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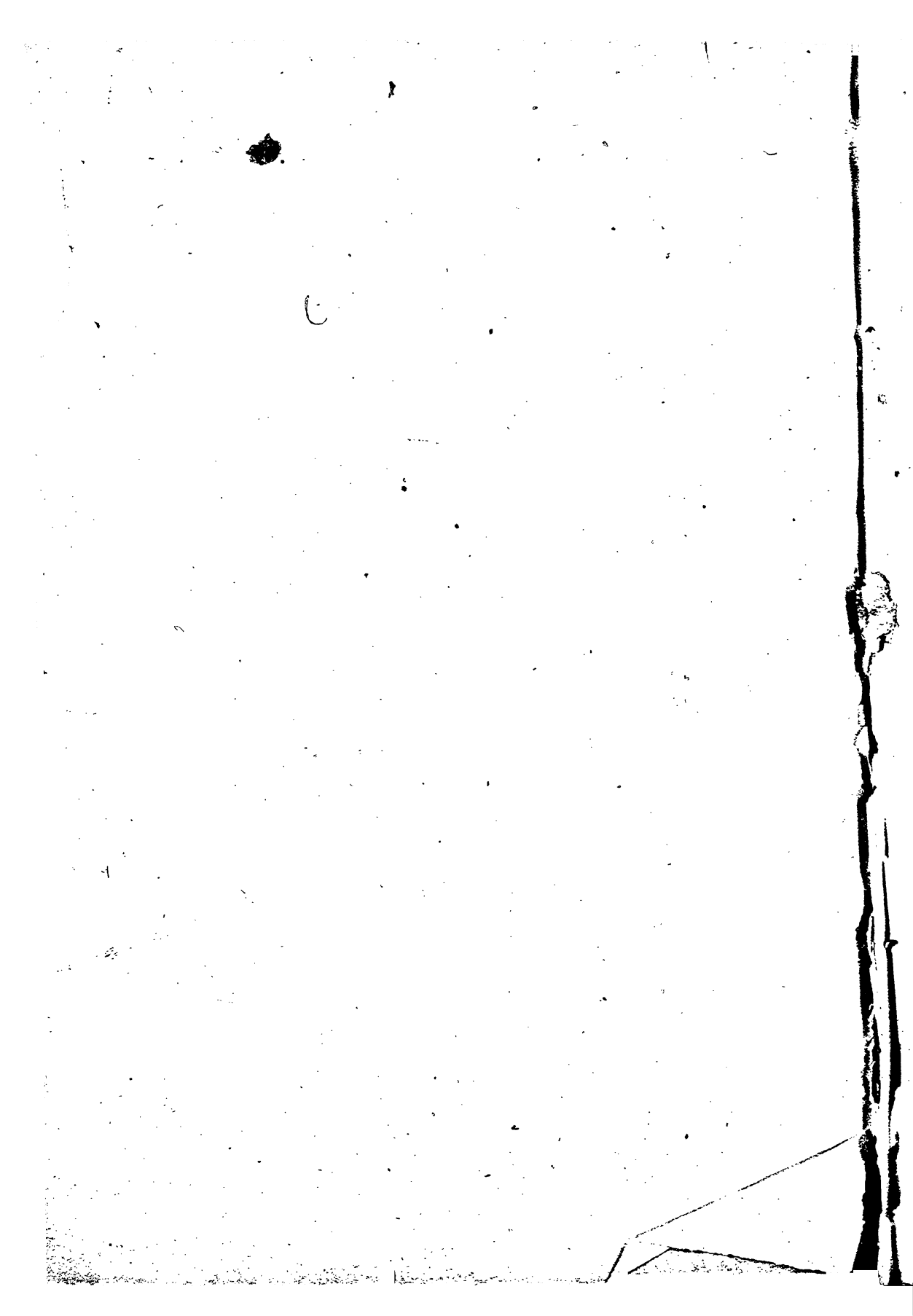
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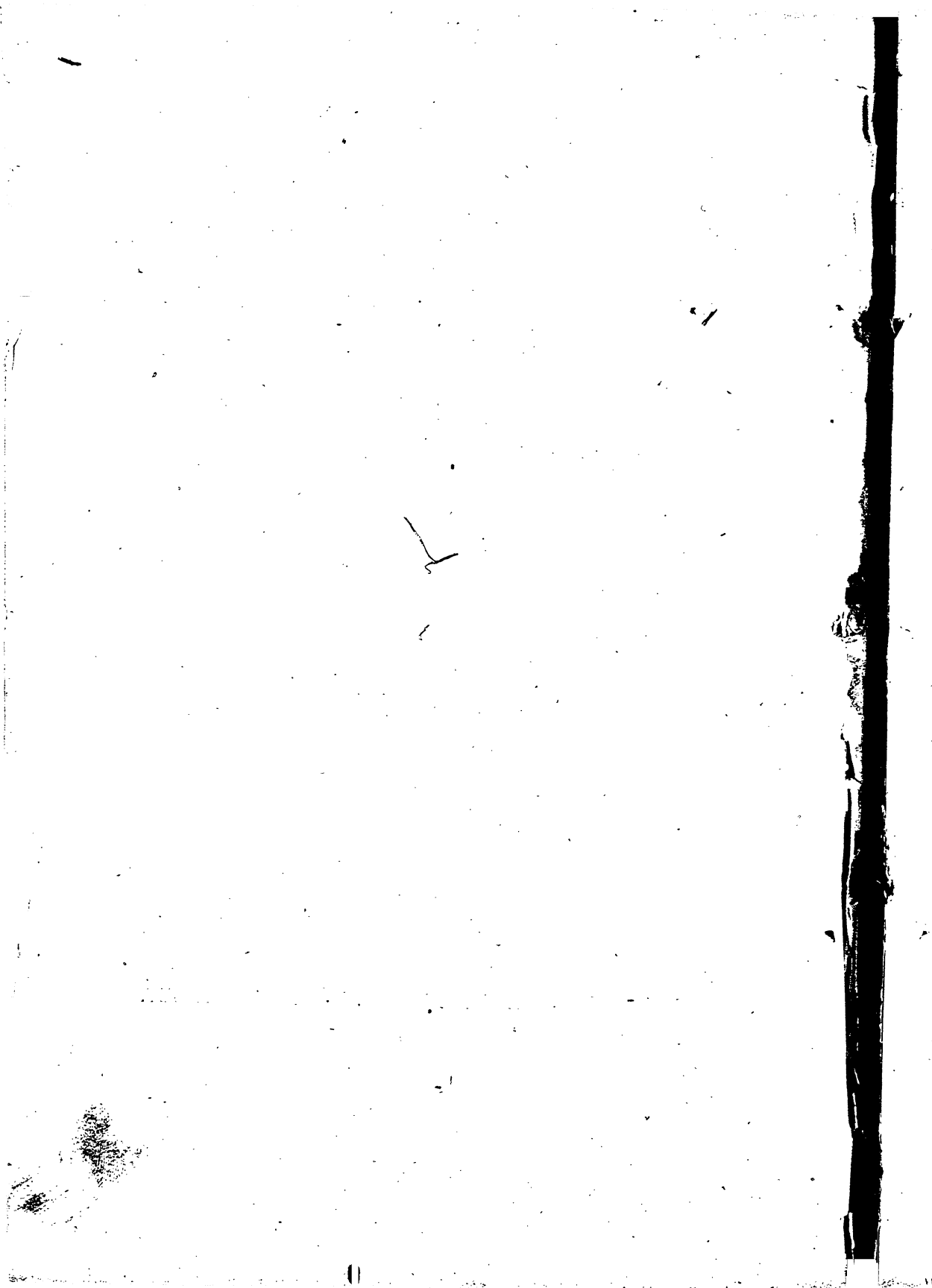
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ARMAND DURAND.

CHAPTER I.

Among the earliest French settlers who had established themselves in the *seigneurie* of—Alonville we will call it—on the banks of the St. Lawrence, was a family of the name of Durand; and the large and valuable farm which had come down from father to son in regular succession, had enabled them always to maintain their position as leading men in the district in which their lot had been cast. They were a strong and handsome race, industrious and thrifty too, though in no manner parsimonious.

Paul Durand, tall, straight, with jet black hair and eyes, dark skin and regular features, was a good specimen of their male representatives. Unlike most of his countrymen, who usually, at least in the rural parts, marry at a very early period of life, Paul had reached the age of thirty before he decided on taking to himself a wife. The cause of this lay not so much in indifference to conjugal happiness as in the fact that, for some years before he had attained the age of manhood, his father had died, and his widowed mother had thenceforth continued to live with him in the paternal homestead, ruling alike his purse and household with a judicious though arbitrary hand. His only sister, Françoise, had married at sixteen a respectable country merchant in a neighboring village, to whom she brought not only a handsome face but a comfortable dower; so Mrs. Durand was at liberty to watch over and devote herself entirely to her son.

What a fine old homestead was that over which she presided, and how strong is the temptation to pause and describe it. The house of rough masonry, was substantially though irregularly built, with a large elm shadowing the front, and dazzlingly white outbuildings and fences. These latter were all regularly whitewashed every year, a proceeding which imparted an additional air of thrift to the wall kept, well stocked farmyard. At one end of the building stretched out the garden, a quaint mixture of vegetables and flowers, where snperb moss-roses, flanked beds of omens, and delicate hearts-ease, astors and carnations, bordered squares of beets and carrots. In one corner, conveniently located amid a perfect wilderness of blossoms of every hue and shape, was a long wooden stand on which were ranged some eight or ten beehives. But why linger over the description? Any one who has sailed past the banks of our noble St. Lawrence, or those of the smaller, though

picturesque Richelieu, must have seen many such homes.

Probably Paul Durand feared that the conflicting claims of a wife and a mother in the one household might not answer as well in his home as it did in that of many others, on account of the difficulty the elder Mrs. Durand might find in yielding any portion of the authority she had heretofore sovereignly wielded. It was therefore only after the mourning put on for that well-loved mother, who had died in his arms, had been worn its allotted period, that he commenced thinking of looking for a companion to fill the void death had made in the old farm house. The chief difficulty of the task, however, lay in the number he would have to choose from, for the richest dowered as well as handsomest girls of the parish would have looked favorably on his suit. But not among them was his choice destined to be made.

The *seigneur* of Alonville was a wealthy, kind-hearted man, named de Courval, and as he was hospitable, like most of his class, his large substantially built manor house was filled every summer with a succession of friends from the neighboring parishes, or from Montreal, in which city most of his relatives resided.

Among these latter was a family but recently arrived from France, and most willingly they accepted Mr. de Courval's pressing invitation to spend part of the summer with him. Mr. and Mrs. Lubois came, bringing in their train two young children, aged respectively seven and nine, and their nursery governess. The latter, Genevieve Audet, was a pale, fragile looking girl, with delicate pretty features, and quiet timid manners; educated sufficiently for the humble post she occupied, but possessing, in reality, no great acquirements beyond it. She was a portionless cousin, seven times removed; of the family she lived with, and in her case, as in that of many others, the circumstance of relationship by no means improved her condition. They generally ignored, whilst she never even hinted at the fact, the only effect of it apparently being to prevent her bettering her condition by seeking a situation in another family, lest the doing so should bring discredit on the connexion which was such a barren honor to her.

Paul Durand often called at Mr. de Courval's, partly because they had some interests in common, having purchased between them a large tract of swampy ground at a

nominal price, which they were now proceeding to utilize by draining, and partly because these visits were a source of real pleasure to Mr. de Courval, who was as excellent a farmer in theory as Durand was in practice, and delighted to talk over crops, drainage, and farm stock with one whose success in all these things was so good an illustration of the justice of his opinions concerning them. When he called at the manor-house, if the master of the establishment had visitors staying with him, he and Paul generally betook themselves to the quiet room which served the double purposes of library and office, and there they chatted and smoked Mr. de Courval's excellent tobacco undisturbed.

The latter would willingly have introduced Paul to his more fashionable friends, for he both esteemed and respected him; but Durand naturally avoided society in which the conversation generally ranged on town topics, with which he was unacquainted, and the interlocutors in which dialogues were sometimes at little pains to hide the species of contemptuous indifference they felt for his social position.

In coming and going he often encountered Genevieve Audet and her little charges, and he sometimes felt grieved, sometimes irritated by the species of tyranny the spoiled, unruly children seemed to exercise over their luckless governess. Simple and straightforward in all things, he one day communicated his opinions on the subject to Mr. de Courval, and without perceiving the pleasant twinkle, ominous of match-making, that suddenly gleamed in that gentleman's eye, Paul placidly listened to an eloquent panegyric on Miss Audet's virtues, accompanied by some touching allusions to her trials and troubles which were indeed only too well grounded. Then his host asked him to accompany him to look at his splendid mangel-wurzel, and somehow or other they strolled up to where Genevieve sat under a spreading maple, trying to coax her unruly pupils to learn that Canada was not in Africa, as they persisted in asserting it was. What more natural than that Mr. de Courval should introduce his companion to the governess, and then, whilst they exchanged a few words, address some laughing remarks to the children, which soon drew down on him a torrent of childish chatter.

Genevieve's manner had very little of the animation for which French women are famed, and the sad lessons her short, young life had already afforded, had imparted a reserved, almost cold tone to language and manner, yet Paul felt himself strangely attracted toward her. She was so delicate, so helpless-looking in appearance, so desolate, so unhappy in reality, that he could not avoid feeling that species of inward

impulse which all noble, manly men know in the presence of oppressed weakness, the desire to protect and succor. The interview lasted much longer than he was aware, for it had proved a very interesting one; nor was it the last, for, a couple of days after, Mr. de Courval sent for him to come and inspect some vegetable monster in the shape of a huge turnip, capable of winning a prize, not only for its size, but also for its ugliness and inferiority in point of taste or nutritious properties. The curiosity was duly examined and commented on, and then in strolling round, they came again upon Miss Audet and her charges, and again Mr. de Courval engaged the latter in noisy, childish talk, whilst Durand, by no means backward, addressed himself to their governess. The favorable impression made on him by the latter was strengthened by this second interview, and fully confirmed by one or two subsequent meetings.

There was no longer any necessity for Mr. de Courval's sending for Paul, for he now had constantly some message to bring to the manor house, or some question to ask the *seigneur*. There were no obstacles in the way, for Mrs. Lubois and her husband had returned to Montreal, leaving their children and governess, at Mr. de Courval's kindly urged request, at his house, his old house-keeper, a respectable widow occupying a place in his household superior to that of common servant, being there to satisfy propriety.

One sultry afternoon that Paul was taking his way thither, thinking very little of his ostensible message and very much of Genevieve Audet, he perceived the latter, seated with her pupils under a cluster of towering pines, a little out of the direct road to the house, and he bent his steps towards them. His movements were slow, the soft green turf gave back no echo of his footsteps, so the group under the pines were totally unconscious of his approach. Probably, had it been otherwise, the scene he witnessed would have been somewhat modified in its developments. The governess, very pale and unhappy looking, was seated on a low garden stool, a half-closed book in her hand. Her youngest pupil was beside her, betraying by laugh and look the high approval he bestowed on the spirited conduct of his elder brother, who stood in front of the hapless Genevieve, defiance flashing from his eyes, whilst he informed her "that he would not learn any longer from her, because his mamma had often said she was not able to teach him, and that she did not know how to direct or bring up children."

With wonderful gentleness the girl rejoined "that even if Mrs. Lubois had said so, he must learn from and obey herself till his mamma had procured another gover-

ness; and that duty obliged her to insist till then on his learning the lessons in which he was so backward."

"That's all your fault!" shouted the young rebel. "Mamma says we will never learn anything till we have a tutor, and that she would get us one to-morrow, only she does not know what to do with you. No body will marry you as you have no *dot*" (marriage portion).

In general, Paul was exceedingly tolerant of the shortcomings of children, and no clover-fields were so boldly invaded for strawberries in summer, nor trees so fearlessly climbed into for wild plums and nuts in autumn as were his. Indeed, he was frequently taken to task by his neighbors on the score that his excessive leniency had a most demoralizing effect on the youth of the village, to which rebuke he would reply that they must not forget that they had all been children once. In the present instance, however, he fiercely clenched his hand, whilst an expletive, better left unrecorded, escaped his lips. Fearing for his self command, and knowing that interference at the present moment might prove most injudicious on Miss Audet's account, he abruptly turned down a dense alley of evergreens, and after having arrived in the midst of the walk, threw himself down full length on the green sward, and taking out his handkerchief wiped his forehead. He seemed strangely moved, but Paul Durand never indulged in soliloquy, so after a half hour's deep thought, he rose and slowly walked back to the spot in which he had left Genevieve.

She was still there, her eyes intently bent on the earth, and a look more weary and languid than usual on her small regular features. The shrill voices of the children engaged in a noisy game of romps re-echoed near, but she did not seem to hear them, or Durand either, as he quietly accosted her. On his repeating the usual salutation in a louder key, she looked up and he then said, "I suppose I must not ask what Miss Audet was thinking of! Her thoughts seemed very far away."

"Yes, they were in France."

"Ah, without doubt, because Miss Genevieve has many friends there whom she dearly loves!"

"No," was the softly spoken reply, "I have none there now."

There was nothing sentimental or affected in the quiet voice in which this was said, and Paul looked silently down at her. The golden sunlight slanting between the branches lighted up the delicate oval face, the large soft eyes, and though he had never read a novel in his life, he felt the magic charm of the scene and situation as keenly as if he weekly perused half a dozen of them.

Long and earnest was his scrutiny, noting face and form, even to the slight, small fingers that mechanically turned the leaves of the book she still held, and on which her eyes were again bent, and then he inwardly said: "Such a girl as that, indeed, not able to marry without a *dot*! Ah, Madame Lubois, we shall see."

With the courtesy and ease of manner which the Canadian farmer, no matter how poor or illiterate he may be, usually possesses, he seated himself on the long garden bench beside her.

And now, if the reader anticipates or dreads a "love scene," we hasten to assure him or her the supposition is groundless, and will content ourselves with saying that when Paul Durand and Genevieve slowly walked up to the house a half hour afterwards they were promised man and wife. The deep flush on the girl's face, the brilliancy of her eyes told of happiness as well as emotion, and in Paul's look there was a blending of honest exultation, tempered with a tender gentleness of look and manner that augured well for the future of both. Very undemonstrative, very quiet lovers were they, however, so much so that when Mr. De Courval suddenly came upon them, the faintest suspicion of the real state of matters never dawned on him, and merely inwardly thinking how unusually well Genevieve looked, he pressingy asked Durand up to the house. The latter accepted the invitation, and Genevieve, suddenly anxious on the score of her unruly pupils, turned her steps towards the summer house from which their voices proceeded, raised in angry dispute.

Seated in Mr. de Courval's study, Durand, without much circumlocution, informed his well pleased host of what had just taken place, begging him to fulfil the duty of writing to inform Mrs. Lubois of the state of affairs.

"Please tell her, Mr. de Courval," terminated the suitor, "to allow the marriage to take place as soon as possible, and above all things, don't forget to say that I want no *dot*."

Mrs. Lubois was written to. A cold answer soon came, saying "that Genevieve was free to do as she pleased, but as the match was not a remarkably brilliant one, there was no reason for immoderate haste."

The parties interested, especially Durand, thought otherwise, and a couple of weeks afterwards they were married in the village church, very early in the morning, Mr. de Courval triumphantly giving away the bride, as Mr. Lubois had found it impossible to be in Alonville at that particular time. The breakfast given by the good-natured *seigneur* was sumptuous, though there were so few to partake of it; and as he heartily shook Durand's hand at parting, he slyly

whispered: "How well we have got on after all without our noble cousins!"

It was probable the fear of this very cousinship being claimed by the new married couple, that prompted the unkind and otherwise unaccountable indifference the Lubois had displayed during the course of the wooing and wedding. "They were not going," they angrily reasoned, "to expose themselves to the incursions of unpolished, country clod-hoppers. Mr. de Courval might make as much of the farmer Durand as he liked, because he lived in the country where society was not only limited but less select; they, however, could not think of admitting hob-nailed boots and rustic manners into their aristocratic drawing-room."

CHAPTER II.

No small amount of jealousy had been excited in Alonville by the unexpected and speedy manner in which the best match of the parish had thus been appropriated by a stranger; and the tongues of mothers and daughters were alike busy and merciless in their denunciations of such a step.

"What could he see in her, indeed, a little doll-faced creature with no life or gaiety in her, to bewitch him in such a manner? What made him marry a stranger when there were plenty of smart handsome girls in his own village that he had known ever since they wore pinafores? She had pretty little feet to be sure and small dainty hands, but were they good for anything? Could they bake, spin, milk, or do anything useful? Ah, well, retribution would come to Paul Durand, and he would yet mourn in sackcloth and ashes the fine girls he had passed by to marry that little puppet."

But all these lamentations and prophecies were unavailing, and in no manner disturbed the serenity of the two individuals who were the objects of them. Were they all unfounded? Alas! that we should have to record it—not quite. The bride knew little, if anything, of house-keeping. This was the more unfortunate, as the elderly woman who had superintended Durand's household skilfully enough since his mother's death, had abruptly taken leave when informed of his intended nuptials.

It was not so much that she felt incensed at the idea of his introducing a wife into the establishment; his chief fault lay in his having ignored the charms of a certain niece of her own, who could boast of a really handsome face as well as comfortable dower, and whom *la mère Niquette* had decided many months previous was a suitable wife for him. With this end in view she had sounded Sophie's praises night and morning, lauded Sophie's qualities, mental and moral, dilated on her admirable house-keep-

ing skill, and the patience with which Durand had listened to talk, which he judged the result of the garrulousness of age, unfortunately confirming her in her illusions, which were shared by the fair Sophie herself, she felt too much aggrieved to remain beneath his roof after seeing her dreams so rudely dispelled. The two inexperienced girls hired at the last moment to replace her, though stout and willing, were otherwise incompetent, and the bride was thus thrown entirely on her own resources. With a vague presentiment of coming trouble, Paul had done his utmost to induce the injured Mrs. Niquette to retain her post. He had expostulated, solicited, and offered what was considered then almost fabulous wages for her continued services, but revenge to some natures is very sweet, and she could not forego it.

Forgetful of the kindness, the consideration with which her employer had always regarded her, the presents, the privileges he had bestowed with a liberal hand, she worked herself up to a belief that she had been treated with the most signal ingratitude, and that she was really an injured personage.

"Ah!" she thought, as she left him with a "good bye, Mr. Durand," to which he coldly responded. "I'll soon see you arrive, my gay bridegroom, begging me to come back, but I won't do that till you and your dainty wife have prayed long and hard; and then when I do return, I'll teach you both how to respect *la mère Niquette*."

But the good old dame was mistaken: neither her master nor his bride troubled her with solicitations to return. Long as she had lived with Paul Durand, she had not fathomed his character yet.

As we have before said, the women of the Durand family were always notable housewives, and during the long reign of the last worthy lady who had borne that name, Paul's house had been the best managed, the most neatly kept in the village, whilst his dairy products were equally famed for quantity and quality. This satisfactory state of things had deteriorated very little, if any, during Mrs. Niquette's rule, who, to do her justice, had looked as narrowly to the comforts of Paul and the interests of the establishment, as her late mistress had done. Alas! under the new dynasty, things were very different, and it was to be hoped, for the sake of the departed Mrs. Durand's peace of mind, that she was not cognizant of sublunary matters, especially of details concerning her son's household.

The latter liked a good table and had always been accustomed to one—now, the soup was often burned or watery, the bread sour and heavy, worthy of the

wretched butter destined to be eaten with it, whilst the crisp brown pancakes, crullers and dainty preserves, that had at one time so frequently adorned his table, were things of the past. Still, with the generosity of a manly nature, he neither scolded nor grumbled, but contented himself with a laughing hint occasionally on the subject, never alluding to it, however, when his wife looked worried or troubled. Poor Genevieve did often make spasmodic efforts to acquire a small portion of the valuable science in which she was so lamentably deficient, but the results were always discouraging failures, and she was gradually coming to the fatal conclusion that it was no use to try. As if to make matters worse, Paul's sister, who had just been left a widow, wrote to announce that her health shaken by anxiety and fatigue during her husband's illness, required change of air, and she felt assured her brother and new sister would kindly receive her for a few weeks.

Ah! how honest Paul Durand dreaded that visit. How his heart ached as he thought of his poor little wife's short comings laid bare to the keen gaze of that pattern and model of housewives. As to Genevieve, herself, she counted the days and hours as the criminal counts the time that has to elapse before the execution of his sentence. Her suspense was not of long duration, for three days after her letter, Mrs. Chartrand arrived. Despite her recent bereavement, which she really deeply felt; despite her own somewhat shaken health and energy, the state of matters in her brother's household alarmed, almost horrified her. Vague rumors had indeed occasionally reached her ear of the housekeeping deficiencies of her new sister-in-law, but occupied entirely with her husband, who had been confined to his room three or four months previous to his death, she had scarcely heeded them. Now, they burst upon her in all their appalling reality, and perhaps no greater distraction to her legitimate sorrow could have been found than the new field of regret thus opened to her.

"How," she inwardly asked herself, "can I find time to grieve for my poor Louis' loss, when I see such wretched bread, such uneatable butter on my brother's table? How can I dwell on my own state of lonely widowhood, when I see those abominable servants of my brother's gossiping with their beaux, whilst the dinner is burning on the stove and the cream going to waste in the dairy. Oh, it is distracting!"

Distracting it proved indeed, for before Mrs. Chartrand had been a week in the house she had almost forgotten her woes and her weeds in the fierce astonishment excited by a farther insight into the waste and mismanagement of the household. For Gene-

vieve she experienced no sentiment beyond that of contemptuous pity, and a keen regret that Paul had made so sad a mistake in his choice. That strong, bustling, active woman, brought up to housekeeping from her cradle, could not understand the sick languor, the weary discouragement to which her weak, nervous sister-in-law, was so often a prey, and more than once she inwardly accused the latter of mincing affectation.

Affairs could not go on long in this way without her disburdening her heart to some one, and one Sunday afternoon, after having declined accompanying Genevieve, under some pretext, to afternoon service, she entered the room where Paul was smoking in peaceful solitude. There was no misinterpreting the determination that sat enthroned on her brow, the portentous solemnity of her manner, and he inwardly made up his mind for a scene, but, like a wary tactician, he awaited the attack in silence.

"Paul," she suddenly burst forth, "put down your pipe and listen to me. I want to have a talk with you."

"A talk about what?" was the brief response.

"About what, you ask me! What could it be else than the woful mismanagement of your household?"

"I think that is entirely my business and Genevieve's," he drily replied, resuming the pipe he had momentarily laid down.

"That answer might do for a stranger, but it is not a just one to make to your elder and only sister, who, in speaking to you, is moved entirely by affectionate interest for yourself. Give me one fair, patient hearing, and I will not ask another. Let me now say unreservedly all that is on my mind, and then, if you wish it, I will for ever after hold my peace."

Feeling there was some truth in her words, Durand silently nodded, and she resumed: "In our poor mother's time, though you had not more cows in your pasture than you have now, indeed less, for you have added three beautiful heifers to the stock, there were always a few firkins of sweet, well made butter ranged in your cellar, ready for market when the price should be satisfactory; there was a goodly row of cheeses on your shelves, and baskets of eggs. How is it now? Nothing for sale at present, and there will be nothing later! In one corner of the untidy dairy, a firkin of some pale streaky substance which we must call butter, I suppose, as it would answer to no other name; a dozen of eggs, perhaps, on a cracked plate; some mouldy cream, and that is the extent of your dairy riches. Are things better in your poultry yard? Remembering the broods of thriving poul-

try, turkeys and geese, that used at one time to people it, my heart fairly aches when I watch now the couple of lonely goslings and turkeys; or the handful of wretched little bantams, wild as woodcocks, that pick up a living as best they can, for half of the time they are not fed, though enough is wasted from each meal to fit them for prize fowl. What do you say to all this, brother? I tell you that you are on the high road to ruin."

"No, Francoise, there is no danger of that. God is very good to me." Here the speaker reverently doffed his cap. "My harvest this year is beyond any I have yet gathered in, though I have had my granaries often well filled. Everything has prospered with me in quantity as well as quality, and we will not, thank heaven, miss the profits of dairy or poultry yard."

"Well, 'tis a great blessing, Paul, that you are so lucky; you require to be so. But what about your own comforts? Your table (you must not be angry with my plain speaking, for you have given me leave to say what was on my mind), your table, I believe, is the worst supplied in the parish."

"I'm sure, Francoise, we have had some very good pies lately and fruit tarts."

"Ah, brother, you may well look sheepish, and pretend to stare into the bowl of your pipe, as you say that. You cannot deceive me, though you try to. I saw Widow Lapointe's little girl stealing into the yard with them on three different occasions. Anything as tempting as them in the cooking line could not be produced in this house now, unless I turned up my sleeves and went to work myself."

Poor Paul felt considerably disconcerted, for he had secretly called at Widow Lapointe's and prepaid for the confection of the dainties in person, hoping his sharp-sighted sister might suppose they were of home manufacture. He worked still harder though in silence at his pipe, while Mrs. Chartrand pitilessly went on:

"Look at the garden, which can be compared only to that of the sluggard, overgrown with weeds and nettles; and yet, I see two great strong, lazy girls lounging about here. Mother kept but one, still, in her time, the same garden was admired by all the parish for its fine display of vegetables, fruits, even flowers. I see no signs either of new home-made linen, nor yet of good gray homespun, such as every Durand wife has always been able to make for her husband and her children. Will you tell me what can or what does Genevieve do?"

A flush had been gradually stealing over Durand's swarthy countenance, and at length heavily striking the table, he retorted: "That is my business, Francoise, only mine, do you hear; and had it not been

for my promise to let you speak, you would not have been able to say so much."

"I know that," was Mrs. Chartrand's philosophical reply, "but, as you passed your word to give me a fair hearing, I shall keep you to it. Is not every syllable I've uttered true as gospel? Have I maligned Genevieve in one single point?"

"If I am satisfied with my wife, who else has a right to find fault with her?" was the loud voiced interrogation.

"You need not look so fiercely at me, Paul. I see you want to quarrel, but I will not gratify you. 'Tis always the way with you men. When your cause is a bad one, you always try to prop it up with angry words and blustering. Now, I will have my say out if you stormed twice as much. God knows no unkind or angry feeling towards your wife lives in my heart, and it is for her good, as well as yours, that I should speak plainly. No one was more delighted than myself when I heard of your marriage, because I thought it would be for your happiness."

"And so it was, Francoise, and I am as happy as a king. Nor do I intend to make myself and my poor little wife miserable by asking her to do what she is not able to do. She is not made for strong or heavy work, no more than the little singing birds twittering in the elm outside. Besides; she is young and will learn."

Mrs. Chartrand inwardly thought that women as young and delicate as Genevieve had often made good managers and house-keepers, but she prudently kept her reflections on that point to herself, and resumed:

"Without blaming your wife for her ignorance of house-keeping, don't you think it would be wise for her to begin to learn at once. Your crops may not always prove as good as this year; children, bringing fresh expenses, may come; and the ruin you now laugh at overtake you later. Listen, and I will make you an offer. I am a childless widow—free to follow my own wishes. Say the word and I will make my home here. I will be no burden, for you know I have sufficient means of my own. I will teach Genevieve house-keeping, if she has strength or desire to learn, and in any case, I will take the whole burden of the household on my own shoulders. Your comfort, your purse and happiness, will gain by it. Now, reflect well before you give me an answer either one way or the other."

Paul Durand did so. He crossed his arms on the table and rested his head on them, in deep, earnest thought. Certainly the material prosperity of his establishment beneath that thrifty housewife's care would materially increase, but how would Genevieve like it? That was an important ques-

tion. Firkins of butter, stores of cheese would accumulate in his cellars; home-made cloth and linen in his cupboards, and when he would return from his farm labors, hungry and tired, tempting, well prepared meals would await him. Yes, it would be very pleasant for him, but would it be so for his wife, who would pass the hours of his absence in shrinking from the constant supervision his sister would exercise over every thing and every person around her? How miserable, how mortified would she feel, brought perpetually into such vivid contrast with the skilful, energetic Madame Chartrand; made to feel so keenly her inferiority on all the points in which the other excelled.

No, he had no right to risk his wife's happiness by bringing a third party to dwell beneath his roof, and in a kind, though firm tone, he rejoined:

"Thank you, Françoise, for your kind offer, the prompting I know of a good heart, but I think it better that I and my little Genevieve should rough it alone. Troubles we will have, I suppose, like most married people, but we must try to bear them patiently; and if Genevieve is wanting in some things, she possesses, at least, a gentle, affectionate nature, and a loving heart."

"'Tis finally settled then, Paul?"

"Yes; you are not angry?"

"No. Do you not think I have better sense than that? But I must leave to-morrow. I could not endure, any longer, the trials to which both my temper and my patience are continually exposed in this house. Between Genevieve's indifference, and the shameless negligence of her two lazy girls, I would be worried to death before a fortnight, debarred as I would be from trying to set things right. Why, they have almost made me lose sight of my poor dead husband, and of that decent grief, which, as a respectable widow, I am bound to feel. I will go to my room now, and read some prayers, for I missed vespers this holy Sunday to have a talk with you."

She left the room, and Paul lapsed into a brown study, from which he was at length roused by the entrance of his wife.

"Come here, Genevieve."

She obeyed, and passing his arm around her, he said, looking earnestly into her face: "My sister wishes to come to live with us; she will take all the charge of the house-keeping into her hands."

The bride's pale cheek slightly reddened, her lip quivered, but with an effort of self-control she quietly answered: "Of course, Paul, if you wish it."

"No, my little wife. It shall not be. No one shall come between you and I; and we'll struggle through our troubles unhelped. I have already told sister Fran-

coise so, and the blame of refusal will rest entirely with myself."

How eloquently the lustrous brown eyes thanked him, how tenderly the small fingers closed on his own, reconciling him in their mute expression of affection to the many shortcomings that Mrs. Chartrand had so pitilessly laid before him. The latter kept her resolution of taking an early leave, and the following morning, whilst sunrise was still flushing the east, mounted into the comfortable little spring cart in which her brother was to drive her back to her own abode. If Paul had felt any qualms of conscience for his refusal of her kindly intended offer, the sight of her plump, portly figure, and full, ruddy cheeks, which he inwardly contrasted with his wife's frail little frame and delicate face, fully reconciled him to the past.

After Mrs. Chartrand's visit, one of the incapables was dismissed, and a substitute procured in the shape of a rare housekeeper, who could do everything almost as well as Mrs. Chartrand herself. But, alas! she had a terrible temper, and would pounce like a tigress on that innocent lamb, her mistress, without the slightest provocation. Knowing her value, Genevieve bore everything patiently; but one afternoon that Marie was venting her constitutional ill-temper in sundry insolent remarks as to what some people were sent into the world for, when they were not able to even help a poor, over-worked servant with a churning, or a baking, her master, whom she supposed busy in the farm-yard, entered unperceived, and after listening a moment to her angry diatribes, laid his hand on her shoulder, and ordered her at once to pack up and "go."

Of course there was a storm afterwards, and Genevieve, securely shut up in her room, listened in nervous alarm to the uproar going on outside, the rattling of crockery, the warlike clashing of knives, and the spasmodic movements of chairs, benches, pails, kicked over in turn. It subsided, however, in time, and husband and wife felt equally relieved when the door closed upon their skilful but redoubtable "help;" Paul devoutly, though somewhat obscurely, thanking Providence "that they would have peace now, even though they should soon be again in the midst of chaos," referring probably to the general irregularity and confusion from which Marie's activity had dragged the household.

CHAPTER III.

Company still continued to come and go at Mr. de Courval's; for the month of October, with its brightly tinted woods and hazy amber sky, without speaking of the excel-

lent shooting the environs of the place afforded, rendered the country quite as attractive as it had been during the summer months.

Gentlemen with guns and dogs, gentlemen on horseback and on foot, frequently passed Durand's door, but Genevieve saw nothing of them. Mr. de Courval had frequently and kindly invited the new married couple to visit the manor house, but as Paul evidently did not care about doing so whilst there were strangers there, Genevieve remained contentedly at home. One afternoon she was standing in front of the door, looking at the distant hills glowing in the mellow, golden light of that beautiful season we call Indian summer, when Mr. de Courval, accompanied by two gentlemen friends, passed on foot. They all three looked weary and dispirited, for they had been on foot since early morning; and when Genevieve, whom Mr. de Courval instantly accosted with his usual friendly politeness, asked them to step in a moment and rest, a thing she could not avoid doing without violating common courtesy, for Mr. de Courval complained of fatigue, her offer was gladly accepted. He introduced his friends, one, a Mr. Caron, a gentleman of middle age; the other, a handsome young cavalry officer, named de Chevandier, who had come out from France to spend some months in Canada. The latter seemed equally surprised and struck by the pretty face and quiet graceful manners of their hostess, as she placed before them tumblers, with a jug of excellent cider, which we need not inform our readers was not home made.

Genevieve, however, was entirely unconscious of the particular attention with which Captain de Chevandier favored her, and that very elegant young gentleman would have been highly mortified had he known that she had not even observed the glossy luxuriance of his dark hair and moustache, or the classic regularity of his features.

Durand came in before the departure of the guests, and, quite unembarrassed, pressed hospitality upon them with kindly courtesy. De Chevandier's aristocratic prejudices were somewhat shocked by the appearance, on the scene, of this plebeian entertainer, but his ineffable airs were as much thrown away on the husband, as his looks of admiration had been on the wife. At length the three gentlemen, rested and refreshed, took their departure, the military Adonis indulging in wondering regrets on their homeward way, that "such a charming little creature should be doomed to pass her whole life among cows, fowls, and all that sort of thing."

After they had left, Durand informed his wife that he was thinking of paying a visit

to Montreal, to purchase groceries and other necessary articles, as well as to see the merchant to whom he usually sold a large portion of his farm products; concluding by enquiring if she would like to accompany him.

"I can spare you a few dollars, little wife, to lay out on ribbons, in the fine shops, even though our butter and chickens have been failures," he added, with a smile, expecting that Genevieve would eagerly grasp at the offer; for a trip to town, even without the promise of spare dollars, was considered a great privilege by the wives in Alonville. To his surprise, indeed, disappointment, she reflected a moment, hesitated, then finally declined. The reason of this was the uncertainty she felt as to how she should act towards the Lubois. Did she go to town without calling to see them, and thanking Mrs. Lubois for the clumsy, old fashioned gold brooch she had sent her as a wedding present, she might be taxed by the family with great ingratitude, and yet, on the other hand, did she present herself with her husband at their exclusive mansion, they might prove very unwelcome visitors. To avoid this dilemma, then, she resolved on remaining at home, especially as Paul would not be absent more than a few days.

