TALES OF THE HUDSON BAY REGION

THE WITCHING OF ELSPIE

By

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT

Author of "Lundy's Lane and Other Poems"

SHUT two men up together for several years, holding some lonely post on the coldest fringe of civilization, and a strange drama of character against character will be inevitable. The rest of the world is nowhere. In the extreme quiet of the snows things take on a new proportion. The result is human drama.

IT is of such stuff that Duncan Campbell Scott makes his stories. Without an extra word or false sentiment he penetrates the queer twists and turns of character that lie beneath the rugged taciturnity of his Scotchmen, the men who have left an old civilization for the lonely spaciousness of the Hudson Bay region of Canada.

McCLELLAND AND STEWART : *Publishers* : Toronto

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a https://www.fadedpage.com administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at https://www.fadedpage.com.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: The Witching of Elspie, A Book of Stories
Date of first publication: 1923
Author: Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947)
Date first posted: November 3, 2026
Date last updated: November 3, 2026
Faded Page eBook #20261105

This eBook was produced by: Mardi Desjardins, Cindy Beyer & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at https://www.pgdpcanada.net

This file was produced from images generously made available by Internet Archive.

THE
WITCHING OF ELSPIE

A Book of Stories

BY

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT

McCLELLAND AND STEWART
PUBLISHERS : : TORONTO

COPYRIGHT, 1923,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



THE WITCHING OF ELSPIE. II
— — —
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

PAGE

I
THE WITCHING OF ELSPIE 9

II
THE VAIN SHADOW 23

III
VENGEANCE IS MINE 47

IV
SPIRIT RIVER 63

V
EXPIATION 101

VI
IN THE YEAR 1806 112

VII
AT PLANGEANT'S LOCKS 121

VIII
LABRIE'S WIFE 143

IX
THE WINNING OF MARIE-LOUISE 165

X
A LEGEND OF WELLY LEGRAVE 178

XI
AN ADVENTURE OF MRS. MACKENZIE'S . . 198

XII
THE ESCAPADE OF THE REV. JOSHUA GEER . 223

THE WITCHING OF ELSPIE

THE WITCHING OF ELSPIE

I

The Witching of Elspie

IT was my father who spoke first; and he spoke to the Curé, Monsieur de Gonzague, who sat with his hand on a church book, and beside him on the table an aspirator for the holy water. "Look at her now," said my father. The Curé looked up at Elspie McGibbon who had been plying her knitting needles. She had let them drop into her lap and was gazing straight at one of the candles with never a movement of her eyelids.

Gradually a curious fey expression crept over her face, her mouth grew long and wan and her beauty all drawn awry; the pupils of her eyes began to dilate and flutter. No one breathed and the wind, striking the shutter a moment before, quieted, and nothing moved without or within. Père de Gonzague rose to his height and made the sign of the cross over her and spoke a few words in the Latin and sprinkled her with holy water. But the maid never heeded; the distrait look still hung upon her face; her hands were laid useless in her lap.

"He must be near," said my father under his breath, and I wondered how he dared to speak, for the flesh was moving cold upon my bones. Suddenly a sound came from without and I felt as if some one had struck my head with a mallet. The sound was like a footstep outside the window upon the gallery which ran all around the house. First a soft padded stroke, then a clump, clump, like a footstep if the foot were half flesh and half bone.

It came slow and powerful and we all rose to our feet except my mother who was overcome, and could only put her hands before her face, and Elspie McGibbon who still gazed woefully at the candle without seeing anything. There we stood as if waiting for the judgment. Père de Gonzague, my father, my uncle Bartholemie, strong Jacques Boudin the farmer, and the housekeeper Annette Valois.

The sound came nearer and nearer, then it ceased and began as suddenly on the other side of the house. We drew closer together. "Here, your honour," said Jacques, "I will go out and face it." He spoke to my father. He took up one of the candles and went towards the door. Père de Gonzague

followed him and I came after. When Jacques reached the door and opened it I saw through the moonlight over his shoulder dark shadows in the elms and in a moment "*paff*" came a stroke of wind like a breath, and blew out the candle.

As we stood, scarcely breathing, the noise sprang up before us so that we all started back, and as suddenly it seemed to walk beyond the windows of the parlour where the light shone through chinks in the close wooden shutters.

A great dread got hold upon me and I longed for my heart to beat. I heard Jacques saying under his breath, "It is gone," and a long crying came up from the banks of the river.

It was just then, my mother said, that Elspie gave a great deep sigh and shut her eyes. When she opened them she picked up her knitting and began clicking the needles as if she had been asleep. "Were you dreaming, Elspie dear?" asked my mother. The girl smiled, "Yes, I was dreaming." "And did you see the tall man again?" She nodded her head and smiled like a maid who has a sweet secret.

Annette came running to us to say she had waked. "Down to his cabin I go," said Jacques, who was a resolute fellow. "I go with you," I said. I stepped before the Curé and as I went on, clutching Jacques, I felt the holy water drop on me.

We went through the lilac bushes heavy with scent, out into the white road under the elms. Soon we saw the moonlight flooding the Becancour and heard the rushing of the stream over the shallows. Even at some distance we could discern the regular outline of the house with its low walls and heavy overtopping roof. When we came to it there was no light and no sound. We walked around it slowly and Jacques laid his ear to the door. Joubert was not within.

When we returned the women had retired, my father had gone home with the Curé, and my Uncle Bartholemie was sitting with all the candles still lighted. When my father came back we counselled together. We were on our Seigniory in the County of Nicolet, just two days from Quebec, when this thing happened.

Joubert had come up to the house and cast the evil eye on Elspie McGibbon. Annette found her leaning at the buttery door in a trance with all the blood gone from her face, and Joubert gazing at her with a horrid smile. She screamed and flew out at him, and when the maid came back to her senses she said that a tall handsome man, who had beautiful eyes and a voice like a flute, had spoken to her.

It was Joubert who had spoken to her, Joubert with his harelip and his terrible whine. Jacques Boudin, the farmer, when he heard it, laid his hand on his head and swore by the saints to tear Joubert's heart out of his body. Every year we had come to the Seigniory with Elspie his love had grown stronger, and now it was fairly arranged that he should marry her.

The year before she was a slip of a girl romping at her work, now she was a young beauty, the masses of red brown hair piled upon her shapely head, her dark blue eye vivid with light, and above everything the charm of her movement, her grace, which is to a woman what cadence is to music; and Joubert had cast upon her his evil eye.

We counselled together upon what should be done but our plans did not go any farther than that night. My father would not look any further, saying that Père de Gonzague was to rummage in some old books he had and might find an ancient cure for the evil eye. So it was decided that Jacques should sit up all night in the dining room out of which opened the large room where Elspie and Annette slept; and I would hear of nothing else than that I was to watch with him.

My father went to bed and Jacques and I sat facing one another; the broad oak table between us. The house was quiet, very quiet; again and again we trimmed the candles and I found myself thinking what a pleasant thing it was to watch all night when I woke up in broad day and found Annette placing the dishes for the morning meal.

Elspie during the forenoon seemed herself again, helping Annette as her duty was, but moving about with more languor than usual, and sometimes standing as if a vision had risen in her mind and charmed her. Every one watched her and it seemed impossible for Joubert to come near the house without our knowledge. But just after dinner we missed her suddenly; she seemed to disappear as we looked at her.

We each ran in a different direction to look for her and down I went to the bee-hives which stood in a circle behind some cedars at the foot of the garden. There she was, standing before Joubert, not near him, with her head slightly on one side, her arms hanging limply from her shoulders, her hands open and relaxed.

When Joubert saw me he dropped one shoulder and began to cringe and fawn like a dog afraid of a beating. His loose mouth tightened at one corner and his grey teeth shone in the folds of his lips. I seized Elspie by the arm, turned her about and led her to the house as easily as if she were blind. Looking over my shoulder at the door I glimpsed Joubert's head and shoulders sliding along behind the hedge.

So soon as Elspie came to herself we had a scene, for Annette broke into a fit of weeping that seemed more violent than ordinary, for she was a thick, well-governed person, and no one had ever before seen a tear in her eye. When she got quieted in my mother's room, with salts of lavender, she told, between sobs, what she had been keeping back, that in Beauce, when she was a young girl, she had known of just such another witching of a maid by an old devil, and nothing could be done about it; they even burned him out of his hole, and carried the girl to the convent, and cut off her hair, and the nuns said a myriad of prayers daily in her behalf; so many were the prayers that you could fairly see them flying out of the window like pigeons.

But all of no use, the old "loup-garou" got her at last and they lived together and had children, nine of them, all idiots, each one more terrible than the last. After this recital Annette relapsed into tears.

My mother, after a while, called Elspie into her room where it was cool and dusky, and when she got her employed in turning the linen in the presses, she asked her whom she was talking with by the bee-hives.

"The man I was telling you of; the tall, dark, strong looking fellow." My mother said she had not seen him and asked who he was.

"Oh!" said Elspie, with a peculiar shy smile, "I do not know his name; that I must not ask. But he came a long, long journey to see me here. He is a rich man; he has a domain in Portneuf where he digs silver and gold out of holes in the earth."

My father had come in and was listening by the door and my mother wrung her hands toward him, so distraught was she by the pity of it all. My father spoke quickly from where he stood and asked Elspie if she did not know well that it was old Joubert to whom she was talking. She laughed under her breath, a thing she would not have dared to do if she had been herself, she was so careful in respect for my father.

"No, your honour," she replied, "it was not Joubert, I know Joubert; this man is fine and handsome, has the look of the rich in his eye. Joubert is the fellow with a mouth like an old hound, his hair is full of mould and he has forgotten the feel of a sou between his fingers. I will tell your honour," she added, standing up, blushing like a pink peony, and with a little movement of grace and deference, "that this gentleman has asked me to marry him and live on his domain in Portneuf."

"And what about Jacques Boudin, honest strong Jacques Boudin?" said my father in his deepest voice.

"Jacques Boudin," said Elspie as if striving with her memory; "Yes, yes, yes"; she repeated these words slowly with a sigh between each. You could

see her mind struggling like a little storm-beaten boat trying to land on a familiar shore.

They told me this at once and I went and told Jacques Boudin. He sat down and bent his great stubborn looking back, and let his head hang down to his knees. He was mighty enough to have broken Joubert with his own hands, but he knew that would not break the spell. All at once an idea came into my mind.

"Jacques," I said, "we will save her from him. I have an idea; only do you wait, I will see the Curé and then I will tell you, you must help me." Help! He drew up to his full six feet, and two tears, as hard as white marble, stood in the corners of his eyes. He held my hand so fast that I had to pull one foot off the ground.

If my plan was to be carried out that night I must lose no time, so off I went to see Monsieur de Gonzague. He had turned over all his books but never a cure for the evil eye could be found.

When I told him my idea, he put his head on one side and pondered. "Well," he said at length, "carry it out, I will do my part." Hardly waiting to thank him I hastened down to the forge and had a talk with Hector, the blacksmith, and before I left him he was working with a will.

Then I went on to Joubert's den which stood about four hundred yards from the river, in a thicket of trees and undergrowth. As I came down the path I saw him seated on his door-step, but he did not see me until I stood before him, so intent was he on the work that he was doing. He had a small piece of dried skin laid upon his knees and was working at it with his fingers. He wore only a pair of breeches and a shirt. The former was well patched with clouts of buckskin, the latter was whole but open at the throat, showing a fell of coarse hair at his breast.

His hands were enormous; each joint seemed as long as an ordinary human finger. His nose jutted like a promontory. Tufts of hair grew in the whorls and on the lobes of his ears. His head was sunken in at the temples, his eyes were wild and light. His skin was flushed unnaturally as if a fire was burning underneath; and drops of sweat as large as beans stood out on his brow. His hair was black as pitch and hung in points on his shoulders, so matted was it with dirt that showed grey upon it. His feet were bare.

"Oh, Master Philemon," he said, sniffing the words out, "you are here at Joubert's little house?" He never raised his head, his eyes jumped one look at me and then fell back. His fingers kept clawing at the piece of skin.

"Yes," I said. "What are you working at?"

"Oh, nothing at all, just a little fancy of my own."

"You were up at the house to-day?" I said. He was perfectly motionless in a twinkle and held himself together just as I have seen a rat stop dead still to listen when alarmed.

"Yes, yes, Master Philemon," he replied, relaxing his muscles.

