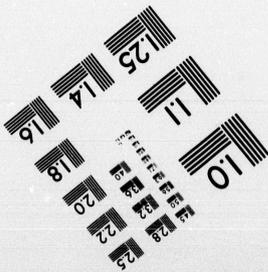
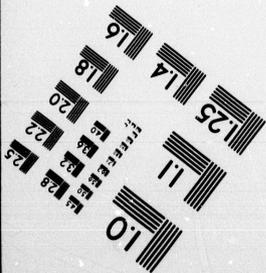
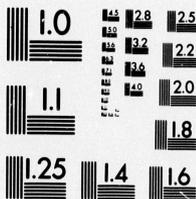


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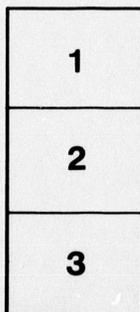
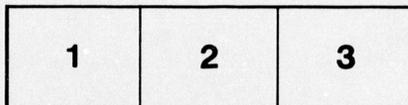
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THE CRIME OF PAUL SACRISTAN

A TALE

BY

ARTHUR CAMPBELL,

AUTHOR OF "THE MYSTERY OF MARTHA WARNE," ETC.



MONTREAL :

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THE
CRIME OF PAUL SACRISTAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

I am Paul Sacristan.

I am the hero of my own tale. I live in Montreal, and am a quiet, sober man of business. Few would suspect that I was, in my youth, a gay and thoughtless ne'er-do-well, and the chief participator in such a series of events as I am about to relate; yet so it was.

I shall say no more about myself, nor shall I dwell upon the integrity of my personal character in order to attest the sincerity of my narrative. Such a wild and romantic story as that which I have

to tell is not to be vouched for in words. Let those in whose lives there is no shadow of mystery, no tragic remembrance, no skeleton hidden from the public gaze, point to me as a charlatan. For them I care not. Let those whose youth has been made desolate by the dissolution of their bright dreams and cherished hopes, but who have, nevertheless, taken courage and nerved themselves for stronger efforts in life's battle, listen to my tale. To them I shall appeal, not in vain, for credence.

It was twenty years ago, and in the little village of Suffolk, on the Quebec coast, that my story has its beginning. I have said that I am the hero of my own tale,—in one respect, I was far indeed from being a hero, for I was, throughout, in consequence of my own misdoings, in disgrace!

I was then a young man. I had been sent out along with several others to survey a tract of country through which the Government proposed building a railroad. I was young, inexperienced, and given to drinking; and, through an unpardonable act of carelessness, I had lost my position. It was the evening of the day on which I received notice of dismissal that my story begins.

It was the last day of November. I stood in my bedroom in the hotel, talking to my friend, Colin Gordon. He, too, was a young surveyor, and my most intimate friend, though, unlike me, he bore the highest character. We were smoking,—he a pipe, and I a cigar. It was about nine o'clock in the evening, and we were standing in my bedroom where we had been walking up and down for some time. We were, both of us, in a state of too great mental unrest to sit down.

“I am so thankful, Colin, to have you all to myself the last night. I don't feel as if I could sleep although I know I ought to, before starting for a thirty-mile walk. I wonder when we will be together again, Colin.”

“God knows, old chap; I don't. But wherever you are, Paul, boy, I'm with you in spirit.”

“I know it, Colin. I don't believe in anybody else in the world, Colin; but you I can trust. I say, Colin, I am beginning to feel light-hearted again. It must be the reaction; for I am not a bit nearer making up my mind.”

“Take my advice, Paul; go on to Boston, and make a clean breast of it to your uncle. Believe me, old man, it's the best thing to do.”

“Colin, you don't know my uncle. If you did, you would never say that; he is what they call a hard man, and as unbelieving as a Jew. If I tried to come round him with good resolutions and such like, he would only laugh:—and quite right, too. No; he won't help me, and I know him better than to ask him.”

“That's so, eh Paul? Well—take a chair, old chap; and we'll think it over again!”

We sat down, I on the side of the bed, he on a chair with his feet on the table. He was a tall man with reddish hair and moustache, and large blue eyes. We liked Colin Gordon so much that he passed among us for a handsome man. I do not think, however, that his personal beauty would have carried him far with the fair sex. Though his features were good, his hair was decidedly red, and he was somewhat freckled. But Colin's manliness, good nature and intelligence would have won him admiration anywhere.

“I am disgraced, Colin;—disgraced.”

“Don't say so, Paul!”

“But it is so, Colin; why not admit it? I am disgraced, turned out of my profession, cast forth into the world, branded with a bad name.”

"Life is long, my dear boy. You will win them all back again some day. Cheer up, old chap. I say, Paul, must you go to-morrow?"

"Better to-morrow than later, Colin. Another day with you would only make it harder to leave. I shall walk, and walk, and walk, until I reach the railroad; and then I shall start for Montreal. Montreal will do as well as anywhere. I shall get what work I can, and be thankful."

"I wish I could help you, Paul."

"So you do, Colin. If it wasn't for you, I shouldn't be able to brace up at all. It's a great thing to have a friend."

"Nothing like it. And you'll apply to me, Paul, if you need anything, won't you? You will promise me that?"

"I promise—I promise. Disgraced, eh? By Jove, it can't be helped now. I am glad, though, Colin, that my father and mother are both gone. It would be hard enough to stand it if they——"

Here I confess that a lump rose in my throat, and my voice broke down.

"Yes," said Colin slowly, looking, not at me, but out of the window into the darkness of the night;—

"hadn't you better go to bed, Paul. I don't want to be rid of your company, old chap, but I think you would be all the better to be in bed and asleep."

"Perhaps I would. I will go. Don't mind me, Colin; sometimes I am a fool. It's my nature, you know. I can't help doing the wrong thing, and then I can't help being sorry afterwards. It's a mistake; a man like me should have no conscience."

"Don't say such things, Paul. A man without a conscience is not a man at all."

"Shall I see you again in the morning, Colin?"

"No, old chap; that is why I am allowing you to talk so much now, when you are hardly fit for it."

"But can't you come in just to say good-bye?"

"No—not even that. We are to start too early; you will not be awake. We have to start before sunrise, and go through the woods. You must sleep and gather strength for your walk."

"And what do you want to say to me, Colin?"

"I want you to promise, old man,"—here Colin came up to me and put his hand on my shoulder—
"I want you to promise—it's a strange fancy of mine—I want you to promise that, some day, any time, if ever I ask a favor of you—that you will grant it

—that you will gratify my request, whatever it may happen to be.”

“But, Colin——”

“I know it’s a queer thing to ask, old chap; I know it. But I can’t help it; I must ask it. Will you?”

“I promise.”

“Give me your hand on it.”

I gave it.

“Paul, my boy, trust me. This is to be good-bye, and I must speak out. Take care of yourself, and in the future make no more mistakes. And—I don’t know—you may laugh at me—but I have a presentiment that we shall meet again before very long. Good-bye, old chap.”

He grasped my hand, shook it, and was gone.

Men do not cry. As his form disappeared in the doorway, I saw the best friend of the life that was gone passing out of the life that was to come. A feeling of desolation overcame me. As I have said before, men do not cry, nor sob, nor make loud lamentations with much flourishing of handkerchiefs and hysterical tears. I made no sound; I shed no tear; but I wearily threw myself down on my bed

wishing, almost praying, that I might sleep never to wake again. Life's burden seemed too heavy to be borne.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW OF A DREAM.

AT last I slept; and, while I slept, I dreamed. The dream of that night has haunted me my whole life. I have heard of many dreams,—of problems puzzled over in daytime and solved in sleep; of lost treasure seen in visions of the night, so that at daybreak the dreamer has been able to go forth and take possession; of a man's wraith appearing, pale and deathly, at the self-same moment at which he has himself shuffled off this mortal coil; of dreams that have foreshadowed what has actually come to pass in after times;—but of never a dream like mine.

I will tell my dream.

I stood inside an old ruined church. It was dark, dismal and dreary. A long low gust of wind seemed to be passing, a gust that rose and fell, and rose and fell, and whistled and moaned, and yet never seemed to die away. It was neither day nor night but a dusky twilight, as if the sun had not quite set, but yet was

so obscured by clouds as to make it rather dark than daylight.

I stood at the chancel rail of the church, silent in the dim light. Around, behind, before, I felt, rather than saw, the outlines of rough stone pillars, and the forms of windows without glass in them through which the wind swept in gusts, causing me to shiver; opposite to me was the outline of a woman's form; and behind the altar-rail was the figure of a clergyman robed in a white surplice.

This was the dream. The figures and faces of these persons I could not see plainly, only the outlines, dim and unreal. Like the building in which they stood, they were shadowy and ghostly. There was no audience, no congregation; we were quite alone. And not only so;—*I* was alone: for of the three persons in my dream, I was the only one alive. The other two were cold and stiff in death!

In this lay the horror of the dream. The clergyman standing by the altar had a book in his hand and was reading the marriage service; but he had no features—no face. When I looked at his face, I saw only a vague, uncertain gleam of light, like the glimmer of phosphorescent light in a morass. His

voice seemed to come from another world ; it was unlike anything human.

The form opposite to me was that of a tall woman. Round her was wrapped a black shroud. The figure showed no sign of life, a face pale and thin, with deep lines traced on its marble brow ; eyes closed, and features stern and set ;—and the hand that I held in mine was cold and lifeless.

I stood there long in the same position, holding the cold hand and gazing into the face that was motionless as marble. The figures were like ghosts ; the voice of the clergyman seemed to float on the air like the mournful cadence of a funeral dirge, heard far away ; often the sighing of the wind would drown it, and ring through the vaulted church like a peal of demon laughter ; then, ceasing, I would hear the same slow murmur coming from the face whose lineaments I could not trace.

I repeated the words after him. They echoed through the building, and I started at the sound of my own voice. When I ceased, the clergyman began again. Then, in her turn, the woman spoke ; and as she spoke, the blood seemed to freeze in my veins. It had the effect of a cold breath blowing over me,

to hear the strange words coming from those lifeless lips.

Then came a change. It was my turn to respond, and I responded; and as is usual in the marriage service, the clergyman repeated the words, "I pronounce that they be man and wife together," adding the usual formula.

As he spoke the words, I gazed intently at the woman. As I gazed her eyes opened and looked into mine. For one brief moment I seemed to awaken to a new consciousness, and to recognize whom it was that I stood beside. Her face lighted up in an instant with a glad smile of recognition, the blood bounded in my veins, and in a transport of happiness I opened my arms to fold her to my heart.

As I did so, a flash of lightning lit the church; a peal of thunder broke over us; and, in the confusion of sight and sound, I stirred in my sleep and awoke!

I rose from my bed and looked out of the window. A storm prevailed outside. The wind swept the bare branches of the trees almost to the earth, and fragments of dead leaves blew against the window. It was a wild night;—but there was no snow or rain, only wind.

I thought over my dream. It had been very vivid. Not the smallest fragment of it had faded from my recollection. Every part of it was vividly impressed upon my mind. I lived it over again, as I stood at the window, looking forth into the night. I puzzled over it until my brain was tired, endeavoring to identify the face that had looked into mine in the dream. But I could not remember ever having seen it before. It was an unknown face;—and yet, if I could but see it again, I knew that I would recognize it in a moment. Then I bethought me of the morrow, and went back to bed.

When I again awoke, it was long past daylight in the morning.

CHAPTER III.

LOST IN THE STORM.

It was the afternoon of the next day. I had been walking ever since breakfast. Except for a short rest at a wayside inn, during the middle of the day, I had kept steadily tramping along. I found, however, that I was not as far advanced on my journey as I had hoped to be.

The weather had, hitherto, been finer than I had dared to hope for ; all day, grey clouds had hung low over the earth, and gusts of wind had seemed at times to threaten a tempest. But the tempest held off; and I hoped to reach a shelter before it broke over me.

I was walking on a lonely road by the St. Lawrence shore. The road was bordered on either side by spruces,—on one side sparsely, allowing the rough waves of the river to be seen beyond ; on the other side thickly, the trees forming the outskirts of a forest. The river, as I caught glimpses of it from

time to time, looked rough and cold ; the waves were tossing and splashing impatiently, as if waiting for the wind to rise and allow them free range far and wide.

It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon, and I was, as far as I could tell, some fourteen or fifteen miles from the nearest refuge. I had been told that I would pass several old houses on the way, but that they were all in ruins and unoccupied. I must, therefore, press on, and lose no time ; for it was the first day of December, and in December night comes early.

Alas ! A snowflake fell on my face—omen of ill ! If it would but hold off till night ! But I cast my eyes out over the water, and saw, too plainly, a storm blowing up the river.

I ran ; for fully ten minutes I kept up a good running pace. I thought of pleasant things, as I sped along ; it made the time pass quicker. I thought of Colin Gordon, and pictured our meeting in the future under happier auspices. A good long run, and then a brisk walk, and the number of miles is lessened by one.

Ah me ! the snow is falling. The ground is

already white. It is falling thickly; the air is full of it; the trees are showing a soft white burden on their branches;—I must hurry on.

A short distance off I hear the splashing of the waves. Ever and anon I catch a glimpse of them, grey and troubled, drinking in the falling snow. It is a heavy, heavy sky that hangs over the river.

At first it had been easy walking on the hard frozen road; but now my feet leave their print on the soft pathway, and my boots begin to gather hard lumps of snow

I look at my watch; it is twenty minutes past four. On, on, for I have no time to spare; night will be on me before I am aware.

I thought of Colin. What would he be doing?—perhaps thinking of me. There was a comfort in that. Out as I was on a lonely road, lost in the driving snow, it was sweet to feel that some one was with me in spirit, sympathizing and willing to cheer me.

Alas—I am very tired; the snow is blinding; it blows in my face, and the walking is very heavy; what shall I do? There is no refuge near; miles and miles of rough road ahead, and the storm-swept river and the dark recesses of the woods on either side:—what a plight is mine!

A half-hour passed. I trudged wearily on, every moment with greater difficulty. The snow was falling steadily, the wind had risen and was driving it onward, causing drifts to form on the road. And, worst of all, the darkness was gathering fast.

Darkness:—what could I do to save myself? I stood still to think about it; but I knit my brows in vain; there seemed to be no remedy. I could do nothing. To fall down and sleep in the snow meant certain death; yet would I ever, strong as I might be, reach the nearest refuge, struggling against such a storm?

Perhaps my hour was come. I faced the idea, and shivered slightly at the thought. To die alone, out in the woods, in a driving snowstorm, far away from everyone I knew and loved—O God, was it to be my fate? Yet others had faced death under such circumstances, and why not I?

I pushed on. It was the one thing to do. I would go on, on, on, until I could go no further. The darkness grew apace. The wind howled and moaned, the branches of the trees creaked, the snow beat on my face and covered me from head to foot. The loneliness was terrible.

But stop ;—what do I see over there by the shore—far off, pale, flickering, faint? Is it?—no—yes—pale, faint and yellowish—a glimmering in the darkness. It is, it is—it must be—it can be none other than a light!

Words cannot describe the eagerness with which I rushed forward. Tired as I was, I leaped the ditch like a hound, vaulted a pole fence, and sprang, like a deer, over a field of snow.

Yes—it was a light,—but not until I was quite close to it could I recognize whence it proceeded. At last I stood near it, and saw that it came from a house.

One of the empty and ruined houses of which I had heard, there was not a doubt of it. But it was not empty nor entirely ruinous, else whence the light?

Let me describe the house. It was built on a little tongue of land which jutted out into the water, and was of rough stone, almost tumbling to pieces; indeed, in some places, stones had fallen out and left holes which the snow was filling. It was high, two storeys and a half in height, but narrow and ill-proportioned. Door and windows alike seemed to be fastened up, the latter with wooden shutters on the

outside, save one, a crescent-shaped window over the door, from which the light proceeded. A most melancholy spectacle, that house, and one that might haunt one's memory forever; yet to me, then and there, a sight to gladden the heart.

I rushed up to the house; I was too glad to wait a moment, and, raising my stick, rapped loudly at the door with it. The sound reverberated through the inside, as though it were an empty house. I waited. No answer came from within. I rapped again, rap, rap, rap, and a hollow echo seemed to ring through the darkness.

The occupants must surely be asleep. A louder summons is required. Rap, rap, rap;—there, that would wake any man; pound, pound, pound; thump, thump, thump; and I press my ear against the door and listen intently.

No answer; I become angry. Will they not hear then? I shake the door, I press myself against it, and kick it with both feet. But it is too strong for me, and I make no impression on the occupants in that manner, for no one comes, and nothing is audible save the moaning of the wind, as it seems to sweep through the inside of the house.

O life, what a weary wait! Will these people never answer me? Shall I stand here knocking all night? Shall I try again or shall I call? At least, perhaps, I can reach with my stick the window from which the light proceeds. I jump back a few paces to locate the spot—the light is gone!

The house stood before me, tall, gaunt, cold and lonely, showing no light nor sign of life within. Alas!—whither was fled the light?—had it been an hallucination? No, it had guided me across the field from the roadway to the spot. It had been a reality, but it was gone; what was I to do?