The day succeeding his departure, Genevieve, who was exceedingly fond of the open air, and could imagine no greater treat than to sit for hours on a bench in the garden, or under the old elm that shaded so pleasantly her comfortable home, listening to the chirping of birds and insect life around her, betook herself with some pretence of needle-work to her haunt behind the trunk of the great tree whose ample rotundity sheltered her in great part from the observation of passers by, whilst its foliage protected her from the sun.

She had been brought up in a dingy, dirty town in France, for there are dingy, dirty towns in that favored portion of the globe, whatever may be said to the contrary, and the country was to her an unexplored world as delightful as it was new. How she revelled in her own quiet way in its freshness, its beauty, its perfumes; and how every new phase of its life elicited an admiration which she did not dare to openly express lest she should expose herself to ridicule. Perhaps this predilection was in part responsible for the lamentably slow progress she was making in the acquirement of housekeeping knowledge, for whilst she would be in person in the kitchen, her head aching, her cheeks aglow, amidst the fumes of frizzling, stewing or broiling, or, what was still worse, washing or scouring, her thoughts would longingly turn to the cool, pure air outside, the rustling of the green boughs overhead; and she would inwardly

think, with a sigh, how much she would prefer a piece of bread and a cup of milk enjoyed amid that pleasant repose, to the most dainty banquet, heralded in by such culinary struggles and efforts.

Comparatively free from household troubles for a while, she had celebrated the first day of Paul's absence by making a dinner on the primitive articles of fare just mentioned, an arrangement which entirely suited her hand-maidens, who, also fond of the *dolce far niente*, added a piece of cold meat to their dinner and were satisfied; ease making up for the frugality of their meal. Then, taking a pair of slippers she was embroidering as a present for her husband, and which she worked at in secret, wishing to surprise him, never doubting but that he would find them useful as they were ornamental, she installed herself in her nook at the foot of the old elm.

What a glorious afternoon it was. How often she paused in her work to look from the far off purple hills to the gorgeous coloring of the autumn woods, from the golden and azure glories of the sky above her, to the flashing waves of the broad, silvery St. Lawrence flowing past. All was still. The birds had already winged their way to climes that offered them another summer, and the silence was only broken by the soft rustle of a leaf occasionally falling to the ground. Suddenly, however, a footstep near caused her to look up, and there, cap in hand, his most winning smile on his handsome, regular features, stood Captain de Chevandier. His manner was very courteous without being fulsome, and Genevieve listened undisturbed to some innocent remarks on the weather, the country and the excellent shooting. The time passed so pleasantly that she was unconscious, when he took his departure, that he had been nearly an hour in conversation with her. The day following was as bright and pleasant as its predecessor had been, and after a very light meal, she hurried off with her canvas and wools, not to the elm tree this time, for a sort of instinct told her it was too much in the line of road traversed by Mr. de Courval and his visitors, but to another equally favored haunt under a crooked but shady apple tree in the garden. She was working most assiduously, for she wished to complete her little offering before her husband's return, when a clear cultivated voice pleasantly enquired, "How was Mrs. Durand," and glancing up, she saw Captain de Chevandier looking at her over the low garden gate.

Genevieve felt anything but gratified by this incident, but she was too gentle to betray her sentiments on the subject, so she politely returned his greetings. Still, there was a considerable degree of reserve in her manner, and de Chevandier, at a loss

how to proceed, looked about him for inspiration. By good fortune his glance happened to fall on a bed of magnificent dahlias of various hues and shades, and feigning great admiration of their beauty, he asked permission to look at them nearer and gather one. The permission was coldly granted, and whilst dwelling, with the air and manner of a connoisseur, on the rich tints and peculiar beauty of the specimens before him, he contrived to introduce a graceful compliment to the exquisite taste of the fair mistress of the garden, and to the success which had attended her efforts.

"You give me more credit than I deserve, Captain de Chevandier. 'Tis the old housekeeper, who lived with my husband before his marriage, who deserves all your praise."

De Chevandier bit his lip, and inwardly blessed his stars that none of his witty, caustic companions of the mess-table were present to witness this signal discomfiture. Soon recovering himself, he resumed:

"Well, that will not prevent me choosing, with *Madame's* permission, a couple of those splendid crimson ones," and he suited the action to the word.

Then, from the flowers it was natural to talk of the country, and by a very natural transition, from the country to France. Ah! here was a link between them at last, and de Chevandier was not slow to seize upon it. Though a native of Paris, there were few parts of his sunny land which he had not visited, and even with the dingy little town, Genevieve's birth-place, he was acquainted, having been detained there once a whole day by bad weather, during which time he had continually cursed it as the smallest, meanest, most insufferable spot on the surface of the globe. His recollections of it were now, however, of a different nature, and he spoke of its simple church, the quiet little cemetery, with a pathos that almost brought tears to Genevieve's eyes.

"Ah, Mrs. Durand," he impetuously exclaimed, after a moment's silence, "how miserable you must feel transplanted from our lovely land to this ungenial clime! What are we here, children of France, but poor exiles?"

Genevieve was by no means prepared, despite her love of fatherland, to go such lengths as this, and raising her eyes with a look of astonishment, which never wavered before the half admiring, half sentimental gaze bent on her, she rejoined:

"Miserable do you say? Why, Mr. de Chevandier, I have known more real happiness and quiet during the last few months than I have ever enjoyed in my life. France is dear to me as a reminiscence, but here, in Canada, my affections as well as all my earthly hopes are centred!"

This was another discouraging conversational blow, from which, either unable to

rally, or inferring from Genevieve's manner that his stay had been sufficiently long, he rose, and after a few parting words, uttered in the same strain of respectful courtesy with which he would have addressed a lady of the highest rank, he withdrew.

As he closed the gate after him, however, he muttered: "What a strait-laced, unsatisfactory little creature, but then, what matchless eyes, what taper fingers! Surely, that thick-headed husband of hers cannot expect them to do much in the way of milking or butter making. Ah! my worthy Durand, I am afraid you will find out too late that you have blundered egregiously in your choice."

With a look of deep thought on his usually careless features, he strolled leisurely back to Mr. de Courval's.

The ensuing day, de Chevandier made his toilet with elaborate care, and having armed himself with some newspapers and magazines which he had lately received from France, he bent his steps, about the same hour, in the direction of Durand's habitation. Genevieve was not under the elm, nor, on looking over the gate, could he see her under the apple tree. Evidently she did not wish for any farther interview, but de Chevandier was not easily daunted, and rapping, with the light cane he carried, against the door, he inquired of the untidy, uncombed girl who opened it "if Madame were in."

"She is somewhere in the garden," was the curt response, and feeling she had done all that could be expected from her under the circumstances, she clapped the door to with a suddenness that caused the visitor to recoil.

"What savages!" he exclaimed, "but I will not give it up. I must seek her in the garden." Had Captain de Chevandier been asked what end or aim he had in view in paying such marked attention to Mrs. Durand, he would unhesitatingly have answered that he intended no harm. Mrs. Durand was a very pretty as well as refined woman, and a harmless, sentimental friendship kept up with her would serve greatly to lighten his visit at the manor-house, which otherwise was passing very heavily. But despite such vague semi-innocence of purpose on his part, alas! for Genevieve, if she encouraged or listened to his overtures, for no religious principle guided him, the only restraining influence he acknowledged was the world's code of honor, and what a lax one that too often is!

Inwardly wondering, almost chafing at the intense interest she excited in him, he unlatched the little gate, and picking his steps amid pumpkins, cucumbers and melons, all growing in the most neglected luxuriance, he made his way to the little rustic summer house, constructed out of a few

boards, round and over which a wild grape-vine had been trained, forming a covering of pleasant verdure. Genevieve was still at the "eternal worsted work," as de Chevandier inwardly stigmatized it; he would much rather have seen her melancholy and listless, but with his usual graceful ease he entered, offering his credentials in the shape of the books and papers he had brought with him. Genevieve could not do otherwise than thank him for his attention, and besides, she was really pleased to see the names and pictures of places and things so familiar to her. Whilst she was looking at the illustrated frontispiece of one of them, he took up the work she had laid down, smilingly asking "for what the monument of female industry and patience he held in his hand was intended."

"A pair of slippers for my husband," was the reply.

An expression of keen irony flashed across de Chevandier's features, and, as he thought of honest Paul in his rough country boots, striding through the muck of the farm-yard, and then looked at the delicate combination of beads and silk floss intended for him, and the fairy-like fingers which had worked it, his lip curled and he involuntarily said:

"Mr. Durand is a very happy man and will, of course, thoroughly appreciate this fairy gift. I hear he is an excellent farmer, understands all about sub-soiling, drainage, cattle and such necessary horrors."

Genevieve looked at the speaker. Novice as she was, she divined the covert contempt lurking beneath the half patronizing, half ironical compliments thus paid to Paul, and, keeping her eyes still steadfastly fixed on her companion, she rejoined:

"My husband is not only a good farmer, but an honorable, upright man; one whom the most indifferent of wives could not help respecting and loving."

There was something grand in its way in this fearless, frank expression of her sentiments from one usually so reserved and reticent as Genevieve Durand, and whilst de Chevandier's heart inwardly did her homage for it, it also awoke within him a sentiment of jealous irritation of the man thus favored and honored. It taught him also that in the young wife's presence he must avoid uttering even one word that could possibly be construed as disrespectful towards Paul, and he hastened to repair his blunder by making some friendly, complimentary remark regarding Durand, uttered with the tact and delicacy of which he was eminently master.

Genevieve resumed her work, and whilst her fingers moved with nimble skill, de Chevandier talked or read aloud short passages from the papers he had brought with him. The afternoon shadows were length-

ening when the young wife suddenly rose to her feet, saying he must excuse her, as she might be wanted at home. He escorted her to the door, and as he lingered at the steps, saying a few farewell words, two figures, standing at an angle of the barn, closely watched their movements. These were Manon, the girl who had given so characteristic a reception to Captain de Chevandier, and Olivier Dupuis, one of the most inveterate gossips of the village.

"And, you tell me," he said, slowly, ominously shaking his head, "you tell me that fine town gentleman comes here every day, and spends hours with Madame, (a scornful inflexion on the word,) the husband too, away! Well, well, Paul Durand, you could not do like others and take a smart sensible girl of the village for your wife, you wanted a dainty bit of chinaware instead. Oh! we shall see, we shall see. When do you expect Paul home?"

"To-morrow, I think."

"Good day, then, Manon, and should you ever marry, don't tread in your mistress' footsteps."

"Keep your advice, père Dupuis, till it's asked. When I'm married, I shall do just as I like," and with this amicable farewell the pair separated.

The rain poured down in torrents all the ensuing day, and de Chevandier had to forego his intention of calling on his charming neighbor, lest a visit under such circumstances would render him ridiculous. He therefore betook himself in a very ill humor to the sitting room, where he divided his time between tossing over Mr. de Courval's books, which were nearly all on agricultural subjects, and kicking aside, or swearing at the half dozen dogs that enlivened the home of his bachelor friend.

Genevieve on her part was as happy as possible. The house, under the united efforts of herself and handmaidens, shone with cleanliness, whilst Manon, by some extraordinary coincidence, had made some excellent pies, and turned out, for once, a baking of bread, neither burned outside, nor raw inside. By way of climax, the wonderful slippers, happily completed for the occasion, were ostentatiously spread out on the back of Paul's arm-chair which was drawn to his favorite nook near the flower filled window. Then Genevieve hastened to her room, and after a wistful look at the fast falling rain, to whose violence her husband was probably then exposed, entered, with pretty wifely vanity, on the duty of endeavoring to make herself look as charming as possible.

Her task was not a difficult one, for at all times pretty, excitement rendered her doubly so, and the flutter of pleasure arising from the expected return of her husband after this, their first separation, brought a

light to her eyes and a flush on her cheek, that made old Dupuis' appellation of china ware passably appropriate.

CHAPTER IV.

Meanwhile we will go back a few hours to meet Paul on his homeward route. Rapidly he jolted on, heedless of the miry roads, of the rain so liberally deluging him: in the happy prospect of soon being again with Genevieve, and in the satisfactory remembrance of the favorable business he had transacted in Montreal, tokens of which he had brought back in the shape of handsome presents for his wife.

Unexpectedly he came upon old Olivier Dupuis trudging along on foot, and apparently as heedless of the rain as himself. Of course Paul drew up and offered the wayfarer a seat beside him, a proposal accepted with an alacrity arising from more motives than one. When started on the way again, after a few words about the weather, Paul heartily said:

"Ah, père Dupuis, it cheers and shortens a long road wonderfully, to know that there is a true, kind wife at the end of it to welcome one."

Olivier groaned aloud and dismally shook his head.

Supposing this mournful outburst was a covert allusion on Dupuis' part, to his own state of widowhood, Paul, though it was the first time he had known him to grieve on that account, kindly said:

"Cheer up, Olivier, all have their trials in this world sometime or other, and you have good health and good spirits to make up for your lonely fireside."

"As for that, Paul Durand," was the tart reply, "I think myself much less to be pitied without a wife than many men are with one."

The tone, even more than the words, was peculiar, and Paul cast a keen glance at his companion.

"Yes, look at me well, and I only wish you could read in my face, all that's on my mind. It would save me telling things which I won't be thanked, I suppose, for making known. Oh! Paul, Paul, why couldn't you do as your neighbors and forefathers did before you, choose a wife from among the smart, honest girls of your parish, instead of going farther to fare worse?"

"Assuredly, neighbor Dupuis, you have been taking somebody else's allowance of rum this morning, atop of your own," was Paul's angrily uttered reply.

This last insinuation shot home, for old Dupuis often exceeded the bounds of temperance, though he had not done so on this particular occasion, so, with a malicious twinkle in his little sharp eyes, he replied:

"Thank you for the hint, good friend, but I've met no Christian to-day generous enough to offer me his share. That's neither here nor there, however, and we need not fight because I think it my duty to tell an old friend and neighbor out of kindness, when I see his wife carrying on and amusing herself, when he's away, with one of the beautifully dressed, perfumed young gentlemen visiting at the *seigneur's*. Ah! you may well turn pale, for it's true. They spent three whole hours in the garden, alone, yesterday. Manon saw them too, so she can tell you the same story, and the day before that, widow Lapointe saw them talking together under the apple tree in the garden. She says she stood watching them for nearly an hour; and the fine gentleman was all smiles and sweetness to Madame," (again a marked emphasis on the title).

Dupuis was small in stature, feeble and gray haired, so Paul, who possessed herculean strength, was too generous to gratify his vengeance by using personal violence towards him. He was therefore obliged to content himself with snatching him up suddenly by the back of his coat collar, and dropping him, as he would have done a troublesome puppy, in the middle of the miry road. Then, with the one muttered word *coquin* (rascal), he lashed his horse furiously and set off at a break-neck speed along the uneven road.

After a time, however, he allowed the animal's pace to slacken, the reins to fall on its neck, and bowing his head in his hands, he groaned aloud. Yes, yes, it must be true. The thought was agony unspeakable, but that did not diminish the likelihood of its truth. He remembered now how that elegant gentleman's gaze had pertinaciously and admiringly followed his wife's movements during the short visit he had paid with Mr. de Courval at their house; and he recalled, with a feeling of mingled rage and despair that she had unaccountably, at least to him, refused to accompany him to town.

Durand was by nature of a fiercely jealous temperament, but this failing had hitherto lain almost dormant from want of circumstances favorable to its development. Now, all at once it leaped into existence with as much strength and vitality as if it had blazed unrestrained all his life. His anger toward his wife was softened now and then by a pang of grief or wounded tenderness; but his rage against de Chevandier was deadly, and had the latter crossed his path during that homeward drive, the consequences might have been of a fatal nature. As he turned into the yard, the gate of which stood open in expectation of his arrival, he nervously shrank from the thought of meeting his wife. He knew, before-hand,

reproaching and accusing her would afford him no satisfaction, and he asked himself would it not be better to drive at once to the manor-house, ask for de Chevandier, and without a word of commentary or explanation, fall upon him and take full vengeance for his wrongs, serving Mr. de Courval with a small dose of the same treatment if he ventured to interfere, for, after all, he was the indirect author of all this misery, bringing with him into virtuous, humble homes, his unprincipled, fashionable friends. Whilst he still sat wavering in purpose, reins in hand, the door opened, and Genevieve, in her fresh, girlish beauty ran out, and poising her little foot lightly on the iron step held up her blushing face to kiss him. Naturally shy and undemonstrative, nothing but her deep love for her husband could have tempted her so far out of her usual reserve; but, turning aside his head, as if not comprehending her intention, he harshly said: "Go in out of the rain."

What a fierce pang of anguish shot through her heart as he spoke the words. He had had such love, such trust in her, and she was so winning, so lovable, so gentle in appearance, whatever she might be in reality. Leaping from his seat, he unharnessed his horse, led him to the stable, and declining the assistance of one of the farm servants, who hastened to help him, he fed, watered and rubbed the animal down himself. Feeling then that the dreaded explanation between himself and his wife could no longer be averted, he strode into the house. The cloth was laid, supper on the table, and Genevieve standing waiting for him; but how different that pale, shrinking woman, to the blushing joyous creature that had bounded down so lightly a few moments before to welcome him? Ruthlessly flinging away the embroidered slippers (in the midst of poor Genevieve's bewildered anguish that little act inflicted a special pang of its own) he seated himself at table, but food and drink remained untouched, except a large tumbler of cold water which he swallowed at a draught. He then pushed back his chair.

"What does it all mean?" the trembling young wife asked herself, for the twentieth time; and her cheek grew paler and her lips whiter, till she almost feared she would faint.

"The hue of guilt," thought Paul. "Ah! the worthless hypocrite!"

At length she spoke.

"Paul, what is the matter with you? Why do you treat me thus?"

"First answer me a question, woman! What visitors have you had here in my absence?"

"No one but Captain de Chevandier," she faltered.

"Ah! it is true then! And you have the audacity to acknowledge it!"

This speech was certainly inconsistent on Paul's part, for if she had concealed the truth he would have been if possible more enraged with her: but when was anger ever logical or consistent? Her reply, however, was a fearful confirmation of the reports he had heard, and in a hoarse, husky voice he asked:

"How often?"

"Three times."

"That is, every day during my absence, except to-day, when either the fear of my return, or of exposing his dainty person to the rain, kept him at home. Oh false, worthless woman! What can I, what do I think of the wife who profits of a husband's absence to pass hours every day in the company of a total stranger, whose only claims on her are that he is young, handsome and unprincipled?"

"Oh! on my sacred word, Paul, I will swear it on the Bible, if you like, I have never wronged you, my husband, by one word or thought. Without any invitation from me, Captain de Chevandier called here, moved only by a feeling of politeness or courtesy."

"Silence, I say! Do you think you can blind me to your misdoings as easily as that! Ah, you have proved yourself an ungrateful as well as a false wife. Though you have made ourselves and our home a laughing-stock in the village, through your miserable ignorance of everything that a woman should know, I have never spoken you a cold look on that account. But you spend the time that other women pass in honest, useful housework, in listening to the sweet words of a scoundrel—in trifling with your husband's honor!"

"Paul, you are cruel and unjust."

"Silence, I tell you. Do you not know that to-morrow the wretched gossips in whose power you have so weakly, so criminally placed yourself, will have held us both up to public scorn? Out of my sight!"

She rose, and with a feeling of deathly sickness crept from the room.

The fiercest enemy Paul Durand ever had would have felt his desire of vengeance sated if he could have looked into that silent chamber and into the depths of the occupant's heart, as he sat there in lonely wretchedness, his aching head bowed on his crossed arms, unnoting the thickening shadows of twilight, unconscious of the long day's fast which he had but lightly broken once in the anticipation of the pleasant evening meal to be partaken of in his own home with her.

By degrees his first violence gave way to softer thoughts and feelings. What if Genevieve had only erred through inexperience or thoughtlessness—had been guilty of no greater fault than simply permitting

de Chevandier's visits, without either inviting or encouraging them?

Well, it was almost as bad, for he had said words in his anger which few women could easily forget or forgive, and he felt a spirit of dogged sullenness rising within him which would prevent him making anything like advances even if convinced that he had unjustly accused her.

He foresaw it all—the estrangement that henceforth would arise like a wall between them, an estrangement which time would only deepen. And they had been so happy together! He had known such perfect bliss in his home since she had come to it—she had entwined herself so closely around his very being! In anguish unutterable he groaned aloud.

A light foot-fall crossed the floor, and looking up he saw Genevieve beside him. She placed the candle she carried on the table, and even in the trouble of the moment, he noted how deathly pale she was, and how weeping and mental suffering had already left dark rings beneath her soft eyes. Suddenly conviction awoke within him that she was innocent of all wilful offence, and with that thought a terrible fear flashed across his mind that she had come to say she would leave him—that he had insulted, outraged her beyond forgiveness. It was just such gentle quiet women as she who did such things. And he knew, he felt that the demon of sullen pride within him would keep him dumb, that even though his heart should break he should make no sign and let her depart.

Very softly then she spoke.

"Paul, I am sorry, truly sorry that I have angered you thus! Had I known that you would have disapproved of Captain de Chevandier's visits, I should have refused to receive them, even at the risk of insulting, without provocation, a friend of Mr. de Courval's. Hear me swear now before God as solemnly as if I were on my death bed," here she knelt beside him, and reverently raised upwards her clear earnest eyes, shining with the light of truth, "that I am innocent of one thought or word that could in any manner have wronged you. Surely you will forgive my unintentional offence?"

Passionately, convulsively he strained her to his heart, and as he held her there, he inwardly registered a vow that never again would he grieve, contradict or doubt her. That feminine gentleness, more powerful than anger, logic or pride, had demolished in an instant the wall that passion and suspicion had raised between them.

"My wife! my darling!" he whispered, as the tears his honest manly nature no longer felt ashamed of, fell thickly on the glossy head resting against his breast. "Thank God we are at peace again! May

this be our last as it has been our first quarrel!"

It was, and no look of doubt or anger on either side, darkened the course of their later married life.

The next day, when Captain de Chevandier called, he was told that Mrs. Durand was too busy to receive him. When he repeated his visits, which he took good care to do at a time when he knew Durand was from home, having seen him pass on his way to the back of the farm, he doubtless flattered himself with the prospect of a different answer, but the reply was the same, coupled with the additional mortification of seeing Genevieve at one of the windows, engaged in no more important occupation than that of trimming the plants and flowers in the window.

With a muttered curse he turned away, and the next day bade farewell to Alonville, never to return to it.

Matters after this went on very quietly at the Durand homestead, but though perfect peace and affection reigned within it, there was no perceptible change in the domestic economy of the establishment. Still, honest Paul was thoroughly satisfied, thoroughly happy, so that, after all, was the chief point. The slanderous gossip propagated by old Dupuis soon died out for want of something new to feed upon. Genevieve continued to enjoy with the same zest, sunshine, birds and flowers, satisfying her conscience now and then by a desperate effort at housekeeping, which, after causing her intense worry for some time, she would quietly abandon.

A token of Mrs. Chartrand's thoughtfulness soon arrived in the shape of a large parcel, accompanied by a note from that lady, saying that as she supposed Paul would soon require new shirts, she had taken the liberty of sending a dozen, cut out according to a pattern of his she had in her possession. She knew the making of them would be only an amusement for her sister-in-law.

Of course the young wife willingly undertook the task, and when Paul left for his fields in the morning, he carried with him in imagination a pleasant picture of his pretty Genevieve seated at her little table, armed with a dainty thimble and scissors, and a pile of snow white cotton and linen before her. But, alas! Genevieve's good intentions were frustrated not by want of will but of ability. She got confused, utterly bewildered, between gussets, bands and pieces; and, finally, disheartened and discouraged, she put her work hopelessly down before her. She left it and returned to it, twice, thrice, during the course of the day, but with like result. Whilst sitting with her hands lying listlessly in her lap, thinking how willingly she would

exchange the little embroidering talent she possessed for the art of reducing the chaos of white strips before her to order, Paul, hot and wearied with his toil under a burning sun, entered.

Instinctively she caught up the sewing which had made so little progress since morning, and then glanced towards her husband. He had seated himself, and was wiping the thick drops of perspiration from his flushed forehead, such a contrast in his hot weariness to her own repose as she sat quiet in that cool shady room, and yet how dispirited, how listless, how miserable she felt in the midst of her ease.

"Well, little wife, how goes the sewing?" he kindly asked.

She threw it down again, and bursting into tears, sobbed forth:

"'Tis no use keeping up a fiction. I understand nothing about it! Paul, Paul, you have a useless, worthless wife!"

Pushing away the work, he drew her kindly towards him, whispering: "Heaven is witness, Genevieve, that you render my home pleasant to myself and happy,—what can woman do more? Don't worry yourself about such trifles. Your sweetness and patience render you more dear to me than if you were the most notable cook and seamstress in the parish! Tie all that up in a bundle and this evening we will drive to widow Lapointe's and leave it with her. It will be a charity to make her earn a trifle and the drive will make you as cheerful as a linnet."

They soon started, and though gossips wondered at Paul's infatuation and singular blindness to the shortcomings and utter uselessness of his wife, she pursued her way more petted and indulged than ever.

Before another year the cup of Paul's happiness was filled to overflowing by the birth of a son.

No titled nobleman longing for an heir to bear an old and time honored name; no *millionaire*, anxious for a son to inherit his vast wealth, rejoices more over the birth of a male child, than does the humble Canadian peasant. Either it is that he, too, likes to see his obscure though honest name perpetuated; or that he knows a son's strong arm will bring him help in his agricultural labors at a time when he knows old age will render such assistance almost indispensable; such is certainly the case.

But, alas! Paul's joy, like all earth's gleams of sunshine, was short lived, and Genevieve's health, always frail and delicate, never rallied after the birth of her child. Day by day she grew weaker, and despite the affection, the watchful tenderness with which Paul surrounded her; despite her own boundless, clinging love for husband and child, the parting hour came;

and patient, resigned, she softly breathed out her life in the strong arms that had proved so secure a resting place to her, since she had first known their shelter.

Ah! Paul Durand, as you sat lonely and almost broken hearted in your room, no sound breaking its haunted silence but the monotonous ticking of the tall clock standing in the corner, and, looking back, remembered the weariness and languor with which at times she moved about; and the color that went and came with every trifling exertion, you divined the secret of the want of energy for which idle tongues had so often blamed her; and you reverently thanked your God that you had never reproached or taunted her with it: never harshly urged her to exertions and efforts which were beyond her strength.

Perhaps Durand's greatest solace was found in this thought, and in the petting of his infant son, who possessed all his mother's delicacy of feature, and, it was to be feared, much of her fragility of constitution. Now, in his isolation, Paul would willingly have accepted the companionship of his sister, but that worthy lady, wearying of her weeds, had already consented to exchange them for nuptial garments, and was to be married in a few months to a respectable notary somewhat advanced in years, but who possessed a good practice and quiet temper, points Mrs. Chartrand had taken care to fully satisfy herself on before giving an affirmative answer to his suit. It was not so much on account of household waste and mismanagement that Paul desired his sister's presence, for by this time he had become thoroughly accustomed to both, but it was for his child's sake. That tender little nursling wanted more judicious care than the fitful kindness or ignorant companionship of servants. Once convinced that there was no chance of Mrs. Chartrand's coming to live with him, he resolved to marry again.

"Ah, what a shame!" some reader may exclaim. "How could he so soon forget the fair young wife who had nestled for a time on his hearth and next his heart?"

He did not forget her; and long years after, in the solemn hour when life's last scenes were receding from his misty sight, the hope that he was again to meet her absorbed every earthly regret!

CHAPTER V.

It was for the love of Genevieve that Paul sought a mother for Genevieve's child, and that thought exclusively guided him in his second choice. Careless of youth, beauty, or rustic dower, he passed by many a bright eyed, rose lipped girl who would have smiled on his suit, and selected a

plain featured, but amiable, virtuous girl, already regarded in the parish as an old maid, knowing that she would replace to his idolized son, as far as woman could do, the young mother he had so early lost.

The day he asked Eulalie Messier to be his wife, he frankly explained to her his reasons for changing his single state, quietly adding that he esteemed and respected her, and would endeavor to make a good husband, but he never mentioned the word love. Eulalie was amply satisfied, and thankful alike to Providence and Paul; for her total want of dower as well as personal attractions seemed to have irrevocably condemned her to a state of single blessedness, which in her case signified a life of isolation and unending toil.

Paul's second wedding took place on a scorching day in July, a month capable of inflicting as much fiery inconvenience on the inhabitants of this land of "snow and ice" as if we dwelt beneath the tropics.

Many of our readers may remember the inimitable description given by Dickens, in *Little Dorrit*, of a hot day in Marseilles, in which the broiling pavements and blistering walls are enlarged upon, whilst luckless pedestrians are described as plunging into the sultry fierce glare of the sunlight, and swimming for their lives to the nearest strip of shade.

Just such a temperature was it in Alonville on the day of the important event above alluded to; no ripple stirring the smooth clear waters of our magnificent St. Lawrence as it flowed majestically past, mirroring back the pretty villages nestling coquettishly on its banks; no breath of air stirring the trees, the long grass, the weeds and wild flowers that bordered the road side and filled every dell and hollow, looking in their sultry immovability as if painted on canvas.

What a very Sahara seemed the closely shaven clover fields, the yellow stubble reflecting fiercely back the molten sunlight that poured down on it, and how hot and scorched the poor corn fields looked, each stalk bending, it seemed, not so much beneath its weight of grain, as under the merciless heat, till they seemed to claim pity almost as much as the kine and sheep that panted and gasped beneath the meagre shadow of fence and outbuilding, or the few isolated trees spared here and there, on the land. Insect life, however, held full jubilee, and flies buzzed, bees hummed, crickets, grasshoppers sang, chirped, till their united efforts made up almost in volume of sound, if not music, for the silence of the birds that mutely nestled amid the drooping foliage.

Before the neat little village church a number of vehicles were gathered, the horses of which were tied to the numerous

posts which usually dot the green sward in front of the country places of worship. Soon the owners of said vehicles came out of the sacred edifice; and with brisk interchange of jokes and a fund of gaiety that rendered them indifferent to, if not unconscious of, the scorching atmosphere, the cavalcade proceeded to the bridegroom's house, festivities of any kind in the bride's poverty stricken home being of course out of the question.

Paul would have preferred by far having his second marriage on the same quiet, simple scale as the first, but his friends protested so energetically, indeed indignantly against such an unsocial proceeding, that he was obliged to sacrifice his own wishes and conform to theirs and to custom.

We need not say that on the morning in question the Durand homestead, from attic to cellar, was in a state of shining as well as hospitable preparation. Huge nosegays, some placed in cracked jugs or tumblers, graced every available spot, whilst a long table draped in snow-white country linen was plentifully set out with delf and glasses.

When the lively party entered the house; the fairer portion proceeded to divest themselves of their large straw hats and to shake out their calico skirts,* taking turns for surveying their smiling faces at the one looking glass adorning the bed-room wall, and whose shining surface rewarded each beholder with a distorted semblance of self, enough, not only to subdue effectually any lurking vanity the fair gazer might have possessed, but in some cases to cause them to recoil in horrified amazement.

Jugs of cider and ale, with raspberry syrup, a summer beverage most Canadian housekeepers can make to perfection, were handed freely round, and shortly after, amid remarks on the heat and the crops, they gathered round the table; and the village *cure*, who occupied the post of honor, having said grace, they attacked the dainty fare before them. The supply was indeed most bountiful, consisting of poultry, sausages, cold roast pork, smoking pancakes, fruit tarts, honey and preserves, with large heaped up plates of brown crisp crullers, that never failing cake, a plate of which is always to be found on Canadian tables. Bottles of rum and sherry, the latter chiefly intended for the "women-kind," were placed at reasonable distances around the board.

Seated at the upper end were bride and bridegroom. Paul looked calm and quite at his ease, but nothing could equal the magnificent self-possession of the bride, who

* Our readers will please remember that this was in our hero's infancy. Fashion, in our country parts, has made rapid progress since then.

sat in her new place as composedly as if she had occupied it for the last ten years. Her black hair, which, by the way, was really glossy and abundant, was brushed back as simply as possible from her temples; and her *toilette*, though irreproachably neat, had evidently been chosen with a view to utility, and as strong a contempt for finery as distinguished that of her worthy husband. The expression of her countenance was frank and honest, as well as good humored. With unruffled tranquillity she listened to jokes and innuendoes, to the labored and intentional repetition of her new name without blush or token of embarrassment, till at length the most industrious jester, the "wit" of the party, having emptied every arrow in his quiver without once putting her out of countenance, declared to a neighbor that he would really find more pleasure in quizzing his grandmother. His discomfiture, however, in no manner interfered with the general hilarity, and merriment; singing and talking went on, whilst keener appetites had perhaps never been displayed even in the bracing hunger inspiring days of winter. At length the party rose from table, and during the confusion of changing seats, the men filling pipes, which they did with tobacco taken from small pouches carried on their persons, Durand made a sign to his new made wife, and she, comprehending him, instantly rose and quietly followed him out into a narrow passage terminating in a steep staircase leading to the upper part of the house. The ceiling of this flat was very low, but the same air of comfort reigned here as below, and in a little crib, spread with coarse but beautifully white linen, slept a pretty child of two years old.

Laying his broad sun-burned hand lightly as a rose leaf on the sleeping child's forehead, Paul Durand said, with a slight tremor in his voice:

"My motherless child, Eulalie. You will be a mother to him, will you not?"

The woman looked in silence at the little sleeper. The face was one of great loveliness, and even in that early stage of life, the perfect regularity of the features gave sure promise of later beauty. Perhaps, awakened by the father's light touch, the child opened its large hazel eyes, that acquired a still darker hue from the long heavy lashes that shadowed them, and looked up quietly, wondering at the unknown female face bending over it.

Surprised, perhaps pained by her silence, Durand resumed:

"You have not answered me, Eulalie! Will you not be a mother to my poor boy?"

A faint flush stole over the bride's cheek, the first that had visited it that evening, though it was her wedding day. Kneeling

beside the cradle, she tenderly kissed the child, whispering :

"Yes. May God give me grace to do my duty towards it well!"

Then for a moment her lips moved either in silent prayer or promise, and when she rose to her feet there was a look in her face that told Paul she was resolved to keep her promise—a look which rendered her more beautiful in his eyes than if roses and dimples, instead of lines of care and hardship, marked her countenance.

Quietly the newly wedded couple went back to their guests, the father carrying his boy, who, of course, was ready attired in all his finery for the occasion; and Mrs. Durand bore the new storm of jests and compliments that saluted her return with her usual serenity. After little Armand had been duly admired and caressed (some worthy dames smothering a sigh as they whispered among themselves the ominous word "step-mother,") he was handed back to the girl who had had charge of him since his mother's death, and who stood at the door, scowling in turn at each individual who touched her nursing, for Lisette's temper on that joyous day was sadly soured, not so much by the general festivities as by the special circumstance that had given rise to it.

The day wore on. Fiercer and fiercer blazed the sun; the great river, as one of the guests reproachfully said, would not spare them even a whiff of air to blow the smoke curl from their pipes; but, despite that, eating, drinking, smoking, went on, varied by singing and dancing, which in the then state of the temperature was a species of self immolation almost incredible.

Everybody was delighted, and the general merriment never flagged. Though the doctor of the village, young and unmarried, was among the guests, together with his brother, an equally untrammelled notary from Montreal, both amusing and agreeable, more than one feminine breast heaved a sigh, inwardly acknowledging that the new bride, despite her plainness of feature and the title of "old maid," with which they generally qualified her behind her back, had indeed secured the first marital prize in Alonville.

The wedding festivities lasted for eight days, being celebrated alternately at the houses of the different relatives of the newly wedded pair; and then, when all parties were thoroughly tired out with pleasure, things returned to their usual course, and perfect quiet settled down in the household of Paul Durand.

There was not much danger of Paul's second wife making him forget the first, for Eulalie was singularly taciturn and matter of fact, and could spend hours in company with her husband without uttering a word

or encouraging him to do so. But she was a rare housekeeper, and dairy, poultry yard and garden, flourished under her auspices even as they had done under those of Paul's worthy mother.

Oh! restless human heart. How often in the midst of the comfort, cleanliness and thrift that now surrounded him, Paul looked back with a longing, aching heart, to the period of misrule which had been rendered happiness to him by the love and companionship of the idolized young wife he had so early lost.

He knew though and acknowledged the sterling worth and good qualities of the second Mrs. Durand, whilst she, never obtaining a look into the closed chambers of his heart, averred that he was one of the best and most devoted of husbands. She took the little Armand to her heart at once, and though naturally undemonstrative, caressed and petted him with all a good woman's devotion.

The time came when she had another child to fondle, but when she had rendered Durand the father of a strong robust boy, she made no distinction between the children, and little Paul did not rob his brother Armand of a single particle of her affection and watchful care.

Of course this new tie between husband and wife was a powerful one, and he began to feel a deeper interest in her, a more anxious desire for her health and happiness than he had yet done, when again inexorable Death stepped in and deprived him of his wife, just as he was beginning to feel sincerely attached to her. A malignant fever, contracted in the chill rainy season of autumn, sufficed to prostrate that active strong frame, full of energy and health; and the second wife was laid beside the first, just two short years after she had taken her place.

As Paul sat in his mourning clothes the day of the funeral, and remembered that he was now burdened with two helpless children instead of one, whilst he was more lonely than ever, he inwardly determined that he would not venture on matrimony again, but come what would, he would endeavor to struggle through the battle of life companionless. Destiny, however, had some comfort in store for him. After some months, his sister's husband, Henri Ratelle, paid the debt of nature, dutifully and kindly tended by his wife to the last. The new made widow briefly wrote to her brother: "Paul, do you want me?" to which he briefly rejoined: "Yes, without delay," and she came.

"You see, brother, it was written that we should live together. We both married a couple of times, almost, it seemed, to evade it, but it was to be. I am satisfied if you are!" Paul was amply so, and gave all

just authority to this new regent of his household, nor was his confidence misplaced. She proved herself well worthy of it, and in no respect more so than in her judicious care of her brother's two young sons. She had never been blessed with children, and her kindly nature yearned over the two thus confided to her charge, as if they had been indeed her very own.

The two boys were as different in disposition as they were in physical characteristics, and whilst Armand, with his mother's fragile beauty, was sensitive, reticent and quiet, Paul possessed the manly vigor of his father, but was besides turbulent and thoughtless. Both Durand and his sister treated the children with perfect equality; and if at times Paul, in watching the strong resemblance his eldest son bore to his fair young mother, felt his heart yearn towards him as it had once done towards his idolized first wife, he never evinced the feeling by any outward token of preference.

