*Malbrouk s'en va t'en guerre*," he had forthwith set out to hail this daughter of Gaul, if perchance she might be seen again.

At more than ordinary peril he crossed the river on a couple of logs, lashed together, some distance above the spot where the picket had seen Mademoiselle. It was a moonlight night, and he might easily have been picked off by a bullet, if a wary sentry had been murderously inclined. But the truth was that many of these pickets on both sides were not unfriendly to each other, and sometimes exchanged tobacco and liquor across the stream. As it chanced, however, no sentry saw McGilvray, and presently, safely landed, he made his way down the river. Even at the distance he was from the falls, the rumble of them came up the long walls of firs and maples with a strange, half moaning

sound—all else was still, most still. He came down until he was opposite the spot where his English picket was posted, and then he halted and surveyed his ground.

Nothing human in sight, no sound of life, no sign of habitation. At this moment, however, his stupidity in thus rushing into danger, the foolishness of pursuing a woman whom he had never seen—and a Frenchwoman at that, the punishment that would be meted out to him by his colonel if his adventure were discovered, the sudden reflection that the wench was probably no more amusing than hundreds of other wenches whom it had not given nearly so much trouble to find—all these came to him.

They stunned him for a moment, and then presently, as if in defiance of his own thought, he began to sing softly, "*Malbrouk s'en va t'en guerre.*"

Suddenly, in one confused moment, he was seized, and a hand was clapped over his mouth. Three French soldiers had him in their grip: stalwart fellows they were, of the Regiment of Béarn. He had no strength to cope with them; he at once saw the futility of crying out, so he played the eel and tried to slip from the grasp of his captors. But though he gave the trio an awkward five minutes, he was at last entirely overcome, and was carried away in triumph through the woods. More than once they passed a sentry, and more than once camp fires round which soldiers slept or dozed. Now and again one would raise his head, and with a laugh, or a "*Sacré bleu!*" drop back into comfort again.

After about ten minutes' walk he was brought to a small wooden house, the door was thrown open, he was tossed inside, and the soldiers entered after. The

room was empty save for a bench, some shelves, a table on which a lantern burned, and a rude crucifix on the wall.

McGilvray sat down on the bench, and in five minutes his feet were shackled, and a chain, fastened to a staple in the wall, held him in secure captivity.

"How you like yourself now?" said a huge French corporal who had learned English from a girl at St. Malo years before.

"If you'd tie a bit o' pink ribbon round me neck, I'd die wid pride," said McGilvray, at the same time spitting on the ground in defiance.

The big corporal laughed, and told his comrades what the band-master had said. One of them grinned, but the other frowned surlily and asked:

"*Avez-vous du tabac?*"

"Havey you to-bac-co?" interpreted the big corporal.

"Not for a Johnny Crapaud like you, and put that in yer pipe and shmoke it!" said McGilvray, winking at the big fellow and spitting on the ground before the surly one, who made a motion as if he would bayonet McGilvray where he sat.

"He shall die—the cursed English soldier," said Johnny Crapaud.

"Some other day will do," said McGilvray.

"What does he say?" asked Johnny Crapaud.

"He says he'll give each of us three pounds of tobacco if we let him go," answered the corporal.

McGilvray knew by the corporal's voice that he was lying, and he also knew that somehow he had made a friend.

"Y'are lyin', me darlin', me boilin' beauty!" interposed McGilvray.

"If we don't take him to headquarters now, he'll send across and get the tobacco," interpreted the corporal to Johnny Crapaud.

"If he doesn't get the tobacco we'll hang him for a spy," said Johnny Crapaud, turning on his heel.

"Do we all agree?" said the corporal.

The other two nodded their heads, and as they went out, McGilvray said after them:

"I'll dance a jig on yer sepulchrees, ye swobs!" and he spat on the ground again in defiance.

Johnny Crapaud turned to the corporal.

"I'll kill him very dead," said he, "if that tobacco doesn't come. You tell him so," he added, jerking a thumb toward McGilvray. "You tell him so."