I rushed wildly forward like one demented, and again shook the door violently. Failing to produce any effect, I ran round the house. It was the same on every side, windows and doors boarded up or locked; there was no opening. At the back the house stood so near the river that the spray from the waves blew into my face as I passed.

I shouted—"Open, open—for the love of God, let me in, let me in! I am a traveller, and have lost my way;—I am cold and miserable; I am freezing. Let me in for the love of God!"

I might as well have talked to the wind. It was

the only thing that answered. The house itself seemed to mock me, standing there with a chill, gaunt stare, while I urged and prayed for help. I stood looking at it like one entranced, and watched the snow falling, falling, falling, in a soft white shower, settling on the grey stones and filling up the interstices in between them.

And now it was grown dark, and I was beginning to lose my head. I was cold and numb. I crept round to the front of the house, and looked up at the crescent-shaped window. All was dark; all was hopeless. Gathering my coat up round my ears I crouched under the shadow of the door.

CHAPTER IV.

A MINISTERING ANGEL.

"WHERE am I?"

"Hush—do not speak so loud. You are safe and will be cared for."

"But where am I?"

"Never mind. We are friends, and you are sick and cold. You had better try and sleep."

"Are you an angel?"

I remember asking that question, and no wonder, for the face that bent over mine was so beautiful that it might have passed for that of a messenger from heaven.

A soft laugh was the answer, and a man's voice, coarse and gruff, said, "What does he say?"

"He asks 'am I an angel?' what shall I say, Juggernaut?"

"Tell him you are the devil; and let him hold his tongue if he knows what is good for him, and wants to stay here. Where's Cynthy?"

"She is coming. Go, Juggernaut, leave him to me. He is going to be ill, I know. Leave him to us."

"Ha—here's Cynthy. What have you got, Cynthy; some grog? Give him that, and let him sleep on it."

I turned over to see where I was. My head was aching, there were intense pains in my limbs, things swam before my eyes; yet I was able to make out fairly well what was going on around me.

It was a small garret room, with bare boards for ceiling and walls, and a dormer window at the end. I lay, half dressed, on some straw, with a blanket above and beneath me. At the foot of my bed stood an old man of repulsive appearance. At a first glance it was evident that he had negro blood in his veins; at a second, one saw that, with the full lips and flat nose of the negro, he combined the leering greedy eyes and brutal insensibility of the lowest of our own race. This unprepossessing person held a candle in his hand, and seemed to begrudge every effort made on my behalf.

Beside him stood a girl. She was clad in a blue flannel gown with a dark shawl round her shoulders,

Her hair, raven black, was hanging down her back, and her face was partly hidden by the shawl. But no words can picture the beauty of her features, as she stood there in the dim candlelight. Her skin was of the purest white, soft and transparent; her eyes blue and of wondrous depth. She had full, red lips, and her chin was long and pointed. It seemed to me that I had never before seen so beautiful a face.

While I was gazing at it, an old woman approached me and held a cup to my lips. It was full of hot rum, and I drank it down without a word. Then, having administered her medicine, she took a piece of canvas that she had brought with her, and put it over me on top of the blanket.

“Will that be enough?” said the girl.

“Yes—plenty.”

I turned my face round, and the girl's eyes looked into mine. She seemed to pity me. I smiled as if in appreciation of her effort to befriend me.

“You go below!—go—do you hear?” said the man with the candle. “There!—be off with you! Now, Cynthy, have done!”

“I have done,” said the old crone; “he needs no

more now. Like enough he'll have rheumatism, though. Lord, he's off already!"

I felt my eyes closing as she spoke; and in a minute more the light had disappeared, and I was in the land of dreams.

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CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERY OF THE BOAT.

IF they expected me to sleep till morning on the strength of the rum which had been given me, they were mistaken. Either it was too strong, or the pains in my arms and legs were too great, for I awoke while it was still dark.

I remember that awakening. I turned over, and, for a moment, failed to recollect. Then, like a flash, came the remembrance of the storm and the ruined house, my efforts to get in and their failure;—then the old man and old woman, and the girl with the face of an angel. I remembered it piece by piece, and knew by the pains in my back and limbs, as well as by the feverish state of my head, that I was in for an attack of illness.

The wind still roared without, and seemed to shake the house to its foundations. Especially in the room in which I was, and which seemed to be on the

roof, did it ring out wildly and long. I shuddered and groaned;—it was so lonely, and I was very, very tired and ill. Oh for the touch of a friendly hand!

I listened; in the intervals between the gusts of wind I thought I heard sounds below. Doors seemed to open and shut again; hinges creaked; then voices spoke.

I turned over and over on my straw bed. I was nervous, and afraid of my surroundings. I was quite sure that there was no one in the room, yet I could not help looking anxiously around. All at once I fancied I saw the faint glimmer of a light in the window. I looked again, and it was gone. It seemed—yes, again I saw it. Evidently it came from something outside.

I rose from my bed. My head was aching, and I was not in a fit state to walk about; but curiosity, mingled with fear, got the better of me. I walked to the window and looked out.

At first I could see nothing but a yellowish light below me, glancing to and fro. Then I made out that the light proceeded from a lantern, and that the lantern was carried by the old man whom the girl called Juggernaut. He was enveloped in a long coat

reaching to his heels, and was a weird and uncanny sight, walking to and fro on the bank of the river, ankle deep in the snow. As he walked, or rather shuffled along, backwards and forwards in front of my window, he swung the lantern up and down.

After a little I made out another and a much fainter light, away in the distance. It had stopped snowing for the time, and the night was dark. I fancied that the new light must come from a boat; and no doubt the old man was swinging a lantern to guide it across the river—though why a light in one of the windows would not have answered the purpose I could not imagine.

It was cold where I stood, but I watched and watched with the greatest interest. The farther light drew nearer and nearer, and at last I could make out the form of the boat, and some dark objects inside which I took to be men. When it got quite close, some one on board called out, and Juggernaut stopped his walk up and down and went forward.

At the sound of voices outside, the forms of two women emerged from the darkness, and I recognized old Cynthia and the young girl, who still wore her

shawl over her head. Both went forward to the water's edge.

The boat was now come to land, and three men jumped out of it. Waving the women back as they advanced, they seized Juggernaut by the arm and drew him over to where the boat lay. Then a hurried consultation was held, the whole party gazing earnestly the while at a black mass which lay in the bottom of the boat. At last the discussion came to an end, and one of the men went forward and whispered a few words into the women's ears. I watched them all, meanwhile, holding my breath, for I felt a nameless fear.

As the newcomer addressed her, a cry broke from the girl's lips. I fancied—perhaps wrongly—that Juggernaut and Cynthy spoke angrily to her and glanced up at my window. At any rate I knew that she was bidden to hold her tongue. At the same time the four men went to the boat and made her fast. Then Juggernaut, having given the lantern to Cynthy to hold, helped the other three to lift something out of the boat and put it on the snow.

It was the figure of a man! Alive or dead, I could not tell. I shuddered and almost fell over on the

floor. But I was, indeed, unprepared for what was to follow. They laid him down for a moment in such a position that his face was turned upward to the window where I stood. Impelled by a woman's curiosity, the old hag who held the lantern rested it on the snow beside his head in order to survey his features. The light fell on his face.

Am I dreaming!—or am I mad?— or is this the last blow of all that are to fall upon me, the last and worst?—for I see plainly, lying there cold and stiff, as if in death, the face of my friend, Colin Gordon!

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CHAPTER VI.

WEARY DAYS.

I SAW no more, nor had I time to think about it. My head was weak, and, not knowing what I was doing, I tottered back to bed. For a long time I continued in a semi-conscious state; I drew no distinction between day and night, nor could I distinguish one day from another. I was feverish and delirious. Often I saw people moving round my bed. Sometimes I fancied Colin was present; sometimes the girl of whom I have spoken. But when I would open my eyes wider and collect my thoughts, I would see that it was only old Cynthia, who acted as nurse.

She nursed me faithfully, though I appreciated it ill. She was subject to toothache, and kept her face tied up with a handkerchief. What she used as a remedy I do not know; but the odor of it was very disagreeable to me, and I got to loathe her presence. Long and anxiously I looked for some one else, but always in vain.

At last, however, some one else came. It was a day, a long time after I had taken ill, and my head for the first time felt clear. I lay on my bed, thinking, too weak to rise, but pining for company. From where I lay, I could see the sky through the dormer window, and I saw flakes of snow falling outside.

As I lay dreaming I heard a footfall at the door. I turned my head, and beheld the girl of my dreams. She was clad in a shabby brown gown, and her hair hung down her back in long, uneven braids; but she looked lovelier than ever. In the dismal light and amid the coarse surroundings, her exquisite features, her blooming cheeks and the intense depth and beauty of her dark blue eyes formed a contrast that an artist might have gazed upon in rapture.

"How are you?"

Her voice was rather shrill, with a touch of humor in it. As she spoke, her lips formed a half-disdainful smile.

"I am better, thank you. Won't you come in?"

"I came to see if you wanted anything; do you?"

"Yes—I want you to come and talk to me—if you only will."

The girl started slightly, and then smiled rather

bitterly. "Oh, that is what you want, is it; you must be better, then. What shall we talk about?"

"Oh anything. Tell me anything at all."

"I have nothing to tell," said the girl. "I am not allowed out of the house, and no one has passed for over three weeks, so I do not exactly know the latest news."

"I do not care for that: tell me first where we are."

"I can't—don't you remember? It is best to ask no questions."

"But won't you sit down."

"I suppose I may."

There was a box full of straw at the foot of the bed, and she sat down on it. "Cynthia is asleep; that is why I have come in."

"Is she ill?" I felt ungrateful, and did not mind if she was.

"She has the toothache, that is all. She has had it for a week, but it was worse this morning, and she has gone to her room with a bottle of gin. Soon she will be quite helpless."

"And are you alone, then?"

"Juggernaut is below somewhere, I don't know where," said the girl. She spoke in a listless, unin-

terested fashion that fascinated me. Moreover, she hardly so much as glanced at me while speaking.

"Who is he?" I asked, "and where did he get the name?"

She turned her eyes upon me for a moment. "It is the name of a Hindoo god; did you never hear it before?"

"Yes, I have heard that; but that explains nothing."

"There is nothing to explain. When I was a little girl, I had a picture of Juggernaut; this man was so ugly that I gave him the name. It suits him, doesn't it?"

"I daresay it does," I answered; "and your own name?"

"My name is Elaine Moore; do you like it?"

"I do. Mine is Paul Sacristan; do you like that?"

"Paul—I don't know," said the girl. "I suppose Paul is as good a name as any other."

I had hoped for a more encouraging answer; but all at once an idea came into my head, and I determined to act upon it.

"Do you like the name of Colin?"

At that she started, and rose to her feet. I held

her eye with mine :—"What is the matter? Why do you start so?"

"Did I start?" she said, hastily sitting down again; "I thought I heard Juggernaut below, calling me."

"No—no one called," I said. "Sit down again, and let us go on talking of names. Tell me, what do you think of the name Colin?"

"I don't know," she said, half closing her eyes. "I do not like it."

"Did you ever hear it before?"

"No—I think not. Whose name is it?"

"That of the best friend I have in the world, Colin Gordon."

In answer the girl only turned her head away. But I fancied that I saw her clasp her hands nervously together.

"Why do you ask me about your friend's name?"

"Because I think you must have seen him."

"I?" There were many degrees of interrogation in her voice—"I?"

"Yes, Elaine—may I call you Elaine?—for the love of God, tell me—tell me what happened him?—is he dead?"

"Your friend—your friend—how—how should I know?"

"Because—oh because; let me tell you; I saw it all; I saw him carried in. I saw them bring him up in the boat, and lift him out and carry him into this house. I saw it!"

"You saw what? When did you see this? You are dreaming, Paul Sacristan!" She stood up as she spoke, and glanced uneasily at the door.

"I saw it; I saw it the night I came; I saw it the night I was taken sick. Tell me about him, for Heaven's sake; he is all I have in the world. Tell me; I am unable to go and look for him."

"Paul Sacristan, you are dreaming; you are crazy. No one but yourself was ever carried into this house, living or dead. Your friend never was here; you imagined it."

"No, he was here; I saw him. O Colin, Colin!"

"Hush!" said the girl in a softened voice;—"hush, Paul! Do not say these things. Hush—I go; and—and—and don't talk to Cynthia about it or to Juggernaut."

"O, never!" I cried. "But won't you come back, Elaine?"

"Yes—I will—"

"Soon? Yes, come soon; and O Elaine! promise me that you will tell me truly, truly——"

"No, not now, Mr. Sacristan;—I won't promise; but I will come again, in a day or two, and we will see!"

And in another moment she was gone. I was obliged to be content. I was content for the moment. But I was resolved that, come what might, I would solve the mystery of Colin's appearance at the house the same night as my own; for I had never doubted, no, not for an instant, that it was he, and he alone, whom I had seen carried into the house as one dead.

CHAPTER VII.

"ELAINE THE FAIR, ELAINE THE LOVABLE."

"HOW did I come here?"

It was about a week after, and I was feeling slightly better. Elaine was paying her second visit, the one promised.

"How did you come?—I carried you."

"You, Elaine?—impossible!"

"Impossible or not, it is true; I did it, or helped to do it."

"Tell me about it."

She sat down once again in the same place, and fixed her large blue eyes on me. "Well—it was so:—I was asleep, and a cry outside woke me. It was a very stormy day."

"Yes, I remember—it was I who cried; you heard me?"

"I heard you. When I awoke, I was frightened, for there was a pounding at the door in front, and I was sure it was the police."

"Why should the police come, Elaine?"

Her eyelids lowered: "Why do you interrupt me?"

"I didn't think;—go on, Elaine, and pardon me."

"I went downstairs. I found Cynthia and Juggernaut in the dark. They said some strange man was trying to get in, not to speak loud. So I kept quiet. Then I heard cries, and I felt like opening the door; but they wouldn't let me."

"Elaine—all that time I was freezing outside; I remember."

"Well, we waited. After a time the cries stopped, and we thought that the man had gone on. Then Cynthia and Juggernaut went upstairs to cook the supper, and left me below.—Who is there?" She looked out into the hall, but no one was in sight. "When I was left alone I got curious to see if there was any trace left of the man outside. So I went softly up to the door, and unbolted it. When I opened it, it gave way, and the body of a man fell at my feet. That man was you!"

"Elaine, Elaine!—Did you scream?"

"Scream? No, Paul; I did not scream. I just fell too!"

"You were afraid."

"Fearfully ;—for a minute. But I soon came to myself, and looked at you."

"And what did you think of me?"

"What did I think of you? I saw you were a young man—dark, and not so unhandsome, either; you have lost your good looks since, Paul; but there, don't mind that!"

No doubt I winced, for I knew how I must look. I was thin, pale, and unkempt; for over a month my hair had not been cut, nor had I used a razor. Elaine, when she saw me blush, seemed rather pleased than otherwise. She drew herself nearer, and became more friendly as she continued her story.

"I shut the door and drew you into the middle of the room, and then I took off your coat and cap. You were quite numb, and I rubbed your hands and face to revive you."

"Then you saved my life, Elaine!"

It was a romantic speech, but she did not seem to heed it.

"I did little. But, in a few minutes, Cynthia came downstairs, and she poured some brandy down your throat."

"And what happened then?"

"Well—while we wondering whether you would get better or die just then and there, Juggernaut came in, and there was a big row. I believe he would have thrown you out again, but Cynthia took your part, and said you must be carried upstairs to this room instead."

"And who carried me?"

It was now Elaine's turn to blush.—"Cynthia and I carried you; Juggernaut only swore at us, and carried a candle for fear we should break our necks. And after you got up here you came to yourself."

"And I saw you, Elaine; and I thought you were an angel!"

Again the color mounted to her cheeks, and it made her a thousand times more beautiful. "Elaine, come here."

"What for?"

"Let me just kiss your hand—you saved me!"

"Oh, Paul."

"Come—just once—you saved me. Give me your hand."

As I took it in my own thin one and raised myself a little from the bed, a thrill ran through

me. A new feeling arose in me, a fire, a glow, like the sense of awakening from death to life. How poor, how weak, how miserable I seemed ; how bright, how beautiful, how glorious, she ! Yet even as I kissed her hand, a recollection of another friend and an older love came strong upon me. " Elaine— Elaine—I want you to answer one question which I have to ask."

" Yes, Paul ? "

" Elaine, the night I came here, a boat came in ; there were four men in it ; one was *lifted out* and laid on the snow."

With a sharp cry she withdrew her hand from me ; but I went on with the question.

" Tell me, on your honor, Elaine ; was that man alive or dead ? "

She started visibly and paled, but answered—" he was alive."

" Thank God !—and *now*, Elaine ; is he alive *now* ? "

" I don't know, Paul ; that is, I believe he is ; he is not here."

" And will you tell me no more ? "

" Not now."

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THE CRIME OF PAUL SACRISTAN.

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But I was still sick and weak, and, for the time
being, was content.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE'S DREAM.