CHAPTER VI.

Paul Durand, always industrious and prosperous, was now a rich man. Farms and lands he owned in more than one locality, and a college education for his sons seemed to him a matter of course. He was no miser, and how else could he spend the very considerable sums that had accumulated in his strong box, despite his frequent purchases of land, unless on them. To college then the two lads went, and their outfits, for those days of moderate ideas, were considered remarkably fine ones, though they would probably have excited the scorn of youths of the present generation.

Armand was tall for his age, and slight; Paul was remarkably developed in height and robustness for his. Both boys had been for some years under the charge of an efficient village schoolmaster, who had at least fairly started them on the thorny road of learning. It was in the month of September, the very day of the re-opening of the classes after the summer's vacation, that they entered beneath the low-browed portal of the old Montreal College.*

Durand accompanied them, and after a short conversation with the Director of the Institution, father and sons were standing alone in the square, flag-paved entrance hall. Paul's eyes were glancing restlessly around him, from the low, time-darkened ceiling to the small-paned, curtainless windows, but Armand's look was wistfully fixed on his father who was saying a few

* Since leased by the gentlemen of the Ministry to the Imperial Government as a barracks.

words of farewell counsel and encouragement. At length the final pressure of hands was given, and as Durand left the hall, the porter, a rather unsociable, not to say ill-natured looking individual, entered.

Paul returned his inquisitive scowl by a glare of defiance, and whispered to his brother: "I hate that fellow like poison already!"

There were no lessons as the classes were not yet formed, so a long day was afforded the new comers to become acquainted with their future abode and fellow pupils. Paul made good use of his time, and before he went to rest that night he had engaged and defeated three different boys in single combat, sworn eternal friendship to another, invited a fifth to spend the next vacation with him in his father's house, in Alonville, besides selling two knives and a pocket book at exorbitant prices to some of his comrades, whose purses having been recently replenished by kind friends, were able to indulge in the luxury of paying a high price for things they did not want.

Armand had made no advance as yet towards intimacy with any of his companions, and some of those quick-witted young gentlemen had invested him before twenty-four hours with the title of *Miss Armand*. Whether this feminine appellation, of course intended as a highly contemptuous one, had been suggested by his retiring, quiet manner, his shyness, or his delicate beauty of feature and complexion, it is impossible to say, but it was soon almost universally adopted, and inflicted an extraordinary amount of mortification on its object.

The two brothers were sitting together, one holiday, some weeks later, in a room overlooking the play ground, surrounded by its noble range of towering poplars, when the voices of two loiterers who had paused awhile underneath the window, unconscious of their near proximity, arrested their attention.

"Yes, it is a good knife, but I paid a good price for it! I bought it from one of the Durand boys."

"From the large boned noisy fellow, I'll warrant!" was the reply. "There seems nothing of a trading spirit in the younger one."

"I think the younger one a regular milk-sop, a muff, a fellow to run from a mouse!"

"Come, we neither of us know anything about his courage—we haven't seen it tried yet; but, he has a thorough bred look about him which that great hulking brother of his has not got. Just look at the small hands and feet—straight, regular features, and slight graceful shape!"

As the words were spoken a frown gathered on Paul's forehead, but he made no remark, merely bending more forward to obtain a view of the speakers, in which

action he was involuntarily imitated by Armand.

There they stood talking together, one a tall elegant stripling of seventeen, named Victor de Montenay, the other, Rodolphe Belfond, the owner of the knife, a compact, square built, swarthy looking boy, somewhat younger.

"Don't talk such trash, de Montenay!" said Belfond, angrily. "What business has a fellow with a face as pretty and hands as small as a girl's?"

"As well ask what business has the racer to possess slight, graceful limbs and elegant symmetry of form, instead of rejoicing in the lumpish shape and movements of the cart horse?"

"I don't see what you are driving at!" was Belfond's retort. "I suppose in your eyes a fellow can't be of a decent size and build without being compared to a cart horse because you happen to be a little in the slim and dainty line yourself!"

"Well, my dear Rodolphe, I am both proud and thankful that I do possess the elegant slimness on which you seem to set such little store. If a fortune were placed in one scale and my own personal good points in another, I would unhesitatingly choose the latter; for you know money might come to one accidentally some day or another, but money could never change huge red fists and broad square feet into hands and feet like—why should I mince it? my own, for instance!"

"Hang it, de Montenay! If you are not a fool you are a fop, which is just as bad! Much good the aristocratic smallness of your extremities, as the doctors call them, would do you in boxing, boating, or anything useful!"

"It would serve at least, good Rodolphe, to distinguish the captain from the crew, the officer from the private!"

"I tell you what it is, Victor de Montenay, I'd knock you over in a minute, did I not know that my family is as good and as old as your own, and that consequently, in sneering at me, you are simply making a donkey of yourself."

"My friend, you would indeed be thick headed as well as big handed if you thought there was anything personal in my remarks. Come and have a game of foot ball to put you in good humor with yourself and your friends!"

"They've hit us both pretty hard!" muttered Paul between his teeth. "You a milk-sop, I a big hulking clod pole! I hope I may be able to pay off one of them yet."

In the peculiar emphasis the speaker laid on the word "one," he evidently thought only of redressing his own particular wrongs; but his companion, without any comment on this unbrotherly reticence, quietly said:

"What else could we expect? Listeners seldom hear good of themselves!"

"You are a scrupulous fool!" was the sharp reply. "I think there is as much nonsense in you as in that conceited idiot who seems to set such store on his good looks. I only wish I could get a chance of spoiling them for him a little!"

The noisy entrance of half a dozen comrades put a stop to further discussion, and Armand, seeing his brother's sullen mood still continued, amused himself by examining the pile of new study books before him.

The regular school routine now commenced, and as far as the labor of learning was concerned, Armand had nothing to complain of, for he mastered his tasks with an ease and correctness which won him high eulogiums from his teachers. Unfortunately, however, this very success excited the envy of some of his companions, whilst his shy, retiring nature, made him no friends. Day by day his unpopularity increased, and the words *Miss Armand*, milk-sop, were freely applied to him without any provocation on his part. All this was intolerable to the boy's sensitive nature, and more than once he determined he would write to his father and beg—pray him to remove him from college.

One afternoon that he was standing quietly in the play ground, looking on at the sports of the others, a band of his tormentors gathered around him, and with the malicious ingenuity peculiar to many boys, began their persecutions. One mockingly requested "*Miss Armand* to join in their games." Another deprecated such a thing lest she should spoil the beauty of her soft white hands, which were only fit to "hold on to mamma's apron string."

This ancient witticism was received with shouts of applauding laughter, which grew more hilarious, when a third young gentleman expressed his wonder that *Miss Durand* should go out without a sun bonnet, as her delicate complexion might get tanned or freckled.

Armand's breath came quick and panting. His whole being was writhing beneath the pitiless mockery of his tormentors, who, to do them justice, scarcely realized the amount of suffering their thoughtless jesting inflicted on that highly wrought sensitive organization, so shrinkingly afraid of ridicule. His cheek became pale as death, and half imploringly, half despairingly he glanced round the circle. Alas! no relenting, no compunction betrayed itself in any of the boyish countenances breathing mirth and mischief. Feeling keenly the cruelty, the injustice of a persecution so unmerited on his part, the boy burst into tears. At sight of this unexpected display of emotion, some became silent, whilst others only seemed to redouble their persecutions.

"Ah! she's going to faint! Quick, a smelling bottle!" said one. "A pocket-handkerchief to wipe her tears," suggested another.

At this juncture the elegant de Montenay and his friend and constant companion, Rodolphe Belfond, strolled up and joined the group.

"Why, halloo! what is the matter with Miss Armand?" inquired the latter.

Armand looked suddenly up like a stag at bay, and his glance fell on the speaker who loomed up large in front of him. Supposing in the perturbation of the moment that Rodolphe had been among his persecutors from the first, and giving way to the wild craving for revenge that had been swelling within his heart for the last few moments, Armand sprang on his foe, with the strength and rage of a tiger, bringing him to the earth with him. He rolled over and under his antagonist, and unmindful of the sledge-hammer blows the latter showered upon him, he never relaxed the fierce grasp he had taken of his throat. A mist seemed before his sight, a dulness in his hearing, and he was totally unconscious, in that delirium of passion, of all other things save thirst of revenge, till he was dragged by main force off his antagonist.

"Why, Durand, you are a perfect devil! you've nearly strangled him!" said one of the group, as he assisted Belfond to rise, whose blood stained lips and face, livid from partial suffocation, presented a somewhat alarming spectacle.

Somewhat confusedly regretting his desperate fury, Armand mechanically raised his hand to his face and took it down stained with blood. Without a word he walked over to a tub of water that stood under the rain spout and commenced washing from his countenance the traces of the fray.

"Well, friends, you'll scarcely call him Miss Armand, any more, after this, I think!" questioned de Montenay, addressing the circle of boys, who still stood quiet, almost stupefied by the lightning-like rapidity and fury with which the slight, delicate boy, they had been so ruthlessly tormenting, had fallen upon one far exceeding him in size and strength.

There was no answer to this, and addressing himself to Belfond, he said:

"The best thing you can do is to follow the example of your late adversary, who has indeed proved himself a foeman worth your steel, and give yourself a good washing. It will refresh you as well as improve your appearance."

Belfond, with quiet good sense, staggered off to follow this advice, though not in the direction Armand had taken. This latter was still at his ablutions; when, seeing a shadow fall across the sunlight, he looked up and perceived de Montenay beside him.

"Armand, do you know that you are a hero?" he said.

"A brute, you mean!"

"By no means! If it had been that overgrown brother of yours, I might have found something brutish in the bull dog tenacity with which you held on, strangling and choking your foe, but in one of your slight build and strength, it was courage—pluck, in the highest degree. Give me your hand!"

Now, Armand had entertained from the first a feeling of profound boyish admiration for the handsome young aristocrat before him, who, always dressed with scrupulous care, elegant, though often insolent in his manners, witty and sarcastic in his remarks, belonged to a class with which the country bred lad had never yet come into contact. Indeed he had looked up to him as something infinitely beyond the reach of his friendship or intimacy under any circumstances, and to have him thus standing beside him with words of praise on his lips and proffering the hand of friendship, brought a flush of exultant delight to his brow and made his heart beat fast with pleasure.

Shyly, however, without betraying what he felt, he extended his hand, saying at the same time: "But I thought Rodolphe Belfond was a friend of yours!"

"So he is," and de Montenay seated himself on the edge of the tub, whilst Armand dried his face and hands in his handkerchief. "So he is. Indeed, we are distantly related, but that is no reason I should fight his battles. Notwithstanding I spend half the vacations at his place and he the other half at mine, that did not prevent my feeling rather satisfied to see him get the worst of the encounter to-day with a youngster like yourself. He boasts so much of his bone and muscle, his strength and sinew, that a lesson such as you gave him will probably prove a wholesome one."

Had Armand been older and more experienced in life's ways, a suspicion as to the value of such a friendship as Victor seemed to extend to his friends might have flashed across him, but dazzled by pardonable vanity, he listened to his companion as to an oracle, without doubt or misgiving.

"You see—what's your name, Armand, a good one, in keeping with your looks, if you had the strength and size, the points of a prize fighter, I would have taken no interest in seeing you come out in such style as you did to-day, but I must say I was pleased to see you, with that girlish face and figure of yours, thrash that big massive friend of mine who has knocked myself over more than once. Don't flush up with such a look of annoyance when I mention your pretty face and figure. You will yet be proud enough of them both when you know a little of life. Yes, as proud as I am of

mine!" and he leaned smilingly over his own reflection, mirrored back in the humble waters of the tub." What do the thick headed louts here, my *fidus achates* amongst the rest, know what weight beauty, either in man or woman, carries with it in the world while it lasts."

Armand, finding his philosophic young friend becoming rather deep for him, hastily replied that he would rather be devoid of such doubtful beauty as procured for him the mockery and persecution of his companions.

"The day will come when you will think otherwise, Master Armand, and when the *prestige* they will gain you will rank far higher in your estimation than even the wondering respect your late exhibition of fearless pluck has won you from your school mates."

The precocious young speaker bent still farther over his water mirror as he spoke, and looked more thoughtfully down on the handsome classic face it mirrored back. Leagues behind his companion, in point of worldly knowledge, was Armand Durand, for the former had read novels, and gleaned from them information that he would have been much better without. Suddenly rousing himself from his pre-occupation he asked:

"What the mischief made you single out so suddenly my big shouldered friend when some of those other cubs had been tormenting you long before? Why, how astonished you look!"

Armand's regret, when he learned how comparatively unprovoked had been the fierce assault he had committed on Belfond, was extreme, and his conviction that the part he had played was anything but that of a hero, doubled. That regret, however, was speedily over-looked, if not forgotten, in the mingled gratification and pride found in the thought that the object of his secret boyish reverence had deigned to extend to him the hand of friendship.

Later in the day he found himself unexpectedly in close contact with his late adversary, as the boys were preparing to fall into their ranks, previous to proceeding to the refectory.

"I say, Durand," whispered the other, fiercely, as he pointed to his darkened and swollen eye, "I suppose you are confoundedly proud of your smartness, but I'll have my turn next. Perhaps you would like another bout in the play-ground to-morrow, during recreation?"

"Frankly—no!" was the honest rejoinder.

"And why not pray?"

"Because you are a great deal stouter and stronger than I am, and I would certainly get the worst of it."

"But, say, Armand, you bowled him

over like a nine pin this morning, and perhaps, you might do it again," said one young gentleman, longing for the excitement of a stand up fight.

Armand shook his head. "I may have done it once, but I wouldn't be able to do it again! Besides, Belfond, I'm sorry for flying at you in the way I did this morning, without sufficient provocation. It was some of the fellows who had been worrying me all along that I wanted to attack."

"Durand, you are as honest as you are plucky. Shake hands!" and a second time that day was the hand of friendship extended to Armand.

From that time an intimacy, highly gratifying to Durand and useful to the elegant Victor, sprang up between them. Armand, in the simple, honest admiration he experienced for the aristocratic heir of the de Montenays, and the gratitude he felt for having been elevated to the coveted post of friend, thought no sacrifice too great to offer on the altar of friendship, and whether it was writing a thesis, copying Latin translations for him, at the expense of his own play hours, or pressing on his gracious acceptance the chief portion of his share of the well filled basket he and his brother frequently received from home, he was equally happy.

De Montenay not only accepted this homage but displayed a marked preference for the society of him who tendered it, finding the incense unconsciously offered his vanity, very gratifying, whilst at the same time he discovered a certain charm in the refinement of word and feeling his boy friend evidently possessed, a refinement arising in great part from the childish innocence and delicacy of his character, an innocence so strongly marked that, happily for them both, de Montenay had never yet cared about troubling it.

The intimacy between Victor and Rodolphe Belfond had latterly almost ceased, but as it was the result as much of frequent intercourse between their two families, as of mutual preference, neither party suffered from its cessation. And so, with few variations beyond those presented by the duties and amusements of school life, the days passed over, pleasantly enough, till the halcyon time, so earnestly longed for by teacher and pupil, the summer vacation, was at hand.

With what rapture did both boys leap from the jolting vehicle that conveyed them, one bright July morning, to their home!

With what reckless joy did they fling out boxes, bags and parcels, utterly regardless of accident or injury to the chattels in question; and with what exuberant affection did they embrace Aunt Françoise, and shake hands, again and again, with their

father, who, stalwart, erect as ever, stood watching them with a feeling of quiet pride he endeavored, somewhat ineffectually, to conceal.

And then what a flood of questions they poured forth regarding barn-yard favorites, special fruit trees, or garden beds, whose great attraction lay in being their own, interspersed with torrents of disconnected anecdotes about school mates, school life and masters.

For long months past the walls of the farm house had not heard such voluble chatter, such mirthful peals of laughter, such snatches of song as they daily re-echoed to now.

On the return home, a course of feasting was of course inaugurated, and fruit and cream, fresh eggs and butter, dainty cakes and preserves, presented a charming contrast to the simpler fare of college life. Never were boys more petted and feasted; and never were parents happier in their prerogative of thus indulging them than were Paul Durand and his sister. One sultry afternoon that the lads were lounging in the summer house, arranging rods and tackle for a proposed fishing excursion, Mrs. Ratelle mending some of the countless torn garments which their wardrobes furnished, Durand entered, and to the question smilingly propounded to him of "What news?" answered:

"I have just seen Mr. de Courval. He was about starting for Montreal, but he intends returning soon and bringing the family with him."

The family in question consisted not of wife and children, for Mr. de Courval had never married, but of a widowed sister and her daughter, whom he had brought from Quebec, some years previous, to preside over his bachelor home, when the death of his brother-in-law, Jules de Beauvoir, had left them in embarrassed circumstances.

"Is Mr. de Courval well?" asked Aunt Ratelle.

"Yes, and he enquired most kindly about our boys. He says they intend having gay doings up at the Manor-house soon, and he must see something of them during their vacation."

Neither Paul nor Armand seemed much elated by this intelligence. Life offered already too many familiar sources of pleasure to leave them any wish for unknown fields of enjoyment, and the member of the group most delighted with the information was certainly Mrs. Ratelle, whose secret wish was to see her nephews mingle freely in a more aristocratic sphere than that in which her own lot had been cast.

Some time after, a very friendly invitation came from the Manor-house for the brothers, mentioning they would have the pleasure of meeting some of their school mates

among the guests. Paul, if he gave the matter a thought at all, was rather pleased than otherwise, but Armand shrank from the idea of going amongst strangers; and it required some very sharp words from Aunt Ratelle to induce him to accompany his brother.

Owing to the unwillingness Armand brought to his toilet, and the laggard pace at which he walked up to the house, it was somewhat past the appointed hour when they arrived; and on being shown into the drawing-room, they were informed by the polite domestic that Mr. de Courval and his young guests were out in the grounds, but would soon be in.

Grateful for a few moments respite, Armand seated himself in a corner, whilst Paul strolled leisurely round the room, examining its contents. What a contrast the apartment presented, in its lace and damask curtains, mirrors, paintings and countless trinkets, the very names and uses of which were riddles to them, to the plain, though clean, "best room" of their own home, with its bare floor, covered only by a few strips of rag carpet (produce of Aunt Ratelle's industry), white dimity curtains, simple straw bottomed chairs and wooden settle; its only ornaments being some vividly colored pictures of saints, together with a few plaster statuettes of equally amazing untruthfulness to nature. The longer Armand looked, the more deeply he felt how great must be the distance between himself and those who dwelt among the scenes of elegance he now surveyed, and the greater became his dread of encountering them.

So suddenly as to make him start, a door at the far end of the room unclosed, and a slight, elegantly dressed girl of fourteen or fifteen entered. She evinced no surprise on seeing the new comers, but after leisurely surveying them, inquired if they wanted Mr. de Courval.

Armand made no reply, but Paul bluntly rejoined: "I suppose so, as he invited us here! My name is Paul Durand, and that is my brother Armand."

A quick earnest look shot from the large hazel eyes, beneath which Armand colored scarlet, and again she spoke, but this time, more courteously: "My uncle will be here in a few moments and will of course be glad to see you."

As she left the room, Paul grumbled. "Nice enough, but I hate girls! They are always so nonsensical and stuck up!"

Armand maintained there was nothing unpleasant about this specimen at least, of the sex thus sweepingly condemned. "Ah! here they are!" he hastily added, as the sound of voices and laughter floated through the open window.

In they came, Mr. de Courval in front,

and kindly shaking hands with the newcomers, he said: "You will meet some of your friends here. There are two or three from the same college as yourselves."

Armand cast a quick, nervous glance on the group of young people surrounding his host, finding to his great discomfiture that all eyes were bent on himself and brother; but a sentiment of relief descended on his troubled spirits when he perceived Victor de Montenay among them. Shyly though quickly advancing towards him, he extended his hand to the admired, loved friend of his college life, but the latter affecting not to see the action, with a slight nod and careless "How are you, Durand?" turned away.

To describe what Armand felt at that moment would be impossible. Shame, mortification and wounded feeling were all torturing him at once; his misery deepened by the fixed, inquisitive gaze of the many strange eyes bent on him, when, suddenly a pleasant, familiar voice, heartily exclaimed: "How are you, Armand? So glad to see you!" and the hand that had been disdained by de Montenay was energetically shaken by Rodolphe Belfond. The latter's frank manliness of character thus happily softened a little the bitterness of the first life lesson given to Armand Durand. A moment after de Montenay had disdainfully turned from his college friend, he approached the same young lady who had accosted the two brothers a few minutes previous, and whom they now knew for the first time was Gertrude de Beauvoir, Mr. de Courval's niece. He bent down whispering friendly or flattering words in her ear, which she, being as wayward and uncertain in temper as she was fascinating in appearance, answered by petulantly turning from him and flinging a sprig of heliotrope, which he had given her a few minutes previously, out of the window.

The evening, with music, round games, strolls on the lawn, passed pleasantly to all the guests except perhaps our hero. Even Paul, having met with a couple of kindred spirits who "hated reading, girls, music, and all that sort of trash, and cared for nothing but foot ball, boating and fishing," amused himself tolerably well. Armand alone, too shy and painfully ill at ease to make advances, and still smarting from the sharp wound so ruthlessly inflicted by de Montenay on every feeling of his better nature, counted each hour, wearily longing for the end.

Mr. de Courval, though a kind, was not a very attentive host, and his sister, Madame de Beauvoir, who, imposing in silks and laces, reclined languidly on the sofa during the greater part of the evening, still more indifferent than himself. Isolated and unnoticed, Armand stole from the drawing

room, where he seemed entirely out of place, and was standing on the verandah, revolving in the quiet moonlight, thoughts more painful than pleasant, to judge by the expression of his face, when a light, quick footstep approached, and hastily turning, he saw Gertrude de Beauvoir at his side.

"Why do you not come in and take some supper?" she asked. "All the ices and strawberries will be finished, for you young college gentlemen have good appetites."

"Thank you, I am not hungry!"

"Perhaps you are sulky then. Mamma says boys are always either the one or the other."

"But I am neither, Miss de Beauvoir!"

"Well, all evening you have been so dull and lonely! Is it because Victor de Montenay would not shake hands with you?"

Armand's brow flushed at the remembrance of that supreme mortification, and at the thought that she had witnessed it, and he answered: "Yes, I was much pained by it, especially as de Montenay and myself were very good friends at College."

"In your place I would never look at or speak to him again!" was the impetuous young lady's comment. "It was very paltry of cousin Victor to act in such a manner!"

Greatly comforted by this unexpected sympathy, the shy reserve of Armand's demeanor began insensibly to soften, and he soon found himself relating, to a willing and engrossed listener, details of his school trials and troubles, even to the memorable school-boy skirmish which had been the origin of the friendship between himself and de Montenay. Whilst lightly, apologetically touching on the paroxysm of rage to which he had yielded on that occasion, Gertrude interrupted him by clapping her hands and energetically exclaiming:

"Good! Good! You should have served all the wretches in the same way! 'Tis fortunate I'm not a boy, for as I cannot bear a rude word or look, patiently, I would have been eternally engaged in quarrels with my schoolmates. I never begin, but, at the same time, I never put up with any impertinence or injustice!"

At this moment, de Montenay stepped out of the French window opening on the verandah, and saying: "Come, Miss Truant, mamma has sent me to bring you to her," threw his arm carelessly round her waist, and endeavored to draw her towards the house.

The spirited young lady, highly resenting this liberty, suddenly turned on him, and administering a sounding slap on his ear, exclaimed:

"How dare you do that, Victor de Montenay? Do I ever permit you to take such liberties?"

If de Montenay had wished to astonish Armand, by displaying a greater degree of

familiarity with the fair young lady of the Manor-house than was in reality accorded him, he was certainly well punished.

Turning pale with anger, he muttered: "It seems to me a cousin has a right to so small a privilege!"

"I do not contest the small value of the privilege, sir," answered the pretty termagant, tapping her little foot on the ground. "What I find fault with is your rudeness, which your quality of cousin in no manner excuses. And, indeed, our cousinship, fourth or fifth degree, is so very distant as to be almost doubtful. 'Tis a distinction I do not at all covet!"

"Well, I will leave you, Miss de Beauvoir," he retorted, with ironical politeness. "Perhaps you may wish for an opportunity to give your new acquaintance, Mr. Durand, the privilege you see fit to deny me!" and with a sneer on his handsome face, he turned away.

Since the beginning of her interview with Armand, no tinge of color had once deepened on Gertrude's cheek, whilst his had been in a chronic state of fluctuation, but it was her turn at last, and now, a vivid flush suddenly overspread her cheek and brow, whilst embarrassment kept her silent for a moment.

Suddenly turning sharply on him, she said: "Armand Durand, if I thought you were such an idiot as to believe that de Montenay's impertinence, I would treat you just as I have done him; but, whatever other faults you may possess, you certainly have not his matchless conceit!"

Armand was too much confused to answer, but there was nothing painful in his present embarrassment, and as he stood there, under the soft summer sky, the rich odors of the flowers stealing up around them, listening but scarcely daring to look at the bright, though wayward young creature at his side, the scene impressed itself pleasantly on his memory, to be recalled with strange yearning in future years when they both should be far apart, through force of circumstances more than actual distance.

"Come, now," she quickly said; "I will introduce you to mamma. You must not leave without that, for it would be impolite to do so. 'Tis no use hesitating!" she authoritatively added, as Armand, muttering some confused apology, drew back. "Come this minute!" and she lightly led the way, her companion unwillingly following in her wake. Mrs. de Beauvoir, reclining on the sofa with cushions on her right and cushions on her left, was talking in an indolent, caressing sort of way with de Montenay, who half knelt in one of the graceful positions that seemed natural to him, on a low stool beside her. Loftily disregarding of his presence, Gertrude tranquilly said:

"Mamma, I wish to introduce to you Armand Durand."

Mrs. de Beauvoir favored the luckless candidate for the honor of her acquaintance, with a steady stare, a cold bow, and then immediately returned to her engrossing conversation with de Montenay. Armand hastily retreated from her ungenial presence, and then Mrs. de Beauvoir calmly said:

"Gertrude, my child, Victor has been asking me to make his peace with you. He thinks you are rather severe with him, and I must add, I think so, too! Too severe with him, an old friend; and too familiar with new acquaintances, who, to make things worse, are obscure nobodies."

Gertrude silently looked from her mother to de Montenay. The eyes of the latter were cast down as if he felt pained by the censure thus pronounced on herself, but the girl detected a faint gleam of exultation on his features, and she coldly retorted:

"As far as regards obscure nobodies, mamma, they are uncle's guests, and as such, have a right to be treated with courtesy, especially when they know how to behave themselves, which some of our highly favored acquaintances do not seem to do!"

Mrs. de Beauvoir raised her eyes in gentle deprecation. "My dear Gertrude, how often must I implore of you to moderate your natural vehemence of character! 'Tis in such bad taste—so unfeminine—positively vulgar. What must, what can Victor think of you?"

"I care very little about his opinion," was the scornful rejoinder. "He can scarcely think less of me than I do of him; and, I will add, just by way of conclusion, that if ever he provokes me again as he did to-night, I will give him two slaps instead of one!" With this Parthian shot, Miss Gertrude abruptly turned away, and bent her steps to the farthest end of the apartment.

Mrs. de Beauvoir shrugged her shoulders. "You will require patience, my dear de Montenay, if your intentions remain unchanged. But time, unceasing watchfulness on my part, not to speak of the all-powerful influence of a mother's example, will in all likelihood tone down her present peculiarities. She is at least truthful and frank."

"Yes, painfully so. Madame; but, *n'importe!* Handsome, clever, graceful, she is a prize worth waiting for, and I will wait!"

"The resolution of a boy of eighteen, I fear, de Montenay!" and the lady lightly tapped his shoulder with her fan.

"We shall see, Madame de Beauvoir. You know I am very determined, indeed, obstinate in character, and will not easily abandon what I once set my heart on. As

to the petulance with which she treats me, it does not annoy me much, for I would scorn a prize too easily won. In three years Gertrude will be eighteen and I will be of age."

"Yes and master of an independent fortune!" thought the wily Mrs. de Beauvoir. "An excellent *parti* in every respect, for my wilful child!"

CHAPTER VII.

The vacation was over, and the boys, full of intoxicating recollections of holiday pleasures and liberty, had to settle down as best they could to the monotonous routine of college life. Armand, who had begun to love learning for its own sake, and to find a new and marked pleasure in the prosecution of studies which he had at first looked on with dislike and apprehension, was very contentedly sorting his books and writing materials, preparatory to placing them in his desk. Paul, seated beside him, was occupied in the same duty, but performing it in a very different spirit, snatching the books violently from the box, then hurling them down ruthlessly on the floor, apostrophizing each as a personal and much hated foe.

"Ah! s... é Latin grammar!" he said, frantically clutching at a primly bound volume. "How many *pensums*, how many headaches and hours of torture are you going to earn for me this year?"

Then the offending book was flung some yards off, overturning in its flight a comrade's ink bottle, which accident resulted in a smart interchange of sentiments anything but complimentary or courteous. A moment after de Montenay sauntered up.

"Oh! how are you, Armand? Awful, is't it, to be back again in these dismal dingy quarters? But you don't look half as miserable as some of us!"

Armand started and colored, as his late boy hero accosted him, but the scene at Mr. de Courval's rose up before him with all its mortifying recollections, and he quietly replied that he was quite satisfied to resume his books again.

"Pray, don't be coming the good boy over us!" laughed de Montenay, misinterpreting Armand's reserve, and never dreaming that his influence over him was irrevocably at an end. "Come instead, like a good fellow, and see if you can beg or borrow from any one, a key to fit my trunk. I've lost mine and feel too wretched to look for it!"

"I'm sorry to refuse you, de Montenay, but I cannot leave my own books lying about. I must put them away before the bell rings."

Victor silently stared at the speaker.

What, his fag, his follower, his worshipper, had thrown off his allegiance, and now rejected his overtures. It was both humiliating and mortifying.

"Why, what the deuce is the matter with you?" he angrily asked. "You are standing mightily on your dignity to-day!"

"Just as you stood on your's the last night we saw you at Mr. de Courval's, when you were too fine to shake hands with my brother," savagely put in Paul, moved not so much by sympathy for Armand, as by the ill tempered mood of the moment, as well as his dislike towards de Montenay.

"Who spoke to you, block-head?" ejaculated the latter, darting a look of withering scorn on this new adversary.

Paul glanced regretfully at a ponderous dictionary he had just flung beyond his reach, but another tolerably large volume was at hand, which he promptly hurled at the enemy's head, merely grazing it, however. De Montenay quickly returned the compliment with a thickly framed slate, the shock of whose descent Paul warded off from his skull by receiving it on his arm. Furious, he started to his feet, and a more serious breach of the peace was imminent, for de Montenay was as ready for the fray as himself, when a friendly mediator appeared on the scene, in the shape of Rodolphe Belfond.

"Hold on, you fellows! Hold on!" he good-naturedly interposed. "Because we are all savage at being nailed down again to our desks, 'tis no reason we should brain one another! You've lost your key, Victor. Here is my bunch. Try them."

De Montenay, without either look or word of thanks, took them, and sullenly withdrew, whilst Paul went on with his work in a more angry mood than ever.

Belfond seated himself beside Armand, saying: "You served friend Victor nicely, just now. He certainly deserved nothing better. But how have you enjoyed your holidays?" This was the introduction to a pleasant talk that filled up the time till the hour for other duties arrived; and Armand separated from his companion, convinced that if he had lost one friend, he had gained another.

Our hero's progress was now very rapid, but that was owing as much to great natural quickness as to application, for there was a dreamy vein in the boy's character that often filled his mind with other thoughts than the studies over which he bent. Longer than he would have avowed to any one, he brooded and grieved over the painful termination to his pleasant friendship with Victor de Montenay, recalling again and again, the galling feeling of humiliation that had almost suffocated him when slighted so painfully by his college friend, in Mr. de Courval's drawing

room. Then he would chafe at social distinctions which seemed so unjust, and resolve that in some coming day he would carve his way to a position as high as could be won, even if he struggled a life time to attain it.

Visions, too, of the wayward but graceful girl, so different to the common place, respectable wives and daughters of Alonville, the only specimens of their sex he had as yet seen, would flit across his mind, and childish, innocent as these remembrances always were, they some how or other invariably increased the restless, ambitious longings taking deep root in his heart.

Would he turn out a worker or a dreamer? Time alone could tell, but the elements and capacities of both lurked in his nature. Fortunately for him, however, the wish to excel, supported by the ease with which he acquired his tasks, for the present decided the question in the most favorable manner.

Paul blundered on, shirking work whenever it was possible to do so, and evidently thinking every task or lesson thus evaded, a positive gain. Yet he was not a noted dunce either, for natural shrewdness, and the attention of vigilant professors, made him acquire, despite himself as it were, a tolerably fair share of knowledge.

On the farther college career of Armand we cannot afford to linger, for the more eventful chapters of manhood have to be recounted.

At the end of two years, Belfond and de Montenay left, having gone through the course with pretty fair success. The coolness between the latter and Armand had never passed away, but there had been no open hostilities on either side. Belfond, however, was excellent friends with our hero to the last, and made him ever the recipient of the countless plans and hopes he was forming for the happy period when he should bid a final farewell to the college walls, and return to that happy home, where, only son among five sisters, he was a household idol.

After his departure and that of de Montenay, Armand applied himself, if possible, more closely to his studies than ever, and on the solemn public distribution of crowns and prizes, which marked the close of the scholastic year, as well as of his own collegiate life, carried off, before the proud happy gaze of his father and of his Aunt Ratelle, the highest honors of the day.

There were other witnesses of his triumph also, and in one of the front seats, amongst the *elite* of the city who were there present, sat Gertrude de Beauvoir and her mother, Mr. de Courval on one side, and Victor de Montenay on the other. Fortunately, perhaps, for Armand's self-possession, he did not perceive the latter group, till after the

close of the magnificent valedictory, which he delivered with an eloquence of voice and gesture, whose influence, combined with that of his refined and striking personal beauty, procured him round after round of deafening applause. On resuming his seat, he looked for the first time in the direction in which they sat, and encountered the splendid eyes of Gertrude fixed upon him.

Despite the great changes the few past years had made in her, transforming the careless, self-willed child of fifteen, into an elegant, aristocratic girl, he knew her at once, and his heart beat with a strangely pleasurable feeling on reading in her gaze, an unmistakable admiration of the eloquent address he had just concluded.

Mr. de Courval's face also reflected a similar feeling, but Mrs. de Beauvoir was superbly indifferent, and de Montenay, stooping towards her, with a slightly satirical smile on his handsome face, was evidently indulging in some sarcastic witticism to which she approvingly listened.

"What a splendid young fellow!" warmly ejaculated Mr. de Courval, turning towards his companions. "How proud his father, as well as we, Alonville people, ought to feel of him! Such eloquence and graceful gesture; and then the many honors he has won."

"*A cui buono?*" responded de Montenay, slightly shrugging his shoulders. "There may be similarity of title, but there is no farther analogy between Greek and Latin roots, and those of field and garden. Will a knowledge of the classics help in raising clover; or will versification teach him how to prevent the ravages of the weevil?"

"But I don't see why he should return to roots or crops either!" interrupted Mr. de Courval, somewhat testily. "Paul Durand has ample means, and, I doubt not, judgment enough to give a lad of such rare abilities, a profession. The other brother can take the father's place on the farm. But I must go up and congratulate my good old friend on his son's triumphs! Are you coming, sister Julie?"

"Really, you must excuse me. I know nothing whatever of those people, and the weather is too hot for making new acquaintances."

"Or for renewing old ones that a person would rather forget," added de Montenay.

"Uncle, I will gladly accompany you, for I not only know 'those people' but like them!" and shaking out her voluminous muslin flounces, Gertrude swept past de Montenay without vouchsafing him a look.

The young man's brow darkened as he watched her making her way, amid smiles and nods from surrounding friends, to the spot where stood the happy family group, of which Armand was the centre. A word

or two, nothing more, to him; a friendly grasp of the hand to his father; and some confidential chit-chat with *tante* Françoise, whilst Mr. de Courval warmly felicitated Durand, and invited his sons to visit him often either in town or country, for he possessed very comfortable quarters in Montreal, which he patronized with his household during the long winter months; this was all that passed. Still it was enough to excite de Montenay's anger, and eyeing the little circle, he wrathfully exclaimed:

"As wilful and wayward as ever! Each day that adds to her charms, seems to increase, in equal degree, her self-will and interminable caprices!"

"Like every young and pretty girl, she knows her own value!" replied Mrs. de Beauvoir, disguising a yawn, for such passages at arms were so frequent between her daughter and young de Montenay, that her patience at times gave way under their constant repetition.

"I fear, so much so, Mrs. de Beauvoir, that she will never be able to understand the value of a husband's authority!"

His companion opened her eyes to their fullest extent, then compassionately said: "But do you not know, my dear de Montenay, that husbands really have no authority in our rank in life, or in the times we live. In the wilds of Africa, Polynesia, or in places equally remote and uncivilized, they may have, but, believe me, nowhere else!"

De Montenay smiled grimly. "A pleasant prospect for a fellow seriously contemplating a plunge into matrimony!"

"But why take the plunge if you dread it, poor Victor? I really fear at times that yourself and my wayward girl will not be very happy together."

"'Tis too late to think of that now—too late to retract!" he muttered. "For years past I have determined she should be my wife—placed my hopes, heart and wishes on it; I cannot afford to give up my dream, now, even though it should bring me misery!"

Probably the astute Mrs. de Beauvoir was aware of this, or she would not have ventured to play fast and loose with so valuable a prize; and having studied Victor de Montenay's character thoroughly, knew that a little seeming indifference would advance her favorite project far more than too much apparent eagerness.

Some time after de Montenay had left College, he had formally asked Gertrude's hand, and she, flattered by the attentions of a handsome suitor, who was in his turn sought by half of the girls of her own age, and influenced too by the counsels and arguments of her mother, who singularly appreciated the wealth and social position of this aspirant to her daughter's hand, inclined to his suit.

An engagement was entered into which was merely a prelude to a series of engagements of a less amicable nature, in which Gertrude's wayward independence of character and her betrothed's arbitrary jealousy were freely displayed. At the close of one of these skirmishes, Gertrude suddenly changing from a fit of passionate sobbing, into a marble calmness of demeanor, informed her startled listeners, Mrs. de Beauvoir and Victor, that the engagement was broken off, and that henceforth she would consider herself as free as if it had never existed.