"You're a sly old wolf," I said. "Our Elspie is crazed after you, and is all for marrying you."

"Ah!" he said, and moistened his lips with his bright tongue.

"You'll have to spruce your place up a bit before you bring her here to live." I could see a foul table and a broken pot on the hard sand floor.

"Not a bad place," he whined, "a sound roof from the rain."

"Bah! a girl of her quality needs more than a shelter. Look you, Joubert, before you come up to see her again you must wash your shirt; it's heavy with grease, man; you'd better go down to the river and pin it down in the current for half a day." He looked down at the loathesome garment and fingered it.

"You're friend to me, Master Philemon, you're friend to me."

"I'd do far more than that for you," I said; "that's a bit of good advice." With that I left him and went back to Hector who had forged me an iron cross about six inches in the standard and three inches in the cross piece, and where they were joined he had fitted an iron handle a good two feet in length; and he had for me one of those braziers, which roofers use, filled with charcoal for Hector was a Jack of all the metal trades.

I hid the brazier in the bushes by the path to Joubert's, and carried the cross to the Curé who blessed it for me through and through. Then back I went to the manoir, carrying my well fashioned consecrated bit of iron, and found Jacques.

I was late for supper, and I had to hear that my mother had gone to bed with a terrible pain in her head. Every one was wrought far beyond the usual anxiety, for affairs gone wrong, save Elspie, and she was a-dreaming. They had been attentive of her and Annette reported with a shiver that she had taken the crucifix off the wall of her room, a sure sign that she had been bewitched, and was looking into her clothes-chest as if preparing for a journey.

My father walked heavily up and down the room with his hands behind him. He thought well of Elspie who had been reared in our family since she was taken a little orphan from the foundling hospital. Her parents were Scotch people. She was a great aid and help to my mother. My father had planned her marriage with Jacques Boudin, and now everything was marred and in confusion by reason of an old villain whom he had suffered to live on

his land and occupy one of his houses. The neighbours' gossip about him, that he was a were-wolf, a loup-garou, he had never heeded, and to requite him this power had struck into his own family.

Père de Gonzague came in after an hour. My father heard with a sigh that no help could be got from his old folios, but I left them certain that the Curé would win over my father to the second part of my plan, which was contingent upon the success of the first. I knew that they would all watch Elspie and prevent her from slipping away, and I went out to join Jacques Boudin.

When it was dark, before moonrise, we found the brazier and struck off the path into a dense growth of hazel which covered two arpents or more to the river bank. Our plan was to work back to Joubert's from the river, but when I broke through the bushes upon the bank I saw a figure below me on a sand bar.

The moon was floating up and long points of silver light shone upon the water. We listened; we could hear the swishing of something in the water, and a gaunt figure rose once and again on the sand bar. Then I knew that Joubert had taken my advice!

Back we went till we had struck the path which the old fellow had worn from his den to the water-side. Then we took to the bushes. Jacques placed himself about twenty feet nearer the water than my station. Soon I had the brazier alight and glowing, and before long when I took the iron out of the fire I could see the cross all red against the dark hazel leaves.

We must have been there an hour when Jacques whistled. Joubert was coming up the path, in his hands he carried his shirt, wringing it and snapping the water out of it as he came. Just as he passed Jacques stepped out and pinioned him from behind. He called out to me, "Loup-garou, loup-garou," and as they advanced I met them with the iron white hot.

Joubert was forced on and half carried by Jacques. I put the brand of the cross on his breast as nearly over his heart as I could, and Jacques spun him round like a top and I burnt him on the back a trifle deeper.

Whatever the creature was made of I cannot tell, for he never uttered a sound; and when Jacques let go he loped up the path like a wolf and was out of sight in a turn behind the bushes. We made a detour and went back to the manoir.

Then to carry out my plan there was a great bustling and hurrying, and disputing, and harnessing of horses, and some demurring on the part of Elspie McGibbon. Around came the calash and the quatre-roux and away we

went to the St. Lawrence landing; my father, Annette, Elspie, Jacques and myself, and two drivers.

Before midnight I had the satisfaction of seeing our sloop slide away in the moonlight, beginning her first tack for Trois Rivieres. The drivers and myself jogged slowly homeward to Becancour. They are separated at least, whatever else comes of it, I thought.

In the morning Joubert had disappeared and he was never again seen in these parishes. Not even by rumour did he visit the haunt of his evil spirit.

And not many weeks after strong Jacques Boudin sailed over to Trois Rivieres with all our family, for we thought well of him, and there was a wedding in the Cathedral.

As years went by I forgot Joubert and his deviltry. Many years after I was visiting the monastery of La Trappe in the hills above Oka. My companion was a notary from St. Basil who was well acquainted with the monks and their institution.

"There is one monk here who flagellates himself, Father Philemon; come, it is his hour, let us have a look at him!"

We went from one cool hall into another: soon a door opened and there came a procession of monks. They stopped; one in the midst of them threw back his cowl and bared his body to the waist. There was something curiously familiar to me in his countenance. Taking a leather thong while his brethren chanted, he began to beat himself over the shoulders and the breast. By and by my companion nudged me.

"Look," he said, "it is considered a miracle." On his back and breast came out in a deeper red the sign of the Cross. In a moment I had recognised him.

It was Joubert.

II

The Vain Shadow

[BEING AN EXCERPT FROM THE MANUSCRIPT JOURNAL OF ARCHIBALD MUIR, CLERK OF THE HONOURABLE THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AT NEPIGON HOUSE IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1815.]

Monday, January Ninth, 1815.

NOW that Murchison has gone daft or near it, nothing remains for me but to shut myself up within myself and resort to what resources I have in my own heart to eke out the days. The longing for a homely life and ordinary sweet converse with one's fellows must be put away and I must, to keep my own brain sweet and sound, take an interest in the dead world about me. The day has been a wild one. Last night I heard the wind begin in the trees; at first I thought it was Donald who has a constant way of moving about at night, speering out at the door, pacing to and fro in the darkness and behaving generally in a manner calculated to set any well ordered body thinking that he was tormented by an evil spirit or an evil conscience which I opine is much the same thing. But it was not Murchison; he was asleep as quiet as if he was dead and I heard the wind give another stir back on the hill. The snow must have fallen from that on, and now all the marks and evidences of the landscape are gone, being concealed in the mass of the storm which blows everywhere.

There has been nothing to be done all day. If I had been so minded I could have added the columns of my ledger for the fiftieth time but every slight mark in the paper being now as familiar as every figure on the page I forbore. If Donald had been so minded I could have read another number of the *Glasgow Herald* but if I even looked upon the desk in which he keeps it he began to growl and shift himself in his seat or to glare up from the bunk where he was lying. Yesterday he called me "a puir feckless fule" but if I was "fule" enough to invent such a diabolical manner of reading the good papers full of news which come out to us in the packets I would "steik" my mouth, as he would say, about "fules." Here he has the good *Glasgow Herald*, mark you, a Christian paper if ever there was one, and will not read it for to enjoy it as a Christian should by reading it day and night till all the copies are done and then reading it over and over to his heart's content. But, "No," he says; "twice every week, on the Monday and the Friday, we will

have our paper and so will pass the winter and have none of your daft performances," says he.

Last Friday I read the news of April Eighth in the year of our Lord 1814 and I am compelled to await the pleasure of my master to read the news of April Eleventh. He will not let me have a look at the paper and sits glowering into the fire or uprising like a man who has resolved to save his country and then dropping back into his chair as if he had no more life than a baby. Oh! if I had the great arrangements of the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company I would make an alteration in the Nepigon House Post.

Donald was always a nervous sort of a body and no more to be depended on than the wind, up and down with his temper and his tongue,—but what started him off to-day? What devil is riding him now? I was eating my brose this morning and I was watching him open the paper thinking to myself, maybe about noon you'll be finished with that. Well he kept on reading without thinking at all of his bowl and it was getting cold. He had his face close up to the window for the light was little, by reason of the storm, and his eye was jumping about on the paper, but very quickly he seemed all turned to stone and stared like an ox hit with a poll axe. Then he gave a sort of groan and let his hand fall down and the paper rustled against his knees. His face turned all wan and pinched together, and a more dreeful figure I never saw, but he was all up again in a minute. I saw he expected to meet my eye, but I was looking into my bowl. "Hoot!" he said, "young donkey, you'd be letting yon brose get as cold as a puddock and not askin' Alec to put them by the fire." With that he sat down but never a mouthful did he eat.

I went over as if to take up the paper. "Haud," says he, "dinna touch it!" "Um!" says I, maybe in a mocking tone. "None o' your snash," says he, as sharp as a trap. I thought better to let it go at that so I put a log on the fire and bye and bye up he gets, whips out his keys, unlocks his private box and just fairly puts the paper away.

So in default of anything else to do I must abuse him for his un-Christian goings-on in this my diary. I wish I had here a woman or two I know who are glib with the tongue and we would roast his character for him so that the material ears would burn on his head. From the first he had a grudge against me and for a year his conduct has been getting more intolerable and I have to bear with him and not be half so impudent as his action calls for. Now he has begun to provoke me by withholding the paper.

January Tenth.

Reading what I last wrote puts me out of conceit of myself for being so impatient with a poor body who maybe has more cause to be provoked with

me than I have to be put about by him. It is almost a fearsome thing, when you consider it, to be here so many miles away from home in a land burdened with snow and deep cold, just the three of us, Donald, myself and the boy. And for the past few months as I look back I realize we have not had a pleasant time of it. Donald has been that freakish there has been no living with him and I have a temper of my own and sometimes there is nothing left for the boy Alec to do but to go out with the dogs. We should be forbearing and I pray God to make me lenient of Donald Murchison's faults.

I was sitting writing with just enough light from the fire to see by when Donald came in stirring about in an uneasy way. "Muir," he says. I thought he was going to speak in the temper he had been in all day, so I went on writing. "Archie, boy," he says in his winning way which when he puts on I would go the round of the world for him.

"What is it?" answered I, looking up.

"Have ye any breath in your body at all?"

"I have."

"Then why don't you blow it into the pipes?"

I was glad enough to do that so I took them out of my box and I played my best and many of the things I knew he liked but when I struck into "Braw, braw, lads" (which is his prime favorite for some reason unknown to me who always think it a scritchy bit of a tune) he held up his hand, not vicious at all, but as not wanting me to go on, so I put them by. Then as he was in such a good humour I slipped away and got the boy Alec, and between us, while he sat looking into the fire and pulling at his beard, we made something savory and got it upon the table without burning or slopping. I was glad to see him eat with gusto and as I looked upon him as we had our faces over the table I began to observe how he was all fallen away and shrunken to half his natural size.

It is strange that when a person has anything upon the mind he will not eat but will go about as if the trouble was meat and drink to him. So it is with Murchison. He has always seemed to me a lonely body, never getting any letters from home, or speaking about his folk, a man without comfortable recollections, and that is a poor way to be in this land where nothing happens but storms and the endeavour of the fur trade. I had a sort of pang for Donald as I saw him looking so wasted and I vowed to be more patient with him. He did not speak much and mostly to the boy, but after supper as I put on fresh wood he began to get restless and in a moment or two to glance at me and at his box. Then he went over and unlocked it and threw the newspaper back over his shoulder at me. "There," he said, "tak'

it," half crossly like a child in a pout. I thanked him courteously and read it over by the firelight. He sat and watched me for some reason or other as if he were ready to pounce on me, but I bore him out and in not more than an hour he went off to bed, when I finished my paper in peace.

This morning he was up early, dancing about for his breakfast and seemed as if he wanted to talk to me without caring to broach the subject.

"Weel," he said at length when we had the porridge and were eating them, "Mr. Muir, did ye enjoy your readin'?"

"I did," said I.

"It's a bonny journal, yon *Herald*; ye said ye were never in Glasga?"

"No," I answered for the hundredth time.

"Puir body. I ken it weel, though I had'na been there for close twenty-five year."

"There must be changes in the town."

"Aye, more's the pity. Now did you happen to observe in yesterday's paper the trial for a murder?" We commonly talked the news over as if it was fresh of the day before though it was nearly a year old.

"I did; the man called Farquharson?"

"Aye! it set me to groping back in my mind and I seem to win back the affair."

"I did not see when they arrested him."

"I did," he remarked. "It was a good many months back; they would have been collecting the evidence against him."

"This fellow was sheer daft to go back to Glasgow; of course some one was sure to recognize him."