A FEW days afterwards Juggernaut came to see me. I had not seen him for some time, and had no wish to see him. But he did not ask my leave to enter. Coming in and shutting the door behind him, he sat down by the side of my bed.

"Gettin' pretty well, eh?"

"Yes, I am," I said; "thanks to some of your women-folk."

"The women-folk? It's thanks to me, that's what it is!"

"No doubt," said I; "if this house is yours, it is certainly thanks to you."

So far he had spoken in an amiable tone of voice; now, however, he laid aside the mask of good nature—which I must say sat but ill on him—and spoke in a vulgar and threatening manner.

"Look here, young man—you've put the words in

my mouth—don't go askin' no questions, here or hereafter; this *is* my house, this has a right to be my house. And I'm an honest man, an honest man, who has escaped from the war over yon"—alluding to the civil war in the United States which was then at its height—"and this I want to say to you."

"Say it, sir."

"This I want to say:—I've took yer; I've fed yer; I've kep' yer. But for me ye'd have been a dead man."

"That may be," said I, thinking at the same time of what Elaine had told me; "supposing I admit it."

"Supposin' ye admit it, what are yer going to do to repay me?"

"Repay you?"—I was somewhat staggered by the question. "Well, well, I don't know," said I; "I haven't thought of it. But I had—I had a roll of bank notes—a few, just in my coat pocket;—and— they are gone," I added hesitatingly;—for one of the first things I had done was to look for them, and I had found them gone. "Who took them I don't know."

"I do," said the wretch with a grin that aggravated

me almost past endurance. "I've got your bank-notes. I need 'em all, and more too, to pay me for the trouble I've had with yer." Having said so much, the creature turned his head to the window, and seemed to wait for me to speak.

"I had nearly fifty dollars in that coat-pocket," I said with a sigh. "It was all I had in the world. I have been well nursed here, and am thankful to you for your kindness. May we call it square?"

"'Spose so," said Juggernaut, showing his yellow teeth; "'spose we may. But there is something else."

"Is there?—what?" I said, rather anxiously, for I had no more money to give.

"Well," said Juggernaut slowly, looking at me out of the corner of his eye—"we're quiet people here. We don't go round nowhere, and we don't care to be known; and——"

"O, I understand," said I, interrupting him. "I understand; say no more. After I leave this house not a word shall pass my lips of you or yours. You have my word; you can have my oath if you wish it."

"I'll have it afore you leave," said Juggernaut. "When are you goin'?"

"Whenever I am able. At present I cannot rise from my bed."

"Humph!" said Juggernaut. And then, without a word of warning, he hobbled away as he had come.

An hour or two afterwards Elaine appeared. She was an almost daily visitor, and I had learned to watch for her coming. When she entered the room she went up to the window and stood there looking out, without having spoken a word.

"Elaine!"

"Yes, Paul. You are better, aren't you?"

"I am. But I have something to tell you. Juggernaut has been here."

"How nice!" said the girl, her lip curling. "What did he come for?"

"He came to tell me how much money and kindness I owed everyone."

"He did! Did he say you owed *me* anything?"

A strange resolve came into my head. "No Elaine; but don't laugh at me. If he does not pay you I will make up for it."

"You will, Paul; how then?"

"Elaine, look at me, come nearer."

She did not move.

"Elaine—Elaine—to-morrow I am going to be up and dressed when you come. Then, after that, I am going to get stronger every day. Then, after that, I am—I am going away."

"So I suppose, Paul; and what of it?"

"When I go, Elaine, I want you to come with me, and be my wife."

I had said it. I was weak, and felt the blood rush to my cheeks as I spoke. Then I folded my arms behind my head on the pillow, and fixed my eyes on her.

"Elaine—Elaine—tell me; why do you look at me so? Why?"

"Because you insult me by such language, Paul Sacristan."

"Insult you? I insult you?—I, Elaine! Oh, for heaven's sake hear me! Oh Elaine, my love, come nearer. I love you, Elaine; I love you. I have loved you since that night—that night when I thought you were an angel."

She looked at me in unfeigned astonishment.

"Elaine, won't you listen to me. If you only knew how I loved you, how I have looked for you day after day as I lay here, how I have longed to be

well that we might go away together. But the time will come. Elaine, come here."

She advanced towards me. "Paul, are you mad?—or am I mad?—or is it all a dream?"

"It *is* a dream, Elaine. You are like the girls one dreams of; you are like a dream, so beautiful, so strange. Tell me, do you love me? Will you come away with me and be my wife?"

"Don't, Paul, don't. Do you ask me truly?"

"I do. Wait till I grow strong and well. Wait till I am myself again. Then we will fly together."

"I am an orphan," said Elaine, clasping her hands and looking at me in a wild way. "I have lived all my life with these people, Juggernaut and Cynthy, in one place or another. I do not think I understand you, Paul, speaking so earnestly. But you will really marry me——"

"O Elaine, Elaine, just wait——"

"That is—if I have you, Paul."

"But you will, Elaine. Tell me, tell me; don't you love me?"

"Yes—a little."

"A little? But you will learn to love me more."

Believe me, Elaine, you will. Come and let me kiss you."

"No ; not now, Paul. I will come again to-morrow, Paul, and then we will talk about it. Let me go now."

"Then, to-morrow, Elaine. Come again to-morrow and we will arrange it all. Good-bye for to-day, and don't fail me, Elaine."

"No, I won't fail. Good-bye, Paul."

CHAPTER IX.

CONVALESCENCE.

THE next day, expecting her, I was up and dressed early in the afternoon. I had no glass in which to look at myself, but I knew that I must appear wan and wretched indeed. I was or had been a handsome fellow, and I had my own share of that vanity which is common among men. As I gazed disconsolately at my thin, white hands, and felt the hollowness of my cheeks, I congratulated myself anew that I had no rival to make me miserable. There was no one who could supplant me in the affections of Elaine, no one who could attempt it. That I might possibly have a rival was an idea which did not for a moment enter my head. I imagined myself her first suitor, and believed her heart free and untouched.

I was so weak that I could barely stand upright ; and lay down again on my straw bed almost as soon as I was dressed, to gather strength. As I lay there I reviewed the history of the past few months.

I was in love. I had been a poor surveyor, and had been dismissed by my employers ; I had started on a journey, and been lost in the snow ; I had been carried into a strange house, haunted, as far as I could tell, by a band of desperadoes, possibly by actual criminals ; I had been wasted almost to a skeleton by a fever ; my pockets had been rifled of all the money I had possessed in the world ; and a mystery which I could not fathom enveloped the house and its inmates, and seemed to connect them with the friend whom I loved more than any man on earth. But what of all that ?— I was in love. A pair of dark blue eyes came between me and all these things ; a soft voice turned the recollection of sorrows into sweet remembrance of the joy that was come ; and I viewed all the misfortunes of the past as more than atoned for in the new light that had risen to shed its gladness on my soul.

It is a strange thing love. All the world, good or evil, seems for the time being to be veiled with a gilded veil. The past is forgotten, the future is like a dream of light, the present is a dream of bliss, and one wishes only that it might last forever.

She was late in coming. The afternoon wore on. No doubt old Cynthia kept her below, Perhaps she

would not come. A fear took hold of me; was she afraid of me?—had my words the day before been too impetuous? Elaine was such a strange girl; she was so unlike any that I had seen. And there was a mystery about her, a simplicity and yet a certain depth of understanding that puzzled me. I could not fathom all her ways. But I was in love; I was in love with everything she did; the very uncertainty of her temperament had its charm.

I rose and went to the window. It was the first time I had looked out since that night. I shuddered. I remembered it all. There was the river; the ice was breaking up; soon it would be possible for boats to come and go again, soon. And Colin, whom I had seen carried out of a boat and laid down yonder on the river bank—Colin, my friend and protector—where was he?

And then I became conscious of something that filled my mind with nervous dread. I felt that I could not tell Colin, should I meet him, of my love for Elaine. The knowledge came upon me like a revelation. No, I could not tell him; I would not tell him if I were to meet him. Yet, why not?—hitherto he had been my friend in all things, hitherto

I had told him everything. But this—how could I tell it? Yes, for the first time between him and me there was a barrier; and the barrier was Elaine!

The rustle of a dress behind me cut short my reflections. I turned and found myself face to face with my love. She wore a shawl over her shoulders and held a fur cap in her hand. Her face was flushed as if she had been running.

“Well, Paul, am I late?”

“A little, Elaine; I was afraid you were not coming.”

“I am sorry, Paul.”

“It does not matter, Elaine. I am satisfied that you should come at all. Let me kiss you, Elaine.”

She turned her face towards me, and I bent and kissed her. The kiss sealed my fate. I had loved her before, but there was magic in the touching of the lips that seemed to link my very soul with hers.

“May I sit down, Paul? I am tired.”

“Yes; let us sit down here by the window. Where have you been, Elaine? I have been looking for you so long.”

“I am sorry, Paul. I went away for a walk. I had to think over all you said yesterday; and I have

thought it over. Do you know the river has broken up?"

"I could see it from the window. It froze after I came here. What a long time I have been here! But I am glad, now, that it all happened, since it brought me to you, Elaine."

"Do you love me so much then, Paul?"

"Love you?—I don't love you, Elaine; I adore you, I cannot begin to tell you how much; but some day, when we are married and living happily together you will realize it."

"I used to come in sometimes, when you were asleep, Paul, and look at you," said Elaine thoughtfully; "but I never could make up my mind about you, whether I should like you or not."

"When shall we be able to escape, Elaine?"

"When? Oh, whenever you are able;—not yet."

"But it must be soon. And do you know that Juggernaut has taken all the money I had with me. In that case, it will not be easy for us to get to Montreal."

"Yes," said Elaine, interrupting me; "I have money; not much, but some. And until you get some for yourself we can do with that."

“And where did you get your money, Elaine?”

“I? Oh Paul—some of it by going on the stage in Boston, and some by selling flowers. I have nearly sixty dollars of which they”—lowering her voice—“know nothing; I carry it here.”

As she spoke she showed me a thin piece of black velvet which hung round her neck, and was fastened under her dress.

“And what did you mean to do with the money, Elaine?”

“I meant to escape into the world some day, Paul; but I was always afraid to go alone.”

“My darling—now we will escape together. And my life, too, Elaine, has been a failure hitherto. But we will commence our lives over again, and live them anew, shall we not?”

And I put my arm around her, and kissed her again.

CHAPTER X.

A DAY OF SUSPENSE.

"PAUL—Paul."

It was early in the morning, and I was not yet out of bed. I heard Elaine's voice calling at the door.

"Yes, Elaine; you may enter."

"Paul—Paul—I haven't a moment to spare—don't speak loud, but the men are coming to-day."

"What men?"

"The men who have smuggled goods from Boston. They are coming."

"Oh!—and what of it, Elaine?"

"Don't get up, Paul; stay in bed. Juggernaut is determined that you shall go to-day—this morning—before they come. And we can't go, can we?—and you will not go without me, Paul?"

"God forbid!"

"Then stay in bed. And when they come for you pretend to be very ill so that you can't move. I mustn't stay, Paul, or they will suspect something. I hear them below, now—I must go."

“ One kiss, Elaine ; kiss me once.”

The kiss was a hurried one, for already there was a sound of heavy footsteps on the stairway outside, indicative of the fact that Juggernaut was coming upstairs. Elaine flew ; and almost before the skirt of her gown disappeared in the doorway, Juggernaut's step fell on the passage by the door. How she escaped him I do not know ; but he did not see her. Dragging one foot after the other, as his custom was, he shuffled into the room.

“ Humph !—what the devil !—are you not out of bed yet ? ”

No answer from me ; he approached the bed.

“ Here you !—come—what's the matter ? Here—come, rouse up ! ”

My face was buried in my pillow, and, as he spoke, a convulsive shuddering fell on me, and I groaned as if in agony.

“ Here—what the devil !—are you deaf ? ” and the wretch, in his haste, began to poke his foot under the straw whereon I lay.

“ Oh—Oh ! Is it you, Juggernaut ?—Heaven help me ! ”

"Eh—what's the matter? What now?"

"Oh, nothing—everything; I have a sick turn, that's all."

"The devil you have!—humph! Want anything?"

"No, thank you; only to stay in bed and be quiet all day."

"Very good. I'll shut the door, and tell 'em below."

"You may, Juggernaut—and leave me quite alone, if you please."

The wretch hobbled away with a frown on his face, muttering under his breath. I was nevertheless free to remain. Needless to say that my illness was purely imaginary; I had been gaining in strength every day, and this particular day I felt strong enough to do anything. But for Elaine's sake I must feign sickness for a little.

At first I lay quiet in my bed, thinking and dreaming. But the sun began after a while to shine in at the window, and I commenced to regret my forced inaction. Life had become suddenly very sweet. I had determined to begin a new career, and

push my way in the world by sheer force of energy and perseverance. I longed to be up and doing.

At last the silence and solitude became intolerable, and I crept over to the door. It was closed ; and I opened it a crack and listened. All was quiet below. My host had robbed me even of my watch, so that I had no means of telling the time ; but I conjectured that it was somewhere between eleven and twelve in the morning.

Then I crawled to the window. I was afraid to walk lest my footsteps should be heard, and dared not dress lest Juggernaut should come and order me out of the house. Having closed the door again, I made my way to the window and looked out.

The river had broken up some days before. Ice there was none. A little snow had fallen the night previous, and the ground was white ; yet there was something in the air suggestive of spring, the sun was bright, and there was a warm glow in the window.

For more than an hour I must have stood at the window, looking out on the grey water as it rushed past, foaming and angry, swept by the keen April winds. The river was much swollen, and I could see that the water came up as far as the corner of

the house. The bare branches of the trees creaked and bent in the wind ; there was as yet no sign of buds. Far and near, as long as I watched, not a trace of any human being was to be seen.

I began to be hungry. Cynthia had brought me, in the early morning, a plate of biscuits and some water. Off of these I dined. Then, having satisfied for the time the cravings of hunger, I laid down again on my straw bed. After an hour's tossing to and fro I went to sleep. When I awoke, I was conscious that I must have slept several hours. It was not by any means dark, but the day was declining ; and I felt again the pangs of hunger. Stretching out my hand, I grasped what remained of the plate of biscuits, and devoured them eagerly. This done, I made my way to the door and cautiously opened it.

They had come. Far below where I stood, probably on the ground floor of the house, there was a sound of voices, and a moving about of men, a sound strangely foreign to the calm and quiet that generally prevailed. I listened, but could not distinguish anything said or done. There was a sound of dishes rattling, and twice corks were pulled, whence I concluded that supper was in progress.

An intense curiosity took possession of me. These were the men with whom I had seen Colin Gordon. Who were they? Elaine had said smugglers; but smuggling is a vague term, and a smuggler might be any kind of a man.

Might I not possibly creep downstairs and see them for myself? Was there any danger that I should risk my life in so doing? The very idea of risk lent a charm to the proposition. Whatever other faults I had had, want of physical courage had never been one of my weaknesses. And now, having been pent up so long in one room, the temptation to run a slight risk of the kind was absolutely irresistible.

It seemed to me but a moment, and I was ready. Strange to say, Juggernaut had left me my revolver, and I put it in my pocket in order to provide for any untoward contingency. As soon as I was ready I started for the ground floor whence came the sound of voices.

It was a long dark passage-way, and I had to grope about a little before I found the stairs. When I began the descent, they cracked so horribly that it seemed to me inevitable that I should be heard.

Possibly they were not listening for any one; for no one came out, and presently I found myself on the second floor.

Here it was very dark, as far as the light of day was concerned. There was no window giving light to the hall. A glimmer at the far end, however, seemed to come from the floor below, and creeping along I found another flight of stairs.

I was now quite close to the other occupants of the house. Leaning over the balustrade, I could hear them distinctly talking to each other in a sharp American accent. Their conversation seemed to be mainly of money, and was plentifully garnished with oaths. Juggernaut's voice I could not hear; one man, whom the others addressed as Andrew, seemed to lead the discussion.

My curiosity increased. I determined to go on down. Softly, step after step, I went. It was not until I stood on the ground floor, in the hall, that I realized where I was. Coming downstairs, I had actually passed in sight of all of them—for the room in which they were was opposite the stairway, and the door was open!

I stood at the foot of the stairs and held my

breath. The discussion in the room went on. It had not stopped for a moment. They had been too intent on the subject in hand to cast an eye toward the door. I had escaped.

For a moment I puzzled myself with the problem how I was to get up again. Then, having come so far, I began to feel reckless, and made up my mind to stay and listen to the conversation that was going on in the room. Creeping gently up to the doorway, I got down on my knees and looked through the crack of the door

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CHAPTER XI.

A SPY IN THE CAMP.

THIS is what I saw. A fire was blazing in the grate, a huge wood fire, and the sight of it cheered my heart in spite of myself. Round the fire sat, or rather lounged, in positions suggestive more of comfort than elegance, five men. Juggernaut sat in the middle, facing the fire and with his back to me. Two tall, swarthy Yankees, each with a goatee and moustache, reclined on a sofa or bench—it was as much one as the other—on his left; on the other side of him sat a little old, round-shouldered individual with a fur cap on his head, the ears of which hung loosely over his shoulders, and who also wore a great coat, although the room was by no means cold. The remaining member of the party sat on the floor, with his back leaning against the mantel and his legs stretched on the floor in front of him. He was a dark, handsome young man, somewhat fast looking, and comparatively well dressed. He exactly faced

me ; and when I first looked into the room through the crack of the door, it seemed to me that his eyes looked straight into mine.