The corporal stayed when the others went out, and, in broken English, told McGilvray so.

"I'll play a hornpipe to him whin his gory shroud is round him," said McGilvray.

The corporal grinned from ear to ear. "You like a chew tabac?" said he, pulling out a dirty knob of black plug.

McGilvray had found a man after his own heart.

"Sing a song a-sixpence!" said he. "What sort's that for a gentleman an' a corporal, too? Feel in me trousers pockit," said he, "which is fur me frinds foriver."

McGilvray now had hopes of getting free; but if he had not taken a fancy to "me baby corporal," as he called the Frenchman, he would have made escape impossible, by insulting him and every one of them as quick as winking.

After the corporal had emptied one pocket, "Now the other, man-o-wee-wee!" said McGilvray, and presently the two were drinking what the flask from

the "trousies pockit" contained; and so well did McGilvray work upon the Frenchman's *bonhomie* that the corporal, promised him he should escape. Then he explained how McGilvray should be freed—that at midnight some one would come and release him, while he, the corporal, was with his companions, so avoiding suspicion as to his own complicity. McGilvray and the corporal were to meet again and exchange courtesies after the manner of brothers—if the fortunes of war permitted.

Then McGilvray was left alone. To wile away the time he began to whistle to himself; and what with whistling, and what with winking and talking to the lantern on the table and calling himself painful names, he endured his captivity well enough.

It was near midnight when the lock turned in the door, and presently stepped inside—a girl.

"*Malbrouk s'en va t'en guerre,*" said she, and nodded her head at him humourously.

By this McGilvray knew that here was the maid that had got him into all this trouble. At first he was inclined to say so, but she came nearer, and one look of her black eyes changed all that.

"You've a way wid you, me darlin'," said McGilvray, not thinking that she might understand.

"A leetla way of my own," she answered in broken English.

McGilvray stared. "Where did you learn it?" he asked, for he had had two surprises that night.

"Of my mother—at St. Malo," she replied. "She was half English—of Jersey. You are a naughty boy," she added with a little gurgle of laughter in her throat. "You are not a good soldier to go a-chase of the French girls 'cross of the river."

"Shure I'm *not* a good soldier thin. Music's me game. An' the band of Anstruther's Rigimint's mine."

"You can play tunes on a drum?" she asked, mischievously.

"There's wan I'd play to the voice av you," he said, in his softest brogue. "You'll be unloosin' me, darlin'?" he added.

She stooped to undo the shackles on his ankles. As she did so, he leaned over as if to kiss her. She threw back her head in disgust.

"You have been drink," she said, and she stopped her work of freeing him.

"What'd wet your eye—no more!" he answered.

She stood up. "I will not," she said, pointing to the shackles, "if you drink some more—nevere some more—nevere!"

"Divil a drop thin, darlin', till we fly our flag yander," pointing towards where he supposed the town to be.

"Not till then?" she asked with a merry little sneer. "Ver' well, it is *comme ca!*" She held out her hand. Then she burst into a soft laugh, for his hands were tied.

"Let me kiss it," he said bending forward.

"No, no, no," she said. "We will shake our hands after," and she stooped and took off the shackles and freed his arms.

"Now, if you like," she said, and they shook hands as McGilvray stood up and threw out his chest. But try as he would to look important, she was still an inch taller than he.

A few moments later they were hurrying quietly through the woods to the river. There was no speaking. There were only the escaping prisoner and the

gay-hearted girl speeding along in the night, the mumbling of the quiet cascade in their ears, the shifting moon playing hide and seek with the clouds. They came out on the bank a distance above where McGilvray had landed, and the girl paused and spoke in a whisper.

"It is more hard now," she said. "Here is a boat, and I must paddle—you would go to splash! Sit still and be good."

She loosed the boat into the current gently, and, holding it, motioned to him to enter.

"You're goin' to row me over?" he asked incredulously.

"'Sh! Get in," she said.