In vain, de Montenay, who was really deeply attached to her, begged forgiveness—in vain Mrs. de Beauvoir, alarmed at the danger of losing so good a *parti*, remonstrated and scolded; the young lady was inexorable. Finally, more in sympathy for her mother's tears (Mrs. de Beauvoir could nearly always summon the latter at command) than her lover's solicitations, she consented to a sort of conditional engagement, which merely provided that if neither of them changed their minds before the end of the year, the marriage should take place; but, in the meantime, both parties should be perfectly free to act as they liked.

After this, matters went on a little more smoothly between the young people. He was less exacting, she, in consequence, less exasperating. Wherever Gertrude was, de Montenay was also, and he followed her like her shadow. Their union at a later period was a generally received thing among the circle in which they moved, and de Montenay, without scruple, proclaimed it everywhere as a settled fact, judging such a step would prove a very effectual means of keeping other suitors from entering the lists.

CHAPTER VIII.

A happy man was Paul Durand, when, installed once more in his comfortable home, he sat with pipe and tobacco before him, his fine, manly sons seated on either side, smiling Aunt Ratelle already engaged in repairing their dilapidated wardrobes, whilst he listened to the cheerful, animated discussion going on.

"So you are determined, Paul," he said, after listening to a violent diatribe from his youngest son against college life, followed by an equally energetic eulogium of the happiness of a farmer's destiny, "so you are determined you will not return to college, to complete the course, unless compelled to do so! You want to enter on a farmer's life at once?"

"Yes, father. That is the free, pleasant life for me! No moping one's self to death in dingy office dungeons, studying the

learned professions! no daubing my fingers with ink, and stultifying my brains with thesis writing and note taking!"

"For shame, Paul!" deprecated Mrs. Ratelle. "You should not talk so after costing so much money at college and spending so long there; you should have picked up by this time a little love for books and learning."

"Books," almost shouted Paul. "Oh I've had enough of them to last my life time. I don't think I'll ever open one again; not, at least, till I am gray headed, and happen to be named school commissioner, or church warden."

Durand tranquilly smoked on. These sentiments, notwithstanding the considerable sums spent on the education on which the speaker evidently set such small store, in no manner displeased him. He had always secretly wished that one of his boys should succeed him in the old homestead, and in the management of the large and well kept farm, of whose flourishing condition he was so justly proud. The robust and stalwart Paul was the one best suited, by strength and tastes, for the position.

"Well, *Dieu merci!*" interrupted Mrs. Ratelle, with an indignant jerk of her thread, "that both my nephews are not of the same way of thinking. Armand appreciates at least the advantages of education."

"Oh, Armand!" retorted Paul, sarcastically. "He is a genius, or a book worm, whichever you choose. I think one of them in a family is quite enough!"

Armand good humoredly smiled, but Aunt Françoise severely rejoined: "One of them is about as much as destiny seems to intend favoring our family with, my young nephew, for you certainly have no calling that way."

"Armand, what do your thoughts point to?" interposed Durand.

"Well, I suppose first to what Paul would call a dingy office dungeon. There, I can dust the desks and stools, whilst waiting to become judge, or attorney general!"

"You need not laugh, Armand, in saying it!" gravely remarked Mrs. Ratelle. "Some of Canada's greatest men have been sons of farmers, and I think your chance is as good as another's. Thank God! natural talent and steadiness often meet, even in this wicked world, with their just reward; but, I must see, now, to making some nice hot cakes for your suppers, boys, which, farmer or judge, you will equally enjoy."

That autumn saw Armand installed in the office of Joseph Lahaise, an eminent lawyer of Montreal, a kind-hearted and benevolent man: whilst Paul, rejoicing in his new freedom from college thralldom, rose with the dawn each morning, and shared his father's farm duties

with a zest and enjoyment that greatly pleased the latter. Gun and fishing rod were not neglected either, and when Durand sometimes saw him return after a half day's keen sport, and watched his athletic frame, full of robust health, evincing such capacities for keen enjoyment of life, he thought, with a sigh, of his other son, toiling over wearisome books in a close gloomy office, and almost wished that Armand had chosen otherwise.

Let us see now how fared it with the latter. Mr. Lahaise, the lawyer with whom he studied, was kind—the study of law itself, though dry, was not exactly distasteful to him, and his father, liberal and indulgent, gave him money enough to amply supply his wants, which were in reality reasonable and moderate. He lived with a respectable though humble family where no other boarders were taken, and where the meals were comfortable and abundant, the linen unexceptionable, and Mrs. Martel, the hostess, motherly and good-natured. Surely life was opening very easily and pleasantly for both brothers! Could it be that in those bright sunshiny waters there were already, at least for one of them, "breakers ahead?"

Mrs. Martel had neither sister nor daughter to aid in dusting the quaint little delf ornaments decorating her mantel piece; nor in watering and clipping the geraniums and monthly roses that blossomed so luxuriantly in her bright but small paned windows. One afternoon, however, that Armand returned to his boarding house, some weeks after he had taken up his residence there, he perceived, in passing through the front room to his own apartment, a young girl seated near the window sewing. She did not even raise her head when he entered, and all he saw in the momentary glance he cast upon her, was that she had a graceful figure, and was exceedingly well dressed. At supper, however, she was seated at table, and Mrs. Martel briefly introduced her as "my cousin, Delima Laurin, who is coming to stop here for a few days to help me with my sewing."

Armand carelessly looked at her. Her features were delicately chiselled, her jetty hair and eyes superb, whilst her figure, of slight but perfect symmetry, was shown to all possible advantage by an elegance of dress more surprising in one of her station, than even her great loveliness. Still, when the meal was over, he felt no wish to linger, and betook himself without any mental effort to his little room, and the dry society of Pothier and other legal luminaries.

Several weeks had now elapsed, and still Delima remained with Mrs. Martel, but she was always busy with sewing, and as quiet and unobtrusive as it was possible to be. Notwithstanding her great beauty, her refined appearance and timid gentleness of

manner, Armand gave her but a very small share of his thoughts, probably because he had first met Gertrude de Beauvoir, and she with her patrician grace and wayward fascinations, had become unconsciously to himself, the standard by which he judged all feminine attractions.

The reception of an invitation to an evening party at Mr. de Courval's (he little suspected the sturdy argument that had preceded the writing of it, between his intended host and Mrs. de Beauvoir) filled him with mingled feelings of gratification and embarrassment. After a struggle with his shyness, he determined on going, and lost no time in ordering from a competent tradesman whatever he might require for so important an occasion.

The evening, at times as much dreaded as desired, arrived, and with a beating heart, our hero entered, for the first time, a ball-room. How bewildering the lights, music and gaily dressed figures, circling round in the dance, at first appeared to him, but, after a time, he grew more self-possessed, and summoned courage to make his bow to Mrs. de Beauvoir, as, gorgeous in costly raiment, she reclined in a graceful position on a couch, smiling on all with easy affability, but giving herself very little trouble beyond that to entertain her guests. Her reception of young Durand, though cold, was polite, a circumstance due probably to a threat of Gertrude's, who, hearing her mother declare she would receive this country *protégé* of Mr. de Courval's in a manner that would effectually prevent his returning a second time, had therewith announced her intention of making amends for whatever slights or rudeness she should show him, by flirting with the victim all the evening.

With this threat before her, and the certainty of its being put in execution if provocation were given, Mrs. de Beauvoir, we have said, received her unwelcome guest civilly enough. A few hearty words from Mr. de Courval, a smiling, kindly bow from Gertrude, who, doubly attractive in her light, airy ball dress, stood, the unembarrassed centre of a circle of admirers; and Armand glided with a feeling of intense relief into a quiet corner, near a side door.

"Nothing will induce me to leave this haven of refuge, unless to make my escape into the passage, if too hard pressed," he mentally resolved, as he took in all the advantages of his new position. He farther proceeded to strengthen it by drawing towards him a small table piled with prints and illustrations in which to conceal his confusion, if anything should occur to make it overpowering.

"Why, how are you, Armand!" suddenly exclaimed a friendly voice at his elbow. "Where have you been burrowing of late that I've never met you?"

"In Mr. Lahaise's office, in St. Vincent street."

"Not a bad place, either, taken all in all. Of course, as you have by this time made up your mind to be either a judge or a statesman, you must begin by the first step towards it. Well, you'll do. You are steady and you have brains, two most important points in the career you have chosen, and for the matter of that in any other."

"And yourself, Belfond?"

"Why I've almost gone through the professions. I tried the law first. Oh, it was intolerable! Dry, dusty and barren! Then I had a shy at medicine, but though I could stand the horrors of the dissecting room and body-stealing, I could not, no, for the life of me, I could not endure the smell of the drugs. A notary's bondage I have not tried, for I have had enough of the law in every shape; but, there is time enough to make up my mind. Besides, as my old bachelor uncle and godfather, Toussaint Lallemand, has lately declared his intention of formally making me his heir, provided I cut all useful or honest occupations, such being in his opinion somewhat derogatory to a gentleman's dignity, I will probably end by being nothing at all."

"You will be able to do so if Mr. Lallemand possesses half the wealth rumor credits him with."

"True! Still, I should like to try for a while, an artist's career, at least the travelling and sight-seeing part of it; but, I suppose, uncle Toussaint wouldn't hear of such a thing! I say, though, you don't intend stopping here all night! 'Tis a capital corner with a nice cool draft, but you have no right to monopolize it entirely! Ah, Miss Gertrude is looking this way. I suppose she will soon be bearing down on us. How do you like her?"

"Really, I know her very little," rejoined Armand, somewhat flurried by this abrupt questioning. "but she is very elegant and fascinating."

"So do I not think. She is clever, and good looking enough, but with a terrible will of her own. I have five sisters, and I do not think I have seen as much temper and caprice exhibited between all of them, since I left off pinafores, as I have witnessed Miss de Beauvoir display on two or three different occasions. But perhaps the fault lies more in the manner that odious mother of hers has brought her up than in herself."

In justice to the young lady thus censured, Belfond should have stated that his sisters were phlegmatic, easy tempered girls, somewhat inclined to be stout, and of a very different organization to the impulsive, sensitive Gertrude; moreover they were happy in the rule of a mother who was as wise as she was devoted.

Very gracefully Miss de Beauvoir floated up to the two young men, and after a few words of friendly greeting to Armand, with whom she now spoke for the first time since his entrance, playfully chided them for wasting so many words and moments on each other, when there were young ladies present to whom they could devote both.

"Do you dance, Mr. Durand?"

Armand replied in the negative, and Belfond sauntered off, saying: "that as he did so, in a sort of a way, he would now look up a partner."

Miss de Beauvoir remained some time longer chatting with her enraptured companion, who, the first few moments of intense embarrassment over, felt much more at ease than he could have believed possible, ten minutes previous. The fact was, though the young girl could be sarcastic and arrogant to a most disagreeable extent when provoked, there was a frankness, a natural simplicity about her that inspired confidence instead of repelling it.

Probably finding her daughter's interview with Armand too protracted, Mrs. de Beauvoir came up after a time, politely inquiring "why Mr. Durand did not join the dancers."

"I do not know how to dance, Madame," rejoined Armand, relapsing into the state of confusion from which he had just emerged.

"Would he favor them with a song then?"

Again our hero protested his ignorance, mentally thanking Heaven he was able with a clear conscience to do so.

"Well, you must take a hand at cards! they want a player in the next room!" and she carried off the reluctant Armand, triumphing in having separated him so diplomatically from his fair companion.

He was soon seated at a whist table with Belfond's eldest sister for his partner; and she good naturedly overlooked his many blunders, never once reproaching him for trumping her tricks and resolutely ignoring her lead. This forbearance he felt the more grateful for, as the sharp looking lady on his right mercilessly pounced upon her hapless partner, a quiet, middle-aged gentleman in spectacles, every time he infringed in the slightest manner the most trifling rules of the game.

Music and singing there was plenty of, and Gertrude and de Montenay sang a couple of duets splendidly together, both evidently quite indifferent to the applause they elicited. Then there were a couple of wretchedly bungled opera selections, a good song from Belfond, who grumbled, *sotto voce* "oh bother!" on being asked to sing, and a splendidly served supper. There were no social round games, so common then, no forfeits, or anything of that sort, Mrs.

de Beauvoir being too fashionable to tolerate them; yet, on the whole, the party went off pleasantly enough, and Armand, who had enjoyed another long delightful talk with Miss de Beauvoir, returned home quite charmed with his *debut* in gay life. The timid advances he found himself forced to make to some of the ladies present, were most graciously received, for though he neither sang, danced nor flirted, his handsome face and refined appearance won him smiles and courteous looks on all sides.

CHAPTER IX.

The next day Belfond called to see him, and they had an hour's pleasant talk in the neat little room, which, despite its rag carpet, whitewashed walls and country made chairs, was very comfortable. A couple of pretty, bright colored mats and a daintily fashioned pen-wiper, evidently the work of feminine fingers, were on the little table, and the visitor took them up, saying:

"My sister Eliza has just given me some trifles like these. How do you come to have any? You have no sister, or cousin, have you?"

"None. Now, that I think of it, this is the first time that I've seen these dainty nothings here!"

"Surely your fat motherly hostess has something else to do than to pass her time in preparing romantic surprises for you in the shape of ornamental needle-work." queried Belfond, amused by his own conjecture.

"It can scarcely be her. It must be Miss Delima Laurin, a cousin of hers, who is staying here, just now, helping with the house sewing."

"Oh, we are coming to it at last, friend Armand, though in a roundabout sort of way!" laughed Belfond. "Now, I'll wager what you will, that the maker of these mats is young, and pretty."

"I believe she's both, though I've scarcely looked at or spoken to her ten times, since she has been in the house," answered Armand, with a slight shade of weariness in his tones, for he looked on the matter as too uninteresting even for jesting.

Belfond, with well-bred tact, abandoned the subject, seeing it was distasteful, and spoke of past college life, politics and whatever other topic presented itself. After a time he approached a window overlooking the little garden, which, despite the brilliant coloring of October foliage, appeared bleak enough. Suddenly he uttered a low whistle of astonishment and eagerly exclaimed:

"Tell me, Armand, who is that fairy princess, that angel in the alley there? I never saw such a lovely face!"

"That is the cousin, Miss Delima."

"Well you are either a very sly, or a very obtuse sort of fellow!" and Belfond turned a sharp, scrutinizing glance upon his companion. "Why, that girl is absolutely beautiful, and her carriage and dress as graceful as those of any of the women kind at Mr. de Courval's the other night, not excepting the peerless Gertrude herself."

"Pshaw!" laughed Armand. "You are bent on making discoveries to-day, in whose correctness, however, no one will coincide."

Belfond eyed him still more closely. "If I were speaking," he said, "to de Mont-enay, or some others that I know, I would unhesitatingly assert that all this indifference of yours was sham, but, I have always found you so straightforward, that I really believe in your astonishing blindness. But she is coming nearer! Heavens, what a beauty! How is it, Armand, that you have not fallen in love with her? I am three-quarters gone already!"

"Then you need fear no rival in me," was the gay reply. "I do not intend sacrificing one moment of the time belonging to those dry shelves" (and he pointed to a small book case filled chiefly with law books) "to all Miss Delima's charms. But are you going?"

"Yes, I've been here more than an hour. Come, and take a turn with me in town. We'll be just in time to join the usual band of *fâneurs*."

Armand was soon ready, and as the two young men passed through the little passage, on their way out, they met the pretty Delima entering from the garden. Durand was passing her as usual, with a courteous bow, when she timidly stopped him to say, "that a parcel and letter from the country had just arrived for him, and if he wished it, she would give them to him at once."

"Yes, yes, Armand. There is no hurry for our stroll. Look at parcel and letter. You must long to know how they all are at home."

"Perhaps the gentleman had better sit down in here for a moment," and as she spoke, the young girl led the way into the little drawing-room.

On a table near the geraniums, was a pile of calico and cotton, with a small mat in process of fabrication, like those adorning Armand's room, leaving little doubt as to the donor.

Belfond got up on a pretence of examining the window plants and of inhaling their fragrance, but in reality he kept a close watch on Delima, as she gave his friend the package and handed him her tiny scissors to sever the cords. Without waiting to give more than a passing glance to the contents, which consisted apparently of wearing apparel, he broke the seal of the letter and ran over it. "Good news! They are all well."

"How is Paul?" questioned Belfond.

"Couldn't be better. He says he pities me profoundly, and thinks if he were in my place he would run away at once. But I am all ready now. Thank you!" he politely but carelessly added, as Delima offered to have his possessions put immediately in his own room; "I'll see to it myself when I return," and he and Belfond went out together.

"I have just made another discovery," said the latter, in a graver tone than he had yet employed.

"Yes. Well, friend Rodolphe, you are in a lucky vein this morning. Tell it, please!"

"It is this. Though you don't seem to care about that lovely little girl, she certainly cares a good deal about you."

This supposition both surprised and startled Armand, and his face flushed. "Nothing of the sort!" he hastily rejoined.

"As I have already told you, we have scarcely exchanged a dozen words together."

"That may be, but I do not think my opinion the less correct in consequence. I was looking at her, instead of the geraniums, all the time, and she certainly is not as granite hearted as yourself. But I see you would rather change the subject, so now for a saunter down Notre Dame street."

That evening, as Armand took his seat at the tea table, he looked for the first time with interest at Delima, a natural result of the extravagant praises bestowed on her by his friend, as well as of the hints thrown out, regarding her partiality for himself. She was in her usual place, presiding over a smoking dish of some palatable *ragout*, for the Martels, like many Canadian families, partook of meat, three times a day.

She never raised her eyes when he entered, and as Mrs. Martel was busy with her tray, and her husband with cutting the substantial brown loaf gracing his corner of the board, Armand had ample opportunity of studying her face unobserved.

Was she really as beautiful as Belfond had said? He looked closely at the small, regular features—the long, silken lashes—the delicately cut, oval face, and inwardly acknowledged, with something like surprise at his own blindness, that she was. Suddenly she raised her eyes to his, proffering some of the contents of the dish before her, but meeting his earnest gaze, her own drooped, and a soft flush overspread her cheek.

Remembering Belfond's second discovery, which this embarrassment served in some degree to corroborate, a feeling of natural vanity mingled with the interest her beauty excited in Armand's breast, but on Mrs. Martel's asking if the news he had received from home had been favorable, his thoughts instantly reverted to the family

circle there, and Delima was for the time forgotten.

For some time after this nothing of import occurred to our hero. He prosecuted his law studies with the same success with which he had done those of college, winning opinions from Mr. Lahaise as favorable as those he had previously done from his professors. His life, though regular and quiet, was by no means dull or lonely; and he was often invited out in families occupying a high social position, where the presence of refined, accomplished women formed an atmosphere most attractive to him, despite his timidity.

To Mr. de Courval's, notwithstanding that he was pressingly invited by the latter, he rarely went, for though Gertrude was kind and polite, Mrs. de Beauvoir's reception of him was so frigid that, inexperienced as he was in feminine ways, he could not mistake her hostile feelings towards him.

On the few occasions that he encountered de Montenay, the latter made no advances, and his reserve was faithfully copied by Armand, a cold nod when they met being the only remaining token of what had once been a warm friendship.

Belfond often dropped in to see him, occasionally bringing a friend as light hearted as himself. Armand never offered them any other refreshment than Canadian tobacco—for it must be acknowledged that all these young men smoked—and a glass of cider or ale, with occasionally, a plate of rosy *fameuse* apples, or crisp crullers, dainties constantly sent him from home by his Aunt Ratelle; and Belfond, accustomed as he was to a table spread with every luxury, enjoyed these impromptu feasts with a zest equal to any he had displayed in his hungry college days.

One evening that he had brought with him a gentlemanly young fellow, a law student, and that all three were discussing, amid puffs of narcotic smoke, the politics of the day, condemning the tyranny of the imperial government and the blindness of their own rulers, and settling the affairs of Europe with wonderful celerity, if not wisdom, a visitor for Mr. Durand was announced, and looming large in the small room, Paul made his appearance. Of course there was a cordial exchange of civilities, a rapid fire of questions and answers about home, the country, the roads, and then the new comer was provided with a pipe, and smoking recommenced with vigor. But the conversation did not flow as freely as before. Paul's mind was of a stamp far inferior to that of his companions, and this difference was rendered still more marked by a certain rusticity of manner and language which he had actually been at some pains to acquire, when he had settled down at Alonville on leaving college.

As this gradually became more evident to him, he grew taciturn, and listened with a sort of moody pre-occupation to the keen polished sallies, the witty retorts of his companions, varying the occupation by stealthily contrasting their white slender hands with his own embrowned ones, and their easy, graceful motions, with his own stiff, constrained movements.

At length the other guests took leave and the brothers were left alone.

"*Eh bien!*" ejaculated Paul, "you are not so much to be pitied as I once thought you were. *Diable!* you are very comfortable here and quite the fine gentleman!"

Without noticing the ugly sneer with which the latter words were uttered, Armand rejoined: "You forget that I am shut up during a great part of the day in a dingy office dungeon, to use your own words."

"A dungeon that perhaps you see very little of!" retorted Paul. "When a fellow hates a place he can easily keep away from it."

"But, Paul, I do no such thing!" earnestly answered the other. "I do not shirk my law studies any more than I did my college ones."

"Oh, you needn't begin bragging about them now! I'm sure we have all heard enough of the subject. Between my father and *la tante* Françoise, I have had a perfect sickening of it. But to change the topic—here is a letter from father with something better than mere words of advice in it. As I guessed!" he added, on Armand's opening the epistle and finding a couple of bank notes inside.

Whilst the latter perused his letter, smilingly dwelling on the pleasant words of affection it contained, Paul lay moodily back in his chair, watching the unconscious reader with a lowering brow. He silently compared the rough, unfashionable cut and texture of his own home-spun suit, which he had ordered so complacently from the village tailor, with the plain, but well-made clothes Armand wore; his well trained, well brushed, glossy hair, with his own rough, uncared-for locks; and the little signs of refinement on the simple dressing table, which, whilst he sneered at them, excited, nevertheless, his vexation.

The sad truth was that the spirit of unworthy jealousy, which had for years past smouldered in Paul's breast towards his elder brother, was beginning to assume a more definite character, and was developing itself under the new tide of reflections and thoughts flowing in upon him, with startling rapidity. The constant flattering mention of Armand at home from a father and aunt both exceedingly proud of his talents, the frequent remittances sent him, though in this respect Paul had no

cause for jealousy, for Durand was strictly impartial in all pecuniary matters; and lastly, the wide difference he now plainly saw for the first time, not only between himself and his refined gentleman brother, but also that brother's associates, fanned the feeling of envy into active life.

"Paul, what are you thinking of?" questioned Armand, as he folded up his letter and placed it and the enclosure in his stout, leather pocket-book.

"Of how easily you win your daily bread."

"Well, all things have a beginning you know. Of course, I can make nothing now, but when I shall have passed my examination, and fairly entered the field, matters will be wonderfully different."

"Words are cheap!" said Paul, grimly.

"And so are sneers, though they are not the more agreeable for that!" retorted the other, beginning to feel nettled at his companion's persistent ill-humor.

"Oh, you must overlook the plain speaking, or boorishness, as I suppose you would call it, of a rough farmer like myself," was Paul's ironical reply. "I have not the advantages of town polish."

"What are you driving at, Paul? Speak out your thoughts like a man, can't you?"

"Well, it is this. Here are you dressed *en grand seigneur*, waited on like one, entertaining the aristocracy, receiving money, I suppose, when you choose to ask for it, and what do you do for all this? I, on the other hand, with no such pretensions or expenses, am up every morning before five; tramping over the farm in all weathers and roads; out drudging, working under burning sun, or chilling rain."

"Your own choice, so you need not quarrel with it. How decidedly did you proclaim, on your last return from college, that you would be no book worm, no galley slave chained to a musty desk, but would choose a farmer's free, independent life. Father would willingly have given you a profession if you had asked him."

"No, one of that calling in a family is quite enough. There must be some one to look after the bread and butter of the others, or they might come to know hunger."

"Pooh! pooh! brother Paul," answered Armand with a good humored laugh, through which, however, pierced a shade of annoyance, "our father can do all that for years to come, as he has done it in the past. Be honest, now, as you were in the old college days, when you used to tell us you would rather be a farmer, tramping in heavy boots through muddy fields and ditches, than the governor in his chair of state."

"Oh, bother!" was the illogical reply.

"T isn't fair to cast up in a fellow's face things he may happen to have said years ago."

"But, Paul, it is not too late yet to retract your choice. On your return, speak to father. I know you will soon gain him round to your wishes, and before two months from this you can be settled down, law or medical student, whichever suits you best, and share my room here, which seems to have so highly excited your grumbling admiration."

"There's no particular hurry in the case that I know of," was the dry rejoinder. "Besides, sending monthly remittances to two might require a little study of ways and means on father's part first."

"Let us leave the subject, then, before we quarrel over it. I will go and ask Mrs. Martel if she can spare me a pillow and blanket to-night, and you can turn into my bed."

"No, I must go back to the Three Kings, where I've left my horse. If you offer me supper, though, I won't refuse it."

"Willingly! That was included in my offer of a bed."

Armand then went to inform his landlady of the unexpected addition to the supper table, and having received her friendly assurance of satisfaction thereat, returned to Paul, who, beginning to feel ashamed of his late querulous ill-humor, made an effort to be somewhat more agreeable.

Delima Laurin was at supper, and the new guest seemed almost as much struck with her beauty as Belford had been. He was very civil in his own abrupt way, offering this, proffering that, and on the return of the brothers to the bed-room, he fairly overwhelmed Armand with questions as to who she was, whence she had come, how long she would stay. Plain jokes and hints as to such charms being enough to reconcile a man to dungeons darker than law offices, and allusions to the complete silence Armand had maintained on the very existence of a person who without doubt gave occupation enough to his thoughts, proved still more unpalatable to the young host than the cross questioning had done, and at length, he said:

"Do, for mercy's sake, try for another subject a little more amusing than one that bores me so immensely. I heartily wish little Delima were back in St. Laurent again, for she brings down on my devoted head an insufferable amount of poor jokes and wearisome questions!"

Inwardly setting down this speech as meaning the reverse of what Armand really felt, especially as the latter, owing to some chance remembrance of Gertrude de Beauvoir, had colored two or three times during the conversation, Paul abandoned the subject, and found one more satisfactory to his companion in recounting the changes that had taken place of late in Alonville; who had constituted the village choir; who had been

appointed church warden, inspector of roads, and other offices.

It was rather late when the brothers separated for the night, but though Paul's rest was generally profound, and sleep a visitor that came with little solicitation, it was long that night before slumber closed his lids, and he tossed and tumbled on his couch, alternating between jealous feelings towards his brother and half regrets that his own peculiar tastes and temperament would prevent him following the profession of a gentleman. "Hang it! No!" he muttered, with an impatient plunge on his pillow. "Nature neither made nor intended me for a smirking town fop, so let me be off with the dawn. I hate this place!"

CHAPTER X.

After stopping a moment in front of Mr. Martel's door, the following morning, to say a word of farewell to his brother, Paul jolted homeward, the train of his thoughts more or less tinged with his reflections of the previous night. Arrived at the old homestead, he was besieged with questions as to how he had found Armand, how he was looking, and what he was doing; and, alas! for human nature, he contrived, whilst keeping to a certain degree within the bounds of truth, to answer in such a manner as to show his brother and his surroundings in the least favorable light.

"He was smoking, chatting with a couple of fine gentleman friends, who, from their talk, must be frequent visitors of his. He was dressed in the height of the fashion, looking exceedingly gay, and not at all like one who studied too hard, or worried his mind unnecessarily with professional problems."

The father looked somewhat grave at this, for he thought of the many temptations into which ill chosen companions might lead his inexperienced son; but Mrs. Ratelle was "quite satisfied that he should rank with gentlemen, dress, look like them, for after all, he would be one of them. There was no saying what high social position he was destined to fill."

"Bah!" sneered Paul. "Perhaps to spend his life haunting the court house, looking always to my father to pay for the very kid gloves with which he covers his dainty hands."

"Son Paul, be not so ready to find fault with your elder brother. He has as yet given me no cause for mistrust, or uneasiness," said Durand.

"No! all the other way!" interrupted Mrs. Ratelle, glancing indignantly towards her nephew. "Who carried off the highest honors at college? who was publicly praised by his professors for industry and good

conduct? Paul Durand, can it be that you are jealous of your elder brother?"

"O misericorde!" ejaculated Paul. "I give in—I retract, I apologize! Anything you wish, tante Françoise, so you will let us have peace. Father, for mercy's sake, lend me a pipe and a little tobacco!" Mrs. Ratelle made no reply to this speech, but the warlike, defiant manner in which her knitting needles clashed together, plainly betrayed that her ruffled feelings were still unsoothed.

Meanwhile that subtle enchantress, Delima Laurin was quietly endeavoring all the time to weave her spells around our hero, and he, at last, began to discern and appreciate in some degree her beauty and grace, after his attention had been as it were forcibly attracted towards them by the praise and wonderment of all of his friends who had seen her. To these latter, she was very distant, indeed cold, and never answered by smile, or encouraging word, to any of the compliments that were gallantly whispered to her, by passing admirers; but for Armand, there was always a soft blush, a timid look, or gentle inflexion in her voice, that plainly betrayed she took a deep interest in him. Gradually, a friendly intimacy was springing up between them, chiefly the result of their residence under the same roof. Often in the long evenings of winter, which had now come on them, he spent a couple of hours in the family sitting-room, reading aloud, or perhaps playing a game of drafts with Delima, who was no mean adversary.

Had he been less inexperienced in life, or more suspicious in temperament, he could not have helped noticing the remarkable dexterity with which Mrs. Martel contrived to farther the growing friendship between himself and her pretty young cousin, pressing Mr. Armand, on stormy, snowy nights, when there was little fear of interruption, to leave his lonely room for a little while, and join their circle, of which Delima, always occupied with her sewing, formed a member. Then she would compassionately bid the latter put down that work at which she was eternally stitch, stitching, and perhaps Mr. Armand would kindly play a game of drafts with her. Very frequently, too, Mrs. Martel was obliged to absent herself in the course of the evening, to look, as she alleged, after household duties, but the grave propriety of the young people during these frequent hegiras was irreproachable, and must, if that astute matron was watching them from some hidden corner, have highly edified her. During the winter, Armand studied closely enough, going out however to social gatherings occasionally, and indulging in no more expensive dissipation than was comprised in an occasional oyster supper,

partaken of with his student friends. The number of Caraquettes sacrificed during these harmless revels was so considerable, that it would be hardihood to state it on paper, lest the sum total should be looked on as an exaggeration.

One keen, wintry afternoon, as Armand was hanging up his overcoat, having just returned from the office, an old college chum, for whom he had never felt any particular friendship, but who had nevertheless persisted in keeping up the acquaintance, called to invite him to an oyster banquet. "My address," he jocosely added, "is a small wooden house, St. Mary street, up three flights of steps, first door, opening on the garret."

Now Armand partly expected his brother on that particular evening, from the contents of a letter received the preceding day, but as it had snowed heavily for some time, he began to think the fear of heavy roads would have induced him to defer his journey. At least such was the view taken of the matter by Robert Lesperance, when Armand pleaded his brother's expected arrival as an excuse for declining the invitation, feeling, in reality, no great desire to join the set he would meet, the members of which were probably of a much faster stamp than he was himself. But Lesperance begged, insisted, adroitly hinting that of course Durand was accustomed to wealthier and more aristocratic entertainments, till Armand, out of good nature, finally yielded a reluctant consent.

When our hero sallied forth, first leaving precise directions where he could be found in case of Paul's arrival, it was considerably past the appointed hour, but he had wished to give his brother every possible chance. Lesperance's jocular description of his abode was pretty near the truth, and Armand's head nearly came in contact with the low browed door on entering.

The noise that saluted his ears was deafening. Long, loud bursts of laughter, occasional snatches of song, convivial cheers, and an occasional sound as of a double shuffle, executed by heavy boots on a bare floor, betokened that mirth, even at this early stage of the proceedings, reigned triumphant. There was but a momentary lull on Armand's entrance, during which he excused his late arrival, and the host accounted for the uproar, by explaining that "in order to prevent his guests falling on the bivalves, and incontinently causing their complete disappearance, before Mr. Durand's arrival, he had challenged them to see if they could not get up a little merriment without any extraneous aid in the shape of refreshments, liquid or solid."

The result had proved satisfactory enough to excite a natural anxiety in any reflecting mind as to what height the general joviality

would attain when stimulated by the banquet which Lesperance, with one of his friends, was now occupied in preparing.

The apartment in which Armand found himself was very different to his own neatly furnished, exquisitely clean room. Of small size, low—with ceiling and wood work discolored by time and smoke, there was no attempt at ornament, except a few rude colored prints of lady dancers, with preternaturally pink cheeks, and short, full skirts, side by side with a likeness of a noted boxer, and some famous French clown. In one corner was a large painted chest containing the host's wardrobe, and answering also as a library, being piled with dusty, venerable looking volumes; in another, a fishing rod and pair of rusty foils o'erarched, a cracked mirror, suspended against the wall, and so small, that Lesperance frequently declared he could only see his features in detail, one at a time. A pair of snowshoes, placed at angles, ornamented one window, whilst a toboggan partly blocked up the other. A clean, though rough table, probably borrowed for the occasion from down stairs, filled up a great part of the chamber. Some black bottles containing liquids stronger than Montreal ale, flanked each end; a few coarse towels, a lame cruet-stand, two empty pails on the floor to receive the shells, and all was complete. We must not overlook the great variety displayed in the matter of drinking vessels. A few common tumblers, two blue delf mugs and three tea-cups, presented variety if not elegance.

Suddenly the host, assuming a grave expression of countenance, exclaimed: "And now, gentlemen, for an important question. Washed or not washed?"

"Not washed, of course!" shouted several voices. Let them come on the board with their native mud around them."

"So much the better; for my amiable landlady, beside whom Gorgon and Medusa would have been agreeable and charming, informed me a short while ago that I should have to wash them myself. Here, friend Pierre, as your mouth is always open, either singing or shouting, you will probably swallow the most, so help me to carry them in!"

No sooner said than done. From some gloomy nook outside, probably the garret, the pair soon re-appeared, bearing between them a huge tray piled high with dainty Caraquettes.

"Now, friends, to the attack! I have but two legitimate weapons of warfare (and he flourished above his head two dingy oyster knives) one of which I reserve for myself, as lord of the manor: the other for Monsieur Durand, as the latest accession to our select and cheerful circle. There are several dinner knives, a screw driver, no

bad substitute, I assure you, if well sharpened, and a jack knife, so choose, gentlemen, choose, unless some of you have come ready armed."

Probably foreseeing, from experience, a similar contingency, a couple of the guests actually drew oyster knives from their pockets, whilst others had good stout jack knives, almost equally serviceable, and the onset commenced.

After some time the door opened, and a sharp featured, grim looking specimen of the softer sex entered, bearing a large jug of steaming water in her hand.

"Ah! many thanks, *la mère*," heartily ejaculated Lesperance. "Now, whoever wants punch can have it; but see, dear Madame Hurteau, if you could possibly lend us a couple of tumblers instead of these tea-cups? No matter how hot or strong we make the beverage, we cannot for the life of us help thinking 'tis tea we are drinking all the time. The consequence is, we take occasionally too much."

"That you would always do in any case," and she sourly smiled. "Yourself and friends cracked two glasses the last orgy you held here, and you have not paid me for them yet, though I intend you shall do so when settling for the month's rent."

"Yes, my dear lady, and it shall be done, even if I have to raise the necessary funds by public subscription," he rejoined with imperturbable good humor.

"If Madame can wait a moment, we shall send round the hat at once," gravely urged an undersized, merry looking youth, who had already, with no better implement than a rusty table knife, accumulated a fair pile of shells before him.

"Then its precious little you'd put in it, George Leroi," was the retort, accompanied by a look of withering scorn. "'Tis always the worst wheel of the cart that creaks the loudest."

"Your quotation is old and stale, Madame Hurteau! Try again and strike out something original and new."

Disdaining farther reply, the hostess retreated, slamming the door behind her with a violence that made the *Caraquettes* shake in their shells, and the ballet girls on the walls.

Over the scene we will not linger much longer. For a time there was really some very excellent singing, glees, duets with a full, effective chorus, but as the cracked tumblers and mugs more frequently circulated, the organs of time and tune in most of the singers seemed to become singularly obtuse, and the result was highly distressing to a critical ear. Indeed the mirth was becoming every moment more noisy and uproarious. The oysters having been disposed of and the shells pushed into a corner, a couple of the guests were execut-

ing a *pas-de-deux* in the middle of them, whistling their own accompaniment; another had climbed on the table, and was shouting at the top of his stentorian lungs some pathetic, sentimental ballad; whilst the hum of voices, ringing of glasses and peals of laughter, filled up the measure of noise.

In the midst of this turmoil, the landlady flung open the door, gruffly exclaiming: "You'll find him in there, young man," and Paul Durand was ushered into the room.

At first, he could scarcely see, or be seen through the dense clouds of tobacco smoke filling the apartment, but in a moment his hand was grasped in Armand's, the singer descended from his impromptu orchestra, and the dancers, now thoroughly out of breath, sat down.

Regrets were expressed over the entire disappearance of the oysters, but the black bottles still contained what their host called "some drops of comfort," with which Paul was at once provided, as well as with a well filled pipe. Perceiving the uproar was again recommencing more furiously than ever, Armand begged leave to retire with the new-comer, as they had much to say to each other, and after noisy "good nights," and farewells, the brothers descended the stairs, and set off under a bright moonlight sky, the glittering white snow crackling pleasantly beneath their feet.

"You seem to have got into a pretty lively set," said Paul, drily.

"'Tis my first evening among them, and I do not think I'll be in a hurry to try a second one, for I could not stand much of such noisy enjoyment. My head is aching already."

"Fough! no wonder!" coughed Paul. "Such a miserable dirty den. I wonder what *tante* Françoise, with her aristocratic leanings, would say, could she have had a peep in there to-night? Another sort of gentry to the white-handed, witty young dandies I found you with last time."

"I must confess the latter are far more to my taste, but how are they all at home?"

"Father is not well—confined to his bed by rheumatism and rather low spirited. Aunt Françoise is busy-coddling and nursing him, and I, general-administrator of the farm business. 'Tis well I am not tied to a town office just now, or affairs would not go on as smoothly as they do."

Armand readily coincided in this opinion, and when they were comfortably seated beside the brightly polished stove, in the best parlor of the Three Kings, he took the letter Paul handed him and entered on its perusal.

It was much briefer than such home missives generally were, and there was an

unusual querulousness in the hopes it contained that Armand was endeavoring to profit of his time and of the money he was costing, glancing also at the great services Paul rendered them at home and thanking Providence he was with them.