The party were eating, all save the young man last mentioned, who was smoking a cigarette. Either he had finished his repast or had no appetite, for he evinced no anxiety to join the others in their evening meal. The sight of them eating was not, indeed, appetizing. Each had a plate in his lap, and the little old man in the fur cap held a platter with a joint of cold beef, from which he cut slices for the others as they required them. A jar of whisky stood on a small table behind Juggernaut, and from the manner in which they were behaving I judged that they had helped themselves liberally. Juggernaut alone had no whisky, but held in his hand, instead, a cup of tea.

Almost the first words I heard made my blood run cold, for it was apparent that they were discussing me.

"I don't see any reason for this here fuss," said one of the two tall Yankees ; "choke him, sew him up in a bag, and drown him. That's the way to do it. Give him to me ; I'll finish him."

"Mind how you talk, Bill," said Juggernaut, looking over his shoulder, and indicating with his finger the next room; "there's Cynthy in there. She's kept him, her and the young one together."

"Weemen spile everything," said the man again speaking through his nose. "I'd get rid of 'em all if I had any round me. What's the matter with him, now, any-way?"

"Colic," said Juggernaut with a grin. "He's got it bad. Quite quiet to-day. If it hadn't been for the women, Bill, he'd a been a gone coon sure this good while back; but, damn 'em, I've had half a mind to send him off and them along with him."

"Good for you if you could," said the first speaker.

"One of them will be gone to-morrow," said the young man by the fireplace. "Elaine has got to go this time, Jug; I'll take no more shilly-shallying."

Juggernaut moved uneasily in his chair. "Take her," he said sullenly; "take her, and good riddance to her. If you don't take her, some of these sick puppies 'ill get her."

"Will they?" said the young man derisively; "no,

Jug; don't you believe it! Not till I'm a dead man first, anyway!"

My Elaine!—Merciful Heaven, what was I to do?

"How much money did you get from h'im?" said the old man with the cap.

"Thirty dollars, beside the watch," said Juggernaut; but he told a lie, for he had taken much more. "I left him nothing but his revolver, and that won't help him if he tries to use it."

A loud laugh burst from their lips at this remark. Involuntarily I put my hand into my pocket and felt my revolver. Alas!—what could I do?

"I'll take her to-morrow, Juggernaut," said the young man, lighting another cigarette as he spoke. "She'll go, won't she?"

"I 'spose so, Jack; I don't see how she can help herself."

"Then by this time Friday she'll be Mrs. Marvel," said the young man raising his glass to his lips. "All hands drink to Mrs. Jack Marvel and her husband to be."

"Then when you're rid of her you can buy up Cynthia with some 'Old Tom,' and get rid of the

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colicky man," said the tall Yankee again. "Here's to 'em both!"

It looked desperate enough. I felt calm and collected, and began to plan an escape for Elaine and myself; but there was not much hope of such an undertaking being successful. If they rushed out upon me, I felt myself ready for them; there would be nothing left but to sell my life as dearly as possible. Yet life was sweet. And the thought of cheating them and carrying Elaine off from the clutches of the wretch who proposed marrying her, whether she would or no, was sweeter still.

"Damn you! the whiskey is run out," said the old man, pushing his chair back, and tipping the jar until it stood wrong side up. "Have you got no more, Jug?"

Juggernaut rose from his chair and shuffled away. It was a moment of suspense. But he passed the door, and entered the next room. As soon as his back was turned, they began to talk of him.

"Has he divided fair, d'ye think?" said one of the tall Yankees, the one who had hitherto been silent.

"Don't know," said the little old man with a shrug

of the shoulders; "a thousand isn't much for a winter's work."

"How does he get his own share afloat?" said the other tall man whom they called Bill.

"Elaine does it for him, I guess," said the first speaker. "She's a sharp one, that same Elaine. You're in luck, Jack, if you get her."

"Get her?" said the young man with a scowl. "He don't intend to give her up, does he? But he shall. She won't do no more money changing for him, damn him!"

The wretch! Could I have throttled him then and there, I believe I would have gone and done it, and taken the consequences. But I was still weak, and he was a strong man to tackle. What they meant I had not the slightest idea.

"Hallo, Jug, give us here; what's this?"

"Some of the same," said Juggernaut handing it to the young man by the fireplace. "Here, Jack, here's to Elaine, and good luck go with her."

"She's done your work well, you old devil," was the reply. "By —, I'll have it out of her how much you owe us all; and then, by —, you'll pay us or we'll know the reason why!"

The face of Juggernaut became livid with rage. "I swear to you by ——," he began.

"Don't swear," said the young man, "or they'll add perjury to your other crimes; it'll be a new indictment against yer."

A loud laugh greeted this remark.

"I *do* swear," said Juggernaut, still yellow underneath his dark skin; "I do swear again, by ——"

"He does fair—he does fair," said the little old man interrupting.

"He goes halves with him; they divide," said the tall Yankee, pointing to the fur cap; "some day I'll shoot yer both!"

Another laugh burst from the crowd at this reassuring intimation, and then the young man gave a kick to a chair that stood near him, and sent it flying across the room into an opposite corner. "Where *is* Elaine?" he asked impatiently. "Why the —— don't she come down and say she is glad to see us?"

"Perhaps she ain't," said one of the tall men laconically.

"Yes, she is," said Juggernaut, looking uneasily at the young man as he spoke; "yes, she is. She

don't come in because I sent her down to the store-house for some tea. She's out just now. But I expect her back every minute."

My heart gave a great bound. Elaine was out. Then, if I could get out, I might meet her, and warn her not to return. We could escape together! Whither?—I might well ask myself; but there was a chance of escape if we ran away in this manner; and to remain would be but to deliver ourselves up to the villains who plotted our destruction.

I crept noiselessly away from the door, backward, into the hall. It seemed to me that the beating of my heart would summon them out; but no one came; they continued talking inside, and the dispute between Juggernaut and the young man waxed louder and louder. After creeping well away from the door, I turned round and looked behind me.

I was at one end of the hall which ran through the house from front to back. At the far end, in the darkness, I could see a door with a crescent-shaped window above it. My blood warmed as I recognized the window in which I had seen the light the evening I was lost in the snow. I was now

as anxious to get out of that door as I had then been to get in.

I crawled along the hall until I reached it. Then I paused to recover my breath and to examine the means of exit. The door was fastened by a big iron bolt. That bolt drawn, I would be free.

But, stop—I am weak. I am fresh from a sick bed. I have no coat nor cap; the cold will kill me. Here, just at my elbow, is a pile of wraps of all descriptions left by the company inside, no doubt, as they entered the warm house. Let me array myself.

Am I stealing? No;—they have taken *my* clothes, they have taken *my* money, they have taken everything from me;—what I am doing is lawful, nay, praiseworthy. A pair of Indian-made moccasins and gaiters, a heavy fur cap, and—yes, here is a coat that fits me exactly. Noiselessly, carefully, and yet hastily, I put them on, as coolly as if I were arraying myself for a morning walk. And—yes—now I am ready.

It seemed an eternity before that bolt was drawn back. Every moment a cold wave seemed to pass down my back, and I expected to have a strong hand laid on my shoulder. But no—the bolt is

drawn—the door is open—I am free! With one bound I was in the open air!

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CHAPTER XII.

"SHOOT HIM."

IT was moonlight. Winter's snow was gone, but during the day a little had fallen, a little of the soft snow of spring, and there was a light covering on the ground. I glanced around me. Yes—there was the house, looking now much as it had looked on that eventful night, save that then dark clouds that covered the sky had shrouded it in sombre mystery, while now the moonlight played on the rough grey stones, and veiled it with a weird fitful beauty. The memory of that night came strong upon me; but I had no time to indulge in reminiscences. Life itself, with all that life held dear, hung in the balance. Yet I cast back one fitful glance at the crescent shaped window above the door, and drew a long breath at the recollection of the hour when it had acted as a guiding star, shining amid the darkness and the storm,

Whither should I turn? I looked at the snow. On it were footsteps. Were they Elaine's? Yes, surely, for the print was small and feminine. Thank God for the snow; without it I should not have known whether to turn to the right hand or to the left. But the footsteps led to the right, and to the right I turned.

The moon was near setting. The trees, grim and bare, showed as yet no sign of a returning spring. The moonlight glimmered fitfully here and there underneath the spreading branches. Behind me the house stood up, gaunt and forbidding, yet weirdly picturesque, a grim reminder of the danger that hung over us. In the sky above it a dark cloud stretched like a pall from east to west. But hurry—on—on—while as yet my escape is undiscovered!

I was walking down a slight incline. A turn brought me out of sight of the house. I was glad to lose sight of it. I went down another hill, and then along by the bank of the river a little. Then I came to an open space where the ground sloped slightly, forming a small hollow round which the road ran. In the hollow, at the farther side, was a small shed formed of logs of wood and loose stones. I looked

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down. At the sight which I saw there the blood froze in my veins. I was as if turned to stone!

This is what I saw. At the far end of the hollow was the shed, formed of logs and of loose stones as I have said. No doubt this was the "store-house" of which Juggernaut had spoken. It was low and picturesque, with little spots of snow here and there on the roof and in the chinks between the stones and the logs. Over it the new moon hung, low in the sky. At the corner of the shed, facing where I stood, I saw a horse, saddled and bridled. A man stood at the horse's head, and his arm, interlacing the bridle, encircled the animal's neck. With the other hand he grasped one of the logs that supported the shed roof. Beside him, standing at an arm's length, was a girl. Both were talking in low, earnest tones. I recognized them at sight. The girl was Elaine—and the man was Colin Gordon!

I stood transfixed. Words—thoughts—failed me. How—how—how—I seemed to say to myself; but no idea, no fixed thought was forthcoming. Yes—it was Colin—my friend Colin—my Colin Gordon—the friend of my past life and my new-found love standing there in earnest converse together. A thousand

conflicting ideas flitted across my brain, but not one took a palpable shape or formed itself in words. I stood like one turned to stone, seeing nothing save that those two stood there talking to each other. The scene burned itself into my brain to remain engraven there forever.

“My God!”

It was Elaine; she was shrieking. I saw an arm outstretched, a hand pointed towards me; I heard a cry, “It is he!—Colin—Colin—God help us, what shall I do!”

The man looked at me, then at Elaine. The hand that was grasping the shed dropped, and was held forth towards Elaine as if to offer protection.

“Colin—Colin—save me—save me from him—save me from him—save me!”

It was my Elaine, my loved Elaine, calling to another to save her from me—from me! The trees seemed to swim round me; the ground rose and fell like the waves of the sea.

“What shall I do, Elaine?”

It was he who asked the question. He spoke low, his voice was but a hoarse whisper. Yet it thrilled me to hear him. It was the voice of Colin Gordon,

my friend, for whom I had longed these many weeks. It was his voice that spoke.

“What shall I do Elaine?—tell me.”

I was speechless. I tried to speak. I endeavored to shout to them. I made an effort to clear my throat; but no: my voice failed me. Involuntarily I began to advance one foot after the other slowly down the hill.

“Look, Colin—look—look—he is coming! He is coming; he is coming;—*shoot him!*”

I knew Colin well. He was a wise man, prudent above all men. But there was a spirit in him akin to that of the men of the olden times who, for a woman's word or for a vow in honor made, would do and dare the worst. He took a revolver from his pocket and pointed it at me. As he did so I instinctively put my hand into the pocket of the coat I wore, and, in my turn, drew one forth. I had not known that there was such a thing there, but I did not stop to reflect upon the matter at the time. Mechanically I drew it forth and held it up.

“Colin—Colin—look—look—he will shoot you; he will kill you! Once before he killed a man so!—quick! quick!”

A strange thrill came over me as I saw my friend Colin Gordon raise his hand and aim his revolver at me. A strange thrill, and at the same moment a feeling of relief; for I knew by Elaine's last words that she mistook me for her would-be lover, the wretch whose coat no doubt I wore, and whose revolver I carried. In other words she saw the man Marvel, and not me, hurrying towards her over the snow.

Whizz !

A poor aim for Colin, but he had never intended to hit me, only to stop my advance, and to show me that he was prepared to go to any extreme rather than surrender the girl to my tender mercies. The bullet passed above my head, grazing my cap.

"Elaine !"

It was I who spoke; at last I had found my voice. But it sounded strange even in my own ears. She did not recognize it. She threw herself behind him. Quick—Colin—he is running, Colin—now—save me from him—save me—he is coming—fire !"

I ran forward; I saw the hand of my friend raised again; I raised mine, and, tearing the cap from my head, waved it in the air,—he pointed the revolver at me; for a brief moment of time I stopped. "Colin—

Colin—spare me! It is I! It is I! It is I, Paul
Sacristan!”

CHAPTER XIII.

IS HE FRIEND OR FOE ?

THE first thing that was apparent was a movement of the horse. Colin's arm had fallen instantaneously, and had fallen on the animal's neck. I saw the horse rear, and then become quiet again, and that was all. In another moment I stood beside them.

"Paul—Paul—Paul, old man! Is it—is it possible? I say, Paul friend—my God, for months—for months—*months*—I have been——"

"Yes—yes, it is I, Colin," I said, brushing away the outstretched hand which was held towards me, and turning round to face Elaine.

"It is your voice, old chap; it is you; but Paul—Paul—"

"Elaine—my love!"

Elaine stood there trembling, her dark eyes gleaming, with an expression in them that I had never seen before. It was an expression that might mean anything—pain, fear, distress, anxiety, disappoint-

ment, relief—all mingled together. She glanced fearfully at me, and then in the direction of the house; then at Colin;—but her glances were swift as lightning; her eyes rested for a moment on nothing.

“I say, old man—Paul—Paul—it is your voice, old chap, but—by God, how you are changed!”

“Elaine—”

“I say—Paul, old man—you must shake my hand.”

“Elaine, my love.”

“How did you ever escape them, Paul? How did you come?” said Elaine.

I could not answer Colin, it seemed to me that I could not even speak to him. I felt that I could have died to embrace him; yet I did not:—and for fear that I should be tempted, I did not even look at him.

“I came, Elaine; I escaped. They were eating and drinking. I do not know how I did it.”

“I do not know,” said Elaine, “but you have done it; Paul. You are wearing Jack Marvel’s coat; did you know?”

“I knew it. And you took me for him? Was it so, Elaine?”

"Yes, Paul; but—"

"But what? What are you doing here?"

"See here, old chap,"—Colin laid his hand upon my arm as he spoke. "See here, Paul, boy; I don't understand all this at all. I am here to befriend Elaine."

"You?—You!"

I wrenched my arm free of him, and turned upon him like a wild beast. It must be remembered that I was not quite myself when I did it. "You, Colin Gordon? Never!—never!—never! You do not know what you say. *You* befriend Elaine while *I* am in the world? Never!"

Colin's eyes opened wide as I spoke, those old blue eyes of his; and his mouth twitched under his red moustache.

"Is Paul mad?" he said to Elaine.

"Mad—you villain!" I cried, loosing all my self-control. "Do you call it madness to be angry because a man who pretends, or pretended once, to be my friend comes between me and mine? No! and were you Colin Gordon ten times over I would say it still!"

While all this was going on, Elaine stood apart, a

curious expression in her eyes, and her lips firmly compressed. From time to time she cast furtive glances in the direction of the house, and kept moving her foot impatiently, backwards and forwards, making a short pathway in the snow.

"What you may be now, I do not know," said Colin quietly; "but you used to be my friend once, Paul. A calm explanation would be better, old man, than this display of temper—which, to say the least, is uncalled for."

"You may go to the ——" said I, for I had completely lost all control over either my words or actions.

"Let me explain," said Elaine, without, however, looking at me, or ceasing the movement of her foot; "I will explain. I came out to the store-house, and I met Mr. Gordon. Mr. Gordon was passing on horse-back. I told him the difficulty I was in. This wretch, Jack Marvel, was come to the house, and had sworn to carry me off and marry me, whether I would or no. They have promised him that I shall be his wife, and though I am unwilling, he will wait no longer. When you came up, Paul, Mr. Gordon was urging me to go away with him to escape them."

"And me, Elaine?"

"It was only the remembrance of you, Paul, that kept me from going. I feared Jack much, but I loved you more."

"Thank God!"

I seized her hand and shook it. I kissed her lips. But Colin's restraining grasp was on me; he took me by the arm.

"Hold a bit, Paul boy."

"Hold?—never!" I cried, shaking him off. "Who are you that you should dare to come between us?"

"I am your friend, Paul, as I ever was. This is no time for hesitating about trifles. You will excuse me, Elaine, if I whisper a word in his ear."

"I will move aside a little," said Elaine, edging away; "there, now, you can speak to him without my hearing."

"Paul, boy"—Colin put his hand upon my shoulder—"Paul, boy, tell me—what do you intend to do?"