"Shtrike me crazy, no!" said McGilvray. "Divil a step will I go. Let me that sowed the storm take the whirlwind"—and he threw out his chest.

"What is it you come here for?" she asked, with meaning.

"Yourself an' the mockin' bird in yer voice," he answered.

"Then that is enough," she said; "you come for me, I go for you. Get in."

A moment afterwards, taking advantage of the obscured moon, they were carried out on the current, going diagonally down the stream and coming quickly to that point on the shore where an English picket was placed. They had scarcely touched the shore when the click of a musket was heard, and a "*Qui va là?*" came from the thicket.

McGilvray gave the password, and presently he was on the bank saluting the sentry he had left three hours before.

"*Malbrouk s'en va t'en guerre!*" said the gir' again

with a gay insolence, and pushed the boat out into the stream.

"A minnit! A minnit, me darlin'," said McGilvray.

"Keep your promise," came back softly.

"Ah, come back wan minnit!"

"Do you love me, Irishman?" she said, in a loud whisper.

"A brazen flirt!" said the sentry.

"You will pay for that," called the girl to the sentry, with quick anger. "Do you love me, Irishman?" she added to McGilvray.

"I do! Aw, wurra, wurra, I do!" said McGilvray.

"Then you come and get me by ze front door of ze city," said she, and a couple of quick strokes sent her canoe out into the dusky middle of the stream, and she was soon lost to view.

"Aw, the loike o' that! Aw, the foine av her—aw, the tip-top lass o' the whole wurrl!" he said.

"You're a damn fool, an' there'll be trouble from this," said the sentry.

And so there was trouble, for two hours later the sentry was found dead—picked off by a bullet from the other shore when he showed himself in the moonlight; and from that hour all friendliness between the pickets of the English and the French ceased on the Montmorenci.

But the one witness to McGilvray's adventure was dead, and that was why no man knew wherefore it was that McGilvray took an oath to drink no more till they captured Quebec.

From May to September McGilvray kept to his resolution. But for all that time he never saw "the tip-top lass o' the wide wurrl." A time came, however, when McGilvray's last state was worse than his

first, and that was the evening before the day Quebec was taken. A dozen prisoners had been captured in a sortie from the Isle of Orleans to the mouth of the St. Charles River. Among these prisoners was the grinning corporal who had captured McGilvray and then released him.

Two strange things happened. The big, grinning corporal escaped from captivity the same night, and McGilvray, as a non-com. said, "got blind drunk."

This is one explanation of the two things. McGilvray had assisted the French corporal to escape. The other explanation belongs to the end of the story. In any case, McGilvray "got blind drunk," and "was making space" through the camp. In the end he was arrested for assisting a prisoner to escape and for being drunk and disorderly. The band of Anstruther's Regiment boarded H.M.S. *Leostaff* without him, to proceed up the river stealthily with the rest of the fleet to Cap Rouge, from whence the last great effort of the heroic Wolfe to effect a landing was to be made. McGilvray, still intoxicated but intelligent, watched them go in silence.

As General Wolfe was about to enter the boat which was to convey him to the flagship, he saw McGilvray, who was waiting under guard to be taken to Major Hardy's post at Point Levis. The General knew him well, and looked at him half-sadly, half-sternly.

"I knew you were free with drink, McGilvray," he said, "but I did not think you were a traitor to your country, too."

McGilvray saluted, and did not answer.

"You might have waited till after to-morrow, man," said the General, his eye flashing. "My soldiers should have good music to-morrow."

McGilvray saluted again, but made no answer.

As if with a sudden thought, the General waved off the officers near him, and beckoned McGilvray to him.

"I can understand the drink in a bad soldier," he said, "but you helped a prisoner to escape. Come, man, we may *both* be dead to-morrow, and I'd like to feel that no soldier in my army is wilfully an enemy of his country."

"He did the same for me whin I was taken prisoner, yer Excillincy; an'—an' yer Excillincy, 'twas a matter of a woman, too."