Whatever was unusual about this epistle, Armand set down to the physical suffering under which the writer was laboring, and he and his brother talked more earnestly and quietly than was their wont of home affairs and family matters.

CHAPTER XI.

Paul as usual made but a short stay, and his purchases for the invalid and the house completed, he turned his horse's head homewards the following day. On Armand's expressing a wish to return with him, to see his sick father, it was hastily vetoed by Paul, who insisted that the fact of his son's leaving his studies would only annoy and fret him, a thing to be carefully avoided in his present suffering state.

Two letters that our hero wrote home shortly after Paul's visit, remained without an answer, beyond a few hurried lines from the latter announcing that their father was a little better. Then came a letter from Durand himself, containing a great deal of solemn warning both from father and aunt, regarding the danger of ill chosen acquaintances—much formal advice about the necessity of profiting of time, with some plain hints about the expense of his support in town; and in answer to his question of whether he had not better run down into the country for a few days to see them he was briefly told to remain where he was and profit of his opportunities.

All this deeply wounded Armand, who was really guiltless of having done anything to deserve it, and his own letters home grew colder, briefer and fewer, characteristics which now plainly marked all the family epistles he received in return, with the exception of occasional bulletins from Paul which, however kind in spirit, contained very little beyond a mention of their father's health, and of the irritating change his rheumatic sufferings had wrought in his usually placid temper, together with some dry details regarding the farm or stock.

Determined not to brood, if he could help it, over these painful changes, our hero studied—went out when invited, and occasionally, though very rarely, when unable to refuse without giving absolute offence, joined the noisy merry makings of Lesperance and his friends. These details, for want of other matter, he frequently mentioned in his letters to Paul, to whom he spoke very unreservedly, even telling in one case how Lesperance had borrowed

money from him which he had no hopes of ever having repaid. Paul's answering epistles soon became of a nature to invite these confidences more fully; for he often repeated how much such amusing letters enlivened the monotony of the long dull evenings at home, and how well he enjoyed such graphic descriptions of town life and its pleasures.

Of Delima Laurin, Armand spoke rarely. A dawning interest in the young girl, excited far more by her evident partiality for himself than by her beauty, induced a shyness on the topic which made him generally avoid it. In reality, there was very little to write about. A quiet evening at cards or drafts, now and then; a cariole drive with her and Mrs. Martel on rare occasions; or a dreamy, long talk beside the large double stove, through whose chinks the fire shone redly, on cold winter nights, such was the extent of their intimacy; and Mrs. Martel's absences from the room, which occurred with a frequency, suggestive at times of design, never caused a tone in his voice to vary or won a tenderer look towards his beautiful companion. Armand might not have been so indifferent had not another face, wayward, proud, charming, often risen mentally before him, steeling him in a great measure against all other influences.

The carnival was very gay, and as Durand was better, so at least Paul wrote, Armand enjoyed without scruple the harmless social pleasures within his reach. He occasionally met Miss de Beauvoir at some of the more *recherché* of these entertainments, and sometimes enjoyed the rare privilege of a dance with her, during which she was always gracious and friendly in the extreme. Singularly enough, every one of these meetings had the effect of rendering him insensible for weeks after to Delima's charms.

With the last week of the festive season came an intense longing to visit home, even if his presence were unwished for there, and on Shrove Tuesday, the closing day of the carnival, he set out for Alonville. When he came in sight of home, evening was closing in, and he eagerly looked towards the comfortable old farm house, expecting to see it cheerfully lighted up, for Lent, that season of fasting and penance had been from time immemorial ushered in within its substantial walls by feasting and mirth. One light now alone faintly twinkled from the sitting room window, but, nothing discouraged, he pushed on, supposing it was rather early yet for general "lighting up," a process usually deferred in the country till the latest possible moment, from economical motives. On arriving he left his horse to the care of the overjoyed old farm servant, and without farther warning than a short rap, he entered the sitting room.

Anything but festive or cheerful did it look. By the light of a candle burning on a small table near her, Mrs. Ratelle was sewing, whilst Paul Durand was seated in a large chair, one limb swathed in flannel and supported on a stool, his head resting on his hand in gloomy silence.

On seeing Armand, his aunt Françoise hastily rose and affectionately greeted him, but his father, generally quiet and unemonstrative, was unusually so on the present occasion. Indeed the coldness of his greeting chilled the impetuous warmth with which his son sprang towards him, and whilst wounding the young man deeply, imparted a reserve to his manner and conversation which the father noticed at once, and inconsistently enough, chafed at. The conversation dragged on heavily. There were some sarcastic fears that he would find a visit to the country very dull after his gay town life, and a querulous doubt as to the necessity or wisdom of young men studying professions unless where there was stability of character.

Here Armand earnestly asked: "But, why do you say that, with such emphasis, father? On what ground am I to be condemned for want of steadiness?"

"Well, son, your own letters to Paul for the last few weeks, which he has regularly read to us, may have given rise to the idea," was the dry rejoinder.

"But was there anything forbidden—anything really wrong told in them?"

"This much, boy! They spoke of little else than mirth, feasting and gaiety, when the old father, whose willing hand furnished money for joining in all this merriment, was lying utterly forgotten by you on a sick bed, a prey to severe suffering and discouragement."

Armand half rose to his feet, but Mrs. Ratelle, interpreting aright his indignant look, with a warning, entreating glance towards the invalid's swathed limb, and the medicine bottles at his elbow, interposed:

"Brother Paul, you must not be too hard on our boy! 'Tis very difficult for a young man to live like a hermit in a gay city."

"Paul wrote to me that you were better, father; and when I wished, some weeks ago, to come to see you, grieved, anxious as I was about your ailing health, I was curtly informed by letter that you wished me to remain where I was and not lose my time."

"I did say so once, and Paul wrote to you that I was better, out of kindness. Ah, he is a son to be prized, a staff for my old age! What would have become of me, of the farm, of us all, if he, too, had taken to law or physic? Up early and late—at work from morning till night; no party going, oyster suppers, or white kid gloves for him,

my hard-working, industrious boy. He makes money instead of spending it."

Deeper grew the flush on Armand's cheek as his father continued in this strain, and he was on the point of breaking forth, despite his aunt Ratelle's beseeching looks, into hasty rejoinder, when the entrance of Paul effected a diversion. Matters, however, did not grow much smoother, and the kind efforts of *tante* Françoise, and the excellent supper she provided, failed to impart anything like cordial cheerfulness to the little circle, or to banish the irritability that marked Durand's manner.

"Why did you show my letters?" abruptly asked the elder brother, as they sat together in Paul's bed-room after the family had separated for the night.

"Because I did not think there was any harm in doing so. I supposed they would have amused father instead of annoying him. If I had kept them to myself, he might have supposed there was something terrible in them."

"I scarcely know him, he is so changed!" moodily resumed Armand. "What does it all mean?"

"Age and rheumatism," was the curt reply. "Don't think I escape without my share of fault finding! When anything goes wrong, even to the bolting of a stable window, you should hear him."

"Poor Paul!" ejaculated Armand, the faint gleam of suspicion that had flashed across his mind vanishing at once. "It must be hard to bear."

It was long past midnight before the elder brother fell asleep, for he was rendered additionally restless and wakeful by the heavy breathing of Paul; but the latter, following the time-honored rule of early to rest, was also early to rise, and when Armand, who had slept unusually late, came down stairs, he was told that breakfast was long since over, and Paul gone out an hour before, on his farm tour.

"Why did not Paul awake me?" he asked.

"Because he knew you were not used to the hardships of early rising," returned his father, and there was a dry sarcasm in his tone that irritated the young man as much as it pained him.

Aunt Ratelle soon placed an excellent breakfast before him, but his appetite was not keen, and after a few minutes spent over the meal, chiefly employed in answering dry questions propounded to him by his father regarding the progress he was making in his law studies—the hopes he had for the future, he sprang up and approached the window. Though near the middle of March, a fierce snow storm was raging, and as he looked forth at the bleak scene before him (what can be drearier than a country landscape in a snow storm) he felt

there was a strange sympathy between it and the aching dreariness filling at the moment his own breast.

Another cold question from his father, followed by a petulant reply from himself, which in turn drew forth a sarcastic remark, and his resolution was taken. Yes, he would return to town at once. The chill wintry air would be more endurable than the new and strange atmosphere of unkindness that had suddenly filled his once happy home.

His intention of leaving so soon and in such weather, was warmly opposed by his Aunt Ratelle, but Durand, perhaps influenced by pride, offered little opposition. On bidding him farewell, however, a sudden softening in his voice and manner almost tempted Armand to throw off all reserve and frankly ask "what had chilled the deep love that had once reigned between them and rendered their intercourse such a happy one;" but the fear of a repulse, of being openly told what he secretly dreaded "that it was the expense he entailed on his father which rendered the latter so reserved and irritable," prevented him.

After our hero's return to town, he betook himself to the daily routine of life, as diligently but in a less joyous frame of mind than previously. Letters from home were rarer and as unsatisfactory as ever, whilst he in turn wrote but seldom, and then generally addressed himself to Paul.

One pleasant afternoon that he looked unusually dull, Mrs. Martel good-naturedly insisted on his going out for a walk, as he had confined himself greatly to the house and office of late. "And please, Mr. Durand, will you kindly oblige me by bringing my poor Delima with you for a walk? She wants a little fresh air as much as you do yourself. Industrious; hard working little creature that she is, she never thinks of taking any rest."

Armand, without any great professions of interest or delight, briefly answered in the affirmative, and old Mrs. Martel, smiling and exultant, hurried off to tell her cousin to dress. Looking very charming in a simple but graceful toilet, Delima soon fluttered down stairs, and Armand, with some brief word of courtesy, opened the little gate for her to pass out.

Suddenly Mrs. Martel appeared in the door way, and breathless from the speed with which she had hurried down stairs, conjured Delima to call at her cousin Vezina's to borrow the pattern of her new cap.

"Tis rather far," hesitated Miss Laurin.

"Where is it?" questioned Armand.

"Near the *pied du courant*, Hochelaga."

"Oh, that is very far!" he replied.

"Twill fatigue Miss Laurin too much."

"Not at all," hastily interrupted Mrs. Martel. "Delima is a good walker. No dis-

tance can tire her, and I particularly want my new cap for Sunday. Please oblige me. Mr. Durand?"

"Well, if you insist, and Miss Delima thinks she is equal to it, I am willing," and without farther parley, the young couple set off.

The walk was pleasant enough, and they arrived at Mrs. Vezina's as fresh as when they started. The cap was willingly lent and then hospitality offered. They must wait for a cup of tea. Delima's timid fear that it might detain them too late, and Armand's suggestion that a glass of milk or cider would be equally welcome, as it would permit them to start on their homeward way immediately, were resolutely resisted. The merits of the cup of tea were enhanced by hot cakes and other delicacies, the preparation of which took considerable time, so when the feast was over, and Delima rose to put on her hat, Armand instead of giving an approving thought to the dainty fare lately spread before him, was impatiently speculating on the lateness of the hour, and the stupidity of Mrs. Martel in sending them such a distance in the evening.

They immediately started for home, and the twilight was fortunately soon replaced by a remarkably clear, brilliant moonlight. Perhaps rendered nervous by the comparative lateness of the hour, Delima tripped a couple of times, so her companion felt bound in common courtesy to offer her the support of his arm. As they walked on, two lonely figures in the long dusty road, she occasionally looking up to him with that timid, appealing look which becomes some women so well, the noise of wheels broke on the stillness, and a carriage came driving slowly towards them.

The occupants, two ladies and a gentleman, were closely scrutinizing our pedestrians and suddenly Armand with a pang of inexpressible mortification, discovered, that they were Mrs. de Beauvoir and her daughter, with Victor de Montenay. In reply to his low bow, two of the party nodded coldly, but Gertrude's face was slightly turned aside, and in the clear, full moonlight, he could plainly see it looked cold and haughty as if made of marble.

How he chafed at the unlucky chain of circumstances that had led him into his present position, mentally apostrophizing Mrs. Martel in terms anything but complimentary including the fair Delima herself in the condemnation. In vain the latter looked up more winningly than ever into his face! In vain the soft pearly light added a deeper lustre to her splendid eyes, a *spirituelle* beauty to her sculptured features! Armand saw—thought only of that cold averted face which had worn for

the first time towards him a look of hauteur.

"Who were those ladies in the carriage?" timidly inquired his companion, breaking a long silence.

"Mrs. and Miss de Beauvoir," he curtly rejoined, unable to disguise a certain lurking irritation in his voice. "But we must walk faster, Miss Laurin. 'Tis growing very late."

Little more was said on either side. Armand was in no mood for talk, and Delima richly dowered in beauty, was not greatly so in mind or conversational powers. Arrived at home our hero, with the briefest possible answer to Mrs. Martel's smiling welcome, hurried past her into his room.

"Did he speak?" she asked, in an eager whisper of her cousin, as they stood a moment in the little entrance.

"Nothing to the purpose," rejoined the girl, tears of mortification glittering in her eyes.

"Heavens! what a flinty heart he must have!" and Mrs. Martel elevated her hands and eyes as she spoke. "But keep up your courage, my Delima! I courted my worthy old husband, in there, fully six months before he condescended to make love to me in return. And, yet, see how much he thinks of me now, and what a happy couple we are. But are you hungry, little one? I have some nice head cheese and a slice of good home made cake in the cupboard for you."

"Yes, I will eat a morsel, for I scarcely touched anything at Aunt Vezina's with Mr. Armand's eyes watching me."

"Bah! do those fine gentlemen think that because a girl is pretty and delicate looking, she is to live like a bee, on honey or flowers? Thank goodness, my Delima is able to eat food that can at least nourish her. Come, now, to the cupboard, and then off to bed, for you must feel tired after your long and profitless walk.

CHAPTER XII.

A fortnight had elapsed without Armand's hearing from home, but they were all such negligent correspondents there, the event caused him no great uneasiness.

Once had he met Miss de Beauvoir since the unlucky evening walk he had taken with Delima, and instead of the smiling, friendly bow with which she had ever favored him, she passed with the faintest possible nod of recognition. This unusual severity bewildered poor Armand. Surely he had not deserved it. He little knew that de Montetay had whispered some short time previous to Mrs. de Beauvoir, some discreditable remark regarding his friendship with the pretty Delima, of whose beauty he had

heard lavish praises from Rodolphe Belfond. Mrs. de Beauvoir, by no means particular or prudish, had repeated this piece of gossip to her daughter, whom it both shocked and pained. The moonlight meeting with Armand and his fair companion at so late an hour, on a lonely road, had wonderfully confirmed it, and Gertrude, with a bitterness she could not explain to herself, resolved that all farther friendship, indeed civility, between herself and Armand, should be at an end.

The latter was sitting at his desk one evening, his head bowed on the volume open before him, not, however, studying any professional problem, but wondering whether Miss de Beauvoir would ever smile on him again, and whether her present coldness was merely the result of caprice, or of a settled determination, when a loud tap at his door, and Belfond's cheerful "How are you?" awoke him from his reverie.

After a short while, the latter abruptly said: "Why, what is the matter with you, old fellow? Twice have I called lately and each time have found you in the blues. Are you in love or in debt, which is it?"

"Neither," rejoined Armand, with a forced smile. "My life is too quiet to give me a chance for either."

"I don't know that," and Belfond shook his head dubiously. "*La belle petite* in the next room has half turned my head and I've seen her only a few times; how, then must it be with you, domiciliated under the same roof with her?"

Our hero faintly colored, thinking how fortunate it was that his friend's suspicions did not point to Gertrude, and after a moment's silence, Belfond abruptly said, with tone and look more serious than he had yet assumed:

"The best thing you can do is to come with me for a while to St. Etienne. My mother wrote this week, entreating a visit, and insisting that I should bring some friends with me. I came here to ask you and will take no refusal!"

"You are very kind, Belfond, but——"

"Not another word, or you will confirm me in my opinion that Miss Delima has already so strong a hold on your affections that you cannot leave her even for a few days. You have only to-morrow for preparation. Wednesday morning we must be en route."

Armand, who retained a very pleasant recollection of the affability and good breeding of the Misses Belfond, gratefully assented, feeling that he wanted some change to aid in dispelling a certain discouragement and listlessness that was beginning to steal over him, and which he had scarcely the will, much less the strength to resist. True, they might be angry at home about his absenting himself from his studies, but the

sense of injustice under which he smarted, made him for the time indifferent to praise or blame.

That evening, at tea, he carelessly announced his intention of leaving for a short time, and he was somewhat surprised, not to say embarrassed, when Delima rose from the table in evident agitation and left the room.

Mrs. Martel hastily followed, and after a pause spent by Armand and his host in staring at each other, the latter said, philosophically: "We may as well begin, or everything will be cold. Do you pour out the tea, Mr. Armand, and I'll put in the milk and sugar."

When Mrs. Martel shortly after re-entered the room, which she did with a face of unusual solemnity, she found them freely helping themselves to hot toast and cold roasting beef.

"Wife, where is *la petite*?" This was Mr. Martel's usual name for Delima.

"Ill and low spirited!" groaned the hostess, glancing first solemnly towards the ceiling, and then indignantly towards her husband, who was just helping himself to another round of toast.

"Perhaps the apple dumplings we had at dinner have disagreed with her. I thought them rather heavy myself."

"If you had not been so busy with them, and your knife and fork, André Martel, you would have seen that she never touched them," rejoined the incensed matron, darting a withering glance towards her spouse, whilst he, unconscious of having incurred her wrath, continued his meal with a hearty appetite.

Soon after, Armand, expressing a polite regret for Miss Delima's illness, rose from table.

"Oh! she'll be better this evening, Mr. Durand, and I think if you could drop in for an hour's chat, it would cheer her up," said his landlady.

"I would do so willingly, but I have some papers to finish copying, and have to write home to tell them where I am going."

"Mr. Armand Durand you have a heart as hard as a mill stone!" exclaimed Mrs. Martel, softly but angrily apostrophizing her lodger as the door closed upon him.

"Indeed, wife, I think him a very quiet, kind young gentleman."

"And, husband, I think you a thick headed dunce, so, now that we have each had our say, hand over what is left of the toast."

André knowing that his wife's fits of ill temper were usually of short duration, complied with unruffled equanimity, and harmony was soon restored.

Pale and depressed, Delima came to table next day, but our hero was too much preoccupied to bestow on her the amount of sympathy which Mrs. Martel doubtless

thought so fair a face deserved. A vague fear too that he was in some measure connected with the young girl's illness or melancholy, made him shrink from the very subject, and when she put her hand in his to say good bye, the morning of his departure, he felt intensely grateful to his landlord for standing quietly smoking in the passage during the parting, unconscious alike of Armand's gratitude, or of his wife's concentrated wrath at his want of tact, which harmlessly exploded in the kitchen a few moments afterwards, when he went in search of her.

Armand was no flirt. He was also too honorable to encourage a young girl in a feeling of affection to which he might never be able to respond, and which, whilst occasionally gratifying his self love, had in reality left his heart untouched.

Life at St. Etienne, where the Belfond family resided, was very delightful. A constant round of harmless gaiety filled up the time, and picnics, excursions by land and water, interchange of visits with neighboring families, succeeded each other uninterruptedly. Armand was quite a favorite with his entertainers, principally because Rodolphe, the pride and hope of the family, was so fond of him, and Mrs. Belfond, whose clear penetration had divined the moral worth of her son's friend, encouraged in every manner their intimacy.

Two or three young ladies from town were also guests, but Miss de Beauvoir was not among them. The hostess had written herself to invite her, but Gertrude replied that she had promised her uncle, Mr. de Courval, to remain some time at Aionville. She would accept later.

On Armand's calling one afternoon at the village post office to enquire for letters, a small note was handed him. The writing though irregular, and evidently disguised, was decidedly feminine, and inwardly hoping it was not a new phase of Delima's low spirits, he opened it and read:

"Armand Durand; how can you give yourself up so entirely to idle gaiety, when your good and loving father lies on his death bed? Hasten home at once, or you will be too late!"

There was no signature, not even an initial, but a sudden presentiment that the writer spoke truth, blanched the reader's cheek to deathly paleness, and he resolved to leave for Aionville that very afternoon, nay, that very hour. Should it prove a hoax, a visit home would be no hardship, should it be truth—but that supposition was too terrible, on it he would not even permit himself to dwell.

On his return, he briefly informed the family that he had received news from home which obliged him to leave immediately, and some hours after he was on his way.

Two days' rapid travelling brought Armand to his journey's end, and he alighted at the old homestead, almost sick with anxiety and dread. The outer door was half open and he hastily entered. Sitting-room and hall were empty, but there were signs of disorder about that usually well kept abode that struck a deeper chill to his heart. A forgotten candle guttered slowly down in a strong draught from an open window—a foot stool, overturned, lay beside a chair on which a bowl had been carelessly left, and cloaks and shawls lay across the stair railing. His secret terror growing deeper and deeper, he hurried up the stairs and stood breathless at his father's bedroom door, which was wide open.

His worst fears were realized. In that dimly lighted room, surrounded by weeping friends and neighbors, Paul Durand, pale and with closed eyes, lay back on his pillow, the damps of death gathering on his brow, its purple hues around his mouth. Agonized, desperate, losing for the moment all self control, Armand sprang towards the bed, and flinging himself on his knees beside it, almost screamed forth:

"Oh, God! It cannot be! Father, Father, you are not dying!"

Slowly Durand opened his heavy eyes and looked at his son. The countenance of the latter, distorted with mental agony, ghastly pale even as that of the dying man, spoke eloquently of passionate anguish, and when in a fresh outburst of delirious sorrow, he loudly asked:

"Why was I not called to your sick bed, told of your danger?" a smile, beautiful as a ray of sunlight, stole over the wan face of Durand.

"Child of my Genevieve!" he faintly whispered, and as Armand bowed his head on his father's breast, in answer to that appeal, the latter feebly strove to caress his wavy hair.

"My God, I thank thee for this crowning mercy!" his pale lips faltered.

Armand could not trust his voice to speak, and a short silence followed.

Suddenly a look of inexpressible distress disturbed the heretofore calm countenance of the dying man, and in a voice, broken and almost unintelligible, he gasped: "The will! the will! Armand, my son, see to it!"

One quick glance the elder brother darted towards Paul, whose eyes fell guiltily beneath his, and then he soothingly rejoined: "Do not be anxious, father dear, about it! We will arrange all for the best!"

A look of relief, then of happiness again stole over Durand's face, but speech was failing fast, and he whispered, "pray."

One of the neighbors took up a prayer book and with a broken voice, read aloud

prayers suitable to the occasion. After a while Durand's lips moved.

His eldest son bent closely over him and distinguished the one word "Genevieve."

It was the last Paul Durand spoke in this world, and shortly after his spirit passed away.

When the eyes of the dead had been reverently closed and farther prayers read, Armand rose from his knees and left the room, closely followed by Mrs. Ratelle.

"Kiss me, my poor unhappy boy!" she said, as she entered with him into the comfortably furnished bed-room he had always occupied with Paul since they were children, and drew him towards a seat. "Sit down here and tell me why you did not come home to us sooner?"

"Rather tell me," he asked, with a fierceness strangely out of keeping with his usual gentleness of character, "rather tell me why I was not asked to come—why that sneaking, treacherous Paul did not write to me?"

"Yes, he did write to you, twice, and I wrote once, but no reply came. Have you been absent from town lately?"

"Yes, I have been spending a few days at Mrs. Belfond's, in St. Etienne, but I wrote word home I was going there, and left strict orders with my landlady to forward to me any letters that should arrive for me in Montreal."

"Something must be wrong then, for we have not received a letter from you for a considerable time past."

"'Tis a riddle that must be solved," rejoined Armand, sternly. "I fear some treachery has been at work."

"Hush! Do not say that!" implored Mrs. Ratelle. "Paul might hear you, but, before he joins us, I have a few things to tell you which it would be better for you to hear from me than from any other."

"Go on, kind *tante* Ratelle, I am listening."

But *tante* Ratelle did not find her task apparently an easy one, for she hesitated—then, with a desperate effort, faltered:

"You must know your poor father was very much pained by your continued absence, as well as silence, when we had written twice to tell you of his serious illness, which we did whenever we feared that rheumatism was about attacking his heart. News came to us through some indirect channel that you were feasting and enjoying yourself at St. Etienne, and, yesterday morning, my poor brother, irritated by your supposed ingratitude and indifference, sent for the notary, and—and—oh, my poor boy," and here the speaker fell on his neck, weeping, "you are disinherited, penniless!"

Calmly Armand spoke. "Then my brother Paul is sole heir?"

"Yes, apart from a thousand pounds left myself, which I accepted merely with the intention of making them over to you, a thing I will do without any delay."

"No, no, good *tante*. They were not intended for me, and I do not want them. Very bitter indeed has my return home proved, but one ray of light brightens its gloom. My father died in my arms, blessing me and thinking of my mother. Thank God that she gave not birth to the traitor who undermined me in my father's love. Go down now, dear *tante* Françoise, you will be wanted below and I long for a half hour's solitude."

Knowing her presence was indeed necessary for superintending the last sad preparations, she silently pressed her nephew's hand and went down stairs, resolved to keep Paul occupied below, so as to prevent the brothers meeting till Armand's excited feelings should have a little calmed down.

The latter left alone, sprang to his feet and commenced pacing the room. In one of his hurried, uneven movements, he overthrew an old-fashioned leather portfolio which had always lain on the table, and as he stooped to raise it and the contents which had scattered in falling, his eye rested on a sealed letter, addressed to himself, in his aunt's well-known writing. He tore it open. It was a short and urgent appeal to him to lose no time in repairing at once to his father's death bed, adding that the latter was constantly asking for him.

"Ah, good brother Paul!" he muttered, between his clenched teeth. "The riddle has been quickly solved. This is why the letters never reached me! What a reckoning lies before us!"

Grasping the epistle in his hand, he resumed his beat, his eyes constantly turned towards the door, longing for his brother's entrance that he might give vent to the passion surging up within him. Armand was in a dangerous frame of mind just then. Men less exasperated than he was, have wrought murder under its influence. He dimly foresaw that wrath would entirely get the better of him—that Paul was hot blooded and violent, and what the result of an altercation between them would be, no human foresight could tell. Still he was determined that an explanation should take place that very evening, indeed that very hour, if Paul entered the room.

At length the door handle turned, and Armand's heart gave a bound. "Ah, here he is at last, the household traitor!"

No, it was not Paul but Mrs. Ratelle.

She looked eagerly towards her nephew, hoping to see a more tranquil look on his face, but instead, its angry excitement had deepened, and the wrathful brightness of his eyes had increased.

"My boy, my Armand, I had hoped to have found you calmer!"

"Is this of a nature to make me calmer, Aunt Françoise?" and he held towards her the letter that had fallen from the portfolio. "This is the summons you sent me, to come quickly to bid my father a last farewell! Brother Paul did not see the urgency of the case and detained it, as he has, of course, done the others. But he will account quickly to me for all, and as I momentarily expect him, I would rather, *tante* Françoise, have no witness to our interview. You will be welcome in this room at all other times."

"As you wish, dear Armand, but, first, you must come with me to see your poor father in his shroud. I have sought you for that purpose. Do not fear meeting Paul there, I have sent him on a message."

Mutely assenting, Armand followed his aunt through the passage to the room now hung with sheets, and lighted with wax tapers, where lay the mortal remains of Paul Durand. The solemnity, but none of the repulsiveness of death was there, for the stalwart farmer looked as if he were quietly sleeping. The look of suffering had passed from his face and his regular features were calm and placid.

Aunt and nephew knelt one on each side of the bed, and as the latter suddenly raised his face, now softened and grief stricken in expression, with eyes full of tears, Mrs. Ratelle reached across, and clasping his hand, placed it over the still breast of the dead.

"Armand, my child, I who have replaced to the best of my ability the mother you lost so early, ask you, now, by her sainted memory, as well as by the love which this true-heart on which your hand and mine are now resting, bore you through life, to forgive the wrongs your brother has done you?"

"Aunt Ratelle, you ask too much," and Armand vainly strove to withdraw his hand from the firm fingers that retained it in that sacred resting place.

"Not so, if these poor icy lips could speak, what would they say? Armand, you dearly loved your father, and despite the little estrangement that reigned of late between you, you were his favorite son."

"'Tis because I loved my father, I would avenge myself on him who, through a series of plotting and treachery, undermined me in that father's love."

"But at the last who did your father cling to? Armand, Armand, harden not your heart against my prayers, against the mute entreaty of those rigid lips and this pulseless heart which can only appeal to you now by their mute immovability. Even as I am now praying to you, Armand, so would he have prayed, implored you to forego a

vengeance which in its unhallowed strength may mean fratricide, murder."

Young Durand, powerfully affected, bowed his head and then whispered: "I promise!"

"Heaven will bless you, my Armand, for that word! I know that you will regard a promise made in this solemn presence, sacred as an oath. Ah! that is Paul's step on the stairs. Thank God! I need not shrink in terror from his coming as I would have done a short half hour ago. Be true, my Armand, to your word."

The door opened and Paul entered. As his glance fell on his brother, he involuntarily recoiled, then advanced a step or two, and said with much embarrassment of manner:

"This is a sad meeting for us, Armand! Another hour and you would have arrived too late!"

"Yes, robbed alike of my father's blessing as of my inheritance. Paul Durand, you owe me a heavy debt," and he held up the intercepted letter, "but I have promised beside our dead father to cancel it."

Paul's swarthy cheek became ashen gray, and he muttered indistinctly something about having accidentally forgotten the letter alluded to.

"Even as the others were forgotten!" retorted Armand, bitterly. "However, I am pledged to peace, so farther discussion is useless. The world is wide and henceforth you will go your way and I mine. The one thing necessary is that our roads should for ever lie far apart."

Something like compunction awoke in Paul's selfish heart, and as his dark cheek flushed, he faltered: "Armand, that need not be. My father has left plenty of means, and I will be willing to share with you. You will not find me as selfish or grasping as you think!"

"How little you know me if you imagine I could accept help or favor from you, after that past which will for ever lie as a gulf between us!"

Here Mrs. Ratelle hastily interposed, dreading the turn the conversation was taking. "Paul, you must absolutely go to bed now. For the last three nights you have faithfully watched beside your poor father. To-night Armand and I will replace you. Alas! that our vigil should be so hopeless a one!"

Paul, ill at ease in his brother's presence, yielded to this proposal, and aunt and nephew were again left alone. After some farther prayer and silent, reverent thought, Mrs. Ratelle beckoned her companion to a seat beside her, in a far corner of the room, and there, in a low, subdued tone, recounted to him the brief episode of his young mother's wedded life. She glossed over nothing, not even her own energetic disap-

proval of the young wife's housekeeping short-comings, and then she spoke of Paul's mother, her moral worth, and the conscientious, tender care she had always bestowed on her young step-son. As Armand listened to these by-gone reminiscences, glancing ever and anon at that quiet bed and its shrouded occupant, he felt more and more convinced that Mrs. Ratelle's intervention had been mercifully ordained, and he thanked God that he had listened to her prayers instead of the promptings of revenge.

The dreary days preceding the funeral, and the still drearier one of the last sad ceremony itself, passed over, and then Armand made his preparations to return to Montreal at once. He and his brother had rarely met during the interval, and then they had merely exchanged nods. Each felt the presence of the other a painful restraint.

That evening, as Armand was returning from a visit to his father's grave, he saw coming towards him a slight, elegant figure, the first glimpse of which set his heart in violent motion. It was Gertrude de Beauvoir, and quick as thought the conviction flashed across him that she was the writer of the few anonymous lines that had summoned him so mysteriously to his father's death-bed. So she probably thought him a heartless, unnatural son, turning from the most sacred appeals of affection, to listen but to the voice of pleasure or dissipation! It was too hard that he should lie under the weight of her censure, her contempt, when he was really undeserving of either, so he would, despite the tumultuous throbbings of his heart, accost her and clear himself. His courage almost failed him as he approached her, she looked so elegant, so stately, but with an effort, he made her a profound bow, which she returned by a slight nod of recognition, so frigid that he involuntarily drew back. Growing desperate, however, in his intense anxiety to right himself in her estimation, he again drew near, but as he exclaimed, "Good evening, Miss de Beauvoir," she abruptly, haughtily turned from him.

Never had Armand experienced so galling, so bitter a sense of mortification as at that moment. How he reviled, reproached himself for his folly. What had he in common with this elegant, capricious beauty, that he should have exposed himself so stupidly to her contumely? What cared she whether he was worthy of praise or blame—he, the unknown law student, permitted to enter on sufferance her uncle's drawing-room? Even had she written him the anonymous note he had received at St. Etienne, it was probably nothing but the result of sudden whim, of woman's caprice.

As if to fill the measure of his humilia-

ting to overflowing, his glance suddenly fell on de Montenay, who had been advancing across the fields and now bounded lightly over the fence, alighting beside Gertrude. In the mocking, malicious expression of his face, as he slightly nodded to Armand, the latter saw that he had witnessed and enjoyed the mortifying repulse he had just repaired, and soiling his core and wounded feelings by giving a dead cut in return for Victor's insolent bow, he turned away, though not before he had seen the latter raise a flower that had just fallen from the bouquet Miss de Beauvoir held in her hand, and after gallantly pressing it to his lips, place it in his breast.

"Ah! loving him, of course she hates me!" soliloquized our crestfallen hero. "What am I, farmer Durand's son, in comparison with the heir of the de Montenays? Fool! fool! what madness have I been laboring under for some time past! Well, I am cured of it now and for ever!"

Depressed beyond measure, he returned to the house and stole up to the spare room, the one he had occupied since his last arrival at home, and there threw himself wearily on a chair, feeling as if life had nothing worth living for.

In came *tante* Françoise to coax him down to tea, but he alleged a bad headache as excuse for declining. Then she touched on his plans and a considerable amount of discussion ensued. On learning that Armand was contemplating giving up the study of the law and endeavoring to obtain a place as clerk in some store or counting-house, her indignation knew no bounds. Indeed, he was almost stunned by the voluble reproaches she poured forth, taxing him with ingratitude to the memory of father and mother, and indifference to the family honor.

On Armand's reminding her that he was now, thanks to his brother's treachery, left without means beyond whatever he might earn by his own exertions, she impetuously urged on his acceptance the legacy left herself. "Would I ever have taken it had it not been that I intended it for you? I would have flung it back to my brother first, irritated as I was by the injustice of his will."

After a prolonged, almost angry discussion, it was settled that Armand should continue the study of his profession, using carefully meanwhile, for his maintenance, the interest of the legacy.

Mrs. Ratelle yielded to Paul's urgent request that she should continue to live in the old homestead and direct it, till, as she curtly told him, he brought home a wife, an event which might happen in a week for all she cared.

With an aching heart, Armand Durand left the home of his boyhood, of which

Paul was now sole master, feeling, in all probability, he should never cross its threshold again. Adding a sharper pang to the thought of the cruel injustice and treachery of which he had been the object, rose on his recollection the disdain with which Miss de Beauvoir had turned from him and from the explanations he had so earnestly wished to make to her. Yes, it was all dreariness together, and he longed to get back to his dry legal studies, hoping to bury in their dull details every other thought or remembrance.

Old Mrs. Martel's reception of him was cordial in the extreme; but, even in the first flush of congratulation and sympathy, there was a mysterious allusion to some special reason which caused her to rejoice doubly over his arrival. Little by little, exacting from him all the while strong promises of secrecy, she at last revealed the fact that her poor little cousin was breaking her heart about Mr. Armand. She cared nothing for the latter's fine gentlemen friends who had so often flattered her; nor for the two wealthy young farmers of St. Laurent, who had vainly tried to win her. No; her love was for Armand alone.

Remembering the remarks made by Rodolphe Belfond shortly after Delima's arrival, regarding her evident preference for himself, our hero, though no fool, saw nothing improbable in Mrs. Martel's revelation. There was something soothing in it also to his self-love, which had been so pitilessly wounded by Miss de Beauvoir's haughtiness, and something so consolatory to the affections which had been so ruthlessly outraged by Paul's falsehood and its result. Yes, there was one heart, at least, that beat true to him, and the thought of Delima in her fresh young beauty, grieving, praying, living but for him, a strong sentiment of gratitude, of

"That pity which is akin to love,"

took possession of him. Ah! her feminine gentleness would never have allowed her to outrage even an enemy's feelings as that high-born beauty had done his. But fearing his silence might be misinterpreted by his companion, he hastily commenced:

"I cannot tell you, dear Mrs. Martel, how unhappy the information you have just imparted, makes me. This is more especially the case, owing to my father's will, which has left me penniless. I cannot think, for years to come, of marrying. Mention this to Miss Laurin and she will at once see the inutility of wasting farther thought on my unworthy self."

"Mr. Durand," replied his landlady, with dignity, "Delima loves yourself, not your fortune, and I feel assured she will rather rejoice than otherwise, at a circumstance affording her an opportunity of showing

her disinterestedness. Ah, hers is a noble nature!"

"That I fully believe, but let us hope that you have mistaken her sentiments."

"Alas! I have not," interrupted Mrs. Martel, solemnly. "I have only too good cause to know the truth of what I say. But thank God, you are back. The very knowledge will do *la pauvre petite* good."

That day, a few hours later, Armand entered the sitting-room, where Delima, looking all the better for a certain pallor and look of languor, sat on the little sofa, a pretence of needle work in her slight fingers. She colored deeply as Armand entered, and to his intense vexation he felt that his face crimsoned also. The interview was a most embarrassing one to both, from the mutual efforts made to conceal that embarrassment, but Armand soon recovered his self-possession and then what a bewitching little listener he had to whatever scraps of narrative he chose to give her. What tender sympathy shone in those soft varying eyes, what timid admiration lurked in those downcast, modest glances! Ah! a most dangerously charming invalid was Delima, and an older head than that of Armand might have yielded to her subtle influence. Still he struggled manfully against it and the wily arts of Mrs. Martel, who in her way was almost as formidable an adversary as Delima herself.

Without the former's able generalship, matters would have never gone farther than a sentimental friendship between the young people, but the elder lady was determined it should not rest at that. In answer to her energetic appeal one day that she had entered his room on some trifling errand, that he should take pity on her cousin and speak some words of encouragement, he abruptly rejoined: "But have I not told you, Mrs. Martel, that I am a beggar?"

"Say not so, Mr. Durand, whilst you are rich in the possession of a heart like Delima's. Listen to me! you will marry the poor child and live with us. We have no children, so there will be plenty for us all."