"Twenty or so years is a long stretch."

"True, but then you see a murder stirs up hate and the friends of the murdered man never rest and they were of consequence in the town I should judge."

"They were that," said he.

"Well, he's properly hanged by this time," I said, thoughtlessly.

"Bah!" he cried, "canna ye steik your mouth. How can you tell aught about that. If there's onything I abhor, it's a lad o' your size with a loose lip."

Friday, January Thirteenth.

This afternoon after the storm I went off to dig out some traps I had set on Jack Fish Island. In one I found a silver fox. The sight of it made Donald smile when I brought it in. It is dancing cold after the storm. About an hour after I brought in the fox he threw me over the paper. "There's naething in it about the trial," he said.

"What trial?"

"Farquharson's."

I could see he was angry again with me for having forgotten and I could see also that he was for some reason or other interested in the trial more than ordinary. He growled in his beard a good deal and would not eat anything and how he can keep the strength in him is more than I can understand.

January Fourteenth.

Yesterday Donald decided in great a fuss and hurry that he would go to Negodina and away we went with the dogs. It was a beautiful morning, the snow all sparkling in the sun and no wind to disturb the lightest of the crystals. I was enjoying the exhilarating motion on my snowshoes and the sound of my voice in the clear air calling to the dogs. We had barely gone five miles when Donald tumbled over in the snow and could not get up. "This is what comes of eating no breakfast," I said, "and trying to walk a matter of twenty-five miles on a glass of grog." He looked at me pitifully out of the weariness of his eyes and said nothing. That is the thing I do not understand about the man, if I get the first word at him he will not so much as answer me back, but if he begins to rate me he will bluster me down if it takes all day.

When I got him back to the Post he was cold and with some hot broth I got the warmth into him, stretching him on the bench before the fire with his rabbit-skin robe well over him. Now I began to remember, what with petulance I had overlooked, that for a long time he had not eaten enough to keep life in a bird and been drinking his allowance. Now sympathy opened my eyes and I saw he had no flesh and no strength.

Toward evening he said in his best winning voice, "Read us the paper, laddie." So I read yesterday's paper through and several times I thought he had gone to sleep but when I had finished he said with a weary sigh, "There's no word about the trial." "Not a word," I answered. A few moments later he fell asleep and as I am writing he still sleeps.

The Sabbath, January Fifteenth.

Donald is not much better to-day. Last night I heard him astir and rising myself I saw him with a candle groping over old papers in the box, but did not disturb him and warn him back to bed, as I should have done, for fear of his displeasure.

Wednesday, January Eighteenth.

There has been nothing worthy to write about until to-day. Donald lay all day yesterday and spoke seldom, and that crossly when he did speak and cuffed at Alec with his blanket which is a thing I never saw him do before. He would do everything for himself and would read the paper and Mr. James Boswell's "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," but flung the book away, calling the writer "a doited body! a clavering idiot!"

But to-day he is up and about as blithe as a bird and nothing that will account for it but some notes about this trial, but why the probability of a guilty man being not hanged through lack of evidence should make anybody joyful is to me inexplicable. But he goes about whistling, "Braw, braw, lads," and snapping his fingers and once when he was working at the parchment in the window he broke out with a laugh and a quoting out of the journal "Insufficiency of evidence." But the laugh sounded hollow.

"You think they won't hang this Farquharson?"

"Na! man; they'd be clean daft to hang the body on any evidence they can find," and he chuckled over the words.

"You seem glad," I remarked.

"Aye!" he said dryly.

"They may hang him yet," I said.

"You are supposing he's the right man."

"He has been identified."

"Aye!" said he, chuckling again.

What sense is there in this, says I to myself. He clearly wants Farquharson to get free. But, to tell truth, I am of that mind also, for the poor body denies so hotly that he is Farquharson. But at the same time he will not say who he is in truth or where he came from and he has against his word all these rich and powerful personages who swear that he is Farquharson and so unless he can open his mouth and find him some friends it will go hardly with him.

In the evening we brewed punch and we had too much of it and, God forgive me, I do not remember what happened, but this morning Alec's ear that was above his blanket was bitten by the frost as the fire had gone out.

January Twenty-fourth.

I have been so busy with Donald that I have had no time to write in this Journal, and now there is nothing to write about saving him and his vagaries about this trial which is like a maggot in his brain. From the news that we read regularly it would appear that the evidence is much against Farquharson, though it provokes me to think that he is long ago cold in his grave or alive and free somewhere while we are bothering our brains about him here for no good reason so far as I can see. When I was a bairn at home when my poor mother used to read aloud to us we would cry out if she read on with her eye and remained silent in the enthralling parts of the story. But dearly would I love to read on now. A flip or two of these old papers and I would end all this suspense, but Donald will not hear to it.

There is no keeping his mind from off the topic and unless I can divert him he will be mad with it. Last night he came to me about midnight and shook me awake. He held the light in his hand and his face was resolute. I saw he was dressed for the road and had his dog-whip in his hand.

"Muir," he said, "I leave you in charge of the Post. I'm awa'."

"Where to?" I asked, half asleep.

"To Glasga." It made my bones crumble to hear him.

"Glasgow, man! Do you know we're in the Nepigon a thousand and a thousand and a thousand miles from Glasgow and as good as a year's travel."

"I'm going," he said. "Be you good to Alec."

I saw he was fixed, so to gain time I humoured him.

"If you are going," I said, "I have a bit of a parcel I'd like you to take to my mother."

"Aye," said he, "that I will do gladly, wrap it up and be quick about it." I took the light from him and went to my box. As I stooped over it I said, "Are you going to attend Farquharson's trial?"

"I am."

"You forget that what we were reading is a matter of a year old." It was cruel hard to say it. He pondered it; then he let the whip drop, threw up both his hands and reeled down on my bed. After a while he let me take off his capot and moccasins. Then he began to cry like a little boy. "You're good to me, Archie, lad; you're good to me."

"Man!" I said, "you're all unnerved."

"I got to thinking o'er much, and I thought if either Mary or me could reach there we might save him."

"You had best talk to me about it," I said, "and not kill yourself with thinking. You don't eat your food, Donald, man, and there's nothing so destroying as this furious thinking on an empty stomach."

"I think you're right; you're a sensible laddie. It maybe would be a good plan."

I built up the fire and after a little while I had the satisfaction of seeing him drop off into a sound and peaceful sleep.

Wednesday, January Twenty-fifth.

I am so careful now in watching Donald and nursing him and humouring him that I have not time each day to write in this diary. I have tried to act upon the suggestion I made the other night and have him talk to me about what is in his mind regarding this Farquharson trial with but small success. I deliberately tried him with a question the other morning when he seemed reasonable and coherent.

"You spoke of a Mary the other night?"

"Tut!" he replied, "ye impudent young rascal, what is that to you that I spoke of?"

I was moved to answer him back sharply but I forbore for that time.

The last journal that we read about the trial said that the evidence was all in and he was that restless and captious nothing would suit him. We had a quarrel this morning over the small matter of a clean shirt I wanted to put upon him. But he would have none of my help and ordered me away as if he had been a prince and I a scullion. "I'll have none of your paltering and officious interference," he says, "do ye think I can no put on my own shirt. Tak' yersel off!" But so weak was he that he had sore work with it and had in the end to ask Alec to do the throat buttons for him.

The only food he will take now is a little broth made from the breasts of the geese we had put down last fall. I make it savory and heat it myself and keep Alec's finger out of the pot so that nothing is burnt or ill-flavoured. To-day when he was supping something he said:

"They think they have the right man and are keeping her out of the way."

"Who?"

"Miss Mary Fraser."

"Oh!" said I, "she wouldn't be a good witness if he were the right man, eh?"

"Never!" he says.

"Well, that's odd that a woman would not see justice done."

"They're bound to hang him," he said grimly, "and they couldn't if she were about. If it was Farquharson there, before her, she'd say it was no him and give him a chance for his life or I never knew her."

Friday, January Twenty-seventh.

Hugh Farquharson is found guilty and is to be hanged on the Thirtieth of June, eighteen and Fourteen.

January Thirtieth.

I have had a mighty trial with Donald and have been through deep waters with him, but now I think he will be gradually getting better if I can keep his mind off the hanging matter. After I read out the last news to him he became like stone, oblivious, as it seemed to me, of his surroundings. Seeing him so quiet I went about my work with an easy mind, and on Thursday evening I said I will play him a little on the pipes. But the drones had hardly taken the breath when he was upon me and he abused me so soundly and so well that my tongue could make no answer. There was somewhat droll about it and tragical at the same time. There was not much flame to the fire and very little light in the room and out of the gloom of the corner where his bunk is I could see him flourish his blanket as his voice descended upon me.

It is strange that a thing he esteems so greatly as the pipes should have set him out of humour. I recollect many evenings during the summer that I would play walking up and down the green in front of the door. When the echo from the chanters would come clamouring back from the hill on the island he would say to me, his face all beaming with satisfaction, "Do ye hear that, Archie boy? It sounds like a lot o' tykes yowling over there." To what a pass he has brought himself when he cannot abide the sound of the pipes and them in the same room with him!

Wednesday, February First.

A wild storm yesterday. I visited the traps at Jack Fish Island. Ogema-gah-bow came in from Negodina and says the rabbits are scarce. I gave him a bag of flour and a small keg of rum. Donald is quiet but no better.

February Fourth.

To-day has been one of misfortune. The boy, Alec, began this morning by burning the porridge and they were vile. Then one of the windows blew in with the storm and the fire got out of the hearth. Then when the fish was ready for supper the boy stumbled with it and fell along the floor. Donald was moved to laughter and roared like a bull-moose. It was droll, the figure

of Alec sprawling, trying to save himself and the supper at the same time. His felt cap that he persists in wearing in the house sprang off his head and went into the fire where it was finely singed. It was good to hear Donald laugh after so many days of silence. But it had an untoward effect upon him for in a few minutes his flesh was ringing with sweat and cold at that. The man was crazy that he would not allow me to help him out of his shirt.

I have some decent pleasure now in reading the *Herald*, although Donald's eye is fearsome at times and glares as if he expected to see the real execution in it. If he would but let me go forward a few months and see how the matter was ended!

The Sabbath, February Fifth.

The fit of laughter that Donald had yesterday at supper time seemed to have cleared the air, and to-day he is quite sunny with that uncommon winning way he has which when he adopts it makes him the best companion in the world, even for me who am maybe half as old. After dinner I had him propped up on the bench before the fire, his wool bonnet on his head, his rabbit-skin robe across his knees when he began to talk with never a provocation from me which I will write down to the best of my recollection, using his very words when I can recall them.

That Mary Fraser was a bonnie lass; ye mind I used to live in Glasga; a bonnie, bonnie lass. I was a young thing then in her father's counting house, a matter of twenty or twenty-two, and she was maybe eighteen or twenty, maybe, they gar their ages weel, the lassies. I had a great comrade in those days, he was over the self-same desk, Hugh Farquharson by name. Aye! Ye start; I knew the lad weel. He was a sort of cousin to Mary Fraser, ye ken; his mother and her father were second cousins, close enough in Scotland. Weel, he was a rantin' bit of a boy. Ye remind me of him some, ye have the same up-and-down capricious temper and a good deal of the same sort of nonsense about ye. That maybe makes me tolerate ye. Weel, old Hugh Fraser used to ask him up to the house occasionally to have a bit and sup and sometimes Miss Mary used to run in to vex her father at the office and so they met at whiles. There was anither lad who lived at the big house who was not as much relation as was Hugh. Old Fraser was good to his relatives and the only chick and child was Miss Mary. Weel, this fellow's name was Purvis. Aye! ye start: I'm telling ye how it happened. A mean, hang-dog, pale-eyed puppy he was; but there he was in the house, mind ye, and he was older than us boys, looking back I weel realize we were nothing but boys. What old Fraser could see in this disjasket, speldering nobody I could never

make out but nevertheless he was as much bound to match him with Miss Mary as the idiot was himself.

I didn't much wonder at Hugh falling in love with Miss Mary she was that cantie with her bonnie red hair and her blue eyen and her arms and waist as round as a ring. And perhaps ye could na blame her for loving the lad but I was never the judge of beauty in a man. He was as strong as steel and as straight as a rush, that I will say. Weel, he told me about it for we were on open terms.

"Tak' care what ye do," said I, "and just keep your eye on Mr. Purvis."