"I intend to marry Elaine; and nothing on earth or in heaven shall prevent it!"

"You mistake, Paul—I shall prevent."

He meant well but he spoke in ignorance. I had

just, as it were, risen from a sick bed, and my mind was weak and impressionable from the effects of my illness. For months Elaine had been the light of my life, the one consolation in an otherwise cold and heartless world. I was utterly incapable of taking an impartial view of the situation.

I jumped back, and drew my revolver. "Colin Gordon, rather than allow you to carry out that threat, I would do anything to prevent it. I will shoot you where you stand."

"Paul—Paul—Paul!"

Elaine rushed up and caught me by the arms, standing behind me and holding them both back.

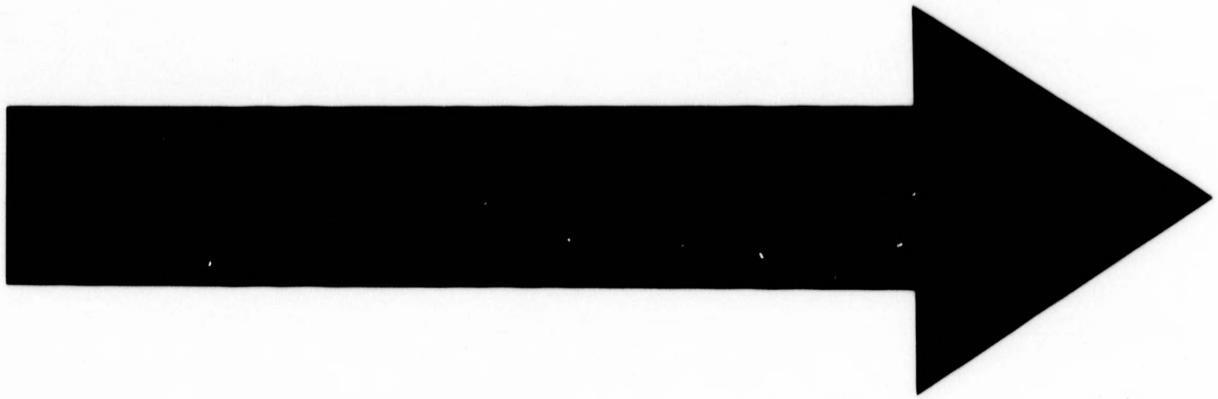
"Elaine," I said, "how you came to know this man I do not understand; but I can trust you to tell me later. Tell him for me,—for us both—that you mean to be my wife."

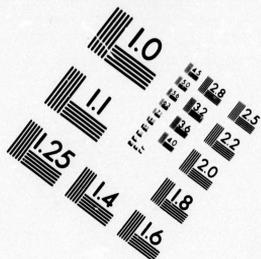
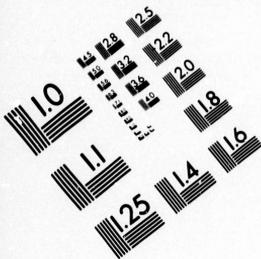
I felt her tremble where she stood behind me.

"I do—I do. I mean to be his wife—Paul's wife—if you—if you—do not——"

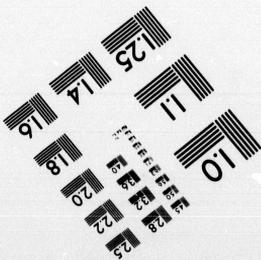
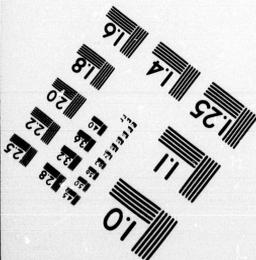
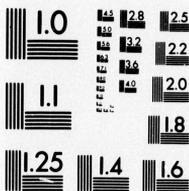
"Nonsense!" I said, goaded to desperation; "what is he, or who is he, that he should prevent it?"

"Paul," said Colin, speaking in a thick voice; "when we parted, you made me a promise. You pro-





**IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



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mised that whatever I asked of you, you would do. Do you draw back now?"

"I do: I refuse. Is that enough? I promised you then, but you shall not come between me and the woman I love."

Colin put his arm around the horse's neck, and drew a long breath. "Then if there is no more to be said, what shall we do?"

"Escape," said Elaine.

"But how?" said Colin; "how will you escape, Elaine? Will you and Sacristan take my horse and ride him to St. Pierre? He will carry you both."

In spite of myself, I flushed with shame. It was the old Colin Gordon who spoke, always unselfish, true and noble.

"We cannot do that," I said. "Leave you here? We cannot do that, can we, Elaine?"

"No, Paul," said Elaine looking anxiously towards the house, for it was growing late;—"that we could not do!"

"Then will you let Elaine ride away with me?" said Colin gravely, looking at me over the horse.

"I will," I said grimly; "but I give you fair warning: I will shoot you as you turn the corner."

"Then what shall we do?"

Colin put his hands into his pockets, and looked at me with a provoking calmness. I was stung to the quick by his manner. I answered:—

"I will tell you what we might do. If you wish to take Elaine, I will give you your chance, though what right you have to come between us I do not know. I will stand here, and do you stand over there. I have a revolver; so have you. Let us fight it out—and the survivor can carry off Elaine."

A look of quiet scorn was the answer; but Elaine ran between us.

"No, no," she cried, standing with an arm outstretched on either side. "No, no! Paul—Paul—you are to be my husband. I will stay with you, Paul! I will stay with you! But this is no time for quarrelling; we are in danger; every moment is precious. Do you, Colin, ride away as fast as you can. Go and bring us back help. As for Paul and myself, we will follow you on foot. We will live or die together!"

"Good!"

With one bound Colin was in the saddle. As for me, I was unable to speak. I saw him mount and

ride away, and I was silent. It was only when the horse and the rider had disappeared among the trees that I turned around and folded Elaine in my arms.

CHAPTER XIV.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

"Hi—halloo! There—the devils—ha! This way, boys!"

A cry rang through the still air. We looked around. At the turn of the road above us stood a man!

"This way, boys— I have 'em! By — *he's* here too; ha, ha, ha! Here's your man, Jack; here's, your girl—ha, ha, ha!"

A horrid peal of laughter echoed through the woods. We were discovered!

Elaine clung to me. She uttered a faint cry. "Paul, Paul! they have followed us; we are trapped; they will kill you; they will kill you! Oh God, Paul."

"Hush, Elaine," I said; "be brave. We will sell our lives dearly. Come—keep hold of me."

Jumping over a ditch, I plunged haphazard into

a thicket. As I jumped, I turned my face in the direction of the house—a tall figure in an overcoat was standing about sixty yards from us; and, farther away, I could distinguish the forms of others advancing towards us.

A hearty laugh broke from them as we disappeared from their view. "Your gal ain't so anxious to run off with ye, Jack," said a coarse voice in loud accents; "how is that? You don't understand courtin', eh? Damned if I'd let the other feller run off with my clothes, though, if he did cut me out!" The shout that followed and the oaths that succeeded the shout made my heart die within me. What could we do to save ourselves? We were at the mercy of these demons; God help us!

I did not know where we were, nor whither we were going. In the first impulse of self-preservation, I had rushed to the shelter of the nearest thicket. Elaine had followed me. We could hear the shrieks and the laughter of our pursuers as they pushed after us. They seemed to regard it as a huge joke. But we had no time for thought. We were running for our lives.

"Hi—I seen 'em, Bill; you! Good for you, Jack!

That's a man; whip out your knife. Give it to him when you get him, Jack; he's got ahead of you bad!"

"I'll break every bone in his --- body," was the answer. "Just you wait a spell—just you wait!"

"Kill me," said Elaine suddenly; "kill me, Paul; and then kill yourself. I would rather."

"Wait a bit," I said; "wait—just a little. Here, take care of this hill. Ah—we're caught."

For we stood beside the house! We were almost exactly behind it. I had not known whicher we ran; on reaching the foot of the hill, however, I saw, in an instant, where we were, and that our flight was cut off. We had run, in fact, almost up against the house; there it stood before us. Escape was impossible.

"It will be better to kill me, Paul. I would rather die."

A great fire burned in her eyes, those wondrous blue eyes. "Oh, Elaine, Elaine!"—I caught hold of her arm, and we two stood together for a moment, panting for breath. It was living a lifetime in a few seconds.

"Wait, Elaine—not yet—not yet—"

"I would rather, Paul;"—and quickly, with her hand, she smoothed the long tresses of black hair that had fallen out of place during the scramble through the thicket;—"let me die just here, now, beside you;—while you love me!"

"Ha, you devil! Jug, Jug! come out, you black-guard; come out; we've trapped 'em; we've got 'em!"

The speaker appeared at the brow of the hill as the words were spoken. He halted as if to gather breath and swoop down on us leisurely. Like a cat gloating over a mouse which it has shut into a corner, he grinned tauntingly at his prey. At the same moment the form of Juggernaut emerged from the rear of the house.

At the sight of him my blood boiled. Death might be near; but let me, first of all, wreak vengeance on Juggernaut. I rushed forward. He whipped out a knife and prepared to show fight; but I was quicker than lightning. With one spring I was on him. In another moment he was on the ground, flat on his back.

A yell from him rent the air. I turned and beheld two of the desperadoes rushing towards me. It was

a desperate moment. I planted myself firmly, and, raising my revolver, took aim at the nearer of the two men. At the same moment Elaine grasped my hand.

"Paul—the boat—the boat!"

The words passed through me like an electric shock. The boat? Just Heaven—was it possible? I turned again; Elaine was running I followed. The ground flew away from under us. A slip meant death. "Elaine—for our very lives—hurry!"

She knew where it was; I did not. I followed her. The pursuers pressed close behind us. On—on—across a little valley—across a little brook—a jump—a little hill—a descent—a log to cross—the bank of the river—the river—the *boat!*

Were I to live for ever, I should never forget that scramble. We each of us depended on the other yet acted without directions from one another, having no time for a word of counsel. Elaine went straight to the boat, gave it a shove, jumped in and threw herself to the fore, falling flat on her face. She had not been sufficiently strong to move the boat, and it remained fast. I followed.

"O my God—in this hour—strength!" I cried,

as I laid hold of it. "Now—just for once—" on—it goes—splash, my feet are in the water, it is moving; I spring forward—yes, it is moving; we are off!

Our pursuers had caught us. One of the men ran in after me and seized my foot as I jumped into the boat. With a resolute kick I sent him flying backward.

"Quick, Paul—lie flat in the bottom or they will fire and kill you!"

Elaine's presence of mind saved me. Hardly had she finished speaking when a bullet struck the boat and a moment after another passed over our heads. But she had spoken in time. My feet, indeed, were sticking up over the tiller; but I was lying, face downward, in the bottom of the boat, and the shots had no effect.

Then followed silence, broken only by the sound of rushing water, as we rocked to and fro out on the current. We had no oar, nothing to guide us; we had escaped with our lives only. Darkness reigned—save for the light of stars and the glimmer of the moon behind a cloud. The swift spring current of the mighty St. Lawrence bore us along.

"Paul."

"I am here, Elaine."

"Where are we?"

"God only knows."

At the same moment we raised our heads, and looked each other in the face. Then, without exchanging a word, we glanced around. The current in April is very strong; in an incredibly short time we had been carried an immense distance. Far, far away, the old stone house seemed but a grey speck in the distance. On either hand the sombre trees stood up, grim and indistinct, against the dark sky. The cold air on the river fanned our faces, and the boat rocked to and fro in the wind.

We had escaped! But we were alone on the wild St. Lawrence, tossed at the mercy of wind and wave, without clothing, without food, without means to guide our course; and the resistless current of the mighty river was fast hurrying us on, God alone knew whither!

CHAPTER XV.

THE NARRATIVE OF COLIN GORDON.

SUFFOLK VILLAGE, Lower Canada,

May 1, 1863.

THIS is the narrative of me, Colin Gordon, formerly of Keith, in the County of Banff, Scotland, now of Montreal, in the Province of Lower Canada, engineer, written by myself on the evening of this first day of May, A.D. 1863.

I intend, to-morrow morning, starting on a tour of investigation, the result of which I cannot possibly foresee. In the case of any accident happening to myself, I wish to leave this narrative behind me, as an explanation, and as a justification of my behavior. I am neglecting the business with which I have been entrusted under the strongest pressure; it is a matter of life and death that calls me; in order that I may not be misjudged, I make the followings tatement, as an explanation of my conduct.

I find, on looking at my note-book, that it was on the thirtieth day of November, 1862, that I parted from my friend, Paul Sacristan. Paul Sacristan was dismissed from our survey for having repeatedly muddled his accounts while under the influence of drink. He was a clever fellow, but thoughtless and dissipated. We two were more than friends at the time; I loved him then—and love him still—as if he were my brother.

It was the night of the thirtieth of last November that I took leave of him. He was to walk to the railway station at St. Pierre, and there take the train for Montreal. He was to start the next morning on the journey, and, being obliged myself to be away at an early hour, I said farewell the evening before.

When I returned home about noon the next day, I found that he had started, according to arrangement, in the morning. It was a raw, chill day, and there were signs of a coming storm; but our chief, being anxious to finish some reports before the severity of the winter should set in, asked me, as a personal favor, if I would consent to go down the river as far as the village of Ste. Marie, to get some

information which was indispensable for the completion of our labors.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when I started, in a small sloop, with a young lad, who was supposed to know the river thoroughly, as my only companion. We were not out an hour before we were overtaken by a heavy snow-storm; it came on us suddenly, without the slightest warning, and completely blinded us.

In the emergency, the lad, upon whose experience I had been advised to place so much reliance, proved a failure. No sooner were we compelled to lay to and depart from the usual track than he completely lost his head.

The wind blew up the river, and we were tacking to make some headway down. I was for continuing our course, in spite of the snow; but sailing on a river was something new to me, and it was with some diffidence that I proffered the advice. The lad was for landing. There was not a village, not even a house, anywhere in sight; but *terra firma*, though it were a wood or a swamp exposed to a wind or covered with the snow, would, he argued, be a more

desirable resting-place than this boat lying out on the river.

Very much against my will, I at last consented; and running the boat round we made for the southern shore. We were bound for the village of Ste. Marie which lies to the south; and the hope of finding a road which might lead me to this destination made me run south instead of north. Otherwise I should have landed on the north side of the river, and made my way back to Suffolk with all speed.

To run the boat in was no easy matter; and in landing we got wet to the waist. When we had at last got safely ashore, we looked about us in the hope of discovering some human habitation, in which we could find shelter and dry our clothes. But after beating about the country for nearly an hour, we found none, and sat down under a dense clump of bushes to consider what was to be done next.

The lad was quite exhausted, and, had I allowed him, would have dropped off to sleep in the snow, and probably froze to death. My hands were benumbed and my feet almost frozen; but I was strong enough to stand a long tramp in the snow

and be none the worse for it, had I but known which way to turn.

At last I hit upon a plan. We were about two hundred yards from the river, and the river bank was comparatively regular; by following the river down stream we must, I felt sure, after a time, strike a road leading to the water. Rousing my companion from his lethargy, and bidding him take courage, we started.

I was right in my surmise. We must have gone between three and four miles, and were wellnigh given up to despair, when an opening in the bush showed itself, running north and south. It was only a wood-road, and apparently little used, but it must lead somewhere; and in the joy of finding so much as a pathway through what had seemed to be a trackless forest, I took courage anew.

It was a question whether to go north or south; but the river was but a quarter of a mile distant, and towards the river we turned our steps.

We had not gone more than twenty yards when a turn in the road brought a most unexpected sight into view. About a hundred yards from where we stood we saw the figure of a man, leaning against

the trunk of a tree, with a gun under his arm. To speak correctly, the gun was resting against the tree, and the man was engaged in lighting his pipe ; but it was evident from the position in which he stood that he had been carrying the gun, and was about to take it up again.

I knew at the first glance that the man was a sentry. What he could be guarding it was impossible to conjecture ; but there was something in his appearance that convinced me he was keeping watch. For myself, when I saw that he did not notice us, being intent on getting his pipe to draw, I would have retired a little to consider the advisability of going forward ; but the lad, overjoyed at seeing, as he imagined, a friendly face, ran on with a glad cry of surprise ; and the man, letting his pipe fall to the ground, grasped his gun and turned to face us with an air of brusque hostility.

“Who are you ? and what the devil d’ye want here ?”

Putting out my hand, I grasped the boy by the arm and drew him back. Then, after a short colloquy with myself, I advanced with my hands in my pockets.

"Who the —— are you?"

"You may pick up your pipe, man, and light it, too," I said, speaking coolly, as I felt a canny Scot should speak; "we are only two, and have nothing to defend ourselves with, if we tried, but our fists; and they are frozen."

"Where d'ye come from?"

"We started to sail down the river to Ste. Marie," I said, "and got blown ashore. Here we are."

"And where are ye goin' now?"

"Wherever we can get a fire to dry ourselves, and a bite to eat."

"Humph! There's no shelter round here."

"Oh, but there must be," said the lad, who was almost dead with the cold. And, making a dash forward, before I could restrain him he was flying past our interlocutor and out of sight among the trees.