The General's face relaxed a little. "Tell me the whole truth," said he. McGilvray told him all.

"Ah, yer Excillincy," he burst out at last, "I was no traitor at heart, but a fool I always was! Yer Excillincy, court-martial and death's no matter to me, but I'd like to play wan toon agin to lead the byes to-morrow! Wan toon, yer Excillincy! an' I'll be daintly shot before the day's over, on me honour! Ah, yer Excillincy, wan toon more, and to be wid the byes followin' the General."

The General's face relaxed still more.

"I take you at your word," said he, and he gave orders that McGilvray should proceed at once aboard the flagship, whence he should join Anstruther's Regiment at Cap Rouge.

The General entered one boat, and McGilvray followed with some non-com. officers in another. It was now quite dark, and their motions or the motions of the vessels of war could not be seen from the French encampment or the citadel. They neared the flagship, and the General, followed by his officers, boarded her. Then the men in McGilvray's boat climbed up the side also, until only himself and another were left.

At that moment the General, looking down from the side of the ship, said sharply to an officer beside him, "What's that, sir?"

He pointed to a dark object floating near the ship, from which presently came a small light with a hissing sound.

"It's a fire-organ, sir," was the reply.

A fire-organ was a raft carrying long tubes like the pipes of an organ, and filled with explosives. The little light which the General saw was the burning fuse. The raft had been brought out into the current by French sailors, the fuse had been lighted, and it was headed to drift toward the British ships. The fleet was now in motion, and, apart from the havoc which the bursting fire-organ might make, the light from the explosion would reveal the fact that the English men-o'-war were now moving towards Cap Rouge, and Wolfe's secret design would be defeated.

McGilvray had seen the fire-organ at the same moment as the General. "Get up the side," he said to the remaining soldier in his boat.

McGilvray caught the oars and was instantly away towards the raft. The General, looking over the ship's side, understood his daring purpose. In the shadow, they saw him near it, they saw him throw a boat-hook and catch it, and then attach a rope; they saw him sit down and, taking the oars, laboriously row up stream toward the opposite shore, the fuse burning softly somewhere among the great pipes of explosives.

For some minutes those on deck watched and listened. Presently nothing could be seen, not even the small glimmer from the burning fuse.

Then, all at once, there was a terrible report, and the organ-pipes belched their dreadful music upon the

sea. Within the circle of light that the explosion made there was no sign of any ship, but strangely tall in the red glare stood McGilvray in his boat. An instant he stood so, then he fell, and presently darkness covered the scene—the furious music of death and war was over.

There was silence on the ship for a time as all watched and waited. Presently an officer said to the General:

“I am afraid he’s gone, sir.”

“Send a boat to search,” was the reply. “If he is dead—” the General took off his hat—“we will, please God, remember him within the French citadel to-morrow.”

But McGilvray was alive, and in half an-hour he was brought aboard the flagship safe and sober. The General praised him for his courage, and told him that the charge against him should be withdrawn.

“You’ve wiped all out, McGilvray,” said the General. “We see you are no traitor.”

“Only a fool of a band-master who wanted wan toon more, yer Excillincy,” said McGilvray.

“Beware drink—women,” answered the General.

The next day Quebec was taken, and McGilvray went in at the head of his men playing “The Men of Harlech.” Three days later he met in the streets the woman who had nearly been the cause of his undoing.

Indignation threw out his chest.

“It’s you, thin,” he said, and he tried to look scornfully at her.

“Have you keep your promise?” she said, hardly above her breath.

“What’s that to you?” he asked, his eyes firing up. “I got drunk the night aafter I set your *husband* free

—after he tould me you was his wife. We're aven now, decaiver! I saved him, and the devil give you joy of that salvation—and that husband, say I!”

“Hoosban’!” she exclaimed, “who was my hoosban’?”

“The big, grinning corporal,” he answered.

“He died of his wound this morning,” she said, with a touching sigh, “and he was—nevare—my hoosban’.”

“He said he was,” replied McGilvray, eagerly.