"Why?" said he.

"Because he's just the very deevil!"

"Pooh!" answered he, "I could crush him with my thumb."

"Ye could that," said I, "but he has a deal of low cunning in that head of his and you run counter to his plans for he wants Miss Mary for himself."

I thought Hugh would choke when I said that. Weel, for a whole winter they went on with their love nonsense and nobody observed them. For to be sure they hadn't over much of a chance for it. At kirk it was a mere feasting of the eye; and otherwhiles a bit of a note exchanged or a lock of hair as like as not; or a word that meant more than it sounded when some dull body's back was turned. Hugh got a sailor in port to tattoo on his breast over his heart a true-lover's knot with the initials above and below: M.F. that was Mary Fraser, and H.F. that was Hugh Farquharson and like as not he told her of his foolishness.

I don't know that there was any end to the secret lover's nonsense they carried on and when it came spring they used to meet in the evening. There was a little old garden door in the wall fairly smothered up in ivy and when Miss Mary could slip away from her women folk she would come out and talk to Hugh under a thorn tree where he had piled a heap of stones for a seat and I have no manner of doubt but that the burn looked fine to them as they sat by it in the starlight.

One night as I was reading in my room Hugh came on tip-toe into me, his face ghostly white.

"I've killed him!" he whispered.

"Purvis?" I asked under my breath.

"Yes," said he.

Then he put his mouth up to my ear and whispered me the story. It appears they were cuddled up there in the moonlight in Hughie's plaidie when Purvis came through the gate and found them. Instead of talking to

Hugh like a man, he began to abuse Miss Mary and in the midst of his gab he called her a vile name. It was hardly out of his mouth when Hugh was upon him. Miss Mary frightened half to death ran into the garden as Hugh told her.

"I've killed him," he said, "and I was very quick with him."

"Well!" said I, "let us go and see." Even then I had made up my mind what to do and I took a bit of rope with me. We scurried along in the moonlight and when we found him he was dead,—stone dead.

"What maun I do now?" asked Hugh, shocked out of his senses.

"You'll do just as I tell you."

So we tied him up with stones and sunk him in a deep pool of the burn. "Now," I said, "the Quebec (she was one of Fraser's ships) weighs anchor to-morrow morning. You go aboard to-night, get McTavish (he was second mate and a chum of ours) to hide you until you are three days out and good-bye to this part of the world." It was the only thing for him to do. Old Fraser would have hunted him if he but laid a finger on that booby Purvis, for he was a fine hater, and here he had killed him outright, ye see, in the middle of his temper without ever being able to tell afterward how he had done it. After a while I slipped away myself for it was sort of uncomfortable after the affair got about and I had a power of questions asked me some of which I did not care to answer.

Monday, February Sixth.

It was too long a story for Donald to tell and he has been weaker since and looks woefully bad. When he was listening to the paper to-day which I was reading to him he said, suddenly interrupting me:

"I told ye that story that ye might tell Mary Fraser if anything happens to me that I would have gone to Glasga and saved the man if I could have done it."

"If the man is Farquharson how then could you have saved him?" asked I impudently.

"You will tell her that, Archie, like a dear lad?"

"I will," I replied.

"And tell her too that I know that if she could have got there and saved him she would have done that. Ye ken she might be away travelling in foreign parts or they might keep the word of the trial away from her as they do sometimes from women folk."

"Yes, I'll tell her that."

"That's considerate of you, ye ken I knew them both well. Ye seem to understand that it is the woefullest of all the fates to have your mind in one spot o' earth and your dull dead body in anither, not to be able to reach folk when they need ye sore, and to feel your soul destroy your body like the wick burns up the candle."

Saturday, February Eleventh.

Yesterday when I took up the new paper to read to Donald I had a surprise: it was dated June Twenty-fourth, and the last one I had read was dated May Ninth. He saw there was something wrong so he said, "What is it, Archie man?" I had to tell him and search high or low I could make nothing of it, six weeks of the papers were missing. "Guid God!" he cried, "do ye ken what this means. Six weeks gone out of life and all for the sake of some doited clerk body who doesn't know what is life in these outland parts." I could not get him quieted and in truth I was well put about myself. But search was useless, a whole package of the paper had gone astray. "Just think of it!" he kept murmuring to himself, "six weeks of those bonnie *Glasga Heralds*."

"Well, we can go on with the others and try not to remember it."

"I'm no so sure o' that." Then he said in a low, musing voice, "If we did that they'd be hanging him next week."

The loss of all those papers is a wretched business when you come to consider it. It is not as if you could turn your money in your pocket and have them again. To-day I heard Donald talking to Alec; he thought I was out feeding the dogs. It was pitiful to hear his apologetic tones with the boy whom he had been sharp with a moment before.

"Ye maun na mind me, lad, I'm just a bit gyte. Ye ken I've lost six weeks o' my life in those *Heralds* that may be in the bottom of the deep but which are missent mostlike by some idiot clerk in the office. Man, but it's waeful. Ye see Archie Muir and me were expecting something in the journal about six weeks from now and I canna let him read on and there's no way of leading up to it. What'll happen to me before that Guid kens. Mind ye never make mistakes in your work, laddie, they're sometimes worse than real wickedness."

The Sabbath, February Twelfth.

Donald called me about four o'clock this morning. "Archie, man, I'm a bit cold! will you give me a drink?" I had Alec up in a twinkling, and in a moment we had some hot grog. He sipped a little of it. His hands were very

cold. “Go,” he says, “Archie, lad, to my box, you’ll find a little packet in the corner of the top.” He shut it up in his hands. Then he sank back and sighed. It came over me how I had often been angry and fought him. Poor Alec did not understand and cowered up trembling against me.

“What is it?” he asked.

“Death,” I answered.

“Do people die so easily?” he asked.

“Sometimes,” I answered.

“I thought it was sleep,” he whispered.

“So it is,” I said.

Monday, February Thirteenth.

I have made everything right for poor Donald. We have cleared the snow from the house where we winter the canoes and have opened the door. It is the best place we have for him. On Wednesday morning we will put his body into his own canoe out of which I have cut the bars, and we will put him there at rest until I can dig a decent grave for him in the springtime.

I have blamed myself much to-day for not noticing that he was so low. I have been thinking that he might have wished to say something at the last, and I would have liked to have asked him to forgive me if I had been unmannerly and hard to live with. But it is all over now and he lies there on the bier that we have made him out of the only two planks we have in the Post, with his hands clasped over the little package he had me bring him from his box. The boy will not believe he is dead. Twice he has come to me with the word, “I’m certain I saw him move, Mr. Muir.”

Tuesday, February Fourteenth.

It is late at night now. I got wrought upon by waiting and thinking what I should do now I have charge of the Post. I remembered that I had promised to write to Miss Mary Fraser. Then I thought I would know if they hanged that poor body Farquharson; so I glanced at the *Heralds*.

I found what I looked for but not what I expected. They had not hanged him for he was not Farquharson. Miss Mary Fraser, who seems to have been kept away as I read it, proved that beyond peradventure. He had not the marks over his heart of which she had been told. The poor fool was heartened to tell who he really was and that he was a deserter from the army lately in Spain, which fact had closed his mouth. His uncommon and unfortunate resemblance to Farquharson had nearly cost him his life. “Oh!” I thought as I looked down upon Donald, lying there so still and solemn, “Oh!

if you could only have known." Then I remembered that I would write it all to Mary Fraser. Upon that a thought came into my head that made my voice tremble as I said to Alec, "Hold the light, boy."

"What may be the matter, Sir?" He held the light high over the quiet form on the bier. I turned back the coat and the shirt.

Over his heart were the initials M.F. with H.F. above and below a true-lover's knot.

"Is that all?" said Alec; his voice wavered.

"Aye, that is all."

III

Vengeance Is Mine

I

AND God said, Let the dry land appear, and it was so." But as yet the waters alone seemed gathered together into one place. There they lay, vast, unmoving, lustreless, of the same grey color as the sky. And the land, which had risen without violence, pressed from beneath the surface of the waters, lying a little above them, but clearly as yet the bottom of a sea, extended on all sides, the mere essential earth without the form of hill or valley.

So thought Evan McColl as he gazed at the surface of James Bay from the shore, a little above its level, and remembered the first chapter of Genesis. This was the famous bay he had dreamed about as a boy, until it had become a land of fairy, which, if he could only reach it, would render up adventure as the very spirit of its shores and waters.

This was the reality! Behind him were the buildings of the Hudson's Bay Company trading-post at Winisk—low, rude structures crouching on the shore; before him was the waste of waters, lightened here and there by patches of dirty yellow, where lay the shifting sand-banks, and clouded by vast marshy beds, the haunt of the wild fowl.

If he had not long ago wrung his heart dry so that there were in it no more tears he would have wept aloud. But where his heart was there was a feeling of ache and terror; and where his soul should have animated him there was deadness. He had been only two years in that land, but it was enough. To one sensitive and subject to the longing for things home-like, and with comfort at the core of them, two years of that land were equal to ten of strange cities. He had signed for five years, and three of them lay before him. Suddenly a voice smote him:

"What are ye gaupin' at there, ye loon? Have ye naught to do but look at the water as if it was going to bite ye?"

Evan's shoulders drew together as if a scourge had fallen on them. Without looking behind him he turned and walked toward the storehouse, and the trader, Ian Forbes, scowled after him.

"God be feared," he muttered to himself, "that they should have put an idiot upon me when I have enough to bear!"

A gull that seemed to have no power of flight flopped awkwardly near him. He called out to it:

"Gabriel, ye loon, ye have more sense in your bit of a feathered body than he has in his whole carcass."

Evan unlocked the door with a ponderous key and plunged into the gloom of the interior and the heavy smell of dried fish and strong tobacco, leather, and rancid tallow. It was a dreariness and an odour like unto that of Whale River, where he had spent eighteen months of his two years on the bay, and where his soul and body had been broken.

Here at Winisk he had hoped all things would be changed; at Whale River, Winisk seemed to be in the old magic zone of his dreams. Surely no other place in the world would be so sunk in loneliness and squalor as Whale River! The voyage across the bay had some trembling of romance about it—the breezes seemed fortunate; there beyond the tawny line of the horizon lay—fabulous, secret, and full of lustre—a new province, and surely a new life. It was a recrudescence of hope.

When he first sighted the post it was transfigured by a mirage and gleamed in the morning light. Held high above a long silver strip of water, the white buildings looked like things fashioned of crystal, around them the sheen that is upon the breasts of doves. A large content took hold upon him; no intoxication of pleasure could equal this lull of all earthly passion into peace, absolute and virginal. Two miles nearer the coast the vision was snatched away and the low, grey shoreline, with dull, small buildings, dwelt in its place—the reality.

When he landed, the trader, Ian Forbes—"Black Ian," as he was called—looked him over from crown to foot, looked him through from breast-bone to shoulder-blade, and with never a word turned on a grinding heel and spat upon the ground contemptuously. Yet at the first glance Ian was rather engaged with the tall, red-haired Highland lad; but his experience of clerks and helpers had been a long one, varied with bitterness, and he would begin by crushing and humiliation; if any human relations were to follow, they would be allowed to creep up by a process of reconstruction. He expected nothing of God or man. The country and the trade, loneliness and disappointment, had seared his heart, and having met with kindness nowhere for years and years, he paid his debt by hardness, studied and determined. But he was ready for comradeship in the midst of all his cruel perversity, was in very truth longing for it, and his first glance at Evan revealed possibilities to him. The reception, so wilfully brutal, was not lost upon the newcomer. With one look of terror at the averted shoulder, the strong, round head with its Kilmarnock bonnet, and the short, powerful figure, Evan

busied himself extracting his few belongings from the miscellany of the cargo.

His hope fell dead, but in a day or two, taking an inventory of his new situation, he found himself with some items of privilege. It was, to be sure, a fine thing to be free of the filthy Eskimos of Whale River. Here his quarters were roomy, if nothing great to boast about, and, moreover, clean. There was some pretence at Christian cooking of such coarse food as was to be had.