The man who confronted me was a rough but by no means ill-looking individual. I saw that he did not intend me to advance any further, nor was it his intention to offer us food and shelter. But I was desperate; to go back and follow up this road, perhaps for miles, without coming upon any human habitation was more than my strength was able for;

I determined to make an effort to enlist his sympathies in our behalf. I approached him.

"See here, my friend, I don't know who you are, of course, nor what your business may be; but I wish you would show us, this boy and myself, how we are to get some shelter from the storm. I am an engineer, and this young fellow offered to take me down to Ste. Marie this afternoon, in spite of the storm; and this is the end of it!"

The man frowned. "Engineer, eh? Where d'ye come from?"

"Scotland."

"H'm! Goin' back there?"

"I hope so—when I can; at present I am concerned how to keep body and soul together. Hark—what is that?"

It was a shout, or chorus of shouts, coming from the bank of the river below us. "That is my sailor boy yelling," I said; "I must go and see what is the matter."

"All right," said the man; "go on. Let me go a head of ye; there are some rough fellows down yonder, and it may be best for me to pilot you down."

I linked my arm with his, greatly to his surprise,
and we strode together down the hill.

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CHAPTER XVI.

CONTINUATION OF THE NARRATIVE OF COLIN
GORDON.

A SMALL wooden shed, a boat moored to a crazy wharf, a fire of wood shedding its cheerful glow over the otherwise desolate and dreary scene, a man holding my companion by the coat and threatening to knock his brains out—this was the sight which burst upon our view as we descended the slope of the hill and advanced towards the river.

When they saw us coming, the boy stopped his screams, and the man who was cuffing him let go his hold and uttered an exclamation of surprise. Instinctively I stopped, and allowed my guide to go forward by himself, in order to explain matters, unembarrassed by my presence. The boy came to me, and we waited together until bidden by the occupants of the shanty to go forward.

They were some time making up their minds

regarding us, and there was a sound of voices raised in anger inside the little shed, which boded ill for our welcome; but at last we were bidden to come in, and with glad hearts we went.

The shed was a boat-house, and in it was a boat, a small boat—not, I judged, as large as that in which the boy and I had come down the river. At the end of the boat-house a bench ran along, and on the bench were seated three men.

I glanced furtively at the men as we entered, and nodded at the same time with as much ease as I was capable of assuming. One of them responded; and, casting my eye around the place, and seeing no other sitting accommodation, I sat myself down on the gunwale of the boat, face to face with them.

“Wal, and what’s brought *you* here?”

The accent, as well as the appearance of the speaker, indicated a Southern origin. He was a tall, lank individual, with a moustache and goatee, and he spoke through his nose. The man who sat beside him was another of the same, and both were smoking cigars. At the end of the bench I saw a small villainous-looking creature, well muffled up in furs and coats, whom I took to be the oldest of the party.

The one whom I had accosted on the road, and who had been keeping watch for the others, was apparently the youngest, as he was also the best looking.

I answered the question put to me in the plain language of the tall Yankee, describing in detail the facts connected with our sail down the river, our disembarkation, and our search for shelter; and I was careful not to belittle the hardships we had undergone. I concluded my story by asking that I might be allowed to dry my clothes at the fire which I saw burning at the far end of the boat-house, and that I might lie down and rest under the friendly roof to which a kind Providence had brought us.

My request was acceded to immediately, one of the men pointing to a heavy buffalo robe in the corner of the shed, which he said would serve me for a bed. At the same time he offered me a drink from a flask which he produced; but, having some of my own in my pocket, I refused it. A moment later I was stretched on the buffalo robe with an old piece of canvas over me, my wet clothes hanging up beside the fire which burned alongside, and my face turned towards the group of men who sat in the shadow at the other end of the shed.

For awhile the faces of my companions followed me into my dreams, and I heard, mingled with the sound of their voices, the roaring and whistling of the wind and the splashing of waters. Then came total unconsciousness, and I rested at last from the weary labors of the day.

I had no idea how long I slept, but it was far on into the night when I awoke. I was awakened by a hand grasping me by the shoulder, and a voice calling in my ear. Hurriedly I sat up and looked around. Beside me stood the young man whom I had first seen in the afternoon previous, and he was the only one of the gang visible. He held in his hand a glass of grog and a couple of biscuits which he gave me to eat, telling me at the same time that his companions were making preparations for crossing the river.

I inquired eagerly whether they would take me with them to the other side, offering to pay as much as I could possibly afford for the transit. He replied that he thought they could be induced to do so, but that there was one stipulation they would make, to which I would have to agree, whether they took me with them or left me behind where I was. This was complete silence on my part with regard to

having met them at all. If I would ask no questions of them, and swear never by word or deed to give any information as to having seen them or met them, he would answer for his part that I should be conveyed safely across the river and placed on the road to Suffolk, which he said was not more than twelve miles from the point where I should be landed. He further explained that he and his gang were smugglers, and that more information about them it was unnecessary to give.

Needless to say, I at once agreed to this stipulation. I felt some curiosity to learn more, and the explanation given I did not for a moment accept as the truth; for though smuggling exists on the American frontier, I could not conceive what necessity there was for any traders in contraband goods running such risks as these people were. But I asked no questions; my main object was to get back to the point from which we had started; and, after eating the biscuits and drinking the grog, I followed my guide to the boat which was ready to push off.

Whether the drink that I had taken was drugged, or whether I was in a state of semi-stupefaction arising from cold and exposure, I do not know; but we

had barely pushed off from the shore when I seemed to completely lose my head. I remember lying down in the bottom of the boat, and I remember no more. I may add that the young lad with whom I had started in the morning was not with us; he had been left behind with sufficient food to last him through the next day, when I was assured he would be enabled to return also. I remember asking for him, and I remember one of the Yankees answering my question, and then I lost all consciousness of what was passing.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONTINUATION OF THE NARRATIVE OF COLIN
GORDON.

THE next thing I knew, I was being pulled by the collar, and bidden to arise. I felt heavy with sleep, but, seeing, in the dim light of morn, my friend of the night before sitting beside me, I sat up and looked around. I found myself in an ill-lighted room, and was seated or rather lying on the floor. The tall stranger was the only other person present. The room was small, and was lighted by a single candle; but through a tiny window above my head I could see that morning was breaking outside.

As soon as he was assured that I was awake, my friend asked me if I was not ready to start for Suffolk. I replied in the affirmative. He then requested me to wait a few moments, and, going away, returned with half a loaf of bread and a large cup of hot tea. I ate and drank, and felt refreshed,

After this hurried breakfast I was conducted to the door. I saw nothing of the house as we passed through, nor were any of the gang with whom I had crossed the river visible. I saw and heard nothing.

When we reached the road I cast a hurried glance back at the house, so that I should be able to know it again, and advanced, following my guide, a short distance on the road leading through the woods. Here we stopped, and my friend, after cautioning me again to say nothing whatsoever of what I had heard and seen, and receiving a solemn assurance from me to the effect that I would respect his wishes in the minutest particular, left me.

I do not wish to make my narrative long or tiresome. When I reached Suffolk, which I did at length, feeling very much fatigued, I went straight to my chief, and made a clean breast of my whole story to him. He expressed his willingness to let the affair remain without further enquiry, and promised to keep his own counsel. From that day to this I have told no other person a word of what I have here written. Now, however, all is made clear to the world, and I have no further reason for keeping silence.

Hitherto I have been telling a plain, matter-of-fact story in a plain, matter-of-fact way. Now the romantic portion of my narrative comes in. I had promised to keep silence regarding all I had seen and heard when in the company of the gang who called themselves smugglers, and that promise I kept; but I saw no reason why I should not gratify my curiosity by riding out to take another look at the old ruined house, in which I must have passed at least a portion of the night; and accordingly, one fine day, about a fortnight after the occurrence, I rode out on horse-back over the snow. It was a little-used road, and, as we passed along under the trees, I noticed that our tracks were the first on the snow, which was about a couple of inches deep. I rode on for many hours, stopping only once to get a glass of beer and a biscuit at a wayside inn.

At last I came to the house. I knew it when I saw it, though I had had but one glance at it before. It was an old ruined house, built of stone, and now falling to pieces. Snow had gathered in the crevices between the stones, and this added a certain melancholy beauty to what would have been a rather unpicturesque ruin. Doors and windows were board

ed up as though it were uninhabited. I turned my horse round, and we stood facing it for the space of about ten minutes.

Who and what were the occupants? I had no faith in the smuggling story; criminals they might be, but smugglers not. I was forbidden to inquire, but there was no reason why I should not conjecture.

I stood looking at the house. It looked weird and lonely. The wind blew little flurries of snow from the walls and roof, and the dark gray waves of the St. Lawrence, not yet frozen, rolled, cold and gloomy, behind. Empty, desolate and bare it looked, the old house—"but you are not as empty as you look, my good house," I said aloud.

"Right!"

It was an unexpected voice behind that answered, and I turned suddenly round, causing my horse to rear a little. Just behind me, on the road, stood a young girl. She was tall and blue-eyed, with masses of long black hair, and bright cheeks. Astonishment completely overcame me, and I was quite unable to speak. She, however, was equal to the occasion. A smile lit up her face, and she answered my unspoken question with an air of easy nonchalance,

"Yes, I belong to the empty house ; I have just been out fetching these," pointing to a pair of dead chickens which she carried, " and I am going back to it. You're right, it isn't empty. I wish it was some times. You were our only visitor, except one, since the Spring."

" I ? "

" Yes, you ; didn't you spend the night there ? " nodding in the direction of the house.

" Yes, I certainly did. But I did not see you, needless to say ; for if I had, I should not have forgotten you ! "

She laughed saucily. " Wouldn't you, though ! Well, I saw you, and I haven't forgotten you. You were asleep, you see, which accounts for my recognition and your surprise.

" You saw me—in there—when I was asleep ? "

" I did. And now—what are you doing now ? Are you going to repay us for what we did by bringing the police about our ears ? "

" God forbid ! " I said emphatically. " Such a thought never crossed my mind ! I was full of curiosity to see the place ; and, as this was my first spare day, I rode out to take a look at it. That is all."

"I am glad to hear it. Otherwise I should run in and ask Juggernaut to get out his gun."

"Who is Juggernaut?"

"A man—a fiend. Didn't you see him? No, I remember you didn't. Well, he is master of the house. It is not improbable that he is pointing a gun at us now from one of the upstairs windows. They are boarded up, you know, but there are holes, and one can see if anyone passes."

Instinctively I threw myself in front of the lovely creature; but she only laughed at my offer of protection. "No, don't be afraid; Juggernaut may shoot you, but I am safe; I am worth too much to be dealt with after that manner."

"I am glad to hear it," I said. "I do not think he will shoot me. I do not come here with any evil intentions. I had, however, no hope of such luck as this."

"You flatter me," said the girl; "and here I stay, instead of taking the chickens in and plucking them. But it isn't once in a century I see a man."

"What?" said I. "Where are all the men who brought me over the river in the boat?"

"Oh!—they are gone again. But what am I doing? —you must not ask any questions at all."

"I won't, then. But you will tell me who you are, won't you; you see I cannot help feeling interested."

"I am Elaine," said the girl; "just simply Elaine. And you are Mr. Gordon."

"I am," I replied. "May I come and see you sometimes," I asked boldly, for she made as though she was about to leave.

"No, certainly not."

"Why, what harm can it do?"

"None, except that Juggernaut would certainly kill me without compunction the first time. Of course," she added after a pause, "if you happen to be riding by, I shall not be blamed for meeting you, and we might just speak, you know."

"I shall be riding by soon," I said with some emphasis; "now, don't keep indoors all the time; will you not?"

"We will see; we will see," said the girl smiling and running away in the direction of the house; "but I advise you not to ride out this way often."

I waved my cap to her as she bade me adieu. "I

will risk it," I cried; "I am going to ride this way every day I get off—I wish you would ——"

But she was out of hearing; and there was naught for me to do but turn and make my way back homewards.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE NARRATIVE OF COLIN
GORDON.

AS it happened, however, I did not ride out in that direction again for months. I was ordered back to Montreal the first of the year, and had to go; and when I got there I had so many things to think of that the beautiful Elaine passed almost completely out of my mind.

By this time I was beginning to be very anxious about Paul. I had looked eagerly for a letter from him, but had received none. As soon as I was in Montreal, I started to hunt him up.

He was not there. Not for days could I believe it; but I was at last forced to acknowledge to myself that he had never come. I was, when I found this out, almost crazed. I had loved Paul Sacristan as a brother; for two years and more we had lived together, worked together, and enjoyed life, as far as lay in our

power, together. Now he was gone, and I knew not whither, perforce fearing the worst.

Paul Sacristan was a wild, thoughtless, dreamy, clever and lovable young man, about twenty-six years of age. I am two years his senior ; and, while neither so brilliant nor so fascinating, have the steadier head, and have succeeded better in our profession. He was a handsome young fellow, tall, slender and dark. Every one liked him, nay, adored him. As for myself, I would have given my life for him. If need be, I will give it yet.

I made every effort to discover what had happened to prevent him from carrying out his plans. There was no other place for him to go but Montreal. He had an uncle in Boston, but was not likely to have gone there, as I had pressed him to do so the night before his departure, and he had laughed the idea to scorn. However, hoping against hope, I wrote to the uncle. The reply was such as I dreaded ; Paul had neither been seen nor heard of in Boston.

It was long before I discontinued my search, but at last I did discontinue it. I had no clue to go upon. Paul had disappeared, and it looked as if he had disappeared intentionally. I could not find it in my

heart, however, to believe that he could thus sever himself from the companionship and the counsel of his best and dearest friend. I knew him too well.

And so the winter passed on, and the spring came, —if not the spring, the spring months, and with them the return to work down here at Suffolk. I reached here Thursday the twenty-third of April, and took up my abode at the hotel, where I am writing this narrative.

My first thought, on my arrival, was of Paul. It was here that we had parted, here in this very house. I thought the matter over again, for the hundredth time, and determined to make investigations at once, personally. Paul had left me here. We parted in the evening, and the morning of the next day he had started to walk to the railway, a distance of thirty miles. I would start the first day I got the chance, and ride over the road which he must have trodden. True, I had already ridden over it once or twice, or, at least, a great part of it; but I would do it again. I would sift the mystery to the bottom.

When I think of all that has happened during the last twenty-four hours, I can hardly realize that it was only yesterday that I went for my first ride, I

made up my mind to go, the night before last, on our chief telling us that we might slacken off work for a day or two. "If the day be fine," said I to myself that night, "to-morrow I will commence my investigations." And the weather taking an unexpected turn for the better that evening, I prepared for my holiday the following day.

It was late when I started, considering the distance I had to go. I intended going about half way and back. Some other time I would make a two days trip of it and include the second part of the journey. For the present, I thought, the first fifteen miles would suffice.

I took with me a flask and a parcel of sandwiches, for I had no intention of stopping anywhere on the road to ask for food. There had been a slight fall of snow—I hope the last of the season—and the ground was nearly white. But the road was in a better condition than I expected to find it, and I made the best of my way along.

It was a long ride, and I saw nothing of interest until I came to the old ruined house into which I had been carried after being brought across the river. When I came to it, I reined up my horse, and stood

and gazed at it for several minutes. It looked the same as ever, bare, desolate and deserted, windows boarded up, no sign of life anywhere visible. Was Elaine inside, I wondered? Perhaps. But after waiting for fully ten minutes, and seeing no sign of her nor of the presence of any human being, I passed on.

A few miles further on I halted, and, tying my horse to a tree, proceeded to eat my sandwiches and refresh myself from my flask. The sun was now sunk behind the trees and the moon was high in the heavens. I could go no further.

For some little time I continued to walk up and down, in order to rest myself. Then I sat down on a stump and thought of Paul. Then, after half an hour or so of meditation, I determined upon returning home as I had come.

The ride home was likely to prove more enjoyable than the ride out had been. It was a fine night, and the glimmering of the moonlight among the branches of the trees and the glitter of the snow on the roadway made the scene around me full of entrancing beauty. I went slowly along, walking my horse for a mile or two, willing to enjoy, as much as possible, the beauty of the night.

So I went on, absorbed in dreams, until, all at once I drew the horse involuntarily to a standstill, and uttered an exclamation of surprise. I was at the turn of the road at which the old ruined house came into view, and a most unexpected sight met my eyes.

A young woman was coming out of the front door of the house. She carried a basket on her arm, and her head was muffled up in a shawl. I said to myself "Elaine!" She did not see me. Rapidly crossing the short space of ground that separated the house from the road, she turned her head away, and commenced walking briskly in the same direction as that in which I was going.

I cast one quick glance at the house; the door she had closed herself, and there was no evidence that anyone inside—should there be another occupant—could see me as I passed. Speaking to the horse, and grasping the rein with a nervous tension, I pressed on after her.

It must have been three or four hundred yards the other side of the house that I caught up to her. She had run down a slight elevation, and was standing, irresolute, beside a small shed built of logs that stood a short distance from the road. When she saw me,

she screamed, mistaking me, I afterwards discovered, for one of the miscreants who were at the time spending the day at the house. I took off my cap and waved it; and, at last, recognizing me, she rushed forward with great eagerness, and called me by name.