“He was always a liar,” she answered.

“He decaived you too, thin?” asked McGilvray, his face growing red.

She did not answer, but all at once a change came over her, the half-mocking smile left her lips, tears suddenly ran down her cheeks, and without a word she turned and hurried into a little street and was lost to view, leaving McGilvray amazed and confounded.

It was days before he found her again, and three things only that they said are of any moment here.

“We’ll lave the past behind us,” he said, “an’ the Pit below for me if I’m not a good husband t’ye!”

“You will not drink any more?” she asked, putting a hand on his shoulder.

“Not till the Frenchies take Quebec again,” he answered.

THE FORGE IN THE VALLEY

HE lay where he could see her working at the forge.
As she worked she sang :

“ When God was making the world,
(Swift is the wind and white is the fire)
The feet of his people danced the stars ;
There was laughter and swinging bells,
And clanging iron and breaking breath,
The hammers of heaven making the hills,
The valleys, on the anvil of God.
(Wild is the fire and low is the wind.) ”

His eyes were shining, and his face had a pale radiance from the reflected light, though he lay in the shadow where he could watch her, while she could not see him. Now her hand was upon the bellows, and the low, white fire seethed hungrily up, and set its teeth upon the iron she held ; now it turned the iron about upon the anvil, and the sparks showered about her very softly and strangely. There was a cheerful gravity in her motions, a high, fine look in her face.

They two lived alone in the solitudes of Megalong Valley.

It was night now, and the pleasant gloom of the valley was not broken by any sound save the hum of the stream near by, and the song, and the ringing anvil. But into the workshop came the moist, fragrant smell of the acacia and the sandal, and a long brown lizard

stretched its neck sleepily across the threshold of the door opening into the valley.

The song went on:

“ When God had finished the world
 (Bright was the fire and sweet was the wind)
 Up from the valleys came song,
 To answer the morning stars,
 And the hand of man on the anvil rang,
 His breath was big in his breast, his life
 Beat strong on the walls of the world.
 (Glad is the wind and tall is the fire.) ”

He put his hands to his eyes, and took them away again, as if to make sure that the song was not a dream. Wonder grew upon his thin, bearded face, he ran his fingers through his thick hair in a dazed way. Then he lay and looked, and a rich warm flush crept over his cheek, and stayed there.

There was a great gap in his memory.

The evening wore on. Once or twice the woman turned towards the room where the man lay, and listened—she could not see his face from where she stood. At such times he lay still, though his heart beat quickly, like that of an expectant child. His lips opened to speak, but still they remained silent. As yet he was like a returned traveller who does not quickly recognise old familiar things, and who is struggling with vague suggestions and forgotten events. As time went on, the woman turned towards the doorway oftener, and shifted her position so that she faced it, and the sparks, flying up, lighted her face with a wonderful irregular brightness.

“ Samantha,” he said at last, and his voice sounded so strange to him that the word quivered timidly towards her.

She paused upon a stroke, and some new note in his voice sent so sudden a thrill to her heart that she caught her breath with a painful kind of joy. The hammer dropped upon the anvil, and, in a moment, she stood in the doorway of his room.

"Francis, Francis," she said in a low whisper.

He started up from his couch of skins. "Samantha, my wife!" he cried in a strong proud voice.

She dropped beside him and caught his head, like a mother, to her shoulder, and set her warm lips on his forehead and hair with a kind of hunger; and then he drew her face down and kissed her on the lips. Tears hung at her eyes, and presently dropped on her cheeks, a sob shook her, and then she was still, her hands grasping his shoulders.

"Have I been ill?" he said.

"You have been very ill, Francis."

"Has it been long?"

Her fingers passed tenderly through his grizzled hair. "Too long, too long, my husband," she replied.

"Is it summer now?"

"Yes, Francis, it is summer."

"Was it in the spring, Samantha?—Yes, I think it was in the spring," he added, musing.

"It was in a spring."