The Indians, all but a few, had left for their hunting-grounds, and the permanent staff of the post was, in addition to himself, Luke Contrecoeur, his Cree wife, and his daughter Julie. There was another member of the group with an individuality of his own—the seagull, a resident by compulsion since Ian had captured him and clipped his wings. They called him Gabriel, and he seemed to love the warmth of the house and the easy fare, of which he was monstrous greedy. You might say he was tamed, for Ian in his idleness, and by a certain measure of cruelty, had taught him a few odd tricks. But his chief use was as a foil for his master, to curse when he was in a raging temper, and to apostrophise with remarks which were intended to apply to other people. Many a hard saying had been delivered over the gull's wing.

Evan had to admit that there was society. His mind very quickly governed his body, and his lassitude and the physical weakness which had been upon him receded and his heart gladdened a little. Ian noticed the change and, although he made no sign, was pleased enough. There would be plenty of time for the amenities when he had shown the lad the extent of his power. So he was a heavy taskmaster, and Evan bore it without a word, for something was at work upon his heart.

II

"It's a fine thing to be here with you, Luke," he would say, as he filled his pipe by the light of Contrecoeur's fire. "A better place than that heathen Whale River. I should have died there this winter."

"Yes, surr," Luke would reply; "and you don't look right strong yet, surr." He was a huge, kindly fellow, with a low, soft, rumbling voice.

"Oh, I'm all right. Say, Luke, doesn't Julie ever speak to anybody?"

"Yess, surr. Speak to him, Julie."

"Yess, surr," Julie whispered, her eyes fixed on the floor.

She was about seventeen, with a shapely figure and a grave, oval face, and her eyes, when she showed them, were brown. It was an innocent game

of Evan's in these days to catch a full sight of her eyes. But her glance was like a young bird learning to fly; its perch was somewhere in Evan's face, but it fluttered off and fell back to the ground constantly. He wooed her shyness and tried to gain her confidence by most boyish wiles, and was happy without reasoning about happiness. Ian was unobservant of what was going on between Julie and the lad, as he called him in his mind, but he was glad enough to hear his high voice flourishing amid the roundelays of some good old song.

"Call me Evan, Julie."

"Yes, surr," she would drawl in her most musical voice—with a laugh beginning in her mind.

"Well, then, say it—Evan."

"Evan, surr." She pronounced it Eevan, with a long stress on the first "E."

The glance almost fluttered up to its perch; then followed two or three liquid sounds, the end notes of her laughing melody, the first of which had only run through her mind.

Ian spoke almost kindly to him one day. "Lad," he said, "I'm thinking we'll have to make some new skidways afore we haul up the boats for the winter, and you and Luke had better edge up the axes in a way."

"Of course, Mr. Forbes," he said lightly, and Ian did not like the manner of his reply. He thought his first mildness should have received more consideration. He was sensitive, this broad-breasted Highlander, as quickly proud and sensitive as a fine lady, and the advances he had already made in his liking for Evan were now so many causes for self-reproach. "Tut! He's but like the rest o' them, and I was fair to make a fool o' myself."

But Evan was indifferent now to the trader's tone, whether rough or smooth. The next day Ian stumbled upon the reason. Julie had come up to the store for some flour, and Evan had caught her hands. Then, timidly as a lover may, and not breathing for very ecstasy, he drew her toward him. Her shawl fell back from her dark, lustrous hair—her bright eyes dwelt upon his face, her breast rose in one short sigh. He clasped her close, and long and shudderingly he kissed her lips. Then, just as his face left hers, she pursued it timidly and her lips met his cheek somewhere, fugitively, with the lightest of caresses; then, frightened at this disclosure of her heart, she swiftly covered her head.

Forbes, who just then came down from the fur-loft, saw this play. The little new-born humanity of the man was blighted. He had never before considered Julie—she had been as a child; but if any one thought her a

woman, no one but himself would own her. His temper of jealousy grew two days, then he sent Evan down the shore on a wild-goose chase, and called Luke.

"Take the women away to Albany!"

"Yes, surr."

Luke was fairly stupefied and stared like an ox. Forbes struck him full in the face.

"Will ye go?" he said in a frenzy. "Be around the point before McColl comes back, or 'twill be the worse for ye."

"Yes, surr," said Luke patiently.

III

When Evan went down to Luke's house that evening it was dark; there was no fire on the hearth. He came back with a great misgiving. Ian sat in a huge timber chair filled with cushions, a grim look on his face. He watched the boy, who was excited by apprehension. Gabriel was wedged in among the cushions in a warm corner.

"We'll find out who is the master here, Gabriel," said the trader. "We'll all find out sooner or later, songsters, and high and mighty lovers, and all."

Six days later Luke came back. Evan burst in upon him.

"Luke, for God's sake, tell me what has happened! Where is Julie?"

"Gone to Albany, surr."

"A hundred miles! Luke, I shall die here; there is no help for it."

"Better not do that, surr."

"Who sent them away? Tell me, quick."

"Him."

"What right has he over *your* wife and daughter?" he said, passionately.

"He has the saying," said Luke simply. Surely they were all in the trader's hand; his power was close over them.

By and by they began to build the skidways. They were flattening long cottonwood logs and pinning them together. The labour was too heavy and exasperating for Evan, who was wasted with longing and many sleepless nights. His old lassitude had come upon him; he felt weary as death; he would look long upon the heavy waters and hate his life. He longed to kill Ian with his broadaxe; to lay him low in the midst of some cruel jibe. Once, when the trader was bending over the chalk-line adjusting it, Evan swung back the axe with a sudden passionate impulse—but Ian looked up. When he

saw the gleaming blade hanging over him he showed his teeth in a smile; but he never turned his back on the boy again. After that they were pitted against each other, and Ian was the more savage because he had had those inner drawings which were now, he thought, all proved to be false.

The winter was now close upon them, though as yet it held off wondrously. A chief item of their provender was the wild fowl which they salted. The birds came in flocks among the reed-fringes of innumerable small islands, and they shot them from stands set for the purpose. Grey daylight would find the men hidden and ready with their huge fowling-pieces. One morning Evan came away without his great coat—for he could hardly now collect his thoughts upon any subject—and it was bitterly chill. A breeze which stung to the very bone with cold moved the reeds.

"Ye young donkey, ye're here without your coat. Ye'd leave yer head if it was any particular use to ye."

"Luke will go back for it when he comes out."

"Listen to that, now!—the young lord! Luke has better to do than fetch and carry for such as you." He was feeling in his pocket for his flint and steel to make a light for his pipe.

"You've forgotten something yourself," said Evan impudently, at a hazard.

"You're over-quick to guess. You've thieved it yourself, you young devil. I see it in your face." He whipped himself into an awful rage. "It's my fire-box I want, d'ye hear? and I'm going to find it, and you'll wish ye had even such a wee spark of fire before anybody remembers to come out for ye."

He seized the boat and put off through the reeds. Luke was kept busy by Ian all that day while he nursed his raging heart, but toward sundown, in a passion, he ordered him to go for the lad, as if the delay had been one of his faults. Evan was lying unconscious on the soggy marsh grass in the half-frozen water. Luke rowed him to the shore and carried him to the post. He had been all day without food. He had shot some geese, and in trying to reach them had fallen into the water.

All that night Luke laboured to get some of the warmth and breath of life into the lad's body, and all the next day he lay in a raging fever, with Luke alone ministering to him, as tenderly and with such rude comforts as might be. Ian, if he thought of him, betrayed no sign of it. He was warring against the demon within him. Ashamed to be solicitous for the life he had nearly taken, he argued it out with Gabriel.

"When he is well, I'll make it up with him. I'll forgive him. I'll not be ungenerous with the laddie. But he stole my fire-box, do you know that, Gabriel—reived it away, the black-hearted young devil, to think on't!"

With a heavy, desperate face he went about his business, but he did not once sit down in the house that day, not even to eat his meals. He took his food standing over against the window and gazed upon the parchment covering as if he could see through it, out upon the immensity of the waters beyond. When night came he slept in his clothes, if he slept at all, sitting in the large chair, his hands extended upon the arms and his head fallen down upon his breast.

Luke was faithful all night to the fire and to Evan, and only murmured to him when he replaced his blanket or moistened his lips with a little oatmeal-water. As the room was warmer than usual, Gabriel sat close under his master's chair and did not seek his usual haunts; occasionally he would stretch his wings, snap his bill, and move his feet restlessly. Once he was aware of something which dropped from the cushions of the chair, struck him softly on the back, ran lightly over his plumage, and fell upon the floor beside him. He opened one eye wisely and blinked at the firelight.

Toward morning Luke must have slept, for when he awoke the room was filled with equivocal daylight and Ian was gone. Evan's fever had left him, but he could barely move his limbs, so weak was he. The ordinary coarse nourishment of the post he refused when Luke prepared it for him.

"Oich! I'm done for," he said heavily. "I can't swallow the stuff, and I'm a long way from home. I wish you'd bring over my casette, Luke."

He carried the box and set it by his side, and Evan made him rummage for a certain book of which he was fain. When he found it, at intervals all day he pored upon it, searching for something. Suddenly he said:

"Luke, bring me here a coal from the hearth."

Luke brought it in his naked fingers, which could stand fire like steel. In his excitement the boy took it from him and burned the page opposite a certain text. The live coal ate his flesh, the page, and the blanket. He sank back exhausted. In a quarter of an hour he was up again, leaning against the strength of Luke.

"I want to tell you, Luke, that I loved Julie. But there was nothing wrong; I loved her in the way men love women in God's country. I want you to give her this to be minded of Evan, who loved her in the true way."

He unwound a heavy gold chain that went three times about his neck, and gave it in Luke's hand. He was quiet for a space.

"Luke, I want you to show Ian Forbes this book, where I have burned it with the coal. At the right time—you will know—show him that, as from me. He was mightier than I, but another shall deal with him. Show it to him."

IV

"He's gone, surr," said Luke to Ian, humbly, as if he were in some way responsible.

"Who's gone?"

"Master Evan, surr."

"Where?"

"He's dead, surr." Ian was convicted.

"My God! He did it to spite me. Luke, the fellow crossed me from the first. It was like him to slip away—never to say where he hid the fire-box."

But Ian was filled with an awful dread; after they buried the body, for a week he never took off his clothes. He was buried himself, deep, deep in his own mind. He never spoke. He had all the superstitious feeling of his race. Every moment he was aware of the long white body in the shallow grave, covered so lightly that he expected any moment to see it stand in the doorway.

One day as he stood before the table in a dream he saw Gabriel flounder along, pushing something from under the chair. He stooped mechanically and picked up—the fire-box!

A peculiar smile came upon his face. He launched a kick at Gabriel, and turned away, trembling. What was he to do? He leaned upon the table, which shook with his trembling. Murdered, and accused falsely! He could not escape from the impeachment. He was consumed of it, as by a slow fire.

One afternoon he must have dozed in his chair. At dusk he half awoke. Mysteriously he saw the door open without a sound. An appearance stood there, gaunt, grey, fearsome, and passed like a mist into the room. It had the weird look of the boy in the grave.

With a scream Ian threw himself against the door. There was something on the floor moving strangely about. Gabriel! Then he knew. Sometimes when the bird was outside he would open the door himself by fluttering as high as the big oak latch, which extended six inches beyond the door. He would perch upon it, over-balancing it by his weight, and the heavy door would swing inward. Then some one would get up and shut it. Ian began to

laugh a wild, half-mad laugh, and laughed until he was faint and covered with cold sweat.

Some days after this his mind was quieter, and Luke, who was ever watching his opportunity, heard him half-whimpering to Gabriel:

"Ye know I really loved the lad. There was that about him that I liked—ye ken? But he would not let me, he was that quick with me, and ye mind he tried to hit me with the broadaxe. But I wanted to love him, Gabriel."

Then Luke brought forth the Book.

"What's this?"

"The lad told me to show it to you, there—where he burned it with a coal of fire."

Ian sat down with his head in his hands and studied the page. He read before and after. Suddenly his face turned grey. He was in the hand of God. A judge rising from the grave had placed him there. He knew his crime now: he had killed the lad he loved, as, in his heart, he had restrained and killed his love for him. What would his sentence be?

Day after day he paced the shore and knew he would go mad. But he wondered how God would visit him. Gazing sometimes at the water, he thought it would rise and sweep him away; sometimes that the wind would drive him into the wilderness like a dry leaf; sometimes that the earth would open and that he would fall, fall, fall forever.

"Luke, go to Albany and tell the factor that I'm going mad. Bring him back, bring the women, bring everybody, and be as sudden as ye can."

There had been no deep cold as yet, and the ice had barely formed, but Luke obeyed. The danger, and it was great, meant nothing to him.