Armand impatiently sprang to his feet, but the remembrance of the soft tearful eyes that had looked so sadly at him that morning, whilst their owner informed him of her intention of returning to St. Laurent, as her health was getting worse instead of better, enabled him to conquer his momentary annoyance. Mrs. Martel continued at intervals, in the same strain, Armand pursuing his rapid promenade through the narrow room, and then he abruptly entered the sitting-room where Delima was sitting, looking listlessly from the window. Of course his hostess did not follow him there, and the lapse of an hour found him still lingering beside that slight girlish figure.

When they parted, they were affianced lovers.

True, he had hesitatingly acknowledged that he feared he did not love her as she deserved to be loved, as indeed he felt he was capable of loving, but had she not with touching gentleness whispered that it would be her aim, her study to win him to do so. Yes, she was surely all that a man's heart could wish for, and yet as Armand pressed the kiss of betrothal on her cheek, a sudden remembrance of Gertrude, with her patrician grace, so fascinating, despite her coldness and haughty reserve, flashed upon him and substituted a dull pang of pain for the rapture with which that hour should have been fraught.

Mrs. Martel with an energy that fairly appalled Armand and against which he vainly protested, hurried on affairs as rapidly as possible, and shortly after, one dull overcast morning, at the early hour of six, Armand Durand and Delima Laurin were united till death should them part.

There was no ceremonious wedding breakfast and pretty bridal gifts—no gathering of friends and acquaintances to wish them joy. Mrs. Martel fearing family interference, had extorted a promise from Armand that he should not write home before the event was over, and he, knowing well how unwelcome the information would prove, willingly assented.

Of course there was a dainty breakfast spread to welcome them on their return from church; of course Mrs. Martel was all smiles and felicitations, and the lovely bride herself all blushes and fluttered happiness; still—perhaps it was the dim, gray light of an overcast day—a faint shadow rested at times on the bridegroom's handsome face which he vainly strove to conceal. Would the young girl at his side aid in dispelling or deepening it, was a question; the answer to which lay hid in the dim misty recesses of the future.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lamps were lighted and curtains drawn early, in the comfortable drawing-room of the Manor-house at Alonville, for the evening was wet and windy; and leaning thoughtfully back in the depths of the largest and softest of easy chairs, sat Gertrude de Beauvoir.

A strip of embroidery on her lap, wools and canvas on the table beside her, and books and newspapers at her feet betokened she had turned from one employment to another without finding much interest or amusement in any. Her reverie was interrupted by the entrance of Victor de Montenay, who, apparently undisturbed by the coldness of his reception—he had by this

time grown accustomed to her wilful ways—drew another easy chair towards her and seated himself.

"Have you heard about the latest marriage?" he questioned, after a short exchange of common-place phrases. "No! Well, that very handsome, clever, good-for-nothing Armand Durand, has at last married the pretty little sewing-girl with whom he has been flirting so long."

The speaker bent a covert, penetrating look on his companion, but she stooped, even whilst he spoke, to raise a fashion-plate that lay at her feet, and when he again caught a glimpse of her face it was calm as that of a statue.

"The news does not seem to interest you much, Gertrude."

"Why should it? I know him very little; her, not at all!"

"Let us turn then to topics nearer home! When is our own marriage, dearest, to come off?"

"I am sure I have no idea except that it will not be for a long time!" and she half closed her eyes as if the topic wearied her.

"But that is not a just or generous answer to my question."

"It is really the best I have to give."

He angrily pushed back his chair and said: "Gertrude, it is time to have done with childish folly—time to ratify at the altar the engagement between us. Think how long and faithfully I have waited, bearing all the while with your indifference and caprices. Be just now and answer me."

"The answer, I fear, will not be a pleasant one, Victor. Do not insist on my giving it!"

"But I must have it. I cannot, I will not be put off any longer from month to month—from year to year. I entered this room to-night, resolved not to leave it without an explicit, definite reply."

"Since you will have it so, I will speak. Frankly, then, I fear that you and I are too dissimilar in sympathies and opinions to permit us ever to be happy together!"

"Gertrude, you are not serious! You are surely only saying this to try my patience as you so often do."

"For once, no," was the rejoinder. "I was earnestly reflecting on the subject when you entered, and thinking how I could best make my determination known to you."

De Montenay sprang to his feet and vehemently exclaimed: "You surely do not dare to say that after having kept me so long dangling in your train, you intend to prove false to your promises now!"

"What promises? You know well that after the last *grand éclaircissement* we had together, it was formally settled that we were both free—entirely released from our previous engagements."

"So, perhaps, in word, but not in reality. Think you I want to be taunted everywhere with having been jilted by you?"

"You can say you jilted me if you like it better, and I will never contradict you. 'Tis no fault of mine that I have persistently followed my footsteps without receiving, for months past, any encouragement from me. Ah! I would much rather be sneered at now than pitied later as a miserable wife."

"You are growing sentimental," and de Montenay's lip curled. "'Tis not in your line, Miss de Beauvoir, and does not become you."

"Certainly not," she retorted, with an angry flash of her dark eyes. "Nor is it in my line either to sit tamely down and listen to any one talking to me as you are daring to talk now. Ah! what a happy couple we would make!" she sarcastically added. "Our life one long unceasing warfare—"

"At least," he interrupted, "we have the advantage of knowing each other's faults now, instead of finding them out after marriage. There will be no mutual accusations of deception in our case."

"Because we neither of us have self command sufficient to conceal our faults," was the retort. "Our characters are too undisciplined for that!"

"This is childish trifling. Gertrude! Pray be reasonable and let us speak as sensible man and woman, not like a pair of quarrelsome children."

"I have given you my final definite answer. I am sorry for your sake, but no recriminations or entreaties will ever win another from me."

"If such is really your determination, you are a heartless, unprincipled flirt."

"No one knows better than yourself, Victor, the injustice of that accusation. Have I ever pretended to feel love for you? Have I not rather by my persistent coldness plainly proved I entertained no such sentiment, and have I not repeatedly endeavored, though always overruled, to end this entanglement, which was forced, as it were, on me, when I was too young to decide on so important a point?"

"All nonsense, Miss de Beauvoir," retorted de Montenay, stung almost to madness by this frank avowal. "Probably you have fallen in love with some more favored individual than myself. Indeed, I half suspected you of a fancy for that *preux chevalier*, Armand Durand, though apparently he has not reciprocated the sentiment."

"How dare you forget yourself thus?" queried Gertrude, with flashing eyes.

"Why, young people, what is all this?" said the soft, clear accents of Mrs. de Beauvoir, as she swept into the room, her rich dress rustling with every movement. "I de-

clare you are quarrelling with as much acrimony as if you were man and wife already."

"That I fear we will never be!" rejoined de Montenay, sullenly. "At least if I am to trust the explanations with which Miss de Beauvoir has just favored me."

"Ah, a lover's quarrel, I see! I must say you have had a fair proportion of them, but courtship would really be insufferably insipid if not enlivened by something of the sort." Here the speaker carefully adjusted the cushions of the sofa on which she had seated herself, casting, however, a quick, covert glance in the direction of the belligerents.

"'Tis more than a lover's quarrel, Mrs. de Beauvoir, 'tis a formal intimation from your daughter that she will not fulfil our engagement—that she definitely rejects my hand."

The elder lady's cheek reddened, and her white fingers involuntarily tightened on the cushion tassel with which they were playing, but with great outward calmness she replied:

"And you really believe her, Victor? Ah, 'tis her turn to-day, it will be yours to-morrow. To-night, she will probably cry herself to sleep, grieving over her folly, and longing for the morrow to bring about a reconciliation."

Gertrude's lip curled superciliously, but she made no reply, whilst de Montenay, taking his cap, moodily rejoined: "I will say good evening, ladies, for I have borne as much to-night as I possibly could bear. Few men would have endured as much!" With this he abruptly left the room.

Mrs. de Beauvoir waited till she heard him descend the stairs and the hall door close upon him, then, shutting the door of the drawing-room, she approached her daughter and said:

"Do you tell me that you have actually refused de Montenay?"

"Yes, mamma, I have."

"And why may I ask? Is he not good enough for a young lady eating the bread of charity—fed, clothed by her uncle's bounty?"

Gertrude's delicate cheek reddened, for pride had a fair share of rule in that young heart, and she impetuously answered: "Yes, I did refuse him, and I would refuse him if I were begging from door to door!"

"From what novel is that taken, or is it a flight of your own imagination?"

"Please listen to me, mamma. I now formally confirm what I have just told de Montenay. Never, never will I be his wife!"

"But you have no alternative child. You know as well as myself the struggling poverty from which your uncle de Courval's generosity rescued us? You cannot have forgotten the narrow, shabby lodgings in Quebec, in which we were living, after your father's

death, when his welcome letter arrived. Well, did you find that life of privation so pleasant that you want to return to it?"

"There is no question of our doing so, mamma. Uncle makes us welcome and he has ample means."

"Granted, but he may die, and he has other relatives who may confidently expect their share in his wealth. Another thing, he may marry again, and then what will become of us? Nothing for you but to go as a governess, and for me, perhaps, to make handsome dress caps instead of wearing them. Gertrude, you must forget this sudden madness that has taken possession of you, and marry at once, for I see in your case, the proverb 'Delays are dangerous,' is doubly true."

"But, mamma, I cannot, I will not do so," and the little foot rapidly beat the ground. Oh, if you knew how the school girl feeling of admiration that I entertained for Victor when I first came out in society, soon gave way to indifference that has deepened in its turn to positive dislike."

"Gertrude, I hitherto have stooped to reason and persuade, now, I will command. Listen, child, I enjoin you, under pain of my severest displeasure, to fulfil your early engagement with de Montenay. You will not, surely, set me at defiance!"

"Mamma, you have given me my own way so long that it will not do to tighten the reins so suddenly. Marry Victor I never will, so cease to worry me, and let there be peace again between us."

"God help me!" said Mrs. de Beauvoir, an inexpressible accent of bitterness piercing through the conventionality of tone and manner, which, till then, had never varied. "I have brought up a daughter, who, forgetful of what she owes both to me and herself, mocks at my counsels and laughs my authority to scorn."

A sudden feeling of remorse awoke in Gertrude's breast, for she saw her companion's emotion was sincere, and throwing her arms around the latter's neck, she whispered: "Forgive me, mamma, I am so sorry for having grieved you thus!"

"Prove it then by obeying me," coldly rejoined Mrs. de Beauvoir, as she unwound her daughter's arms from her neck and left the room.

"God help me too!" sobbed the impetuous girl, as she flung herself in a paroxysm of passionate sobbing back in her chair. "Worried, tormented as I am on every side, and my own undisciplined heart the cruellest tormentor of all!"

Gertrude de Beauvoir's nature was a noble and generous one, but tares had grown up thickly in her impetuous character under the mismanagement and counsels of her shallow, worldly mother, and now the harvest time was an exceeding bitter one.

Heart sick, wretched, she stole to her room, and after long hours, sobbed herself to sleep, to awake next morning self-willed and imperious as ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

The pleasant part of a Canadian autumn had come and gone—the gorgeous, many tinted foliage had fallen leaf by leaf from the trees, leaving, here and there, a solitary brown speck clinging to some of the skeleton branches. Its amber, mellow sunshine had given place to the cold gray light and searching winds of dreary November; and many a disconsolate pedestrian, whilst surveying the seas of liquid mud flooding the city streets, longed impatiently for a keen frost and deep snow-fall which would bring the chief compensation the season could offer in return for the many discomforts of which it was so prodigal.

Sitting writing by this dull November night, in his little room at Mrs. Martel's, was Armand Durand. Very grave and thoughtful looked the young bridegroom of a few months, and as he abruptly laid down his pen and rested his head on his hand, a long sigh escaped him. After a while he opened the plain wooden desk at which he was seated and took out a letter. Though the letter was dated a considerable time past and had evidently been often handled, he read it slowly over.

It was from Mrs. Ratelle, and had been written on her learning through some accidental channel the news of his marriage. Short and cold, it began by regretting that her nephew should have shown so little respect to his father's memory as to marry almost immediately after his death, and that too without even mentioning his intentions to any of the family; then it deplored the singular and unwise choice he had made. Ah, he had wounded *tante* Ratelle in her weakest point there; he who had received an education which fitted him to seek a lady, a woman of intellect and birth for his wife, and who instead, had married a sewing girl. It ended by a brief intimation that though she might consent to see himself in the future, she had no wish whatever to make the acquaintance of his wife.

As may be supposed, the study of this epistle did not tend in any degree to cheer the reader's spirits, or to dispel a certain thin line of care, beginning already to show itself legibly enough on his smooth forehead; and after replacing it in his desk he returned to the brooding chain of thought to which it had been anything but an agreeable diversion. The striking of the clock in the adjoining room, heard easily through the thin partition, suddenly roused him from his abstraction, and he resumed his

pen with a sudden eagerness that plainly denoted his intention of making up for lost time.

He had spent about a half-hour thus, when the door opened and his young wife entered. She looked very beautiful; and was dressed with a richness hitherto without precedent in that humble abode. A costly silk, elaborately trimmed—a gold watch and chain, with a couple of showy rings on her taper fingers, presented a singular contrast to the simpler though graceful toilets in which we have first known her.

"I want you to come out with me for a walk, husband?"

"I fear I cannot go. I must have all this writing done for to-morrow, and, though Mr. Lahaise is kind, he insists on punctuality."

"That is only an excuse. The real reason is that you don't wish to accompany me."

"And why should I not want to go out with such a pretty little woman as yourself?" was the smiling query.

"Because I suppose you're ashamed of me—a-fraid of meeting any of those fine ladies and gentlemen at whose houses you used to visit before your marriage."

He gently laid his hand on hers and said: "Delima, you have already spoken in this manner two or three times, and whilst assuring you of the injustice and folly of such an accusation, I have also told you that it pained me."

"But it is true!" she pouted. "None of them take the least notice of me, though indeed I look as much of a lady in my new silk as any of them, and though you used to be invited out everywhere last year, since our marriage not one invitation has come for either of us."

Too generous to point out to her that she herself was the cause of this universal neglect, Armand made no reply, whilst she continued in the same complaining strain:

"I'm sure when I married a gentleman, a professional man I may say, I thought I should be regarded and treated everywhere as a lady!"

"But you forget, Delima, I am a poor man, and poor men are little thought of by society."

"You might be rich if you liked. You have rich friends."

Our hero hastily moved back his chair, and she, probably comprehending the meaning of that abrupt movement, resumed:

"Of course you get into a passion if your poor wife dares to even open her lips on any subject save those which please you."

Armand bit his lip and took up his pen which he had momentarily laid down.

"Ah! I see you are tired of me—you want me to go away!"

"I really think it would be the most prudent measure. Do you know, little wife, we are verging on a quarrel?"

"'Tis all your fault then," was the feminine retort. "You get angry if I even speak to you."

For a moment the bridegroom's brow contracted, but then as the ludicrous absurdity of the accusation struck him, he smiled and said: "Well, have it so, but, since I am such a bear, get out of my den quickly, lest I should prove dangerous. When I have finished my work, I shall be entirely at your disposal."

"But I want you to come out with me now," she persisted.

"Again, I tell you, I cannot. To-morrow afternoon we will have to ourselves."

"But to-morrow afternoon I will not go!" and with a petulant toss of her head, she flounced from the room.

Armand sat motionless for some moments and then he murmured: "She was so gentle—so timid—so dove-like before marriage!"

Ah! is he the only husband who has ever marvelled in a similar manner under similar circumstances?

He soon however turned to his papers and steadily worked on till summoned to supper. The board was not as plentifully or daintily spread as in the days of his bachelorhood; nor was Mrs. Martel's countenance as serene and smiling. The host alone was unchanged, and, with the good-natured politeness of former days, he said, as the young man took his seat: "Mr. Armand, try some of this hash. Perhaps it is better than it looks—at any rate it is all I have to offer."

"And it is as good as we can afford, André," added his wife, severely. "Money is not found in the streets, now a days."

"Nor was it, some months ago, wife, when we used to have a roast fowl, or something as nice, nearly every evening. But, thank Providence, I have a good appetite as well as good digestion, so can eat what is going."

"It's a pity you cannot boast also of having a little good sense?" was the sarcastic comment of his better half.

"I have what is just as useful—a fair share of good temper," imperturbably rejoined the worthy Mr. Martel. "Armand, my son, pass me the bread. You are not eating, *petite*; what is the matter? Perhaps you, either, cannot relish the hash."

"It is not that," indignantly interrupted the hostess. "No, the poor child has been disappointed."

"Not in love at any rate," was the smiling comment, "for she has friend Armand secured, hard and fast!"

"I wish, cousin Martel," answered the young bride, with a quick flash of her dark eyes, "I really wish that you would not drag my name into any vulgar jokes."

"You are rather sharp to-night, young woman! You were not quite so short in past times."

"Because her patience, André, has been sorely tried this evening. Waiting, dressed in her best two or three hours, for a walk with her husband and not able to get it."

"Oh, is that all? Well, she'll enjoy it all the more when she does get one."

"Brides are not usually refused such small requests," replied Mrs. Martel. "Perhaps, though, it's the way with gentlemen," and a sneering emphasis was laid on the latter word.

"Delima has married a poor man," calmly spoke out the bridegroom. "She must take the consequences. Instead of walking out with her to-day, I had to write."

"For all the money the writing brings in, it might have been laid aside for a while; but you have rich friends, Armand, who could and would help you if your pride would only allow you to apply to them."

In that last sentence Mrs. Martel had stated the unpardonable grievance that was at the bottom of most of the feminine persecution of which Armand was the object.

"I have already told you, Mrs. Martel, that I would not allow any interference on that subject."

"Poor people should not be so finical!" and Mrs. Martel stared at the clock as if addressing this observation specially to it. "You should remember you have a young wife dependent on you now."

Here Delima burst into tears whilst Armand hastily rose from table and left the room.

"I think you'll drive the *nouveau marié* into soon taking walks on his own account, if you go on at him in this way. He will find it the only means of securing a little peace."

"André Martel, you are an idiot!" "Perhaps so—I married you, but let us cease this sparring, wife, and give me another cup of tea."

As soon as he had swallowed it, he unceremoniously rose and strolled into the kitchen for a smoke.

Meanwhile Armand started out on his unpremeditated walk, and drearier weather fortune could not have favored him with. The pleasant sunshine of the afternoon had early become overcast, and now fast falling snow, accompanied by a keen piercing wind, rendered the streets shunned by all whom necessity did not force into them. Purposelessly he walked on. No aim had he beyond passing away an hour, and calming down the unusual irritation reigning in his breast. Past more than one brightly lighted house whose doors had till lately been hospitably opened to him, he strode,

thinking bitterly of the many changes his marriage had brought him. No invitations had he received since that eventful epoch from any of his former friends, no calls had been made on his young bride, no unceremonious visits paid himself in the evening, except by Lesperance and a couple of his associates, whose society he by no means desired for himself, much less for Delima.

Of course the isolation that had fallen upon him was owing in great part to the obscure social position of the wife he had chosen, and partly to some random insinuations, carelessly mentioned by de Monténay, or Mrs. de Beauvoir, and subsequently circulated pretty freely. Of this latter fact he happily was unaware, for he had subject enough for bitter thought already.

Leaving the thoroughfares he turned down one of the narrow dark streets leading to the harbor. The latter presented a lonely, desolate look. The black expanse of water, dark wharves covered with snow, whilst two or three spectral looking crafts, oyster or wood batteaux, the last visitors of the port, shone dimly through the faint, uncertain light. A lamp gleamed dimly here and there, through the thickly falling snow, and against the post of one of these, he leaned for a long time, absorbed in thought as dreary as the scene around him. At length yielding to a growing feeling of physical discomfort he turned his steps homeward. Though not late when he arrived there, he found the lights and fires out and the door fastened, Mrs. Martel and Delima having retired early, so as to execute this small vengeance. As he knocked softly at the door, he inwardly thought how pleasant it would be if his young wife came down, and with a kind word or smile admitted him. How willingly, then, would he overlook the annoyances and discomforts of that evening! A light gleamed suddenly inside the house and the bolt was withdrawn, but it was by the worthy host himself.

"Poor Armand, you must be very cold! Why, you are wet through and through! Sit down and I'll light up a fire to warm you. You needn't say no, because if I don't, you'll be sick to-morrow. You are shivering now."

First, carefully closing the door of the stair-case leading to the upper part of the house, he stirred the smouldering fire in the stove, into a cheerful blaze, and filled the kettle. This done, he proceeded to place on the table bread and cold meat, with tumblers and a bottle.

"Armand, you took no supper this evening, so you must make a hearty one now, and a glass of something warm will keep you from taking cold after your lonesome walk. Ah, my young friend, you must not let these matrimonial squabbles cast you down. Of course they're unpleasant at

first, but when one gets used to them, they find that they simply mean—nothing! Besides, there is always some compensation. If a wife is a scold, she is probably a clever housekeeper — if niggardly and fond of stinting one's comforts, she is certain to be saving and economical."

Young Durand shook his head. "I do not find the compensation a sufficient one in either case."

"Perhaps neither do I, but where is the use of grumbling at destiny? To be sure, some men reverse this rule and manage to have all the faults on their side—the endurance on the woman's, but they must have strong wills and rough tempers of their own."

"I hate quarrelling with women!" said Armand, abruptly.

"So do I," was the quiet answer, "and in consequence Mrs. Martel rules the roast. To be sure, I tell her a piece of my mind, now and then, but it does neither good nor harm. Taken all in all, she is a smart, careful wife—keeps my house and clothes in excellent order, whilst as to her tongue, I mind it no more than the singing of the canary hanging over your head. Try, friend Armand, to follow my example, and you will be all the happier for it."

The prospect thus held out to the young bridegroom was anything but a very enlivening one, and he inwardly wondered that runaway husbands were not more common. However, he was young, blessed with a tolerably good constitution and appetite, so he addressed himself without farther delay to the comforts Martel had so kindly provided for him, and found that they at least dispelled his sensations of intense physical discomfort though they could do nothing for the dull pain wearing at his heart.

Calm brooded over the cottage for some days after this, but on one occasion that Mrs. Martel and Delima had been out together shopping, André saw at once, by the menacing brow of his spouse as she re-entered the house, that the truce was at an end. Armand, who had been detained at the office did not come in till late, and seeing that his smiling salutation to his young wife was coldly received, he seated himself, awaiting, though not with Martel's philosophical calmness, the coming storm.

"I should like to have a new dress, Armand," suddenly said the bride in a pettish tone.

"But you have one on you already that becomes you charmingly."

"I do not ask for compliments. 'Tis money I want!"

"Alas! I have none to give. You see one of the many disadvantages of being married to a poor man; but, in case I should find

a purse, or come into a fortune, what sort of a dress is it that you want?"

"A purple silk with a satin stripe, I saw one on a lady to-day."

"Yes, and a real bold one she was too!" interrupted Mrs. Martel. "To see the haughty way she sailed in as if she was a queen and cast a look at Delima and me, as if we were beggars, and Delima by far the prettiest of the two."

"Who was this bold lady in the purple silk with a satin stripe?" questioned Armand laughingly, as he helped himself to a piece of toast.

"One who used to know you well enough, though she is too proud to know your wife," and Delima slightly tossed her head. "Miss de Beauvoir."

The sound of the name that had been a spell to him through his boyhood and beyond it, brought a flush to his cheek which his female companions were not slow in noting.

"Ah, if you had married the young lady whose name causes you to blush so charmingly, you would not have refused her a paltry silk dress!" was Mrs. Martel's sarcastic comment.

Thoroughly roused, Armand retorted: "If I could not have given it to her, she could have done without it, for she does not require such extraneous aids to make her look like a lady."

Armand, in saying this, had indeed sprung a mine under his feet, the effect of which he was destined to expiate in many a subsequent domestic feud. Its present result was to call forth an hysterical sob from Delima and an energetic denunciation from Mrs. Martel, among which confusion he hastily rose and retreated to that usual haven of refuge, his room.

"This is to last through sickness and health till death do us part!" he wearily sighed. "And she is only seventeen—I but two and twenty!"

Very dreary was the maze of thought into which he plunged, and long he remained absorbed in it, careless, indeed unconscious that he was in darkness, and that, notwithstanding the severity of that sharp winter night, no fire crackled and sparkled in the small stove that stood in his room.

Suddenly the door was thrown open and the hostess, after uttering the one word, "Mr. Belfond," placed a candlestick on the table and hastily retired, closing the door with startling violence.

For a moment the two friends, a prey to mutual embarrassment, silently confronted each other, then Belfond recovering himself, extended his hand and seizing Armand's in a tight pressure, exclaimed, "Well, old friend, it is time to wish you joy, but I have been out of town since your

marriage, and only arrived yesterday. Poor uncle Toussaint is now in a better world I hope than this, (here Durand noticed for the first time that his friend was in deep mourning) and his generosity to myself deserved all the attention and affection I could show him. I need not ask if you are well and happy—bridegrooms should always be so."

Of course Armand replied in the affirmative and endeavored to look as blissful as it was reasonable to expect from him under the circumstances, but his careworn, haggard face did not escape the quick eyes of his friend, who had had, moreover, a foreshadowing of the truth in the momentary interview he had just held with the bride. The retiring, gentle modesty which had once distinguished her and which he had so much admired, had given place to a vulgar ostentation of dress—a ridiculous self assertion of look and manner which amazed as well as disgusted Belfond, and prepared him for the gravity of the error his unlucky friend had made in his choice of a wife.

After a time, seeing that the bridegroom seemed unwilling to speak, he gaily touched on his own affairs. "You must know, Armand, that with the exception of the few weeks of poor uncle Toussaint's illness, during which time I got a little repose, mother, sisters and cousins have been and are still continually importuning me to do what you have spontaneously done and get married. Destiny, though, is against it! I see a young lady—take a fancy to her and congratulate myself that there is a prospect of being able to fulfil the wishes of my friends, for I never intend to marry without love, *bien entendu*, but before myself and the object of my worship have met five or six times, my flame begins to burn dimly, and at the end of a dozen interviews, it is entirely extinguished. I'm sure there are very few nice girls in society with whom I have not been deeply in love for a time, and yet I think I would rather be hanged to-morrow, than marry any of them. Come—advise me what to do?"

There was a momentary pause, Durand evidently seeking for an answer, when the voice of Mrs. Martel, plainly audible through the thin partition, exclaimed, in reply probably to some suggestion of her husband's:

"Fire, indeed! no, we cannot afford to indulge in such wasteful habits. If they are cold let them come out and sit here. I suppose we are good enough company for them!"

This tirade was too loudly uttered for Belfond to affect unconsciousness of it, and looking earnestly in Armand's face, which expressed so plainly the mortification and pain the bridegroom felt, whispered "My poor friend!"

Rodolphe Belfond, however, was not one

to give way long to sadness, and suddenly snatching up Armand's cap, he placed it on his head, saying: "And now for a walk, then a cosy oyster supper at Orr's over which we can discuss our mutual grievances."

Armand made no opposition, and as the two friends passed out, arm in arm, Mrs. Martel, with a shrill voice and still shriller laugh, said: "It is teaching a husband bad ways, Mr. Belfond, to be taking him from his young wife."

"The way then, Madame Martel is, for the young wife to render his home so happy, that it will be impossible to coax her partner away from it," and with this telling rejoinder to the elder lady, and a gay deferential bow to the bride, who sat pouting near the window, he drew the door behind him.

"I would give much, Armand, to be in your place for a month, that I might have the taming of that old shrew. I think my hates would prove stronger and more lasting than my loves."

"I cannot endure quarrelling with women!" said Armand, wearily.

"I am not so squeamish, and would enjoy a bout with that old virago as much as I used to relish a set-to in our college days. I would show no quarter to her age or sex, I assure you!"

After the two friends were comfortably seated at their oysters, in a pleasant warm room, Armand began to open his heart a little to his companion. He hurried over the incidents of his father's death, suppressing in great part, the tale of Paul's treachery; and then, though with considerable reluctance, mentioned the circumstances connected with his marriage. Belfond saw at once how completely his friend had been duped, but he made no comments while the latter went on to explain, that he continued, in compliance with his Aunt's earnest desire, to draw the yearly interest of the legacy left her by his father. Unluckily he had once mentioned to his wife, Mrs. Ratelle's proposal to put him in possession of the whole sum at once, and this circumstance was a constantly recurring cause of the bickerings which embittered his domestic life.

Both Mrs. Martel and Delima continually but vainly urged him to endeavour to induce Mrs. Ratelle to renew her first proposal, for Armand knew that such a request would be unwelcome in the present state of things, as *tante* Françoise would naturally be averse to placing the sum she had destined for assisting him in his legal studies and starting him in life, at the discretion of a thoughtless young girl who might spend it on ribbons or fine furniture.

Then Paul, shortly after his brother's marriage, had written him a few friendly lines begging him to accept a couple

hundred pounds as his wedding gift. This epistle Armand had briefly re-directed back to his brother, but unfortunately Delima had previously seen it on his desk, and it afforded fresh scope for angry remonstrance and fretful repining.

From the moment of that discovery, Mrs. Martel and his young wife gave him but little rest or peace. Had money really been a thing utterly unattainable, his life would have been much easier, and his female friends would have been satisfied with things as they were, but the idea that he could command eight hundred dollars, if not more, by a mere scratch of his pen, as they phrased it, a sum fabulous in its amount to them, representing elegant toilets, parties of pleasure, new furniture for the little sitting-room and many other things equally attractive, and yet obstinately refused to employ so precious a prerogative, was unbearable.

When Durand had concluded his confidences, a pause followed, which Belfond at length broke by saying: "Women are unintelligible and unmanageable. Look at that Gertrude de Beauvoir. After flirting with de Montenay and keeping him dangling after her ever since he left college, she gave him an unqualified dismissal the other day."

"Why?" inquired Armand, in a low voice.

"For a woman's weightiest reason—the utter absence of one. Mrs. de Beauvoir was bemoaning her daughter's infatuation and obstinacy the other day, to my mother, in the most pathetic terms, and deploring the loss of what she styles such an excellent match. But to return to your own affairs. Now or never, dear Armand, let me enjoy the privilege of a real friend and see how I can help you. You know poor uncle Toustaint has left me ample means, the entire control of which I possess myself, and joyfully do I place whatever you may require of them at your disposal."

Armand shook his head.

"If my pride would have allowed me to accept of your generously proffered help, I would not have spoken to you so openly of all my troubles. No, Rodolphe, true, kind friend; but do not look so chagrined, I promise that if I should ever be driven to apply to a friend, to you shall my application be made."

It was late when they rose to separate, and as Armand softly knocked for admittance, he anxiously remembered that he had never returned yet at so late an hour to his home. As usual, it was his landlord who let him in, and in a somewhat hesitating voice he asked whether he required anything instead of the supper from which the tongues of his fair companions had driven him.

On Armand's answering in the negative, he seemed much relieved, and muttered something about the women being unusually out of sorts, Mrs. Martel having taken the mean revenge of locking up the bottle. "However," he added, "I'll buy another one to-morrow, and put it into a new hiding place, so we will checkmate her famously."

As the young man with a friendly good night, was retiring to his room, his companion laid his hand impressively on his shoulder and said: "One piece of advice, friend Armand, that I will not cease repeating to you, till you act on it, is this, don't let scolding drive you from your meals. Eat well and heartily—then beat a retreat as quickly as you like."

This counsel was certainly given in time, for next morning, at breakfast, Mrs. Martel and Delima, launched forth into sharp inuendoes and irritating reflections concerning the neglect and heartless indifference of some men who preferred a drinking bout with a boon companion to the society of their respectable wives.

Instead of acting on his host's judicious advice and taking a full meal, Armand hurried off, after half rations of tea and toast, to what he had once laughingly styled a dingy office dungeon, but which was now a haven of refuge—a welcome asylum of rest.

CHAPTER XV.

It cannot be said that our hero was either as studious or as apt as he had been before his unfortunate marriage. He certainly was not. Who could tell the bright dreams and illusions he had had then to spur him on to exertion? Now it was all narrowed down to a mere strife for daily bread without one gleam of hope in the future—one ray of joy in the present. More than once Mr. Lahaise had entered the office unexpectedly and found his student buried in moody reverie whilst piles of papers to be sorted or copied lay untouched on the desk before him. The lawyer, however, had heard something of Armand's troubles, so he was considerate and merciful, knowing that the young man's rare abilities would enable him later, to make up for the time he was now losing.

Slowly—wearily to Durand dragged on the tedious winter, with its short days and long interminable evenings—no pleasant social entertainments, no quiet fireside hours to gild its course. In the domestic circle matters were growing worse instead of better, Mrs. Martel's vituperativeness and Delima's ill humor but increased in proportion as they ascertained more thoroughly each day the invincible patience of their victim, who despite of all, however, remained firm to

his resolve of not applying for money to either friend or relative.

But there is such a thing as straining a bow too tight—as filling a cup too full, and this Mrs. Martel was destined to find from her own experience.

As Armand after a hasty dinner was preparing to leave for the office, Delima pettishly informed him she wanted money badly.

He instantly drew his slenderly filled purse from his pocket and gave it to her. "Tis all I will have, Delima, till next month, but you are welcome to it."

The young wife opened it and scattered the trifling contents contemptuously on the table before her.

"That is of no use," she pouted.

"But what do you specially want just now?"

"Firstly, a new coat for yourself—yours is disgracefully shabby—"

"Oh, is that all!" he interrupted.

"Thanks; mine will do well enough for this winter."

"Then if your coat will do my worn old furs won't. They look perfectly disgraceful beside my fine new cloak."

"Yes, that they do," chimed in Mrs. Martel. For a bride too they look doubly bad."

"I am sorry for it, but I fear you will have to take this season out of them."

"That she won't, Mr. Durand," interrupted the hostess. "What business had you to take a wife if you can't dress her decently?"

"You forget you forced me to, in spite of myself," retorted Durand, who felt in an unusually irritable frame of mind.

"Yes, I can testify to the truth of that," added Mr. Martel, *sotto voce*. "Just as I was married myself!"

With angry countenance his wife turned on the speaker, but the latter prudently left the battle-ground at once.

"All this is not answering my question," interrupted the young bride.

"I have answered it already. I've no more money to give you at present."

"Yes, plenty if your pride would allow you to ask your rich relations. But rather than do that, you choose to live on charity."

Armand's cheek flushed deeply.

"How is that, Mrs. Martel? Do I not pay you regularly the sum you fixed yourself as the price of my own and wife's board?"

"Bah! a sum that does not half cover the expenses! However, if you won't write, I will, and I'll tell your Aunt Francoise, your brother Paul, and, perhaps too your former proud lady love, the stiff-necked Miss de Beauvoir, how poor and miserably off your wretched wife is."

"You had better not do it, Mrs. Martel!" rejoined Armand, with an unwonted

look in his eyes which should have warned that sharp witted matron she was going too far.

Without noting it however and approaching still nearer, she stared defiantly at him, reiterating: "But I will do it. I'll not allow me nor mine to know want when the scratch of a pen will bring them plenty. No poor proud beggar shall impose on us, or if we have to put up with such a thing the world shall at least know it."

Suddenly yielding to one of the gusts of passion which, notwithstanding the gentleness of his disposition, at rare intervals swept over him, Armand suddenly turned upon his portly opponent, and seizing her by the shoulder, hurled her through the open door with a force that sent her crashing amongst the geranium pots, which came down with herself in one confused heap.

"Now, Delima, you will pack up your clothes without delay, and be prepared to leave this house in an hour."

"But she shan't go with you, you monster!" exclaimed Mrs. Martel, rising from the *débris* of broken pots, plants and earth. "You would kill her as you nearly killed me, just now."

"You hear me, Delima," said our hero, with stern calmness.

"No, I will not go with you," hysterical sobbed the young wife.

"As you will," was the indifferent reply. "I have no intention of insisting on my rights," and he quietly left the room and passed into his own.

At once he entered on the toils of packing up, which with him was the very simple process of thrusting into his trunks, clothes, books, brushes, in the order they came to hand. At the end of a half hour his task was complete. Then he suddenly remembered that at the commencement of the late stormy interview he had given his purse to Delima. What was he to do? Fortunately he had a few dollars put up to pay an account for some law book lately purchased, and knowing the bookseller would wait, he resolved on appropriating it to present use. He glanced at his watch. Three quarters of an hour had elapsed already. Well, he would wait one hour as he had told his wife, and at the expiration of that time, he would leave. If she chose to accompany him he was satisfied—if she decided on remaining, he would not say a word to dissuade her from it. Again another look at his time-piece. Four—three—two minutes. Ah, the hour was up, and he took his cap, when the door slowly opened and his wife flushed and tearful, entered.

"Are you coming with me, Delima? Yes! Dress then quickly, for we have no time to lose. I will go for a cariole."

"Where are we to go to?" she sobbed, completely subdued and sinking helplessly into a chair.

"Do not be anxious! We can easily obtain comfortable lodgings for the price we pay here. I have a respectable quiet house in view at which I will make arrangements at once and then return for you. It will give you a little time to pack up your ribbons and flowers."

On his way out, he saw no signs of Mrs. Martel, but he encountered her husband who had been instructed to waylay Armand, and win him over, if possible, to friendlier feelings.

"Why, how is this, Armand? You are not really going to leave us?"

"Yes, Mr. Martel, and I deeply regret it is under such unpleasant circumstances."

"Take a little time, Armand, to decide. Do not leave immediately."

"Nothing would induce me to remain even a night longer."

"*Allons! allons!* What signify a few hot words more or less? My wife is already sorry for the past and willing to make friends if you'll consent."

"I have no objection to the latter proposition and I am exceedingly sorry myself for the violence I displayed during the dispute, but my mind is irrevocably made up."

"Nor am I surprised at it!" ejaculated Martel, treacherously going over to the enemy. "You have suffered a great deal, and now that you have thrown off your chains, I cannot wonder at your not wishing to put them on again. You frightened the *bonne femme* thoroughly, but as you fortunately did not hurt her, I bear you no malice. She said she thought all along that you had the heart of a mouse, but she finds instead you have that of a lion."

"I disclaim the compliment, if it is intended as one, and feel heartily ashamed of my exhibition of lion heartedness. But time presses—I must be off. Before leaving, however, I must thank you, Mr. Martel, heartily and sincerely for the kindness you have invariably shown me during my stay under your roof."

André coughed, and his voice was somewhat unsteady as he rejoined: "God bless you, Armand! From first to last you have acted as a true gentleman. I hope little Delima may prove worthy of you!"

Within an hour Durand returned for his wife, and drowned in tears, she stepped into the sleigh, without uttering a word, having already made her adieux to the family.

Arrived at their new residence which seemed both orderly and comfortable, Armand proceeded to take possession of their small though neat apartment by unpacking

and hanging up his clothes, placing his books and papers in their respective places. Delima, meanwhile, sat disconsolately on a trunk, breaking forth every now and then into a fresh outburst of weeping.