"There was still snow on the mountain-top, the river was running high, and pelicans were gathered on the island in the lake—yes, I remember, I think."

"And the men were working at the mine," she whispered, her voice shaking a little, and her eyes eagerly questioning his face.

"Ah! the mine—it was the mine, Samantha," he said abruptly, his eyes flashing up. "I was working at the forge to make a great bolt for the machinery,

and someone forgot and set the engine in motion. I ran out, but it was too late . . . and then . . .”

“And then you tried to save them, Francis, and you were hurt.”

“What month is this, my wife?”

“It is December.”

“And that was in October?”

“Yes, in October.”

“I have been ill since? What happened?”

“Many were killed, Francis, and you and I came away.”

“Where are we now? I do not know the place.”

“This is Megalong Valley. You and I live alone here.”

“Why did you bring me here?”

“I did not bring you, Francis; you wished me to come. One day you said to me, ‘There is a place in Megalong Valley where, long ago, an old man lived, who had become a stranger among men—a place where the bell-bird stays, and the warrigal troops and hides, and the guava grows as thick as blossoms on the wattle tree; we will go there.’ And I came with you.”

“I do not remember, my wife. What of the mine? Was I a coward and left the mine? There was no one understood the ways of the wheel, and rod, and steam, but me.”

“The mine is closed, Francis,” she answered gently. “You were no coward, but—but you had strange fancies.”

“When did the mine close?” he said with a kind of sorrow; “I put hard work and good years into it.”

At that moment, when her face drew close to his, the vision of her as she stood at the anvil came to him

with a new impression, and he said again in a half-frightened way, "When did it close, Samantha?"

"The mine was closed—twelve years ago, my husband."

He got to his feet and clasped her to his breast. A strength came to him which had eluded him twelve years, and she, womanlike, delighted in that strength, and, with a great gladness, changed eyes and hands with him; keeping her soul still her own, brooding and lofty, as is the soul of every true woman, though, like this one, she labours at a forge, and in a far, untenanted country is faithful friend, ceaseless apothecary to a comrade with a disordered mind; living on savage meats, clothing herself and the other in skins, and, with a divine persistence, keeping a cheerful heart, certain that the intelligence which was frightened from its home would come back one day. It should be hers to watch for the great moment, and give the wanderer loving welcome, lest it should hurry madly away again into the desert, never to return.

She had her reward, yet she wept. She had carried herself before him with the bright ways of an unvexed girl these twelve years past; she had earned the salt of her tears. He was dazed still, but, the doublet of his mind no longer unbraced, he understood what she had been to him, and how she had tended him in absolute loneliness, her companions the wild things of the valley—these and God.

He drew her into the work-shop, and put his hand upon the bellows and churned them, so that the fire roared joyously up, and the place was red with the light. In this light he turned her to him and looked at her. The look was as that of one who had come back from the dead—that naked, profound, uncon-

ditional gaze which is as deep and honest as the primeval sense. His eyes fell upon her rich, firm, stately body, it lingered for a moment on the brown fulness of her hair, then her look was gathered to his, and they fell into each other's arms.

For long they sat in the solemn silence of their joy, and so awed were they by the thing which had come to them that they felt no surprise when a wolf-dog crawled over the lizard on the threshold, and stole along the wall with shining, bloody eyes to an inner room, and stayed there munching meat to surfeit and drowsiness, and at last crept out and lay beside the forge in a thick sleep. These two had lived so much with the untamed things of nature, the bellows and the fire had been so long there, and the clang of the anvil was so familiar, that there was a kinship among them, man and beast, with the woman as ruler.

"Tell me, my wife," he said at last, "what has happened during these twelve years, all from the first. Keep nothing back. I am strong now." He looked around the work-shop, then, suddenly, at her, with a strange pain, and they both turned their heads away for an instant, for the same thought was on them. Then, presently, she spoke, and answered his shy, sorrowful thought before all else. "The child is gone," she softly said.

He sat still, but a sob was in his throat. He looked at her with a kind of fear. He wondered if his madness had cost the life of the child. She understood.