V

Three days after that Ian, exhausted with frantic watching and overcome with dread, slept in his chair. The fire went low on the hearth. A change of which he was all unconscious was abroad in the world. It was the beginning of one of those periods of intense and awful cold which strangle life and make callous the very earth itself. There was no stir in the air, but it seemed to tighten as from some enormous pressure.

Ian slept. Then, mysteriously, the door opened without a sound. Gabriel fluttered in. But there was no one to shut the door.

Ian slept on. The bird flew upon the chair and nestled close behind him, eager for the warmth of his body. Time passed silently; the cold grew deeper and deeper.

Ian slept on. His breath fell in little regular showers of rime on his beard and breast.

Swiftly a shade of white flew across the back of his bare hands, extended on the arms of his chair. His face grew blanched, white as a leper's. The last of the frost fell lightly down upon his beard. His face, clouded no longer by his breath, shone out upon the dusk with a grim, terrible distinctness. There was he fixed, ice to the core, rigid and unchangeable. Over the Book was his right hand, frozen down upon the words in Romans which had been marked with the coal of fire—"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

IV

Spirit River

I

THESE things happened in the country of the Ojibway, where English and French begin to be merged with that soft language, and where all sounds are corrupted by a sort of savage slurring, particularly proper names,—Frederick becomes Matenack, Thomas becomes Toma, Pays Plat is Peepla and Teresa, Trasey.

Spirit River is a cluster of houses upon a plain, open to the flood of Lake Superior and confined on the north by invincible-looking hills, known to be full of copper and believed to be veined with other things even more precious. The north point of the plain disappears upon the silver thread of a stream that has led many explorers and Indian hunters from the plateau to the long tangle of lakes and rivers rising level upon level to the height of land, and beyond that sinking again, binding with a net of silver the savage and lonely slope of the Hudson Bay watershed.

Upon the lake front, a little removed from the low ground through which the stream flowed, stood the village. The whitewashed houses were arranged in an irregular semi-circle following the contour of a ridge, and to the fishermen beating up for shelter behind the islands they looked like huge quartz boulders flashing in the sun. In the middle of the line stood Petit Bonhomme's house, in nowise more imposing than its neighbours, but wearing a sort of dignity because there Petit Bonhomme lived who was the chief man in the village.

In his day, before the railroad was built, the only access to Spirit River was from the lake, and by that ample highway there came to the little population of half-breed hunters and prospectors its small supply of food and raiment. Those few who went out from it to civilisation took their boats from the long reeds that grew in the shallow water at the mouth of the stream, reeds that were taller than a man and no thicker than a whiplash.

Two hours before dawn Pierrish Picon had poled his boat through the light mist that lay upon the stream, the reeds fingering her sides as she slid by. In the open, under the wan glow of an old moon, deep in the west, and a few burning stars, he had spread his sail and had gone down between the

dark islands, drifting with a breeze so light that it seemed a breath from the moon herself, filling his canvas and lighting it with a pale fire.

Later, on the same morning, the whole population, with the exception of Petit Bonhomme whom no novelty could move, was gathered at the landing, awaiting his return with Father Pascal. Once a year, in the spring, the missionary came to say Mass, baptise the children, and make fast the marriages. Pierrish, for fifteen years, had taken this journey to bring back Father Dugas; but the latter had come for the last time. Setting forth the previous autumn from Spirit River he had disappeared in the gorge between the invincible hills and had met his death somewhere on the Albany. So the novelty that had stirred the village was the advent of a new priest, Father Pascal. No one had ever seen him and Rumour, who but seldom folded her wings at Spirit River, had not given an idea of how he looked, whether he was great of stature like Father Dugas, whether he was young or old. It was held the duty of every one to make a good impression on this occasion and many a pailful of whitewash had gone to adorn the walls of the houses. For a week the air had been heavy with rank smoke blown about from rubbish fires, and now that the great day had arrived the place sparkled like a jewel.

It was indeed a morning of special glory; there was in the world a great freedom that seemed to fall with the sunlight, and ever and anon through the still air a lusty stroke of cool lake-wind would visit the neighbourhood and shake with a large power the brilliance that lay too tranquil and deep upon the habitations. For several days Trasey Joubert, who lived with her grandfather, Petit Bonhomme, and her mother, who was a widow, had laboured to cleanse and adorn the house for the Mass, as there was no church at Spirit River, and so Father Dugas had always set up his little portable altar in the large room of Petit Bonhomme's house. He heard confession in a little room at the Widow Espaniol's; so these two houses were honoured of all. Trasey, early that morning, had gathered what fresh wild flowers she could find for the altar, and had fastened boughs of balsam and poplar, odorous with new life, about the door and windows. She and her mother had gone with the others to the landing leaving Petit Bonhomme at home.

No one had paid any attention to the old man, they were so absorbed in their preparations, but there was no one in the village who was so agitated by the approach of this strange priest as Petit Bonhomme. Now that he was left alone he sat down in the shadow and held his burly head in his powerful hairy hands and thought: "Ah, my gossips, my fine friends, my whisperers—what are you running after now—do you think the new priest-man will be like Father Dugas?—not at all. He was my friend, he knew, he never

bothered me about the things I cannot understand. When all their sweet smoke was burnt and the mumbling over, Father Dugas would come and sit down in the open air in the evening and light his pipe and say: 'Ah, Petit Bonhomme, my friend, you're as young as ever!' Then he would talk over old times—now he will never come back." The old man rocked his body from side to side and growled to himself as he thought it over again and again: "Ah, my whisperers, my gossips, what is all this priest-craft beside a man like Father Dugas! Often he would say to me: 'My friend, Petit Bonhomme, you have forgotten more than these young fellows will ever know'; 'forgotten' yes, that was his joke." The old man drew in his breath sharply and expelled it through his nose: "He meant the sort of things that were really of use, things about the woods and the animals, and the winds and the sky. What could young fellows like Amab Seriza know about such things? Father Dugas meant him of course, and Parto Espaniol; but Parto was different, no one expects a fiddle-player to be a good hunter, and there was that little fool of a kitten, Trasey, who could not make up her mind between them." This grief of his for Father Dugas and the uncertainty he had regarding Father Pascal caused him to reflect upon the very few irritating facts in his life. The thought of the hesitating Trasey who refused to be guided by his preference for Parto Espaniol but wavered between him and the son of his old enemy, Amab Seriza, was connected naturally with these troubles.

While Petit Bonhomme growled to himself in the shadow of his house which was all garnished for the Mass, Pierrish Picon's boat had swept in from behind the islands, with the long swoop of a gull, had come to her anchorage through the forest of bending reeds, and the sailor and Father Pascal had come ashore in the small boat. There was great, though rude, reverence in this little group of people, who in blood and instinct were half Indian, for the man who represented an authority which they did not comprehend fully but which they trusted and obeyed unquestioningly. Yet the strongest feeling was simple curiosity; what would Father Pascal be like? Trasey had conjured up a very definite image of him, a tall figure with a blessed face something like St. Anthony of Padua in the picture which Father Dugas had given her three years ago. The image was not wholly wrong, Father Pascal was tall, his face was beautiful, and he smiled upon the people; but his smile was not warming and his face was long and severely grave. If St. Anthony of Padua had smiled, Trasey was sure that the smile would have been jolly. But Father Pascal looked very young and so different with his smooth long face from Father Dugas, whose strong beard all streaked with grey had been rooted far up his cheeks under his bright little

eyes. Then Trasey's thought was broken as she sank on her knees with her mother and the rest to receive his blessing, a procedure quite different from Father Dugas', who always came ashore laughing and gathering the children and the people about him. Yes, of a certainty Father Pascal was very stern. But Pierrish Picon seemed on quite good terms with him for he came to the front with his quick furtive weasel-like way (his Ojibway nickname was Jingoso—the weasel), shouldering his mast and sail, and led the procession with the priest to Petit Bonhomme's house.

The old man was so deep in his reflections that he did not hear them coming; in truth they came without much noise, not with the clack and hum of the old times. They came around the corner of the house suddenly and Father Pascal and Pierrish Picon saw him holding his great shaggy head and rolling it as if it were filled with pain. He looked up as he heard Pierrish say, with a sort of biting mockery, "This is Petit Bonhomme." Then he rose with dignity and stood before the priest. They faced one another, antipodes as they were. The old man was as uncouth as a bear, almost without facial expression, with strange little tufts of grey hair scattered on his rough face. He was clothed in a pair of mole-skin trousers and a red and black checked shirt; a broad leather belt went around his waist and on his feet he wore a pair of shoe-packs. He was unlearned in any of the world's methods, but in his massive head there was stored a subtle lore that was part instinct and part acquirement, a knowledge of the wilderness that had made him a supreme hunter among a race of hunters. The priest faced him clad in his long soutane, a uniform that placed him in the army of the schoolmen, sophisticated by long study for a special mission, bred under the tradition of the Society of Jesus. He was as incomprehensible to Petit Bonhomme as Petit Bonhomme was to him.

"Ah!" he said, ignorant of the village traditions, seeing nothing remarkable in this ursine-looking old fellow. Stepping forward he made a motion as if he would shake hands. Petit Bonhomme looked vacantly at him thinking not at all of him but rather of his good friend Father Dugas. "Why the old man is blind!" said Father Pascal, with an accent of pity.

Blind! The word had an appalling effect upon the people for whom Petit Bonhomme, though ancient, was one whom time or misfortune could never touch. Blind! They strained forward looking at the old man curiously. He turned and went away in a heavy rage not hearing the priest's explanation about "cataracts" and all the rest of it. He was like a thunder storm that did not know how to vent its power; and by him clinging very close, in great new pity for him, went Trasey, her white gown showing beyond his grim edges like the silver lining to the cloud. She kept silently close to him as he

sat moody and ferocious, and she did not leave him until she knew that she must go to the Mass.

There he sat in the shadow. It was a great grief that his weakness had been thus exposed to the people. Yet, he was not blind. Many things to which he was accustomed he could see distinctly. He could fancy he saw his friend Father Dugas sometimes. But he had had a secret with that friend and now it was profaned, every one knew it. That was the greatest grief. Ah, he remembered well the night that Father Dugas had complained that he was getting deaf. With a sweet tact which Petit Bonhomme could appreciate without comprehending, the conversation had ended with the knowledge that he too had an affliction, that he had little veils growing over both his eyes, that they would shut out the light some day. But he might be of good cheer, for some other day his friend would take him to a man many miles away who had a strange power of healing and in the end he would once more have his sight. Ah, he was bitter; see what had come to Spirit River in exchange for Father Dugas!

II

Late in the afternoon under the shadow of a huge willow that grew against the Widow Espaniol's house sat Father Pascal, a little removed from a group which deferred to him with evident awe; there was the widow, Madame Joubert, Trasey, Parto Espaniol and Pierrish Picon. Father Pascal had dined at the Widow Espaniol's, as it was her hereditary right to furnish the priest's meals, a right that would have been no more disputed than the general over-lordship of Petit Bonhomme. It had been served to him as he sat alone at a table in the chief room of the house. This room was painted with royal blue, its walls hung with a few saints' pictures in startling colours, and its floor covered with reed mats. Trasey had been hand-maid, as Madame Espaniol had no daughter, and her mother had assisted in cooking the dinner.

"My good friend Picon here has told me that you play the violin, M'sieu Parto. Now may I ask to hear you?" Parto, who was by nature a scoffer, had but just appeared before Father Pascal. Some strange power in his blood told him he was very much above his surroundings and he behaved upon all occasions with contempt of them. This visit of the new priest which had set the village agog was a rare opportunity to show his scorn. With an eccentricity that his mother thought was madness, of a devilish kind, he had refused to go to the landing and had hidden in a cedar thicket near the house. With ultimate daring, he had not gone to Mass and had only appeared for dinner because he knew Trasey was there and he felt there would be an

unusual chance to exhibit himself. He loved gorgeous colours and even in so forlorn a place as Spirit River he managed to deck himself in strange raiment that somehow suited his form and face no matter how barbaric and foreign it might be to the wilds of Lake Superior. For an answer he shook his hair which stood upon his head with vigour, as if every thread of it had an individual life and was striving to fly into space, and his dark face flushed with sudden blood.