To enter into all the details of our interview would be superfluous, and I have no time to spare. Suffice it to say that she explained to me in a few words the unhappy position in which she stood. The wretches with whom I had crossed the river the preceding winter were, she informed me, in the house. To one of these desperadoes she was, she said, betrothed, though not with her own consent. Many times before, this man had come and gone away again, contenting himself with a reminder of the position in which she stood with regard to him. This time, however, the blow had fallen; she was ordered to hold herself in readiness to go off with him to Quebec the following morning, to become his wife.

In her despair she applied to me for advice, and I was at my wits' end to know what to say to her. I had but little confidence in her veracity, and did not encourage her to tell the whole of her story. The idea, however, of a young girl being compelled, against

her will, to marry a villain such as I knew this man must be, was most horrible. I suggested that she should escape to Suffolk, and there seek a situation for herself, offering at the same time, with some reluctance, to escort her thither. We were discussing the feasibility of this project, when Elaine suddenly interrupted me by a scream; and, looking up, I saw a man whom we both took to be the would-be wooer, advancing towards us.

Elaine screamed, and completely lost her presence of mind. I endeavored to quiet her, but without avail. She urged me to draw a pistol which I carried in my belt, and fire upon the man. This I was naturally unwilling to do; but consented so far as to take it out and raise my hand, in order to show him that I was armed. Elaine, now completely beside herself, pulled my arm, and snap went the trigger. No harm was done, for the bullet must have passed far above his head; but my astonishment may be imagined when the man, raising his hat and rushing forward, exclaimed—"Spare me, Colin Gordon, for it is I, Paul Sacristan!"

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION OF THE NARRATIVE OF COLIN
GORDON.

IT was in truth Paul and none other. In my astonishment I was, for a moment, dumb. On recovering myself, however, I hastened forward to grasp his hand. Alas—the joy of our meeting was all on the one side!

I could not understand it, nor can I yet, as I write. It seems to me incomprehensible. He, Paul Sacristan my friend, my best friend—it is inexplicable.

He was in love with Elaine; nay, more than that, he explained to me in a few hurried words that he intended to marry her at once. I know—though no one has told me—that he must have passed the months that have intervened since his leaving me in the winter with her and her friends in that old ruined house. It may be that he was in the house the very evening that I was there—if it should be so! But I

cannot believe that he saw me, or knew of my presence there. God forbid!

Now that it is all over, I think of many things I ought to have said and done when we met. But at the time I was too much overcome by the change that had taken place in Paul to be able to act judiciously. At the very first it was clear to me that he saw in me a rival. To deny it, or to reason with him, were alike vain; he would not listen. It was as much as I could do to avert a fight on the spot.

Elaine came to our rescue. The arrival on the scene of the young desperado who anticipated making her his wife was possible at any moment, and to prevent this was the first object to be attained. We finally decided that I should ride as quickly as possible into Suffolk, and return with assistance, while Elaine and her lover followed with as much expedition as was practicable on foot.

I rode off, and made my way in hot haste to Suffolk; and hardly fifteen minutes after I arrived I was posting back again, with two policemen and a couple of engineers behind me.

I shall never forget that ride. The weird beauty of the night, the hot haste, the romance of the thing, all

warmed our blood ; and we never drew rein until we arrived at the old grey house. At every turn of the road I had looked anxiously for the fugitives ; repeatedly I had stood still for a moment and shouted until the echo of my voice seemed to ring through the very sky. But there was no Paul, no Elaine. No answer came to our oft-repeated cries !

The house, when we reached it, looked more desolate, more deserted, than ever. The moonlight, struggling through the clouds, cast on it a weird brilliancy that made it look like the grim phantom of a ghostly tale ; the wind swept over it, and caused the wooden shutters that covered the windows to rattle and shiver. I am not a nervous man, but I confess that as I stood there and looked at those old stone walls, with the strange lights and shadows of the night playing on them, I shuddered, and my hand trembled.

We knocked at the door, and shouted for the space of fully five minutes ; but there was no sound within. Impatient of delay at such an hour, the commander of our little force ordered the door to be broken open. In less time than it takes to tell it, this was done ; and with our lantern lighted and our pistols cocked, we entered the house of mystery.

All was dark and deserted; but one of the men striking a match, and turning into one of the side rooms, declared that it bore unmistakable signs of recent habitation. We were about to make a thorough search of the ground floor and the cellar, when a voice, speaking from the hall above, arrested our attention.

An old man and an old woman stood upon the stairs. One of the men, going forward, called upon me to follow, and I followed. Holding the lantern up so that I might scan their features, he demanded of me if I had ever seen them before. The old woman was an aged crone with nothing in particular to recommend her to one's observation, unless it were her excessive ugliness; the man with a mouth like that of the lowest class of negroes, and eyes swollen and brutal in their expression, looked the incarnation of villainy. To the question put to me I made an immediate answer in the negative; I had never seen either of them before. Both were then taken into custody.

To dwell on all that transpired is needless. Suffice it to say that the rest of the gang had escaped, and that these two were the only occupants of the house

as we found it. The old man I recognized as the Juggernaut of Elaine's tale, and the old woman was his wife. Their confederates in crime had escaped, and were, no doubt, far beyond our reach.

I say "confederates in crime"—for criminals they were, and criminals of the deepest dye. This morning a startling discovery was made. In searching the old house, all the requisite instruments for the forging of bank notes were found concealed in a small room on the second floor. Everything has been taken to the headquarters of the police, and it is believed that the old man, now in custody, is the principal of a gang of forgers who have hitherto eluded all efforts made to capture them.

I know but little of the matter, but it seems that there has been a band known as the "Barry gang," for whom the authorities in Boston and elsewhere have been searching for several years. I am told that the man Barry, who seems to have been a clever man of his kind, is dead; but that his daughter, a girl of remarkable wit and beauty, has more than once swindled unsuspecting people in the city of Boston out of large sums of money. When I heard

this I felt an inward conviction that this girl was none other than Elaine herself! And it is this Elaine whom my friend Paul would marry!

I have lost no time. I sought an interview with the old woman this afternoon, and learned from her that Paul and Elaine, being pursued by the gang of desperadoes, had fled down the river, taking the boat in which the band had crossed that morning. As there was but one boat, they were not followed; but the old hag assured me that the fugitives had neither oar nor sail with which to direct their course, and that in all probability they must have been drowned before many hours.

My duty seems to me clear. I must find Paul, living or dead. That he is dead, I do not and cannot believe. May God protect him!—and, if still living, he must be prevented at all risks from marrying Elaine. Paul Sacristan is and has been, for two years, my only friend in the world. I owe it to him that I should make any sacrifice I can for his benefit. I go to seek him. I start to-morrow. As I shall run many risks of one kind or another, I write this narrative, that, in the event of anything happening to me, my friends and my employers may know my reasons

for having left my post. I go with the full concurrence of my senior in the office, and ask from all who may be interested in my efforts a kindly remembrance.

Written by me, Colin Gordon, the night of this first day of May, and signed by me in the presence of the witnesses whose names are hereto attached.

COLIN GORDON.

CHARLES P. LAWRENCE, *Civil Engineer*,
FRS. XAVIER ROBITAILLE, *Hotel-Keeper*,

Witnesses.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE NIGHT ON THE RIVER.

ALONE on the wild river—the waters rushing on, everywhere around us naught but the sound of waters—overhead a wild sky of the intensest blue, with clouds of white and black and dark sombre grey hurrying across it—a wind sweeping over the waves, rocking our fragile craft to and fro, and wetting us with the cold spray; and, far off, the blue outline of mountains, and blurred spots of dark land where the trees came down to the water's edge:—such was our position, such the scene by which we were surrounded!

On, rocking over the black waters—with their silver fringe of foam circling here, there and everywhere—how we shuddered! It seemed as if we *must* upset. How we stood it at all we knew not; yet on—on—surging, rocking, driving—we went. We spun round and round in the eddies; we shot like lightning

along in the current ; we shipped water again and again—and again ; we whirled round, and seemed like to be driven on shore ; we turned up almost on our beam ends—yet on we went ; and still, and still we were alive, still there, whirling along in the current,

“ Paul——”

“ Do not move, Elaine ; keep still where you are. Put your head down ; keep well forward. I will keep still in this end ; let us steady the boat as best we may.”

“ I am doing as you tell me, Paul. Is there any hope ? ”

“ I cannot tell, Elaine ; lie quiet till I speak again.” We sped along. Every few minutes I would lift my eyes above the gunwale to see where we were, if land was near or far, if there was sign of life in sight. Elaine kept quiet as I bade her. When water came over and drenched us I could hear her draw a long breath and shiver, and the sound would wring my heart ; but she would say not a word.

The moon sank low in the heavens ; the sky grew dark. The wind moaned and howled, and swept us onward as though it were conscious of our presence, and would hurl us gladly into the abyss of waters,

Yet again and again we righted and continued tossing about, now approaching the shore and almost reaching it, and now being whirled out with lightning-like rapidity into the swiftest part of the current.

"What is this, Paul?"

"Where?"

"Here—in the bottom of the boat."

"What—I can't see—what is it?"

"It is something—something, Paul. Oh—thank God! It is that cushion!"

"That what?"

"A cushion," said Elaine, reaching out her hand as she spoke, and grasping something that lay near her. "It is a cushion—made with a strap attached so that you can put it over your shoulder; and it is stuffed with cork, or something very light, so that it is as good as a life-preserver."

"Then for Heaven's sake, put it on," I said; "you may stand in need of it at any moment, Elaine. I can swim; but as for you—I have been wondering, ever since we started, if I could save you."

"This belonged to old Barney," said Elaine, sitting up and putting the strap over her shoulder. "He always kept it, for he was a great coward about cross-

ing the river. But I don't suppose you know who old Barney was."

"I have seen him," I said briefly. "He was that old smuggler with the fur cap and great coat, was he not?"

"Yes—he was," said Elaine. "O Paul, let us forget about them!"

"I have—already," I said eagerly. "Cannot you, Elaine?"

"Every time we take one of those dips into the waves, I seem to see everything that ever happened coming up before my eyes; I cannot forget."

She moaned. I did not answer. I, too, had seen my life spread out like a map before me this very night. Death had confronted us, and at any moment we might have to struggle for our lives.

"Never fear, Elaine," I said cheerfully; "take courage. I cannot believe that we have escaped so far only to die in the end."

"But if we do die, Paul—we will die together," she cried dreamily. "Perhaps it would be better; for, if we live, you may see things differently, and—"

But a gust of wind drowned her voice, and for a time I heard no more.

On we went, tossing, pitching, rolling along. Sometimes the big flat-bottomed boat seemed almost done for, and I would begin to think that the end was near. Then, having survived so much, I would take courage again, and pray for help.

The moon had set, but a thin greyish light toward the east heralded the approach of dawn. The mountains on the shore looked dim and spectral in the darkness; but behind them seemed to creep upwards a thin smoke, showing where the top line of the hill ceased and the clouds commenced. Then gradually the smoky appearance of the sky changed to a deep misty grey, and the forms of the trees and the mountains by the riverside took their true shape; day had dawned.

With daybreak our courage returned tenfold. As yet no sign of life was anywhere visible; but it was certain that we must soon pass near some village or other, one of the small settlements with which the bank of the St. Lawrence is dotted. Knowing this I called to Elaine, and bade her raise her head and keep a sharp look-out.

On—on! The water began to take a bluish tinge, as the light of day increased; and the trees on the

banks of the river grew green and grey as the sun's rays illumined the masses of fir and spruce that dotted the mountain sides. In some places I could even distinguish a house nestling up among the black hills; but it was, as yet, early in the day, and no sign of man or men was visible further.

The wind, as the morning advanced, increased, and several times our little craft spun like a top round and round as the current, the wind, and an eddy of the river strove to carry it different ways at the same time. Every time it did so Elaine screamed, and there was, indeed, great danger; for a boat of such small size, coming in contact with a rapid or an eddy, not unfrequently capsizes, even when steered with an oar or a rudder, if the occupant be not careful; and it is nothing less than a marvel that we escaped. Escape we did; in spite of wind, current, eddies and whirlpools, we kept making our way along; and, after a good two hours tossing about, we beheld the sun rising high above the mountain top, and were able to take a look round and study our whereabouts.

I had not the faintest idea where we were. There was nothing to be seen but the bleak hills with the trees coming down to the water's edge, and here and

there the masses of ice and snow, relics of the winter that was gone. I judged that we must be about half a mile from the shore, nearing sometimes one side of the river and sometimes another, according as the current drove us.

“ Paul—Paul. Oh Paul ? ”

“ What is it, Elaine ? ”

“ Won't we soon land ? ”

“ Why do you ask that, Elaine ? ”

“ Because I am cold and wet, Paul, and my feet are numb. And—and I am losing my feelings altogether, Paul ; I am losing my head. I thought when the day came we would be picked up by someone, and get to land ; but now I see that we won't, and I am losing my head. Why do we wait, Paul ? Let us die now, Paul ; let us die now—together ! ”

I could not answer this. As I cast my eye over the dark blue surface of water that separated us from land, my heart died within me. Of what use indeed was life—of what use these miserable moments ? Elaine was right ; if death were near, then let it come quickly.

She lay almost lifeless in the bottom of the boat. We spun round in an eddy, but she forbore to scream.

The water came splashing over us, but she uttered no cry. I felt that a crisis had come. In a very few minutes now, I knew that our journey must end—either in safety on the shore or in the forgetfulness of death on the breast of the mighty river. Neither the boat nor its occupants could possibly hold out much longer.

“Paul—I would rather die—just here alone—with you. Shall we?”

“Be still, Elaine!”

She rose on her knees. Calmly, amid the rushing of waters and roaring of the wind, she grasped the gunwale of the boat and rose to her feet. I saw her, as one in a dream, her dark outline standing out against the morning sky, her cloak floating in the breeze. A strange fire lighted her eyes.

“Paul—Paul, my love, *I will die!—I will die,* here and now;—now, while you love me!”

She cast a hurried glance behind her, and then reached forth her hand as if to bid me farewell. I caught her and held her fast; she struggled; the boat, turning swiftly in one of the innumerable eddies of the river, capsized, and we were thrown into the flowing current; but even as we fell, I saw a boat

coming rapidly round a cliff not far away, in the very direction in which we ourselves were drifting; and knew that, with a presence of mind and a determined effort, we were saved!

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE BRIDAL MORN.

IT was the fairest of spring mornings. The grass, reviving after the melting of the snow that had fallen twenty-four hours before, was glowing in the sunlight, green as yet only here and there in little patches, but giving cheerful promise of the verdure that was to be. Not a cloud was visible in the clear blue sky; a thin mist obscured the horizon; but around, above, on either side, the world seemed to drink in the beauty of the spring sun. The fresh green tint of the spruces and fir-trees on the hill gleamed brightly, as if conscious that its beauty must soon yield to the richer glory of the maple leaf and the mountain ash. All the land seemed smiling gladly in the advent of the early summer; and afar off, beyond the hills, the blue water of the St. Lawrence sparkled and shone with a brilliancy that can be beholden only in May, the reflection of the sun in the water vying with the

power and splendor of the majestic orb itself, whose glory was flooding the sky with golden light.

I stood on the side of the hill, in front of a little French cottage, and my eyes drank in the beauty of the scene. At my feet lay the small village of Ste. Marie de Beaupré, whither we had been carried from the boat the day before. Since landing I had not seen Elaine; I had been cared for by the village priest, while Elaine had been taken up the hill, and placed under the care of an ancient dame professing great skill in nursing.

It was early in the morning, and I had come up in haste to see my loved one. I stood beside the old house in which she had slept, and was pausing, in the first glow of thankfulness at our deliverance from so many perils, to breathe a prayer for guidance in the new life that opened before us. Even as I did so her voice rang out on the morning air, and I turned quickly to see her face at the window, looking out on me in glad surprise.

“Elaine! How well you look!”

“How well I feel, Paul! Is it not strange? But I have slept so well, all yesterday and last night, and

now—just now—I wakened and thought of you. I came to the window, and here you are!”

“And you are able to be up, Elaine?”

“To be up?—I am able for anything. One moment, Paul, and I will be by your side.”

She disappeared from my sight for a few minutes, and then I saw her come forth from the cottage door. She was clad in a long loose-fitting garment of grey serge, evidently borrowed from the old French woman ill-fitting and coarse; and over her head she had thrown, as a protection from the wind and sun a common white handkerchief; yet I had never seen Elaine, beautiful as she was, look so lovely. Her long hair, loosely plaited, hung down over her shoulders; her cheeks glowed with the flush of new-found freedom; her eyes shone brightly with just the least suspicion of fear and anxiety mingled with the trust and confidence that animated them as she looked into mine; and her red lips quivered as she held her face toward me and received a kiss.

“Oh Paul—what do *you* think? Isn't it almost too good to be true! To think that we are here, free, away from them all—alone together!”