When the tea bell rang she indignantly declined that refreshment, so Armand went down alone. The meal was certainly a great improvement on the niggardly repasts spread before him of late, and the reflection a pleasant one that henceforth they could be taken in peace, without a running accompaniment of reproaches and recriminations.

There were but four other boarders. Two old maiden sisters, neat in dress and prim in speech, and a quiet middle aged married couple, with whom, however; and the chatty smiling hostess, a sufficiently lively conversation was kept up.

When Armand returned to his own room, he found it somewhat cheerless, the fire having gone down. Delima had cried herself asleep in an easy chair, and as the rays of the candle beside her streamed full on her pale, tear stained face, his heart smote him, despite the constant provocation and annoyance he received from her. She looked so young, so fragile, and now she was so utterly dependent on him.

He quickly started the fire again, sought out the hostess to ask that a cup of tea might be sent up to Mrs. Durand, as she was ill, a request willingly acceded to and then returned to awake his wife. She again refused the proposed refreshment after it had been brought to her, and renewed her sobbing, interspersed with passionate grievings over her own sad fate and desolate condition.

After a few words of unavailing consolation, the lamentations meanwhile redoubling, he gravely said: "If you are so utterly wretched, Delima, I see but one alternative. You must return to Mrs. Martel's where apparently you can alone be happy. I will give as much as I can possibly afford towards your support, increasing the sum when I will be able. It is too late now, but to-morrow morning you can leave this."

"I will do no such thing," interrupted the fair bride, with much vivacity, "though I suppose you would be well pleased if I did, finding it probably a good riddance."

Stung to energy by this thought, she sprang to her feet and commenced arranging her disordered *toilette* and sorting out what few articles of clothing she had brought with her, Mrs. Martel having promised that the remainder should be ready when sent for.

When the bridegroom returned the following day from the office, he was agreeably surprised to find his fairer half, seated at her sewing in the little drawing room

and engaged in pleasant chat with one of the lady boarders. He was further gratified by her whispered assurance that she felt happier and more comfortable than at Mrs. Martel's abode.

Now, had Armand Durand possessed a little more determination of character, had he been able to follow up his signal domestic victory by a certain firmness of manner and purpose, all might yet have gone on tolerably well, but unfortunately such was not the case, and when after a time Mrs. Martel became a frequent caller at their present residence and Delima passed a great portion of her time in reciprocating these visits, he never interfered. The moral results of this intercourse were plainly perceptible in the growing independence and exacting character of the young wife, who seemed to think the chief aim of existence now was to dress herself as elaborately and extravagantly as possible.

Armand on his side drudged on perseveringly at his office duties, though at times with a feeling of dreary discouragement he could scarcely combat. No farther intercourse had passed between himself and Paul, subsequently to his returning to the latter his epistle containing an offer of money, but at New Year's, a brief letter came to him from *tante* Ratelle in which was enclosed a present of fifty pounds. There was no mention of the bride in this missive, nor any wish however faintly expressed, to make her acquaintance. Unfortunately Mrs. Ratelle had heard from good authority a very accurate description of her character and learned thus how poor, how utterly worthless was the prize for which her ill starred nephew had paid such a price.

The fifty pounds was soon coaxed from him, and instead of being devoted to least in part, to the liquidation of some debts contracted by the young couple, was laid out in the purchase of a new set of furs for Delima and a suit of out door costume, rivaling in elegance the *toilettes* of Miss de Beauvoir herself. Mrs. Martel was not forgotten in this unequal partition of Aunt Ratelle's New Year's gift, and a handsome new cloak out of it fell to her share.

The lapse of a few months found the bride who had been so much enchanted at first, with boarding house life, utterly tired of it. The boarders were so ill-natured and sarcastic to her—the landlady so rude and disagreeable that she scarcely dared to ask for a glass of water between meals, and she herself so tired of being obliged to always eat, sit and live under the constant supervision of strangers, that she had come to the conclusion she would rather starve in a little home of her own—even a garret—than remain where she was at present.

Of course Mrs. Martel was at the bottom of all this repining and discontent. That

wily mischief-maker found she had but very little comfort or liberty in her visits to the young wife. There was no possibility of cosy tea drinkings or long pleasant evenings crowned by a hot supper. In short, Delima might as well be in St. Laurent for all the comfort or profit there was now in her society.

Prompted by such ill judged inuendoes and advice, young Mrs. Durand soon made herself intensely disagreeable to her fellow boarders; and her affectation and airs of superiority were resented with considerable warmth. Every evening when our hero returned from the office, there was a fresh grievance to relate, a new tale of oppression and unkindness to impart, till he began insensibly to dread his return to his present abode, almost as much as he had once done that to Mrs. Martel's hospitable domicile. Delima would vary the tale at other times by dwelling on the happiness they would enjoy in a home of their own,—no matter how humble—and on the economy and housekeeping ability she would display in the administration of said home.

The picture was tempting and, Armand often found himself wondering how it could be accomplished, and if his independence and pride would ever allow him to solicit his Aunt Ratelle's aid in bringing it about. Destiny settled the matter by favoring him with an accidental meeting with *tante* Françoise, who had come to town for the first time since the death of her brother, Paul Durand.

Armand, his young wife leaning on his arm, met her face to face as she was coming out of one of the low-browed, dingy shops, of which many still characterized Montreal at that period. Remembering all her former kindness, the young man was really overjoyed by the meeting, and plainly evinced by look and word, the pleasure he felt. Mrs. Ratelle's first coldness soon thawed under the subtle charm of Armand's affectionate greeting, and to pressing solicitations of the young couple that she would return with them and partake of their present landlady's hospitality, she returned an answer in the negative, but counterbalanced her refusal by inviting them to dine with her in the quiet respectable hotel where she put up.

The invitation was at once accepted and the banquet came off triumphantly. True, Mrs. Ratelle viewed with considerable disfavor the costly furs and elegant mantle adorning the wife of a poor law student, but Delima looked so very young and lovely and rendered herself so charming, resuming for that purpose the gentle coaxing ways which had characterized her before marriage, that *tante* Françoise felt the prejudices she had conceived against her, fast wearing away. With an openness which the elder

lady rather appreciated than otherwise, the bride enlarged on her ardent desire to be in a home of her own, not forgetting to indulge at the same time in one of her usual brilliant dreams of faultless house-keeping.

"But, child," exclaimed Aunt Ratelle, drily, in answer to this latter rhapsody, "I cannot imagine so finely dressed a lady as you are, looking after pots and pans, pickles, and preserves. You would do better in a *salon*!"

"Ah, *tante* Françoise," rejoined Delima, adopting at once the title by which Armand addressed his aunt, "I dress so finely because I have nothing else to do. If I had a little home of my own, how different it would be; I would have something more useful to think of than finery.

Mrs. Ratelle said no more on the subject, and when the young couple took leave, she asked her nephew to return in the evening to have a talk with her. Of course he willingly complied and the night was far advanced when the conference came to an end. Much had they to speak of, but through the course of that long conversation the young man was wonderfully reticent on the subject of his own domestic annoyances, as well as on the manœuvring that had been employed to bring about his marriage.

Amongst other items of home news, Mrs. Ratelle told him that Paul remained always quietly in the old homestead, but had grown unusually gloomy and taciturn, whilst his interest in agriculture and farming had considerably diminished. He seemed to have no thought of matrimony, though, if so disposed, he could have his choice among some of the prettiest girls in Alonville. He never mentioned Armand's name, nor alluded in any manner to the events that had transpired at the time of their father's death, though she suspected he brooded the more deeply over them for all that, turning, probably for consolation, to stimulants, with a frequency that filled her with anxiety and misgiving.

Then Mrs. Ratelle spoke of our hero's affairs, and asked him if he desired as much as his wife to have a fire-side of his own. Remembering the tiresome complaints and tirades inflicted on him every evening by Delima, he heartily answered in the affirmative. His reply evidently found favor in the eyes of *tante* Françoise, who secretly feared that the present inactive life the bride was leading might inculcate her with idle, extravagant ideas, and render her unfit at a later period for assuming the management of a household.

The end of all this was that Armand was to be put in immediate possession of the legacy left her by his father, a portion of which, wisely invested, would ensure a reasonable annual interest, whilst a sufficient sum could be deducted to set up

house-keeping at once, though on the smallest possible scale.

"I hope, nephew, our decision has been a prudent one," said Aunt Ratelle, impressively. "Some might say it would have been wiser to have left things as they were, but you are now a married man, surely fit to be trusted with the direction of your own affairs. Two qualities are eminently necessary for you, economy and firmness. See that you fail in neither!"

CHAPTER XVI.

What a triumphant day that was for Delima when, after having wearily travelled with her husband over half the city in search of some habitation that came up to her ideal standard, they found a cottage at a low rent, in St. Joseph street, containing the requisite number of cupboards and closets, with the small verandah in front which she regarded as indispensable. Then when Armand, who had the usual masculine aversion to shopping, put a well filled purse into her hand before leaving for the office, giving her *carte blanche* to lay it out according to her own discretion, how joyous and exultant she was.

Her first step of course was to go in search of Mrs. Martel, and that matron successively drove the clerks of at least a dozen different stores to the verge of desperation, by pricing, haggling, depreciating the goods displayed before her, and altering her mind several times before she concluded any bargain. Her assistance, however, was invaluable to the embryo house-keeper. But for her prudent interference, the latter, guided by the same tastes that directed her purchases in dress would have invested the three quarters of her capital in an expensive carpet, embellished with lilies and roses; and a set of drawing room furniture to match, as unsuited to their circumstances as were her own silks and laces.

On Mrs. Martel's angrily asking what she would buy the stove and kitchen requisites with, she consented with a heavy sigh to satisfy herself with something less costly. Whilst discontentedly surveying the sober though comfortable looking drugget and plain chairs and table chosen by Mrs. Martel, the latter sharply whispered:

"'Tis somewhat of an improvement, my girl, on the bare floor, and the wooden chairs and settle of the best room, in the old farm house at St. Laurent!"

The bride, who in the midst of her new found grandeur had almost succeeded in banishing such reminiscences, as she did the thought of the aged work-worn grandfather who had brought her up, colored deeply, and determinedly closed her lips, never opening them again till they had left

the store. There were several days of such shopping, but at length all the chattels came home; the furniture was placed and the bride and bridegroom took possession of their new abode. Delima was triumphant, Armand contented because she was so, and Mrs. Martel, who had considerably invited herself to tea, under pretext of starting the young house keeper fairly on her way, majestic and complacent as though to say "all my work!"

Difficulties however soon beset the path. Each day brought with it a discovery more or less unwelcome. First, the kitchen swarmed with beetles and cockroaches, and Delima was so much afraid of these specimens of entomology that her shrieks were heard re-echoing through the house every time she decended to that region. The most approved method of getting rid of the plague was, of course at once adopted, though only with partial success.

Next the chimney smoked in the most capricious manner, sometimes, on the changing of the wind to certain quarters, threatening Armand and his wife with the fate of the inhabitants of Pompeii, in the shape of clouds of ashes whirled in their faces with masses of pungent smoke as they sat beside their fireside.

A recollect (chimney cowl) partly mended this, and their attention was then called to another grievance. The roof in one part of the house badly leaked and the moisture had slyly trickled down into the sacred closet where Delima's splendid holiday silk was suspended, and had elaborately streaked and spotted it all over like an arabesque scroll. These misadventures were repaired by the mending of the roof and the purchase of another dress.

Fate had not yet finished its persecutions, for the cellar was now invaded by rats, before the horror of whose presence, the terror inspired by the beetles faded into nothing. Into this latter stronghold of the enemy Delima would never venture alone, so Armand had to accompany her on pilgrimages for the *matériel* of her meals, till he felt he would almost prefer living on anchorite's fare, bread and water, if it would free him from the migratory state into which he was plunged, whenever he crossed the threshold of his abode. A cat was procured, but she confined her exertions to robbing the pantry and breaking an unimaginable amount of delf, till she became more destructive than the rats themselves.

Meanwhile how did Delima's house-keeping thrive? Did her husband find the reality come up to the golden visions she had previously indulged in?

The fact was that, bewildered by the appalling discoveries of each successive day, and distracted by plans and conjectures for remedying these evils, Armand scarcely

noted that the cakes were solid and heavy, the meats burned or rare according to the strength of the fire, and the soups, an indescribable mixture of greasy fluid with lumps of half raw vegetables swimming complacently through it. When the young husband alluded, which he only did at rare intervals to these phenomena, Delima indignantly asked how could she cook anything well, beset by all sorts of horrors as she was, and blinded, stupefied by smoking chimneys and leaking roofs.

The argument seemed good, at least Armand chose to take it as such, and he proposed remedying all their troubles by procuring additional aid in the shape of a girl whose equanimity would be proof against the terrors which exerted so powerful an influence on the nerves of Delima. The latter willingly assented to his proposal, and arrayed again in silken raiment, bejewelled and be-ringed, the young wife felt very important and dignified, issuing orders to her hand-maiden.

But alas, Lizette was somewhat susceptible, and a lively warfare was soon inaugurated between mistress and maid. Delima who had no idea of what true dignity consisted in, endeavored to make up by arrogance and constant fault-finding for the want of that calm justice and perfect self command so necessary to those whose lot it is to govern.

Every evening now when the hapless husband arrived at home, instead of that light feminine chit-chat which is a very pleasant thing in its time and place, or that perfect repose and quiet which often renders a domestic hearth equally agreeable, he had to listen to wearisome repetitions of Lizette's shortcomings, and of the series of outrages she had inflicted on her much enduring mistress.

"Why do you not send her away then and get another?" would Armand ask, distractedly running his hand through his thick wavy locks till they stood almost on end.

But that did not suit Mrs. Durand. She knew Lizette was an excellent servant industrious, hard-working and honest, and she only wanted the luxury of grumbling. Mrs. Martel's visits became more and more frequent, meanwhile, and her appearance at their social board a thing of more frequent recurrence.

The species of shame facedness which she had displayed during her first visits soon, disappeared, and gave place to tirades against the incompetency and uselessness of Lizette, interspersed with occasional hints intended for the reproof or edification of the head of the establishment.

One day that the two ladies were discussing the demerits of the much tried domestic, the kitchen door purposely left open, in order that she might profit

of this candid analysis of her character, Lizette burst impetuously into the room, informed its occupants that it was easy seeing they were not used to having servants—that she, Lizette, who had lived with real ladies before she came to them, could tell they were upstarts, and that she would not spend another night with them for any consideration.

Hereupon her young mistress recovering from the state of breathless amazement into which this onset had thrown her, sternly informed the excited abigail that if she carried her threat of leaving on such short notice, into execution, she would not only forfeit her month's wages but would also receive a character that would prevent any one else employing her.

The girl independently replied that when she wanted a character she would apply to one of the real ladies she had lived with.

Before the commencement of this exciting scene, Armand had hastily retreated into the inner room and closed the door, but of course the voices of the disputants penetrated full and clear through all intervening obstacles. He was not surprised therefore when Lizette shortly after made her appearance, and having briefly stated that she could not remain in the place any longer, asked for her wages. Having overheard all the provocation that had led to this outburst, Durand paid her demands without remark, and shortly after on glancing out of the window, beheld her, bundle in hand, passing out into the street.

A moment after Delima rushed breathlessly into the room, followed soon by Mrs. Martel.

"Surely, Armand, you did not pay her for this month?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Why not! Did you hear all the insolence she gave me? You did, you say, and you can ask why not! Armand Durand, you have not the spirit of a man, or you would not have sat tamely there whilst your wife was insulted and abused, and then have paid the wretch who did it."

Here Mrs. Martel groaned aloud.

"But you were two to one against her," answered Armand, "and certainly well able for your adversary."

"Ah, so not content with encouraging her by your silence—paying her the wages she had forfeited, you take her part, too?" angrily questioned the young wife.

A louder and more indignant groan from Mrs. Martel, and a cough, evidently preliminary to her taking active part in the engagement, at which, Armand hastily caught up his hat and muttering something about other business to attend to, left the house.

The business thus vaguely alluded to consisted in strolling about for an hour or so, till it was time to return to the office,

where he took his seat, mentally congratulating himself on having such a sure and tranquil asylum. As the hour of departure arrived, and he was gathering up almost unwillingly some books and papers he wished to take home with him, he was inexpressibly surprised by seeing the well dressed but old fashioned figure of *tante Françoise* entering at the door. She had come to town on unexpected business, and knowing she would find Armand at his office, had called there so as to have his escort to his new abode; for Delima in the first flush of gratitude consequent on the magnificent donation which had enabled them to commence housekeeping, had insisted pertinaciously on Mrs. Ratelle's promising that she would make her home with them whenever she should come to town. On arriving with his companion, at the comfortable little cottage in St Joseph street, Armand opened the door with his latch key, inwardly tormented by strong misgivings as to the frame of mind he would find his young wife in after the exciting scenes of the day.

The reality however he was totally unprepared for. The fires were out and the rooms empty and deserted, Delima having gone out with Mrs. Martel after previously concerting with the latter to punish her husband for his contumacy by spending the evening from home and leaving him to the resources of bachelor skill.

Everything was in the condition it had been in at the commencement of hostilities, the furniture disordered, the carpet littered with crumbs, scraps of thread, paper, whilst the door leading into the kitchen which stood half open, afforded a view of a table piled with unwashed dishes, an ashes-strewn hearth and an unswept floor.

The shock this spectacle inflicted on Aunt Françoise with her unbounded love of order and house-wifely neatness, was indescribable. Armand, mortified and confounded, muttered something about Delima having been obliged to go out with her cousin Mrs. Martel, their servant having suddenly left—the keeping of a domestic was a new revelation to his spell bound companion—and then prayed her to sit down whilst he lighted a fire, the one sole branch of domestic economy he had a clear idea of.

Silently she assented, and as her eye wandered from the slight handsome figure of her nephew bending over the sullen fire to the confusion and discomfort thrown as it were all around her, her thoughts went back to the early married life of Armand's father and her own repining at the choice he had made. As far as regarded domestic comfort or good management, there was a strange similarity apparently between the lot of father and son, but there, she ac-

knowledged to herself with a sinking heart, the resemblance ended.

The gentle, loving Genevieve would never have left her husband surrounded by discomfort and confusion, to seek amusement for herself elsewhere. At least, if she had not acquired the art of keeping her home in that exquisite order which renders the poorest hut attractive, she was always there to welcome him on his return with her soft sweet voice and loving looks and smiles. Mrs. Ratelle had once fearlessly expressed to her brother, her unqualified disapprobation of the system, or rather the want of it, that reigned in his household; for strong in his passionate love for his wife and in that wife's entire devotion to himself, he could bear to hear bitter or unpalatable truths; but what tower of strength had Armand to shelter him? Looking in his worn, saddened face and recalling all that she had heard, all that she herself had seen, the answer arose within her own aching heart—none—none.

Ah, not by one word of criticism or censure, however loudly called for, would she add one feather's weight to the burden that already weighed so heavily on him, and when he came towards her saying with forced cheerfulness: "At least, *tante Françoise*, if we have no supper we shall have a good fire," she quickly rose to her feet and smiled pleasantly, as she answered. "But indeed, nephew Armand, we shall have both!"

Having divested herself of her out door habiliments, she took up a towel lying on a chair near and after carefully pinning it so as to protect her dress, and fastening back the muslin strings of her cap, exclaimed: "Now you shall see that *la vieille tante* has not forgotten her olden craft."

Notwithstanding her nephew's remonstrances she entered with alacrity on the task of reducing the chaos that reigned in the kitchen to order. It was soon done, and not very long after a comfortable supper of hot toast, ham and eggs (the household larder was well stocked) laid on the table.

During the course of the meal she cheerfully questioned him about his prospects, expressing her satisfaction that he was pursuing his law studies so closely, but little, very little said she concerning his domestic affairs. Once only, after a long silence, she laid her hand softly on his and whispered, as she looked wistfully in his face: "Armand, my son, I fear you are not happy!"

He made no reply beyond kindly pressing her hand and slightly averting his face. Silence then fell on both again, and it lasted till a knocking at the door aroused them. Armand opened it and his young wife, with a half sullen, half defiant look on her beautiful face, entered.

"How do you like bachelor housekeeping?" she questioned, tartly. "You had so much sympathy for Lizette that—"

"*Tante Françoise* is here," he gravely interrupted. Confused and ashamed, Delima hastily turned, and as she embraced Mrs. Ratelle, the latter icily enduring, not returning the salute, muttered something about being sorry she had not known that she was coming, as she would have returned early to give her supper.

"Why, child, should you show more attention or kindness to me than you do to your husband? His claims on you are far greater than mine."

The pretty mouth pouted—the smooth young brow contracted, and with a slight toss of her head she turned away to undress.

How little had poor *tante Françoise* thought in those long past days when she bore so severely on Genevieve's miserable house-keeping, that a time would come when she would recall with aching yearning her loving smiles and gentle ways, feeling they almost atoned for all other deficiencies. Repining however was useless, and she resolved on avoiding all verbal expressions of it. Two days more she passed with the young couple, for she had business in town that compelled her to remain, and during that time she saw enough of Delima's management and of Armand's domestic felicity to make her wish that she had never come.

Her parting with the bride was rather a stormy one. She told her in quiet stern tones how deficient she found her in all the qualities that constituted a good wife, plainly intimating that future favors and presents would depend entirely on the amendment of Delima's conduct; and then when the latter waxed warm and impertinent, Aunt Ratelle held her peace and quietly left the house.

Rodolphe Belfond occasionally called to see his early college friend, but on all such occasions the young wife, instead of leaving her husband and visitor to enjoy a talk together, always joined them, dressed with elaborate elegance; and with her silly chatter and still more absurd affectation, contrived to render the visit wearisome to host and guest. At other times, when under the influence of ill temper, she contrived to make matters equally unpleasant, by scolding in a raised key at the much enduring successor to Lizette, or bustling in and out, with a great display of brushing, dusting, and cleaning, endeavoring to make her two victims feel uncomfortably awake to the impression that they were greatly in the way.

Fortunately Belfond was not much troubled with shyness or over sensitiveness, so he generally sat on, unmoved and unruffled in the midst of the storm, and thinking,

whilst he calmly contemplated the irate countenance of Delima, how quickly and thoroughly he would tame that beautiful shrew if he were in his friend's place, marvelling all the while at the latter's weakness, but pitying whilst he condemned him.

Care of, however, a deeper sort was beginning to brood over the young household. The money given by Mrs. Ratelle had been spent with a lavish thoughtlessness which that worthy lady had never contemplated.

The only branch of usefulness which Delima possessed in any degree was the knowledge of her needle, and in that she certainly excelled; but even though dresses, mantles and all the dainty little articles of ornament in which she so much delighted, as well as her husband's sewing or mending, were all done by herself, that one branch of economy could not atone for the utter want of system or good management which pervaded every other department of household government.

When the young wife asked for money, Armand at once gave it to her, generally without enquiring for what it was wanted, lest his doing so should bring on an altercation; but when the constant inroads thus made on their little fortune had terribly diminished it, and he began to enlarge on the fact and on the consequent necessity for economy, she paid but little heed, mentally re-assuring herself with the thought that when their purse was empty they could apply to *tante Françoise*. When this time came, and Delima, without consulting her husband, privately wrote to Mrs. Ratelle an epistle portraying in the most vivid terms their destitution, and which, notwithstanding the intense study and application it had cost her, was, nevertheless, a marvel of bad grammar and orthography, the answer soon came, short, sharp and decisive.

Mrs. Ratelle had already given them a sum sufficient, if managed with proper care to place them above the necessity of applying for assistance for a much longer period. Mrs. Durand must learn to be less extravagant in her dress and household expenditure before she could extend to her farther help. There was an expression of surprise too that young Mrs. Durand, who must necessarily have been brought up in habits of the strictest economy, should find it so difficult now to practice them.

In the first burst of anger excited by this frank communication, Delima showed it to her husband, but she was unprepared for the bitterness with which he upbraided her for having taken such a step without consulting him, and for the want of proper pride or dignity which had suffered her to make the appeal.

Little by little that part of the sum which was destined through the interest drawn from it, to afford them a small an-

nual income was expended, some of it having been devoted by Armand much against his wife's will to paying off various trifling debts contracted during the first months of their marriage, and with poverty thus close at hand, retrenchment was imperatively called for. The servant was dismissed, the expenses of dress and table diminished, and Delima, changing at once from one extreme to the other, degenerated from an over dressed puppet into a tawdry slattern. Of course character too participated in this change for the worst, and frowning discontented looks and weak wearisome repinings over her miserable destiny were now alone heard in our hero's unhappy home.

Mrs. Ratelle's customary New Year's gift of fifty pounds arrived in time to shield them from actual want, and Armand, after desperate efforts, procured some copying to do which brought him a trifling pittance in return for hours of close unremitting toil when his office hours were over. One by one many superfluous household articles, some of which need never have been purchased at all, were disposed of to supply present necessities, and over each sacrifice of this kind Delima would grieve and lament as if it were the severing of one of her heart strings.

Mrs. Martel, now a constant visitor at the cottage, would join vigorously in these lamentations, shaking her head, over and over again, and pitifully murmuring "Oh, my poor, poor Delima!" till Durand felt at times as if he would go distracted. On one occasion that the young wife had been unusually loud in her complaints, and her female relative equally so in her condolences, Armand reduced them to utter silence by turning on the visitor and informing her the best thing she could do for the happiness of all parties would be to take Delima back with her, and keep her till he had a wealthier or pleasanter home to offer her. But this outburst was a rare event, and the moral influence it exerted soon passed away, leaving his feminine adversaries again victors of the field.

Whilst bearing up as best he could against the adverse circumstances surrounding him, one day yielding to discouragement and despair, the next, renewing his resolves to battle bravely with his fate and conquer it if possible, a messenger arrived from Alonville, bidding him hasten thither immediately, as Mrs. Ratelle had been struck by paralysis and now lay at the point of death. Of course, Armand, grieved, shocked, prepared to start without a moment's delay, but Delima willingly availed herself of the excuse afforded by bad roads and inclement weather to decline accompanying him.

He arrived in time to receive good kind

tante Françoise's last blessing, to hear a few words of advice and sympathy, when another stroke of the relentless enemy closed the scene. The desolation of Armand's feelings as he stood beside that rigid, motionless form, no words could convey. She was the last being on earth who really loved him (all faith in his wife's affection had long since passed way); that dulled cold ear the only one in which he cared to whisper his griefs or plans, and now the future that lay before him was uncheered by hope of sympathy from any true or loving heart.

A few measured quiet words passed between himself and Paul, the latter awkward and constrained, the elder brother pre-occupied and indifferent, but that was the extent of their intercourse.

After the funeral, which the brothers followed side by side, the village notary put a letter in Armand's hand which Mrs. Ratelle had directed should be given him after her death, adding, at the same time, that he was ready to read to him the will of the deceased. The epistle, dated the morning before Armand's arrival, was written tremulously, almost illegibly, but, was tenderly affectionate in strain, sympathizing with him in his unhappiness, and bidding him look for consolation to that source whence she so abundantly derived it, the hope of a future life. She then went on to say, that with the exception of some charitable bequests and a present to Paul, she left Armand her sole heir, but foreseeing from Delima's extravagance and his own thoughtlessness where money was concerned (amply proved by the lavish manner in which the large sum she had before put them in possession of had been expended) that if the legacy were left them, free from any restraining conditions, it would speedily be spent, leaving them soon again a prey to poverty, she desired that Armand should only receive the yearly interest of the money bequeathed him, for the space of seven years, at the expiration of which time he should enter on its enjoyment, untrammelled by farther conditions.

When our hero was again reinstated in his home, and related to his wife the details of Mrs. Ratelle's death and the contents of the will, Delima could scarcely conceal her disappointment.

"Only a hundred and twenty pounds a year for seven long years!" she discontentedly repeated. "Just a little more than the sum we have been starving on. Why we may both be dead before the close of that time."

"If so it would not prove an event greatly to be regretted," rejoined Armand, speaking out of the bitterness of his heart, "surely our life is not such a pleasant one!"

"It would be if we had plenty of money," was the unwomanly reply.

"No amount of money could bring happiness to our home," sorrowfully thought the young husband, but he held his peace.

CHAPTER XVII.

A few more months of weary struggling—battling with poverty and domestic troubles—then another change in the drama. Mr. Labaise, the kind and intelligent lawyer with whom Armand studied, was taken ill, and after many alternations from worse to better, paid the debt of nature.

This last stroke was most keenly felt by our hero. It seemed to him that, one by one, every human being, who had loved or shown him any interest was taken away. He did not reflect that they were ripe in years—their deaths, events in the order of nature to be soon expected—he only felt the dull blank each decease left in his life and hopes. For many days after Mr. Labaise's funeral, he remained quiet—inactive at home, occupying himself with a pretence of copying some law papers, but in reality yielding more and more to the discouragement creeping over him.

Was it apathy, or was it illness? He could not tell which. He knew no farther time should be lost in seeking out a successor to the late Mr. Labaise under whose auspices he might continue his legal studies, but a strange aversion to the profession he had embraced, was taking possession of him. "How," he mentally asked himself, "could he afford to lose so much valuable time acquiring knowledge that might never bring him any return. Even if he successfully pursued his legal studies and passed his examination (a thing which in his present state of despondency he felt very doubtful of) what assurance had he that clients would come—briefs be given him? At the very best it would be long before such could be the case, and in the meantime debts and difficulties were closing in around him and poverty sitting like a spectre at his hearth-side.

One dark stormy morning he had risen with these thoughts, and they had clung to him with relentless pertinacity through its course. Heedless of Delima's reproaches regarding his idleness—of her loud lamentations over her fate, he sat with head bowed in his hands, motionless as a statue, through long, weary hours, not planning nor proposing, but blankly yielding to despair.

Suddenly a friendly hand was laid on his shoulder, and a friendly voice cheerfully exclaimed: "Halloa, Armand, you have been taking a nap. I have said good day to you twice and have not yet had an answer."

Armand looked up with a forced smile, endeavoring, evidently, to frame a reply, when Delima's shrill voice interposed.

"Indeed, then, he has chosen a wrong time to take daylight naps in, when we have scarcely the price of a dinner in the house. He would in spite of me fritter away the greater part of this month's money in paying debts, as if we could afford that!"

"I sold my watch yesterday morning, and surely the price of it has not all gone for the few scanty meals we have had since then," replied the young husband, wearily.

Delima reddened. She had not expected such frankness on his part before a third party, but, determined not to be put down, retorted: "It will be though, before you think of getting me any more, and then, I suppose we may starve."

Armand passed his hand across his forehead, while an unusual look of suffering clouded his dark languid looking eyes.

"My dear Mrs. Durand," interposed Belfond, controlling with great difficulty his intense indignation at her ill-humor and heartlessness, "you see that your husband is not well. Pray leave him alone with me for a short while, as I have something of importance to say to him."

In her tawdry untidy state, her splendid wavy hair escaping here and there in disorderly masses from her comb, she flounced from the room.

"Confound her!" escaped from the visitor's lips before he had time to check himself.

The languid eyes looked sorrowfully at him, and he hurriedly, entreatingly said:

"Forgive me, Armand, for Heaven's sake, but at the sight of you, so worried and ill-looking I scarcely know what I am doing or saying. Oh, friend, friend, I could cry like a very woman to see you thus," and he tenderly laid his hand on that of his companion, whilst his honest manly eyes filled with tears.

"But, *diantre!*" he abruptly said, hastily dashing away these evidences of weakness, "it was not to indulge in jeremiades I came here but to see if I could not be of service to you. You need not flush up so hotly! I know if I offered you money or loan, you would say as you did before, had you intended accepting either, you would not have exposed your wants so openly, though, indeed, in your place I would not stand in such an absurd manner on my dignity. 'Tis something else I would propose to you, and which you can accept without forfeiting one tittle of that independence on which you set such store. I have written to my cousin Duchesne in Quebec, who is one of the leading lawyers there, and will willingly take you into his office at giving you all the advantages, and many more than you enjoyed with

haise. The fact is he is most anxious to have you with him, having heard your character and abilities very highly spoken of in several quarters."

Armand, suspecting to whose good offices the interest taken in him by Mr. Duchesne was attributable, shook his head.

"Belfond, waverings are at an end, and my mind firmly made up to abandon the profession chosen in more prosperous times."

"No, no, you will not do that Armand! you will not play so cowardly a part. Listen to me. Sell off your furniture here. The proceeds of sale will not only enable you to pay your expenses and those of your wife to Quebec but leave you with something in hand. Arrived there, take a room in some respectable quiet boarding house, and then enter cousin Duchesne's office at once. If you are too selfish, too stiff-necked to give me the pleasure of lending you what I know you will soon be able to repay, you will still have enough to start with in the struggle, and you can rough it in Quebec as you have done here. Duchesne has promised me that he will ensure you plenty of copying—you can take a couple of scholars in the evening, if necessary, in short, do anything rather than give up the profession on whose dry thorny road you have already advanced so far, and which may ultimately lead you to honor and fortune."

"But success is so uncertain," muttered Armand, "and the period of probation so long. I might be able to procure at once some situation or clerkship which would bring me in a good salary."

"And, what then? You would still perhaps be a clerk at the same salary in five years from this. Still, the idea would be a very fair one if you had not already entered on another career. Listen, Armand! Promise to give cousin Duchesne a trial."

"Do you remember, Rodolphe, that long past day in our college life, which witnessed the beginning of this our true and lasting friendship, and yet whose first step was my springing at your throat like a bull dog and nearly strangling you. Well, as I stood then, at bay, harassed, desperate, enemies and troubles all around me, so do I now stand to-day."

"But, you forget, with a true friend at your side, who, unluckily for you, has the foible of always wanting to give you advice. You see, one great advantage that will result from your removal to Quebec will be the freeing your wife from the pernicious influence of that old she-dragon relative of hers, who, I suppose, is always putting mischief into her pretty little head. If after having tried my plan, you still continue to sigh for a change, I will undertake to procure you a good situation later. I

have friends and cousins too among our Quebec merchants."

Long Belfond reasoned and persuaded, his friend wavering more and more, till he finally yielded, and when they separated the look of blank despair had passed from Armand's countenance.

When our hero first announced his intention of removing his household gods to Quebec, a rare domestic scene ensued. Delima wept, stormed, all but fainted, and Mrs. Martel loudly declared that the shock of a separation in her present delicate state of health would kill her—that none but a madman or monster would think of dragging a delicate young creature away among strangers from the friends she was so deeply attached to. To all this Armand had but one answer, which was a perfect stronghold as it were against the enemy.

If his young wife found the arrangement so unbearable, she was at perfect liberty to remain with her friends. This proposition, however, not meeting the general views either, hostilities were abandoned, lest, perhaps in a fit of anger he should enforce it, and Delima contented herself with going about the house in a state of tearful misery. Their wardrobes were packed up and the auction held. This latter was quite successful, many trifling articles being bid upon, or bought up at comparatively high prices by an humble looking though comfortably dressed individual in the crowd, whom no one suspected of being a messenger of Rodolphe Belfond.

With a dark wintry sky overhead whose gray clouds presaged a heavy snow storm though a considerable quantity had already fallen the previous night, our hero set out with his young wife for the new city in which they were to try their fortunes. The appearances of the weather were so little encouraging that he would willingly have delayed his departure for another day, but the farmer who had agreed to take them for a moderate sum in his comfortable carriage, could not wait. They brought but one small trunk containing changes of wearing apparel, Belfond having undertaken to see the remainder forwarded by the first safe opportunity.

When they started, Delima was sobbing bitterly, Armand revolving dreary thoughts and sombre anticipations, and both so pre-occupied that they were almost unconscious of the thickly falling snow and the murky sky over head. They stopped for dinner at a little village inn, where a plate of excellent soup and a mutton fricassee was served to them, and of which Delima, who was beginning to recover her spirits, having had her cry out, heartily partook. They were soon *en route* again but in consequence of the quantity of snow that had fallen, the roads were very heavy, and the stout Cana-

dian horse whose sinews seemed made of iron floundered and struggled gallantly on in the midst of the snow-drifts, shaking back, every now and then from eyes and mane the icy particles plentifully besprinkling them.

How eagerly the travellers began to look forward to their arrival at the little village, in the inn of which they were to pass the night. The wind was keen and sharp, but Armand contrived to keep his wife well shielded from its biting breath by the thick buffalo robes with which they were liberally provided. At length lights began to twinkle through the snow filled atmosphere, and with a sentiment of intense satisfaction the wearied party drew up at the long looked for inn. Travellers had preceded them, for the sound of voices came through the door of the little parlor which was ajar, and there was a great bustle and appetizing odor about the stove, in the outer apartment close to which a couple of farmers were smoking and drinking.

Delima in wretched temper seated herself on the chair nearest at hand, but the host at once asked Madame and Monsieur to step into the other room. They did so, and found themselves most unexpectedly in the presence of Mrs. and Miss de Beauvoir.

Armand, overcome with astonishment, fell back a step or two, his cheek crimson, and then recovering himself, bowed politely to both ladies. Mrs. de Beauvoir replied by a stately though civil inclination of her head, but Gertrude, apparently beset by the same embarrassment which had taken possession of young Durand, colored deeply, then hesitatingly bowed.

Delima recognized the ladies at once, having occasionally seen them in public whilst in Montreal. She noticed the mutual though momentary embarrassment of her husband and the high bred, aristocratic young girl, who, she felt, despite her own rare beauty and elaborately elegant dress, was yet so vastly her superior.

Piqued at this—piqued at the coldness of the strangers, which afforded no encouragement to an introduction or acquaintance, she asked with an air of affected dignity: "Could he not get one of the servants to help her in taking off her wraps?"

"They are too busy," he whispered. "Pray let me do it?"

Bent on showing her importance and her power over her husband, she peevishly retorted: "No, you are too awkward. Do go and see if you cannot get me proper assistance."

What could he do but yield? Refusal would only bring on a scene.

After a short absence he returned. "'Tis as I feared, Delima, every one is busy."

"'Tis too bad," she exclaimed with the

same ridiculous air of self assertion. "What a miserable place you have stopped at! Well, help me off with my cloak!"

Armand fairly overwhelmed with mortification and shame, endeavored to comply, conscious all the while, that the cold, sarcastic gaze of Mrs. de Beauvoir was bent upon them. Her daughter either through compassion for our hero, or impatience at the absurd pretensions of his companion, had seated herself with a book near the tallow candle that burned dimly on the table, and however her attention may have wandered from its pages, her eyes never did.