"Go into the house and get your fiddle, you lanky villain," cried his mother, who had a joyous gift of speech and was ready to turn it upon Parto, but did not wish to humble him too greatly before the stranger. "Go and bring out your silly fiddle that's as lazy as you are. Do you think Father Pascal, here, has come all this way to be refused anything he asks by a peacock of a young dandy,—march!"

Madame Espaniol was very cunning and wordly, but she had a weak nerve of sentiment and this son of hers played upon it unceasingly. Him and his fiddle-playing and his uncanny looks and ways she thought the most wonderful things in the world, so she abused him merely that she might have self-mastery. Parto was hurled into the house by her words. He had prepared a *coup* which would later astonish them all, and a preliminary obedience could not overturn it. When he reappeared with a violin and bow his mother was saying: "He's a great trial, that chap; I wish you would soften him, Father Pascal; what with his laziness, that will do no harder work than play upon that little wooden devil, and his love of fine clothes he will drive me mad some day."

Father Pascal observing by a certain light in Madame Espaniol's blue eyes that she had an infirmity of the tongue, said nothing. "Come, now, whip out a tune," she said to Parto; "you're ready enough to do it when you ought to be at something else."

But Parto did not move. Father Pascal, wishing to gain a little time and woo the artist, held out his hand for the violin. He was a connoisseur and something had caught his eye in the curves of the instrument. Could that tremendous length and that ample form be the adjuncts of a common half-breed fiddle? Its lightness as he took it made him start. The varnish gave him an emotion. He only half heard Madame Espaniol as she clacked away: "It's old rubbish, that's what I say, it would have been better if his father had put it in the stove. You see Parto's great-grandfather, who was a Spanish count, came up the Mississippi looking for silver mines and he brought that fiddle with him over a hundred years ago. What it has been through the good God alone knows. There is no doubt a spirit in it that has kept it alive; sometimes when Parto plays I hear that spirit crying, not a doubt of it. Parto thinks

much more of it than his father did. That good man used it to hide things in; whenever he had any papers very precious he would put them through one of those two holes, and me, I had to get them out again when he wanted them, and that was quite a different matter. Some papers went in there that never came out to my knowledge and the loss of them troubled my good man when he lay a-dying. He was a prospector, Father Pascal, and he knew all about copper and iron, but he is dead and gone. Parto says there is something in there yet; but he is quite an idiot. I pay no more attention to him than to a young cockerel."

From the moment that Father Pascal had taken the violin in his hands he seemed to have forgotten everything, even his desire to hear the virtuoso. As Madame Espaniol talked, he was turning the instrument in his hands using his critical power to decide where it had been made and by whom. It was not a Strad model, of that he was sure; it was too long and the corners were too curt; the line of double purfling gave him pause also; the scroll of the head was too rugged; the "F" holes were bevelled inward. His chief despair was the varnish, lighter than golden brown, as mellow as amber sunset-light. Brescia must have been its birthplace, not Cremona. He could have confirmed his opinion by a glance at the label, but he dallied on the verge of a decision. Then very leisurely he raised the treasure and a long ray of sun trembling with the sage-green under-light of the willow leaves flowed mildly into the little house of sound. There near the centre of the back was the label: GIO. PAOLO. MAGGINI IN BRESCIA. He was right.

Father Pascal involuntarily took a deep breath, with a gasp almost, he had so long been intent, scarcely breathing. Madame Espaniol, who hated silence, broke in with, "Perhaps Father Pascal himself plays the fiddle. There now you think you know it all; it will do you good to have a lesson; prick up your long ears; Father Pascal will teach you a thing or two." The priest only plucked the strings and tuned them; the violin was certainly out of order. Somehow it did not give forth its full tone; the wire on the "G" string was loose and snored horribly. Parto had watched the priest's pantomime with a malevolent interest. He stood with his hands behind his back, the red sleeves of his shirt glowing against his purple waistcoat. A baleful light grew in his large black eyes. The cool glances of the man in his decorous *soutane* as he scrutinised the violin in a way that Parto had never seen any one look at anything before, maddened him and the quiet familiarity with which he handled it, as if he understood its very soul, stirred in Parto a hateful suspicion that he was possessed of some power or understanding above any mere everyday knowledge of a violin.

Father Pascal wiped his brow as he held the instrument upright upon his knee; although he appeared coldly interested his heart was in a tumult—he could scarcely speak.

"Remarkable!" he said half to himself, "Genuine! There is not a doubt of it, a true Maggini." Then he glanced up furtively at Madame Espaniol and swerved his look to include Parto.

"If you ever want to sell it, or if you will do so—now—I will—yes, let me see—I will try to get you—well—two hundred dollars for it." Madame Espaniol's eyes nearly dropped from her head, but she was as cunning as a fox, and in a twinkling controlled herself. Two hundred dollars was much money, but a thing for which two hundred dollars is offered is surely worth much more.

"There now," she said, "you good-for-nothing wolverine, think of that." Pierrish Picon gave a long whistle.

"That proves it," he said knowingly. "I've always heard that a fiddle was worth just what you could get for it." At the same time his mind was eagerly scouring for some hidden advantage for himself in this extraordinary statement. For Pierrish Picon endeavoured to pick up little morsels of gain out of the most remote contingencies.

"Well, I've never thought of selling it," said Madame Espaniol, assuming an air of proprietorship suddenly, "but it's yours, Father Pascal, if you want it. Amab Seriza, who makes very good fiddles out of anything, will make one for love for this young rascal here, but for two hundred dollars—well, that is hardly enough for a poor widow who has only that to sell—nothing more." The priest dandled the violin and drew a long considering breath.

"You must know," he said, "this violin is very much out of order and there must be something inside it—yet let me see—I might—true. But let the young man play upon it; I want to hear the tone." With a free gesture he offered Parto the instrument. No one had paid the slightest attention to him except Trasey; but while the others had been absorbed in the feverish interest of the bargain she had been watching him intently. Often had she fallen under the spell of his playing and she understood that he must loathe this cold commercialism about a thing of the affections. She saw the passions of his heart change his face. But now, she thought, his opportunity had come for a triumph; any two people in the world could haggle over a fiddle, but not one in many thousands could play upon it; and if he would but once play, who would hear and then dare to deprive him of his violin?

Parto suddenly crushed down the hate in his eyes and came forward with a sort of impudence, with the air of a dandy who is about to condescend. But the very moment his fingers felt the smooth, cool wood of the fiddle his whole manner changed. Silently, vindictively he shrank together and drew away to his full height insolently, cursing, as it were, with an attitude. Then, swiftly, as the group stood staring, he seemed to drift away, throwing one glance over his shoulder, a glance of hatred and of triumph. Before they knew it, even, he was gone and the violin!

III

After the days of his mission were past Father Pascal departed, but he left the little hamlet of Spirit River changed in a way that he had not designed. For six of his charges new feelings had sprung up from seed sown unwittingly by him. Three days after he left Parto appeared, first hanging about the house like a half-wild thing until he was assured of the sort of welcome he might receive. His violin was not with him. Madame Espaniol paid no attention to him and treated him with contemptuous silence, whereupon he resumed his impudent air and took his place in the house as usual. Then she opened upon him gradually the batteries of her wrath. "Good-for-nothing! where is the violin then, have you buried it? Pierrish says damp earth is bad for fiddles. What a wicked-tempered wolf you were to treat Father Pascal that way! How you showed your teeth!—well, now, will you dig it up—Pierrish says what with the damp earth, or the dew or the rain if you haven't buried it, it won't be worth a mink-skin." But it was like talking to the wind. Parto was dumb, awaiting an assurance that he would not himself ask for, though all the fiddles in Christendom should in the meantime perish.

Trasey's faith in Parto, as one far above ordinary mortals, had been shaken by his behaviour to Father Pascal, who had certainly done him no wrong. Whenever she thought of the scene, and it was often, she saw him in his gay raiment with his floating hair, turning away with a flash of his canine tooth as she had once seen a trapped wolf. Her mother, who thought Parto possessed of an evil spirit, if not actually crazy, did not fail to bring before her his monstrous conduct and contrast it with what Amab Seriza would have done under like circumstances.

"What will you have, you can't have everything. There, suppose Amab could scamper up and down a fiddle like a red-squirrel on the trunk of a birch tree, what then? Would he insult a good priest who only told him he had something that was worth money? No, Amab would have struck a bargain—ah, ha! well, then—before the dollars were many years older he

would have turned them into money enough to buy fiddles for a King's wedding. Well!" Trasey could draw the contrast for herself without importing her mother's commercial reasonings, and it was unfavourable to Parto. The thought of Amab Seriza was in this hour of disquiet a great refuge for her, though her mother knew it not. He was in all things a sort of sturdy giant, gusty of speech, of tremendous strength, wearing the mantle of Petit Bonhomme in wood-craft and kindred lore, showing delicacy in one thing only, his love for her.

Where was he now? If she did not know, it was her own fault. She was sure though, whether he was trapping or prospecting, he was working with the hope of her in his heart, and in contrast to that hero in useful action, the dangling figure of Parto showed somewhat thin. She had had such perceptions before which a few clear tones of the violin had always seemed to weaken. But to her mortification at Parto's conduct was added the first real sorrow of Trasey's life, the fact that Petit Bonhomme was growing blind. Every one knew it now, and she was aware that the proud and violent old man, who could conceal and bear without complaint any pain, could not brook the exposure of his infirmity. Pity for him as he sat alone, speaking to no one, rolling his shaggy head, and growling to himself, filled her eyes with tears. She tried to comfort him by gentle arts without words, for there was fear of him mingled with her tenderness, the dread that comes from a half perception that the appeal of love is made to one who cannot understand.

Petit Bonhomme, however, understood many things without reasoning about them. He heard his daughter's chatter and noticed Trasey's mute attentions, but they were all involved by his own wounded pride, in a general condemnation of Father Pascal and Amab Seriza.

"You see, you chatterers, I hear you, into what a state this new priest-man has put us all with his talk. Parto has hidden his violin, we shall have no more music; Pierrish comes sneaking about here like a weasel—my crazy daughter talks of nothing but Amab—and even the little children come and look at me and mock me, 'That's old Petit Bonhomme, he's no good—he's growing blind.' Now we're all at war. If anything went wrong when Father Dugas was here he would take out his pipe and say, 'Well, well, Petit Bonhomme, let us smoke a pipe of peace!'"

Pierrish Picon certainly came much oftener to Petit Bonhomme's than there was any necessity for, and showed greater anxiety about the Maggini than he should have done, that affair being no business of his. But he had a great mind for values and so overcame the half-breed dislike of meddling in other people's affairs sufficiently to suggest that it was Trasey's duty to urge Parto to restore the violin.

"Don't you mix yourself in that business," said her mother shrewdly. "You have quite enough to do at home."

"That is true, Pierrish," said Trasey, speaking for herself, as she did not wish to ask any favours of Parto. "Besides, it is only necessary for Madame Espaniol to promise that she will not sell the violin."

Whereupon Pierrish made use of the maid's intention. Ere long, without any parade, the violin reinhabited its box one day, and Pierrish was free to go about his employment of fishing, which he had greatly neglected. But Parto would not play upon it. Whenever he thought of doing so the intolerable flame that represented his hatred of Father Pascal would burn within his breast. For this abstinence his mother now blamed him as freely as she before did for his intemperance.

"Ah, you rascal!" she would cry, "the only thing you can do, you won't; it may have been bad enough to have you scraping like a saw-filer all day, but it's worse to have you glaring about doing nothing at all, looking as savage as a lynx in a mink-trap!" This abuse only intensified Parto's stubbornness; he used to look at the violin once a day at least, and sometimes take it from the box, but he grew to neglect it altogether and for a week or more never went near it.

One evening Trasey had accompanied her mother on a visit to Madame Espaniol, and she and Parto, alone together for the first time since the visit of Father Pascal, sat in front of the house in the moonlight. Before them was the lake giving motion only to the reeds that crossed the silver light-shaft in the water with sharp lines of black and faded on either side into flexible masses of shadow that swayed and rocked with a chafing monotone. From the immense brilliant body of water no breeze came, but a strong sense of coolness. Over them hung the dark mass of the willow. If there were sounds in the air they were such as lead the soul to remote and vaster areas of silence. Under these tranquil influences their conversation had stopped, when Trasey, half in fear that Parto should again establish a kingdom in her heart, and yet half in fear that she might not be conquered in the old way, said quickly, "Well, then, Parto, will you not play again a little?" He only wanted a sufficient excuse, and this night Trasey's voice was enough. He went into the house without a word. Suddenly, when nothing was expected, came an eldritch cry, half moan, half shriek. "It's gone—gone—gone! Liars all, she's broken her promise." Trasey ran into the house to see Parto wringing his hands and leaping about like a mad thing. Hurriedly two more candles were lighted and the three women searched the house diligently and minutely as for a lost piece of silver. But the violin was not. Then Madame Espaniol, dissolved by the wildness of her son's grief and trembling so she

could hardly speak, sank down into a chair. “By the breast of the Blessed Virgin, Parto, lamb of my heart, I know nothing of it—Parto stand still—hear me—Madame Joubert, Trasey— He’s gone, and I am as innocent as one of the blessed saints.”