I took her hand in mine, and we walked along,

side by side. A pile of logs lay not fifty feet from where we stood. To them I directed my steps; and, still holding her hand, we sat down, and I drew her close beside me.

For a long time we were silent. I noticed that she glanced down at the river, and shuddered, lovely as was the sight of the blue water sparkling in the sun, and the silver spray washing around the stones near the shore. The terrors of the day before were still fresh in our memory, and a sober calm stole over her bright face as she gazed on the route that we had followed down the stream, hardly daring to hope the while that we should ever reach the shore in safety. Yet here we were; and the calm and peaceful scene around us offered such a contrast to the last few days of tempest, storm and danger, that we could not help being awed at the very sight of it.

“Are you ready, Elaine?”

“Am I ready, Paul?—for what?”

“To be married to me.”

She turned, and her eyes looked into mine. A faint flush stole over her face. “I am ready, Paul.—When?”

"This afternoon."

"Oh! Is it indeed possible? Where can it be? You would not wish for a Roman Catholic marriage, would you, Paul?"

"No," I said; "though as far as I am concerned, myself, I think a Roman Catholic marriage quite as good as a Protestant one. Still, being Protestants, I think we will go to a Protestant church. I have found out that there is one about five miles away."

"And when do we go?"

"If you are well enough, Elaine, this afternoon."

"Well enough? O Paul, I am well enough. Paul, you really *do* love me?"

"You little fool," I said, "are you not sure of it?"

"O yes, yes, yes! But I—O, I love to hear you say so. I am not good enough for you, Paul."

"Elaine," I cried, "don't say so! It makes me angry to hear you say so. Forget all that is past—forget everything, except that you love me and that you are my wife. Our past life is over; we left it far behind us, up there: see? Now we commence another; here, to-day, the new life begins. Is it not so?"

"I hope so, Paul."

“Then, Elaine, let me kiss away those tears, and may they never come back again.”

And so we kissed ; and so the new life was begun.

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE PROPHECY OF THE DREAM.

THE wind had sunk to a calm. The day was almost over—the long day of May, and the sun began to approach the top of the high hills that bordered the horizon far off across the river. Like a sheet of burnished gold the water lay beneath us, not a ripple breaking the placid surface where the sunlight glowed in unrivaled brilliancy. Though not cold, there was a bracing coolness about the air; and the mountain atmosphere lent its indescribable charm to the glory of the scene around.

Hand in hand we were mounting the hill, we two together. All arrangements had been made, a messenger had been sent on before to make the pastor of the little Protestant church ready for our coming; and now, alone together, we were mounting the hill.

Far off we could just distinguish the church, a

little brown edifice, built of rough stone. The sun shone against the windows, and the building seemed to be ablaze. Like a guiding star, it shone on the far mountain top, and beckoned us to come onward. Like a beacon of hope it blazed before our eyes, bidding us take courage and enter bravely on the new life that was before us.

I went on as one in a dream. I felt as if something were going to happen. Then I reflected that I was about to be married, which certainly is an episode of importance in the most eventful life. But there was another feeling yet, a feeling which I could not myself analyze, but which I can describe as a vague foreboding. I tried to shake it off; but the effort was useless. A sort of grim spectre seemed to be walking up the hill behind me. If I turned my head, of course I saw nothing; and Elaine's sweet face was beside me to banish all evil dreams or forebodings of ill. Yet the spectre was there; I felt it, I knew it. What it was I could not tell; but as we climbed the steep path, time and again I was forced, half shuddering, to turn and look behind me in wonderment, as if a Nemesis were on my track.

The church!—small, sombre, grey, it stood out

against the red sunset sky. It was built of stones rough and uneven, and was in indifferent repair. A low stone wall ran round it about a dozen yards on either side; and, in the little churchyard I saw some tombstones, marking the graves of Protestant villagers. As I gazed at it I shuddered again, for it was getting towards evening, and the wind was rising after the warmer day. As we entered the gate a gust blew Elaine's hat almost off her head, and she was obliged to stand still a moment in order to adjust it.

The clergyman, robed in a white surplice, stood in the door, waiting to receive us. The light of the sun was so bright in my eyes that I could distinguish nothing clearly when first turning them away from it. Hence, when I glanced at the clergyman, I could not see his face, but knew only of his presence by the flutter of the white surplice.

I could not see his face, but only the white surplice! What is this? As I fastened my eyes on the doorway and saw the fluttering white, and strained my eyes to catch the expression of the man who wore it, there flashed upon me, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, the memory of my dream! The spectre who had been dogging my steps stood revealed. No

longer tracking me behind like a Nemesis, I see it before me, face to face. Oh, my God!

My knees shook under me. The stones in the pathway seemed to rise and impede the way. I staggered from side to side. I felt the hand that held Elaine's grow cold and tremulous. I tried to look at Elaine, but my eyes were dim; I could distinguish nothing. A few steps further, and I felt that I must fall to the ground.

Yet I know that we have reached the door of the church and are passing inside. I cannot see the clergyman; I cannot tell what he is saying. I have an indistinct idea that he is speaking to me, that he is shaking my hand; but I cannot hear, I cannot answer. I would speak, but my tongue seems glued to the roof of my mouth, and my throat is dry. Elaine speaks for me; she seems calm and collected; no doubt both she and the clergyman think that I am nervous. Oh Elaine, Elaine!

The clergyman turns and advances up the aisle. We follow. I see the church, the stone walls, the windows, the grim grey rafters above; it is the church of my dream. As I follow him, I seem to have gone back again to the last night spent at Suffolk with

Colin Gordon ; the intervening months seemed blotted out. Yet beside me walks the fair Elaine, holding my hand ; and I know that the fatal ceremony which shall bind us together for better for worse, "until death us do part," will soon have united us in wedlock ! We have reached the chancel. The clergyman, going inside the rails, takes a book off the altar, and turns toward us. The service commences.

But I heed it not. I am again, in fancy, away in Suffolk, talking to Colin ; he is sitting beside me at the table, and the room is the room I used to occupy. I see him with his great blue eyes and his long pipe, looking at me so earnestly, and wondering how I could ever have so far forgotten myself as to play fast and loose with my good name and so invite dismissal from the profession. I see and hear him speak. Oh Colin, where are you ?—and where am I ?—and what is this that has come between us ?—what ?—what ?

"I will."

They are my own words. I spoke them. I speak, but there is a ringing in my ears and mist before my eyes. I see nothing ; Elaine and the minister are like phantoms in the dusk ; I cannot see them ; and

a weird wail of wind rings in my ears and seems to fill the old church with sighing.

“I, Paul, take thee, Elaine,”—a long rigmarole it is, And I seem to speak mockingly, for I am not myself;—I am bound by a spell. Or am I now, for the first time since December, my true self again?

“Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

I feel as if I shall fall to the ground. The air is heavy. I must move or cry out. How long will it endure?

“I pronounce that they be man and wife together: in the name of——”

“No!—No!—No! Hold—for God’s sake, no more!”

A crash—the bursting of a door—the tread of heavy feet—the rush of men—a cry from Elaine—all came together. A rush, a trampling, and Colin Gordon stood before us!

I cried out aloud at the sight of him, but he raised his arm as if to silence me; and I stood transfixed. At the same moment he pointed to another figure that came heavily up the aisle and advanced toward us—a man in the dress of a policeman,

"Colin!"

"Silence, Paul! Am I too late?"

A groan burst from Elaine, and she would have fallen; but the policeman, coming forward, placed his hand upon her shoulder.

"No! By ——" And with one blow I shook the man off as if he had been a mosquito.

Again Colin raised his hand, and again I shrank backward. At the same moment the policeman, again placing his hand on Elaine's shoulder, said:—

"Ellen Barry, I arrest you on a charge of uttering and passing forged bank-notes both in the United States and Canada. You must come with me."

The air grew black, blacker, darker than night itself. In a moment of time I seemed to live years. I have heard of men seeing their whole lives before them when in peril of death; I saw all the future—a future of shame and sorrow—in a moment then.

One glance at Elaine—only one—and it was sufficient. I saw Elaine; I looked into her eyes—I knew—

"Paul—it is true—I am—guilty!"

I looked into her eyes. She put out her hand—I caught it. She held out the other; I caught it also.

A mad fire seemed to take possession of my brain ; I grasped her with all my might. Colin and the policeman strove to separate us ; I flung them off as easily as if they had been weak women ; I was crazed !

She made no sign, no moan. A fierce hatred of the girl whom I had sworn not five minutes since to love and cherish dominated me. If she lived I was bound for life : but she should not live.

I held her by both arms. She struggled. I held her tighter. At last she screamed. I laughed. Then Colin rushed forward, followed by the policeman. The clergyman, also, advanced from the other side. They would soon have been on us and have separated us, but I prevented them. With one tremendous bound I flung Elaine from me—with one frightful effort I thrust her down into the church. She fell—far off—oh, my God, how heavily !—far away in yonder aisle—a crash—a thud—a fall on the stone floor—and the deed was done !

Strange is the passing of time: the seconds add themselves together and make the sum of a minute ; and the minutes pass, slowly, one after another, until they have formed an hour. The hours make up our days, and the days make up our lives. It is strange

this life of days and hours and minutes, and how the action of a minute, nay of a moment, may become the turning point of one's whole life.

Still, out in the fields, the warm sun shone on the struggling green grass, and lit up the little patches of verdure with the lustre of the Spring; still, on the hillside the breeze fanned the budding branches, and the scent of the May buds lingered among the boughs; still, down in the peaceful and quiet village, the *habitants* went to and fro smoking the evening pipe and musing on the events of the day that was gone;—all was the same; yet to me the world was another world, to me life had changed suddenly and forever, and the past that had been could be again no more.

When I came to myself, I found myself standing beside her, as she lay lifeless on the cold stone floor. Colin and the policeman stood on either side of me, and my hands were fastened with handcuffs. I had killed her.

I stood beside her. Her face was peaceful, beautiful in death. Her long hair lay carelessly around her head. Her lips formed a faint smile. And the sun, which was just at the point of setting, shone in at

the window like a blaze of gold; and the flood of sunlight, gathered into one broad ray by the narrow round window, shot through the dark and gloomy church and rested on her upturned face. Let us dream as I dreamed then—let us believe as I believed at that dread hour—when I sank in agony at her side—that the spirit of my poor lost Elaine was borne on that path of sunshine to a land from which darkness and sorrow, sin and shame, are banished for evermore!

CHAPTER XXIII.

WAS IT A CRIME ?

WAS it a crime? Was I mad or sane? Was I conscious of what I did? I cannot tell. Everyone must judge for himself. I was, as a matter of course, immediately committed to prison to answer for my crime, the murder of my wife. At the time restraint was the best thing that could have been found for my mental and physical condition. Left to myself, I think I should have gone mad, if I was not, indeed, mad already. A warrant was procured without loss of time, and I was conducted to a cell in the gaol of the little French town.

Colin spent the night with me, and, under his influence, my mind began to resume its normal condition. When I tried to thank him for all he had done for me, words failed me. No other friend, no brother, no father could have been to me what he was. Colin Gordon!—as I write his name the blood rushes to

my heart, and I feel the glow of a love that is more than the love of woman. What man can do for man he has done for me; what friend can be to friend he has ever been!

We spent the long hours of the night telling each other what had happened since the evening that we had talked together in Suffolk. I recounted everything—my journey in the snow, my awakening in the old deserted house, my seeing him carried from a boat in the dread silence of the night, and laid on the shore as one dead, my sickness and despair, my endeavors to discover the meaning of his appearance and their failure;—and, lastly, with bated breath, spoke of my love for Elaine. As I retailed it all, it seemed to me no longer a reality, but rather as if I were recounting the incidents of a strange and vanished dream. It was as though I had left off my life that night in November when I had parted from Colin in my chamber, and taken up the thread of it again as I walked with him through the village after the fatal ending of our bridal day!

Yes; in the little cell that served me as a bedroom, we two sat face to face. And we talked to each other as we had talked months before, that night we parted

It was hard to believe such changes should have come over our lives, hard to realize that we had really passed through so much. Was it not a dream? I wondered vaguely, as I sat there on a hard wooden chair, and gazed vacantly at the brown paper on the wall, whether I should not wake and find it all a vision of the night!

We talked of everything. Little by little I began to realize what had happened; little by little I understood really what I had done. Not in that one night, nor, indeed, in twenty, did I fully comprehend how, under the influence of my sickness, I had been led from one thing to another, until I found myself standing opposite to Elaine in the little village church of Ste. Marie; but in time, under Colin's friendly guidance, I began to see my way clearly, and became once more the semblance of my former self.

I say the semblance only—for I was never the same man again. I could never again be quite the same. The strange story of Elaine's love for me and my love for her could not but have a lasting influence on my life. How far she was guilty, how far innocent, I never knew; whether she loved me truly for my own sake, or whether the desire to escape from a life

of servitude and danger influenced her more than love for me, I shall never really know ; but away down in my heart of hearts there lingers a true and genuine love for my poor lost Elaine, and a fond assurance that she was, in *her* heart of hearts, worthy of the affection she inspired ; and still, in spite of the scepticism of this hard nineteenth century life, I cherish a wild hope that some day—in some far-off land—we two shall meet together face to face and speak heart to heart. God knows. In the meantime the forgiveness I have granted her I can but vainly hope for, until the veil between this life and the life beyond is riven by the hand of death. But some day assuredly, some day, distant or near, we two shall meet together once again and speak face to face !

I was tried for the murder of my wife, and acquitted. It was doubtful whether I had intended to kill her, or even to hurt her, as I grasped her by the shoulders and flung her from me ; it was doubtful whether she had not, in some measure, killed herself ; it was doubtful whether, at the time, I was in my right

mind or no; and the fact that at the moment we were made man and wife I discovered her to be guilty of a great crime, was an extenuating circumstance. At all events, so many things were doubtful, and there were so many extenuating circumstances, that the simple-minded French jury were utterly bewildered, and solved all difficulties by pronouncing me innocent.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DREAM OF THE PAST.

I HAVE told my tale. With the tragic death of my first and last love the romance of my life ended. Since that fatal day I have lived a life of hard practical routine. The brighter side of existence I have not known; the pleasures of the world I neither sought nor shunned; it has been simply that they have been distasteful to me. I have tried to share in them, but have been unable; since the hour of Elaine's death the world has been to me a sober and practical world.

When the trial was over I returned to Montreal, and became a clerk in a large wholesale establishment. I never returned to my old failings; the wine-cup, the billiard saloon—places where I had once been a leading spirit—knew me no more; I became a man of business. After a number of years my uncle

in Boston died and left me fifty thousand dollars. This money I put into the firm by whom I was employed, and I became a partner. I have prospered greatly, and am now one of the richest men in Montreal.

Colin has married. Fortunate in all other things, he has been especially blessed with one of the best and happiest wives that Providence has ever given to men. No man was ever worthier of a prosperous life and a happy home; no man has ever been more abundantly accorded his deserts. Colin's happiness is mine. His wife, his children, are, next to himself, the objects nearest my heart. In their happiness I rejoice; for their sorrow I mourn; in them alone I find perfect sympathy and true friendliness.

I am growing old. But little of life is left to me. Soon I shall pass away from this vain and unsatisfying world, and the secrets of the future will be revealed to me. To beguile the time of late I have written this tale, the story of my own life. I have written it carefully, and I think I have told it truly. Colin has given me the narrative written by him at Suffolk the evening before he started to find me after the capture of the criminals. I have inserted it in its proper

place, and it gives my tale a roundness and completeness which it would otherwise lack.

I am finishing my story the evening of the ninth day of February, 1890. It is a wild snowy night. As I look out into Sherbrooke street I see the blustering snow driven in blinding clouds everywhere by the wind. There are but few people in the streets. The electric lights flash amid the darkness, and the flurries of snow glitter like showers of tiny stars. Here and there a solitary figure gropes along through the drifting snow.

I listen to the howling of the wind. It rises and falls. Then a long low moan succeeds and dies away. Then, like a trumpet, it rings through the air and down the chimney, loud and shrill. I dream. I see no longer the drifting snow; I watch the tiny dust no longer, glittering in the electric light. A face comes between me and the snow, a face at the window, looking in amid the silence. Two bright blue eyes look into mine with a sad and wistful yearning. Ah me!

I lay aside my pen. The storm is dying without. I draw the curtain and wheel my chair to the fire. The wood crackles and burns brightly; the sparks

fly up the chimney ; the wind comes down, and the red flames leap up to meet it, and gleam the brighter for its coming. The shadows dance around the room, and the ghosts of the dead years flit lightly to and fro in the firelight.

The clock strikes the hour of midnight. The snow beats against the window, and the wind moans in the chimney. Still I dream on. Still I dream. It is life itself that is a dream. All things are unreal ; all is transitory ; the awakening is yet to come.

I see it still. The bright eyes look into mine ;—the dark head hovers between me and the fireplace ; yes, it is there still, the same sweet face and the same questioning smile. *I* have grown old—but *she*—she is ever young, ever beautiful. Still the same yearning smile ; but oh!—I cannot answer it!—Some day, perhaps—some day, Elaine—some day!

THE END.