The servant soon came in to lay the table for supper, and the comedy in which Delima was chief actress, continued. Though the two ladies who were accustomed to every luxury, found no verbal fault with the repast, Mrs. de Beauvoir contenting herself with shuddering when she tasted the tea and inspected the pork omelette, which latter she left untouched on her plate, Delima, who partook liberally enough of both, was loud in her condemnation of everything. A couple of times she had contrived to whisper to her husband: "Introduce me to them," and fearing that she would be overheard, he took the first step towards satisfying her by endeavoring to get up a few words of conversation with Mrs. de Beauvoir.

To his inquiry if she intended proceeding on her journey the following morning, despite the condition of the roads, she briefly, answered "yes." Nothing but the difficulty of travelling by night in such heavy roads would have induced her to remain so long in their present abode.

He then enquired if Mr. de Courval were well. "Yes, thank you," and she rose from the supper table as if to terminate the conversation. "Come, Gertrude," she said, turning to her daughter. "It is time to retire."

"You ought to feel proud of your polite town friends!" whispered Delima, with angry sarcasm, as both ladies with a slight inclination left the room.

Gertrude, who was last, overheard the remark, and she involuntarily glanced towards them, but there was more of sadness in its expression than of anger at the rudeness of the remark she had overheard.

Delima noticed the look and made it an excuse for the outburst of rage and mortification to which she gave way as the door closed behind them.

How dare they treat her with the insolent contempt they had done?—Was she not as good as them?—And what a craven he was to stand tamely by and see her thus insulted. Ah! if he had possessed the spirit of a man he would not have borne it.

"What would you have had me do?" he at last sternly asked. "They did not want to know you nor myself either."

But remonstrance or rebuke were alike unavailing whilst such a tempest of wrath agitated Delima's breast. Her dignity, her pride had been in her opinion shamelessly outraged, and feeling the inutility of opposing her farther, Armand turned with a smothered groan to the window and leaned his hot and throbbing brow against it, staring with vacant look at the white dashes of snow and sleet that every now and then struck against the panes.

Mentally rose before him, in sharp contrast, that dignified, refined girl, and the shallow, violent tempered, though beautiful woman who called him husband, and whose raised angry voice was even now sounding in his ear.

He shuddered and felt he understood now how men committed suicide and the train of reflection that led to such a desperate deed. Yes, but for the restraining thought of a future existence, he could, he would free himself from life and its intolerable bondage.

At length, exhausted by her own vehemence, Delima came to a stop, and abruptly opening the door, called to a female servant passing to conduct her to her bed-room. The latter assented, and Armand was left alone. Still he stood at the gloomy window, watching the storm outside, dreary as that reigning within his own aching heart, when he became conscious of fresh arrivals at the inn. The neighing of horses, tinkle of bells, sounds of cheerful voices broke on the night's stillness, and there was stamping of feet as the travellers shook off the snow clinging to them; in the outer room, and merry calls for a good supper and for something hot in the meantime to restore impeded circulation. The voices, cultivated enough, were somewhat familiar to Armand, and as he was just wondering under what circumstances he had heard them before, the door was thrown open, and Robert Lesperance and one of his intimate friends entered. Their delight on seeing Armand was rapturous, and the latter vainly strove to draw back. They did not—they would not see that their noisy mirth was unwelcome, and pipes, with hot water, sugar and rum, were loudly called for, whilst he was playfully forced to the table and seated between them.

Glasses were speedily replenished, for the new comers were hard drinkers, and they insisted on doing the same for Armand, Lesperance himself preparing his portion and making it additionally strong and sweet. "Now," whispered Armand's better angel, "leave them. You have had enough, return to your wife!" but the thought of being exposed again that night to the latter's

merciless tongue was intolerable, so he determined on remaining where he was, but he would take no more than the one tumbler Lesperance was so energetically and persistently forcing upon him. When that was finished, however, a strange exhilaration had taken possession of him, and he felt that a Lethe was at hand which could afford him at least a few hours' oblivion of his troubles.

Why should he not profit of it? Yes, he would do so in future, fully—recklessly. The stigma attached to a drunkard's name, the dishonor, poverty and ruin attendant on the victim of intemperance, would not restrain him henceforth. What had life for him worth living, caring, or toiling for? Nothing!

Deliberately he would give himself up to the terrible temptation so suddenly besetting his path.

Surprised, delighted at this easy compliance in one who had been so remarkable heretofore for strict self command, Lesperance and his friend sang gay songs, told gay stories, all the while plying their victim with full glasses, till at length they had the satisfaction of seeing him slide gradually down on the sofa, utterly, stupidly intoxicated.

Then they congratulated themselves on their work and laughed over it. He had always been so cursedly finical and stand off—so moral and correct, that it was a perfect triumph to have pulled him down from the pedestal on which he had planted himself. What amusement they would have with some of the fellows when they got back to Montreal, telling the story. But what a pity it was that Armand was not amusing in his cups. Not one word had he uttered that might not have been said whilst he was sober. Perhaps he would prove more entertaining the next time. At least they would give him a chance, and with such light talk they dragged the sleeper into an easy position on the sofa, put the pillows of the latter under his head, and then throwing his own heavy cloak which lay on an adjoining chair, over him, left the room.

Early the following morning, Armand was awakened by the maid servant coming in to set the room in order, and singularly enough, no unpleasant symptom of his last night's revel remained, beyond a slight headach. This latter he got rid of by stepping into the kitchen and immersing his head and face in cold water. Then having smoothed his thick wavy hair as best he could, he returned to the sitting room.

He understood it all. The empty tumblers and other traces of the recent revel—the sofa on which he had passed the night. Yes—he had yielded freely, fully to the tempter! Now that his pulse was calm, his

forehead cool; now that reason had returned to her throne, was he sorry for the past?

A sullen look stole over his face and his heart answered "no." He recalled the exhilaration, the recklessness, the oblivion his self-indulgence had brought to him, and he resolved to return to it again. No price could be too dear to pay for such a blessed break in the weary, monotonous misery of his life!

He was sitting absorbed in these thoughts, his eyes fixed on the floor, when the door softly opened, then shut, and raising his eyes he saw Gertrude de Beauvoir standing before him. Her face was very pale and she leaned one hand on the table as if for support.

In a low hurried voice she said: "Armand Durand, may I speak to you with the freedom, the frankness of a friend?"

Too much surprised and agitated to answer in words, the young man merely bowed his head.

"I would ask you then by the memory of the parents who so dearly loved you—of the respect you have hitherto won from friend and foe,—by the recollection of our boy and girl friendship to solemnly promise that you will never yield again to the temptation that mastered you so completely last night?"

Armand's face crimsoned. Ah, she knew all his degradation then. Well, what was it to her, this proud beautiful being, so far removed from his sphere—from him and his?

Something of the sullen look that had clouded his brow when she had first entered, again stole over it and he answered:

"Thanks, Miss de Beauvoir, for the generous interest you display in my welfare, but I would not like to bind myself in the manner you ask. Temptations strong and irresistible may arise, and I will have enough to answer for in yielding to them without having also violated promises to add to the number of my misdeeds."

"I will not take this for my answer. I have risked my mother's anger—your wife's insults—the mockery of your boon companions to make you this appeal. Surely, surely, you will listen to it."

"Miss de Beauvoir, I dare not. Resolutions of doing better, I freely offer, but beyond that, I dare not venture. I have tasted once of the cup of oblivion and the draught was too welcome to permit of my solemnly abjuring it."

"But the noble promises of your manhood—the talents that God has bountifully endowed you with, are all these to be exchanged for a drunkard's degraded life—a drunkard's early and unhallowed death?"

"Life is not so very pleasant to me that I should cling to it," he bitterly rejoined.

"Oh, I know that, Armand," and she

involuntarily clasped her hands, whilst her eyes filled with tears. "I heard all that passed. My mother and myself occupy the room next to this, and, despite all efforts of ours, every word was audible through the thin board partition. Then when she left you, they came, and who can wonder that, sorely tried as you had been, tempted in your hour of weakness, you fell. I could scarcely refrain from seeking your side to dash the glass from your hand, but my mother was with me and I dared not. Then I heard them triumphing over your fall—laying plans for tempting you in the future, and I vowed to myself, oh, Armand Durand, that with the morning's light I would seek and try to save you!"

Greatly affected, Armand could not trust himself to speak, and after vainly waiting for an answer she went on, rapidly, tremulously.

"You are not the only one to whom the burden of life is a heavy one. Ah! it is no rose leaf to myself, but we must not look earthward for our reward! Arm yourself with generous courage then, and instead of weakly sinking on the field, battle bravely on till the end."

Still he spoke not, and fearing a final refusal, she hurriedly added:

"In pity listen to me! You will not misjudge the step I have taken and call me unmaidenly; but, if I am seen here, others will. Still, even with the fear of that before me, till you give me the promise I ask, I will not go."

"Be it as you will, noble, true-hearted friend," he answered. "I promise you solemnly by all I hold most sacred—by my honor as a man and Christian, to never drink of that fatal Lethe again. I will at least endeavor to prove myself worthy of the generous interest you have deigned to take in one so unworthy as myself."

Her whole face lighted up, and she joyfully whispered: "I know that promise will be faithfully kept, and, now, take this ring," and she removed a valuable ruby from her finger. "Wear it, not in remembrance of the donor, but of the solemn promise you made in the hour it was presented to you."

The ring, which was too large for Gertrude and had been always worn in consequence with a guard, fitted Armand perfectly.

"To be worn," he said, passing it on his finger, "as my promise will be kept—till death!"

"Thank you, Mr. Durand, and now, farewell. We leave this morning, and I probably will not see you again."

They shook hands and parted. When Armand was alone he reverently bowed his head and asked for grace to keep his promise inviolate, thanking God, too, that there were such women in this miserable world as Gertrude de Beauvoir. The friendship erinced for him by this generous, noble-minded girl,

raised him even in his own estimation, recalling the high, earnest aspirations that once were his, and filling him with a fervent resolve to be true in future to the better part of his nature. He was standing at the window, revolving such thoughts and watching the sun that now shone gloriously down on a world of snowy crystals and glittering diamonds, when his wife entered the room.

"You are a kind attentive husband?" was her irate address.

Armand here indicated by a sign that the next room was occupied, on which she at once lowered her voice without changing the spirit of her speech.

"It was a shame for you to leave me alone a whole night in a strange house and in a miserable closet of a room, full of half-famished rats and mice that kept me awake in mortal terror the whole night long."

"Well, Delima, you left me so abruptly, and had said so much before leaving, that I did not care to expose myself to hear more by following you."

"Where then did you pass the night? Smoking and drinking, I suppose."

"You have not divined all the truth yet! Lying on that sofa, stupidly intoxicated. If you doubt the truth of my words, ask Lesperance and his friend, who were the companions of my revel."

Delima's cheek paled. She had seen enough of the evils and horrors of drunkenness (her father having died a victim of that terrible vice) to make her shrink in terror from the idea of a drunkard for a mate. Armand's refined nature—his abhorrence of low or degraded vice had lulled her into a dream of false security from which she now awoke in terror.

Yes, she saw the precipice on whose fearful brink she and her husband stood, and conscience whispered that her own unbridled tongue and temper were the chief causes of his yielding to temptation.

Yet despite all that, she angrily turned on him saying: "How can you have the face to tell me such a thing, Armand? You should be ashamed of yourself. Ah! I foresaw what my fate would be when I consented to leave friends and home. I suppose you want to break my heart so as soon to be rid of me?" and she burst into a paroxysm of low but passionate weeping.

He looked at her, mentally contrasting her in her unwomanly harshness, her weak, fretful waywardness with the young girl who a little while previous had stood where she stood now, and a thought flashed across him that one seemed like his good, the other his evil angel. That thought however was immediately repressed, and he felt relieved when the sound of voices and tinkle of bells called Delima in a sudden impulse of curiosity to the window. It was as she had guessed. Mrs. de Beauvoir

and her daughter were stepping into their richly equipped sleigh, which was drawn by a pair of splendid chestnut horses.

Grief and anger were alike forgotten in the interest excited by this spectacle, and hastily drying her eyes, she enquired of the servant who entered at the moment to prepare the table for the morning meal, "If the ladies were leaving without taking any breakfast?"

"No; breakfast, for which they had paid liberally, had been served to them in their own room, but it remained almost untouched. The elder lady seemed greatly annoyed by the loss of her night's rest owing to the noise going on in the next room."

Armand winced. The girl who spoke was unconscious that the quiet, gentlemanly young man before her, was one of the ruthless disturbers of Mrs. de Beauvoir's repose, but, not the less deeply did he feel the shame, the humiliation of the moment, and it required a glance at the ruby that glistened on his finger, to restore his self-possession.

Delima indemnified herself for the disappointment of having lost a second meeting with the de Beauvoir ladies by assuming an extraordinary amount of state during breakfast, at which meal they were joined by Lesperance and his friend. She had at first intended upbraiding the latter two mirthful spirits with great acrimony for the share they had had in Armand's shortcomings of the night previous; but suddenly remembering the silent quiet dignity of Gertrude, and the cold hauteur of her mother, she enveloped herself in a mantle, as it were, composed of the characteristics of both, and thus agreeably disappointed her husband who was endeavoring to prepare himself for a scene of some sort or other. At the same time she greatly imposed on the other two guests, who secretly wondered where Durand's little country wife had picked up such "quality manners" as they phrased it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The journey to Quebec was performed without farther incident. They arrived late in the evening, and Lesperance, who was thoroughly acquainted with that ancient city, piloted them to a cheap inn in the lower town where they could pass the time till Armand would have found out a boarding house.

"Now, Durand, come and join us," said Lesperance, heartily, after Delima, thoroughly worn out with her fatiguing journey, had retired for the night. "Come, we will have pipes and glasses in and make a night of it! Don't shake your head so solemnly, old fellow. Think what a good

time we had at the Maple Leaf yesterday and you not a bit the worse for it next morning!"

"It was the first night of the kind, Lesperance, that I ever spent, and I firmly intend that it shall be the last. 'Tis useless asking, now, for neither persuasion nor mockery can move me."

Still the tempter persisted. He did not want to lead Armand into any excess—he only wished that they should pass a social merry evening together, but ever between him and the one whose fall he sought to compass, the calm noble face of Gertrude rose up, at once a shield and safe-guard.

A cheap and tolerably comfortable boarding house was found by our hero next day, and he and his wife installed in it without delay. He then sought out Mr. Duchesne and on presenting a letter furnished him by Belfond, was received with marked civility and at once assigned his place in the office which differed very little from the one he had occupied in the rival city except that it was still dingier, darker and dirtier.

Of course Delima fretted and murmured. She found the hills fearfully steep and slippery—the streets narrow and dirty, and the shops small and mean in their exterior but extortionate in their prices. To these complaints, childish though they were, the young husband listened with more sympathy than he had been accustomed to vouchsafe her latterly, for Delima's health was anything but satisfactory. So thought the experienced physician whom he lost no time in consulting, and who prescribed delicate nourishment, good wine, daily driving, when the invalid felt unequal to the fatigue of walking, with apparently very little beneficial result.

Either the total separation from that arch mischief maker, Mrs. Martel, or the hopes of coming maternity exercised a very softening influence on Delima's character. Of childish fretfulness and complaints there was still any amount, enough to put Doctor Meunier at times out of all patience; but the olden spirit of arrogance and aggression was entirely laid at rest. Her dependence on Armand was now carried into the smallest details, and as the hour approached for his return, she would seat herself near the window of their little room watching for him. If he were at all behind time, a thing sometimes the case, where messages often devolved on him, she would upbraid him with his neglect and indifference, declaring he remained away because he found the time passed with her, wearisome.

To a man of a less generous or gentle disposition than Armand Durand was, all this would have proved intolerably irksome, but he found an excuse for all moods of her waywardness in her ailing health and lonely,

isolated condition. They had no friends or acquaintances in Quebec, and they formed none. Armand knew a few lawyers or students, some of whom he had previously met in Montreal, but the intimacy proceeded no farther than a bow, or perhaps a hand-greeting in the street. Fortunately for Delima, her landlady was a kind, motherly person, but her house-keeping cares, united to her anxieties respecting her boarders and three small children, left her little leisure to talk or listen to her new lodger.

New Year's day was at hand, and it dawned on the old city with a sun of wonderful brilliancy, but, though the cold was severe, the sleighing was splendid and the sky without a cloud. The streets were filled with horses of every color and vehicles of every description, these latter crowded chiefly with the sterner sex, for on that special festival, the feminine part of the population remain at home to receive their male friends. Dressed in a plain, dark dressing gown, for her love of finery and dress seemed almost to have deserted her, Delima looking very quiet and dull was seated in her easy arm chair which was drawn up close to the window to enable her to look on the gay scene without.

A quick light step sounded on the stairs and Armand entered.

"See, Mrs. Durand," he gaily said, "I have brought you your *étrennes*" (New Year's gift) and as he spoke, he opened and handed her a tiny pasteboard box, where, nestling in a layer of cotton wadding, was a small though very pretty brooch.

She took it whilst a faint smile lighted up her beautiful face, and with an attempt at her olden coquetry, fastened it in her dress.

"It becomes you very well indeed, but next year we must have something costlier."

This speech touched some painful chord or presentiment in the young wife's breast and bursting into tears she sobbed forth: "Armand, Armand, my heart tells me—I shall never see another New Year!"

Grieved by her despondency, Durand did his best to coax or laugh her out and taking her hand he gently said:

"Say, dear wife, is there anything you would wish me to do for you?"

"I have but one wish in the world now, but I know you would never consent to it, so I need not name it."

An inkling of the truth flashed across our hero's mind, causing him to fairly shudder with dismay, but he looked at the pale tearful young face beseechingly raised to his, and he courageously asked: "What is it?"

"To have cousin Martel here to take care of me through all my troubles?"

Armand's mind took in at once the worry, the domestic storms, the intense discomfort comprehended in this simple sentence, and he remained silent.

His companion went on: "You know old Miss Duprez who occupied the little room next to us has gone to spend the winter with her friends in Three Rivers, so we could get it for cousin Martel. She would willingly come if we asked her, and it would be such a comfort to have her with me instead of sitting moping alone here all day. Oh, do, dear Armand, consent!"

It was not in Durand's nature to refuse, so he rejoined, "I suppose I must not say no to any request made on New Year's day, so write to her when you like, and tell her we will pay all her expenses."

"How good you are, Armand! I fear she would not come without that. I had to pay her out of the house-keeping money for the pretty dresses she bought me when I first came from St. Laurent. And now let me look again at my pretty brooch. I have not felt so cheerful for a long time.

Whatever Durand's secret thoughts were, he kept them to himself, and New Year's day closed more pleasantly for the young couple than it had dawned.

Mrs. Martel most willingly accepted the invitation, and in what seemed to the young husband a miraculously short time, arrived with her trunk and handboxes. Lodged and boarded at Armand's expense, she felt obliged to behave at least tolerably well, but her eternal presence in the one little room appertaining to him was in itself a sore trial. Of course the invalid now consumed, mysteriously enough, a double quantity of wine and dainties, without gaining any extra plumpness thereby, but Armand found no fault as long as he was able to meet all these extra expenses, which he contrived to do by practising rigid economy where his personal tastes or pleasures were concerned, and by toiling late and early over the copying which Mr. Duchesne, in pursuance of a promise made to Belfond, plentifully procured him. One afternoon that he had mentioned to Delima the probability of his early return, owing to a half holiday granted at the office, he was agreeably surprised on entering to find her alone.

"Where is Mrs. Martel?" he asked.

"I have sent her out on a couple of messages that will keep her busy till dark. The truth is, Armand, I am tired of her."

"Well that is something new! I fear next you will be growing tired of myself and sending me off also!"

"Ah, there is no danger of that! Since I have lived with you here alone, without some one always talking ill of you, and putting mischief into my head, I feel very different-

ly toward's you. Armand, I have been anything but a good wife."

"Nonsense, little Delima, don't mind that. We'll all turn over a new and very pleasant leaf soon."

"You will turn it over alone, my husband, and I honestly wish it may be a happy one!" was the quiet, low toned reply.

"Why, I'll really begin to wish for old cousin Martel, after all if you talk in this unreasonable manner. No, no, it was decreed that you should die a judge's wife, and when we remember that I have not passed my examination yet, you will see there is a long lease of life allotted you."

She shook her head, but made no attempt to prevent her husband from diverting the conversation into a more cheerful channel.

Both the young people looked up regretfully when Mrs. Martel, flushed and important, bustled into the room. After loquaciously detailing the fatigues of her expedition, her escapes from falls on slippery side-walks, runaway horses, from robbers under guise of extortionate shop-keepers, she displayed her purchases, enlarging on her own superior skill in bargaining, as successfully opposed to the chicanery of the tradesman with whom she had had to contend.

This latter fruitful topic exhausted she suddenly discovered that the apartment was cold, and flinging back the stove door with a loud crash, threw in several billets of wood, wondering all the while, how Armand could sit quietly there and let the room get so very cold.

"But it is quite warm enough, cousin Martel, and we have already an excellent fire."

"Besides," interposed Armand, "Dr. Meunier has specially interdicted keeping the room too hot. He says it weakens Delima."

"That!" for Dr. Meunier's opinions, or indeed for those of any other inexperienced young man," and she disdainfully snapped her fingers together. "I should think I know something about nursing and sick rooms by this time."

Here it must be premised that a brisk warfare had been inaugurated between Delima's medical attendant and Mrs. Martel, from the first arrival of the latter, that worthy matron instinctively opposing every injunction or recommendation of the higher authority.

Dr. Meunier would cheerfully enter the room and after commenting on the beauty of the weather, suggest a walk or a drive, according to circumstances.

"Just Heavens! Go out to-day, Doctor! Why she would freeze to death. Look outside at the icicles hanging to the horses' noses!"

"She needn't look at them, ma'am, if

they frighten her," would be the unceremonious reply.

Or, perhaps he would make his visit on some occasion when under favor of Armand's absence and her own management the apartment was hot as a furnace, and he would savagely inquire: "Which object she had in view—roasting the patient alive at once or weakening her to death by the same atrocious expenditure of caloric."

"Weakening her indeed, Doctor!" Mrs. Martel would indignantly reply; "A good fire, or good food never weakened anybody yet."

"I want no old woman's fancies, if you please, ma'am, in this sick room. They have killed more unfortunates than disease has ever done."

"You want to kill her your own way!" his feminine antagonist would murmur *sotto voce*.

In Dr. Meunier's absence his orders were still more systematically set at defiance. The open air exercise or drive would be adjourned to a more favorable day—the stove piled full of wood, and more than this the physician's tonics or draughts set aside under plea that a bowl of broth or a glass of warm negus would prove more beneficial than nasty drugs.

Now, though Mrs. Martel had no faith in the physician's preparations, she had a considerable amount of it in her own *tisanes*, and liberally supplied the invalid with them. This latter measure, however, was known only to herself, for quiet as Armand was in other respects, she knew he would never tolerate so audacious a revolt against medical authority.

Though probably ignorant of the half of Mrs. Martel's shortcomings, Dr. Meunier had already expressed his opinion regarding her, in the plainest terms to our hero, concluding his remarks on one occasion, by saying: "Were she a hired nurse, Mr. Durand, I should certainly take her by the shoulders and turn her out."

In consequence of this opinion, Armand sounded his wife as to the possibility of their visitor being induced to shorten her stay at present, under the condition of making up for it by a longer visit at a later time, but the mention of such a thing threw Delima into a paroxysm of weeping, during which she passionately declared "that she knew if Mrs. Martel left her now, she would never see her again." The subject was in consequence abandoned and matters remained in the same condition till the arrival of the event so anxiously expected.

Poor Delima's sad presentiments of the last few weeks were only too well founded, and the evening of the day that saw Armand a father, found him sitting pale and awe-struck, like one in some terrible dream, beside the lifeless forms of wife and child.

A few words of farewell to her husband, a passionate kiss on the baby brow yet moist from the waters of baptism, and on which the chill damps of death were already gathering, and the spirit of the young wife had passed into eternity, almost immediately followed by that of her sinless child.

Rarely had funereal tapers shed their pallid light on two lovelier relics of sad humanity that on that beautiful young mother and her infant. Death had sharpened without rendering harsh, the feeble lineaments of early infancy, till the little waxen face bore a startling resemblance to the placid statuesque countenance beside which it lay on the snow white pillow.

In the course of the long night that the new made widower passed beside that hushed, quiet bed, (he had shortly, almost sternly refused, all offers of companionship during his last sad watch), sharp and severe was the self examination he mentally subjected himself too. He felt he had never loved her to whom he had solemnly vowed love at the altar, but then he had been faithful, and had cherished her in sickness as in health, bearing perhaps more patiently with her faults and foibles than if she had been throned in his inmost heart. Ah! conscience was all the easier now that he had suffered and borne in patience, instead of retaliating, even when he had had good cause for doing so. He could now gaze sadly down on that beautiful face without reading reproach in its pallid marble features, and without tormenting himself with vain regrets that he could not expiate a past which was now beyond his reach.

From the hour Armand lost his wife, a remarkable change became apparent in the tone and demeanor of his whilom landlady, Mrs. Martel. The half familiar, half defiant manner that had characterized her since his entrance into her family, entirely disappeared, and the olden courtesy which had marked her first intercourse with her "young gentleman lodger," resumed. After seeing poor Delima laid in the quiet cemetery of Saint Louis she impressively bade the young widower farewell, feeling that all future intercourse between them was at an end, a supposition in which she was not mistaken.

CHAPTER XIX.

The first days of mourning over, our hero returned to the legal studies to which he now devoted himself, heart and soul. The strict seclusion in which he lived, contributed materially to his farther advancement. Mr. Duchesne soon foresaw that the young man so earnestly recommended to his kindness by his cousin Belfond, was one of those destined to arrive early at that goal of suc-

cess which so many never reach. In writing to Rodolphe he had assured the latter in speaking of Armand, that rarely had he seen such mental gifts combined with so much steady energy and such irreproachable uprightness of character.

It was not wonderful then that Durand, after having passed a most successful and brilliant examination, was offered by Mr. Duchesne a share in his extensive practise. Gratefully, promptly the offer was accepted, and Armand now found himself in a position singularly fortunate for one of his years, as well as for one who had labored for a time under such great disadvantages.

Time passed on, and again bright smiles were lavished on the clever, handsome young lawyer, and invitations plentifully sent him, but within the portals of the gay or fashionable world, Armand was never seen. A time came however when he was obliged to depart at least for once from his usual rule, and that was on the occasion of his friend Belfond's wedding. The latter, notwithstanding his frequent vigorous tirades against matrimony and the fair sex, had suddenly made up his mind, after an acquaintance of three weeks, and a courtship of one, to lead to the altar a young damsel of sixteen, just out of conventual blue, the color then worn by the pupils of Notre-Dame, and who, to counterbalance her extreme youth, possessed a pretty face and gentle, lovable disposition.

Quebec gossip had decided that the bride elect was Gertrude de Beauvoir, and Durand felt angry with himself for the strange dull pain, the dreary sense of world weariness the news gave him. It was with a preoccupied look which he vainly strove to render cordial, that he saw Belfond enter his comfortable rooms one morning and inform him with a smiling though somewhat confused countenance, that he had called to give Armand a chance of wishing him joy.

This our hero did with as good a grace as he could assume, adding, perhaps a little cynically, that "he and his *fiancée* were sufficiently long acquainted to have a fair knowledge of each other's tastes and sympathies."

At the end of this speech, Belfond turned fiery red and angrily exclaimed: "None of your chaffing, Armand! Had another fellow told me that I would have knocked him over instead of inviting him to my wedding. Little Louise and I will be all the happier for having some occupation after matrimony in the way of studying each other's good points, for of course we will try to remain blind to all the bad ones."

"Louise!" repeated Armand, bewildered.

"Yes, Louise D'Aulnay; but you need not open your eyes so wide, you do not know

her. She only left the Convent last summer."

"Ah!" rejoined Durand, feeling immensely relieved, "I thought it was Miss de Beauvoir."

"Tut! No danger of that! I told you years ago she was not to my taste, nor probably am I to hers, nor anybody else indeed, for the matter of that. She has refused offers right and left, and some of them better than she had any right to expect; but, for one thing I will always respect and revere her—she rejected point blank that conceited fop, de Monteny. I suppose her vocation, as my little Louise would phrase it, is to be an old maid. Probably the report concerning us originated in the circumstance that she is coming down here to be Louise's bridesmaid. The two families, are on the friendliest terms, always visiting or reciprocating civilities. But what a difference between the two! Ah, Gertrude is far too clever and stand-off for so blunt and prosaic a fellow as myself. She would suit you much better!"

Luckily Belfond whilst he spoke was busily employed, according to a habit of his, in kicking at a lion's claw, aggressively supporting the table, it being the nearest object suitable for the exercise, so the deep quick flush that his last speech had called to his companion's face escaped his notice.

"And now, Armand," he continued: "would you like to be groomsman?"

"By no means, my dear friend!" was the hasty response. "You know how averse I am to all such offices. Snail-like, I wish to remain within my shell."

"I thought as much; so I gave Arthur D'Aulnay, my future brother-in-law, a conditional promise that if you refused, he should be held eligible for the post. His anxiety to obtain it arises from the fact that he is deeply smitten with Miss de Beauvoir, and as he is only eighteen years of age, you may imagine what his chances are. Now, I must be off, for I want to choose a set of pearls for my own pearl of great price; but, one word of warning to you, Durand, before we part. As you value my friendship, never try to chaff me about my short acquaintance with Louise D'Aulnay; or, to hint, as a fellow did this morning, whom I intend cutting from this out, that had I waited another week, I would probably have changed my mind, as I had so often done before. *Au revoir!* Do not fail to be on hand, in time, on the happy morning!"

With mingled feelings Armand donned the irreproachable attire in which he was to assist at the nuptial feast, one moment desiring, the next shrinking from the approaching meeting with the one woman whom he now felt had been his first as she had been his only love, the woman whose generous courage had saved him from

himself—from ruin—and who had stretched out a helping hand when all the world beside, with one exception, had fallen off from him.

The D'Aulnays were among the first and wealthiest families in Quebec, so everything was done with great state and splendor; and the bride looked like a snow-drop, and her elegant aristocratic bridesmaid like a magnificent *fleur de lis*, tall, white and stately.

Armand's eyes followed her during the ceremony with a strange renewal of the boy worship, the earnest admiration with which she had inspired him during their first interview at Mr. de Courval's summer *fete*, and when at the close of the ceremony, her glance happened to encounter his and a polite but indifferent bow followed, he sadly thought to himself she was no nearer to him now than she had been to the unpolished country lad.

The guests were soon seated around the richly spread breakfast table, and now came one of those unpleasant *contre-temps* from which Armand's secluded life had heretofore protected him. Since the memorable morning when Gertrude, like some angel of light, had stood by his side in the way-side inn, and won from him that promise which had been his salvation, he had scrupulously and religiously observed it. Even when Mrs. Martel had proudly announced to him his new found paternity, and presenting him with a brimming glass, bade him drink to the health of mother and child, he had braved that good woman's indignation by steadfastly refusing the proffered cup, causing her to remark later that she was quite prepared for the sad catastrophe that had followed close upon so unheard of a circumstance.

Now the health of bride and bridegroom was formally proposed, and champagne glasses filled to the brim. Mechanically our hero raised his to his lips and then set it down untouched, hoping to escape notice and the charges of affectation and singularity which he knew would be levelled at him. His expectations however were disappointed, and two or three observers instantly challenged him. Total temperance was perhaps rarer at that time than it is now, and expressions of jesting disapprobation, with any amount of what Belfond would have called chaffing, unsparingly showered on him.

"Is Mr. Durand like the knights of old when preparing for first donning their golden spurs, under vow to abstain from the juice of the grape?" sneeringly asked de Montenay.

"I am indeed bound by promise," coldly but courteously rejoined our hero.

"Well it seems to me the present happy occasion, like a jubilee, should afford a

chance of getting rid of all onerous or ill-judged vows. What does the fair bridesmaid think!

"That a promise made should be fulfilled," was the curt reply.

Upon this another toast was proposed, responded to, and Armand with his brimming goblet left in peace.

After the guests had returned to the drawing room, he was standing before a beautiful engraving representing one of the belles of the French court, and thinking how much the calm, proud brow and eyes resembled those of Gertrude, when a soft rustle of silk sounded behind him, and turning, he saw Miss de Beauvoir, who was passing to the other end of the apartment. A friendly interchange of trifles—a wonder that they had not met for so long a time, an allusion from Armand to the retired life he had led of late, and then there was a pause.

The latter was broken by Gertrude's abruptly saying: "How glad I was this morning to see how faithfully you have kept your promise."

"Could I do otherwise when you had deigned to ask it? Ah, I trust I will keep it and the precious talisman you gave me then, as I once before told you, till death," and he raised to his lips the ruby ring she had given him. "Think, Miss de Beauvoir, of what you saved me from—of all I owe you, and tell me, can you wonder at the earnest, the life long gratitude I feel towards you?"

Ah, Armand, that speaking passionate gaze, that thrilling intensity of look, voice and manner, unconsciously betrayed a sentiment warmer than that of gratitude, and a sudden flush rose to Gertrude's cheek and her calm fearless eyes drooped.

"You attach far too much importance to a trifle, Mr. Durand, and the fidelity with which you have observed your promise repays me amply for the effort it cost to ask it. But you have not enquired about your old and early friend, Mr. de Courval, yet!" she added, anxious to give a turn to the conversation which was becoming embarrassing. "Have you not heard that he has been very ill?"

"I am truly sorry to hear it," and Armand handed a chair, which his companion at once took, evidently nothing loath, now that the conversation was on a strictly general subject, to prolong it.

She told Durand that Mr. de Courval had had several severe rheumatic attacks, that he was becoming in fact a martyr to the disease, and though at the present moment he was a little better, Mrs. de Beauvoir had been obliged to remain at home to nurse him. Then the conversation wandered back to the first meeting between them as boy and girl, in the manor-house of Alon-

ville, and how, even then, at that early time she had befriended and encouraged him. The transition was easy from that back again to the already much talked of meeting at the village inn, and the happy influence it had exerted on Armand's subsequent career.

The subject was an engrossingly interesting one apparently to both, and whatever peculiar spell lay in it, Durand, despite the hopelessness of his lasting and secret love for his companion, and the polite indifference she had usually shown him, found himself, almost before he was aware of the fact, laying bare to her gaze the long and jealously guarded secret of his heart. With the shimmer of her bridesmaid robes and veil around her, with the gay talk and laughter of the wedding guests sounding in her ears, Gertrude de Beauvoir accepted the vows of one for whom her preference dated almost as far back as did his for herself.

That Mrs. de Beauvoir should sneer and cavil when informed of the engagement entered into by her daughter, was not surprising, but fortunately her opposition was neither violent nor long-lived. True, he was not a *seigneur*, nor was he a wealthy, independent gentleman like de Montenay or Belfond; but then he was partner with an old and well known lawyer, and after a short time would come into untrammelled possession of Mrs. Ratelle's fortune. Paul, too, was unmarried, and report said he drank freely, so he would probably soon put an end to his existence that way, leaving Armand his heir.

Yes, she would consent. It was better Gertrude should marry him than remain an old maid, as she had often threatened to do before. Mr. de Courval was quite satisfied, and between the intervals of a sharp rheumatic attack, presented the bride with a comfortable dower and rich trousseau.

How much had Armand to tell his *fiancée*, including the reception of the mysterious note summoning him to his father's death bed (a note which Gertrude confusedly acknowledged having been written by herself.) Then the treachery of his brother Paul—the manœuvring of Mrs. Martel, the miseries and struggles of his unfortunate marriage—the peaceful death of his wife, and his quiet monotonous life since then.

Gertrude was a sympathizing warm hearted listener, and more than once those eyes which he had thought so proud and indifferent grew suspiciously dim as he pursued his recital.

"There is but one thing, Armand, in all this which I would wish otherwise—one thing that I would ask you to retract. For my sake, you must forgive your brother Paul, fully and freely."

Durand's brow darkened.

"Gertrude, I have done him no injury, nor do I seek to do him any for all the evil he wrought myself. Surely that is enough!"

"No! The concessions you have already made were for Mrs. Ratelle's sake, you must now do something for mine. Listen, Armand. Let your free unconditional pardon of Paul be your wedding gift to myself. I will prize it more highly than the purest diamond or rarest pearl! Sovereigns usually signalize the inauguration of their reigns by an act of amnesty, so let us mark the commencement of the wedded affection which I hope shall ever reign between us, by a similar proof of clemency."

The speaker's voice was playful, but her dark eyes were wonderfully earnest and entreating, and Armand felt how impossible it would be for him to ever refuse anything they asked.

"How can I say no to any request of yours? Yes, even my revengeful pride, my long cherished, though passive animosity towards the brother who robbed me of my birthright and my father's love, must yield to your influence. Ah, Gertrude, no greater proof of your unbounded power and my deep devotion could be given!"

The wedding was simple, the best thing to be done, Mrs. de Beauvoir remarked, were the antecedents of the bridegroom had been so peculiar. Gertrude magnanimously forebore resenting this speech, as her own wishes all pointed to quiet and utter absence of display.

Paul, though kindly asked to be present returned an excuse, alleging that he was ill, feeling probably too conscious of his guilt towards his brother to desire meeting him on such an occasion. He sent the bride, however, the most superb set of jewels that money could procure, and at a later period found courage to pay the new married couple a short visit, an event, however, not often renewed. No wife of his ever entered the old homestead at Alen-ville to dispel the gloom that reigned nothing it.

De Montenay never married. He continued to frequent ball-rooms and to haunt for a time the footsteps of every pretty *debutante* that came out, till his glossy hair had turned gray,—a misfortune remedied by the use of some invaluable dye—and false teeth had replaced the white regular ones of which he had been so proud. This life he led till age and increasing infirmities left him no alternative but that of abandoning it, and he then settled down into the cross and most tyrannical of old bachelors, his chief amusement consisting in sneering at matrimony in general, and the wedded bliss of his friends and acquaintances in particular.

No cloud however did his vindictive eloquence bring to the sunshine brightening the home of Armand and his wife; and if trouble and sickness occasionally visited them, as they do all of Adam's race, the solace to that passing grief was found in their mutual affection.

A brilliant destiny awaited Durand and in the political arena of his country, on which he entered soon after his marriage, he distinguished himself as much by his unwavering integrity as by his rare talents. Well supported was he in his course by the noble and superior woman who was

the sharer of his thoughts, his hopes, his plans, as she was of his life destiny; and in those dark hours of discouragement which few true sons of their country escape, she whispered hope, and cheered him on his onward path.

Honor nor emolument never tempted him to sacrifice one principle—one point of justice, and the fairest inheritance Armand Durand left his children, one far surpassing in value the ample fortune and social position he had won, was the memory of his true honest patriotism and unsullied integrity.

THE END.

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