"Did I ever see the child?" he said.

"Oh, yes, I sometimes thought that through the babe you would be yourself again. When you were near her you never ceased to look at her and fondle her, as I thought very timidly; and you would start some-

times and gaze at me with the old wise look hovering at your eyes. But the look did not stay. The child was fond of you, but she faded and pined, and one day as you nursed her you came to me and said, 'See, my wife, the little one will not wake. She pulled at my beard and said "Daddy," and fell asleep.' And I took her from your arms . . . There is a sandal tree near the door of our cottage at the mine. One night you and I buried her there; but you do not remember her, do you?"

"My child! My child!" he said, looking out into the night, and he lifted up his arms and looked at them. "I held her here, and still I never held her; I fondled her, and yet I never fondled her; I buried her, yet—to me—she never was born."

"You have been far away, Francis; you have come back home. I waited, and prayed, and worked with you, and was patient . . . It is very strange," she continued. "In all these twelve years you cannot remember our past, though you remembered about this place—the one thing, as if God had made it so—and now you cannot remember these twelve years."

"Tell me now of the twelve years," he urged.

"It was the same from day to day. When we came from the mountain, we brought with us the implements of the forge upon a horse. Now and again as we travelled we cut our way through the heavy woods. You were changed for the better then; a dreadful trouble seemed to have gone from your face. There was a strong kind of peace in the valley, and there were so many birds and animals, and the smell of the trees was so fine, that we were not lonely, neither you nor I."

She paused, thinking, her eyes looking out to where the Southern Cross was sailing slowly out of the woody

horizon, his look on her. In the pause the wolf-dog raised its big, sleepy eyes at them, then plunged its head into its paws, its wildness undisturbed by their presence.

Presently the wife continued: "At last we reached here, and here we have lived, where no human being, save one, has ever been. We put up the forge, and in a little hill not far away we found coal for it. The days went on. It was always summer, though there came at times a sharp frost, and covered the ground with a coverlet of white. But the birds were always with us, and the beasts were our friends. I learned to love even the shrill cry of the cockatoo, and the soft ding-dong of the bell-bird is the sweetest music to my ear after the song of the anvil. How often have you and I stood here at the anvil, the fire heating the iron, and our hammers falling constantly! Oh, my husband, I knew that only here with God and His dumb creatures, and His wonderful healing world, all sun, and wind, and flowers, and blossoming trees, working as you used to work, as the first of men worked, would the sane wandering soul return to you. The thought was in you, too, for you led me here, and have been patient also in the awful exile of your mind."

"I have been as a child, and not as a man," he said gravely. "Shall I ever again be a man, as I once was, Samantha?"

"You cannot see yourself," she said. "A week ago you fell ill, and since then you have been pale and worn; but your body has been, and is, that of a great strong man. In the morning I will take you to a spring in the hills, and you shall see yourself, my husband."

"He stood up, stretched himself, went to the door,

and looked out into the valley flooded with moonlight. He drew in a great draught of air, and said, "The world! the great, wonderful world, where men live, and love work, and do strong things!"—he paused, and turned with a trouble in his face. "My wife," he said, "you have lived with a dead man twelve years, and I have lost twelve years in the world. I had a great thought once—an invention—but now—" he hung his head bitterly.

She came to him, and her hands slid up along his breast to his shoulders, and rested there; and she said, with a glad smile: "Francis, you have lost nothing. The thing—the invention—was all but finished when you fell ill a week ago. We have worked at it for these twelve years; through it, I think, you have been brought back to me. Come, there is a little work yet to do upon it;" and she drew him to where a machine of iron lay in the corner. With a great cry he fell upon his knees beside it, and fondled it.

Then presently, he rose, and caught his wife to his breast.

Together, a moment after, they stood beside the anvil. The wolf-dog fled out into the night from the shower of sparks, as, in the red light, the two sang to the clanging of the hammers:

" When God was making the world
 (Swift is the wind and white is the fire) —"

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