Parto, beside himself with rage and grief went yelling into the moonlight, “Liars all, every one, oh! oh! oh!” His sudden lamentation disturbed the village dogs, who began with all their power to complain dismally, and away where the Spirit River enters the dark hills, a wolf, hearing afar the ululations, sat upon his haunches and howled to the wilderness.

IV

It was in the earliest dawn of a July morning that Amab Seriza came home. He had for two days slipped down from level to level of Spirit River and had reached the last portage at sundown. Upon the next morning he saw the sleeping village under a light soft enough to have been reflected from the sheen of a dove’s wing. A mist lay close upon the face of the river, and when he rose above it, as he climbed the bank, he saw the village surprised by the first rush of the morning. It was as still as sleep; laved with the streams of rest that had flowed with the night. There was his own house silently welcoming him, and Petit Bonhomme’s, where he knew Trasey lay asleep, and the Widow Espaniol’s under the willow, grey with dew. Beyond it all, but not so very far away it seemed, the day streamed faintly up to the under side of a long arch of diaphanous cloud that floated there all silver and pink like a vast salmon, and higher still to the morning star.

Pierrish Picon was the first to be astir that morning. He intended to draw his nets and return before the village was alive for the day, but his first glance showed him a long canoe, its sides yet glistening with wet, against the east wall of the house. He knew that Amab had come home. Whereupon he altered his plans and began to bustle about his house and garden with a nervous energy. Before long his insatiable curiosity could not remain unsatisfied and he went down the path to Seriza’s. He arrived just in time to see Amab put back into a deerskin bag what looked to the quick eyes of Pierrish like some fine specimens of copper ore.

“Good morning, Amab.”

“Good day to you, Picon.”

“What luck did you have?”

“My own,” said Amab, shortly, pulling the neck of the bag together by its thongs and hanging it upon a peg.

"Pretty fine, I should say," remarked Pierrish. "You will be going down to the Sault now to have them assayed, perhaps. You can go with me; I was thinking of taking the boat down next week."

Amab looked him up and down without a word, but Picon, not at all abashed by the silence, and eager to impart all the gossip of the hamlet, rushed upon the incidents of Father Pascal's visit and all that had happened since. He got nothing but a nod and a grunt from Amab, who went to and fro hanging his blankets in the air and setting his house to rights. Then Picon took himself off to enjoy twice upon the same day the dearest pleasure of a gossip—to tell the first news that Amab Seriza had come back.

From Petit Bonhomme's house you could only see one corner of Amab's in the distance; but Trasey, as she went about her work, caught two glimpses of her lover who on account of the enmity of Petit Bonhomme would not come to the house. Upon these two occasions she saw that his face was averted, and that kept her heart beating slowly, while her mother chattered all day about nothing but Amab and his prowess. Petit Bonhomme went far beyond the sound of it and sat in the shadow with a cloud of flies about his head. Now his cup of bitterness had been filled. Amab, the son of his old enemy Seriza, would know that he was growing blind and would mock at him like the rest of them.

Amab was busy about his house all day and paid no attention to his neighbours; but in the first dusk he took from his chest a bag made of blue drugget with a large "S" embroidered upon it in red wool, and went over to Madame Espaniol's. By the strangest of chances Trasey and her mother were there seated with Madame Espaniol and Parto under the willow.

"Well, Amab!" cried Madame Espaniol, with her hands in the air, her eyes full of trouble, "think of the goings-on there have been since you have left us! The first thing stolen in the village since that thief Ogema-gah-bow went off with the bear-trap!" Amab smiled down from his great height upon the company and let his glance linger tenderly upon Trasey, whose eyes were fluttering upwards as far as his shoulder.

"Who would steal it? Now? Answer me that, Amab Seriza; and I hear every day that I—I—stole it. Ah, but this little darling of mine has a bitter heart. Well! We will see—a fox's heart!"

"You promised," said Parto hollowly, from the corner, where his eyes glowed in his dark face like coals on a birch brand. "You broke your promise!"

"There, you hear him—as if I could promise for the rest of the world—what an unreasonable young crow it is—not eating anything, and moping

after a wooden box and four gut strings—bah!"

"Well, Madame Espaniol, I am sorry—but here now—we will do the best we can—see, I've brought Parto my own fiddle—there—he may have it." Amab took the bag from under his arm.

"There—I've always said his heart was the best—but what's the good of that, children," cried Madame Espaniol, "when Father Pascal said the other was worth two hundred dollars?"

"Well," said Amab, "I made this myself, the back out of a raisin-box and the belly out of a tea-chest—but we've had many a good dance to it—eh, Madame Joubert? I'm not giving you the bag." He said this with a glance at Trasey, who mantled with blushes. Every one could see that the bag was lined with the red and black flannel from which Petit Bonhomme's shirts were made.

"I don't want your old raisin-box," said Parto, sullenly, as he went slowly and dejectedly out of sight around the corner of the house. Madame Espaniol threw up her hands; "There he goes—the ungrateful scamp—possessed of a devil, I say."

They sat there under the willow until all its shadow was drawn up to nest in its leaves. Amab said very little, and seemed to be absorbed in watching a storm-cloud that strode out from land and walked upon the lake; but he was listening intently to everything the women said. When he parted from Trasey and her mother near their house, Trasey lingered for a moment. Madame went on a little way discreetly.

"I want to ask you to do something for me, Amab," she said, dropping her head as if he could see her eyes in the dark.

"What is that?"

"I want you to get Parto's violin for him—I want you to find it and bring it back to him."

"I shall try—perhaps to-night—to-morrow morning look for a smoke—that will mean that I have it— Will you come and get it then? What am I to have in return for it?" he queried, and Trasey knew the reward he expected; but she went away without answering him.

"Well, what did you say to him?" inquired Madame Joubert, eagerly.

"I asked him to find Parto's violin."

"Mon Dieu! Anything but that—a beautiful thing to ask— Now what will he think? To set him to work for that gad-fly! Did you thank him for not giving away the fiddle bag! No—not a bit of it. But this—Amab, bah!"

"Here they come, the chatterers," said Petit Bonhomme to himself as he sat looking up into the dark sky, "quarrelling about Amab. Now you see where we are," he groaned, "nothing but fire and smoke!"

Amab Seriza had returned very well pleased with the results of his trip; every success he had seemed to bring him nearer to Trasey. He had planned to rest a day or two and then go on to the Sault with his specimens; but he found himself plunged at once into the distress and anxiety of his friends. Now he could not mistake the purpose of Trasey in trusting him with this mission; and as he lit his candle he determined to carry it out. He placed the precious instrument, which Parto had so scorned, back in its chest, then he sat down and lit his pipe. He smoked in the silence. Of a sudden a long pervasive sigh arose in the air and dwelt about the house. Amab went to the door; the night had grown intensely dark; he could hear the lake heave against the land. There will be wind he said to himself and, working in the gloom, he secured his canoe. Then he went into the house and without making any preparations for bed, he blew out his candle. A few moments later he was out in the night moving like a shadow.

From a distance the house of Pierrish was clothed in darkness, but, as Amab approached he discerned the presence of light hovering about the window. As he came nearer, and knelt upon the bank of clay with which the house was surrounded, he saw that the faint light came through the tiny holes in some fabric which had been hung before the window. Pierrish had the habit of smoking in bed, and through the tiny holes burned in his blanket by sparks from his pipe the light from his candle shone out into the vast night. The largest of the holes gave Amab a view of Pierrish and the little pool of light which the candle threw upon the table. He was absorbed in some task, safe, as he thought from espionage; against all Spirit River he had bolted the door and hung a blanket over the window.

Without a moment's hesitation, Amab went to the door. Stiffening his arms against it, he plunged forward; the bolt gave with a crash, and before him was—darkness. Pierrish had blown out the candle. He sat there quivering. When he heard Amab's voice, "Light it!" he groped tremblingly for the tinder box. It took him several minutes to make a light and Amab waited without a word. He strode forward and stood over the cringing figure. There was the Maggini in pieces. The belly, the bridge and tail piece, the strings, and the rest of the body lay strewn upon the table. Before Pierrish were two pieces of paper, which he had fitted together and which he had been studying intently.

"What is this devil's work you've been up to?" asked Amab. "You thief!" he said very quietly, "when you came to me this morning with your

tattle 'who stole Parto's violin, and where can it be,' I found out all I wanted to know. You stole the fiddle. Why couldn't you leave it alone?" He struck the flat of his hand on Pierrish's shoulder. The shock awakened all the venom in the thief.

"What business is that of yours?" he said behind his teeth.

"Mine it is, for I make it mine," said Amab. With a sudden stroke of his foot he broke one of the legs of the chair and Pierrish sprawled on the floor. "Now get up and speak truth."

"I won't," said Pierrish, livid with rage.

"Speak out, and the truth," said Amab, picking him up, shaking him, and throwing him upon his feet.

"I won't."

"To-morrow do you know what I shall do with you? I'll take you down to the Sault and for a year you'll never draw a net, or swallow anything but bread and water. Speak truth now. What is this paper?" Pierrish, afraid in his very soul of Amab, tottered near the table and laid his finger upon one piece of paper.

"That I've had for years," he said. "One day I found it on the floor in old Espaniol's house. I knew it was torn from a chart he had made of a copper vein, but I could never find the other part. Then I heard Madame Espaniol say to Father Pascal that the loss of some paper troubled old Espaniol—well—and that he used to hide them in the fiddle—well—I had one of his papers; and I heard Father Pascal say, 'there is something in the fiddle'—so I said why is it not the other part of the paper in the fiddle? So I took it. There—that's the truth. But I could find nothing—and when you came back you looked through me and I said—well, I won't have this fiddle long—so to-night I lifted the top with a chisel. There was the other part of the paper; it must have been stuck down with a piece of pine gum. That's the truth."

"Very well," said Amab, gathering the papers and putting them within the bosom of his shirt. "The truth you say! Now I tell you the truth. Never again meddle with anybody's business but your own. Catch fish. If you ever speak to any one about this, I'll take you in your own boat and make you sail it yourself right over your fishing grounds. I'll tie you up in your nets, sinkers and all, and throw you in. You'll catch fish then if you won't mind your business, and do it in the right way."

Amab took the debris of the fiddle and strode to the door. The wind was rising and came in from the lake with a gusty flourish. In the pauses, from every rocky inlet, drifted the sound of clashing water. Until his candle guttered and went out, Amab sat with his head in his hands gazing at

nothing, and not even hearing the wind that plunged by like a troop of horses. Beside him was heaped the Maggini, and before him was the divided chart. Until dawn he lay in his bunk hearing not the wind that without burden of rain or thunder tore by like a troop of wild horses.

V

But with sunrise the wind lulled. Very early Trasey looked for the signal, but Amab had been before her and a little column of smoke rose against the dark cedars and disappeared in the golden air. Impulsively and with glad heart, she went down the path. Amab met her half-way.

"Yes," he said, "I've got it." But there was a strange grave look in his eyes.

"Parto will be so glad!—and I am glad too." Trasey hesitated. "No one could have got it back except yourself."

"Pierrish had it."

"Pierrish! and he cannot play the fiddle at all!"

"No, and no one else can play this one now—he has broken it."

"Broken it!"

"Yes, he wanted to get inside it; he did not care what happened to it. He wanted to get something out of it that he thought was there. He got it." They had walked past Amab's house down a rocky path between cedars which led to the lake. Soon they came upon the shore where the water was restless in the calm morning. "That's a little worse for me than the broken fiddle—what he found—some old paper of Espaniol's. When I was away this time I found the greatest vein of copper in the world—that was to be for us—for you and me, Trasey, if—well, you know. But Pierrish, the thief, turns this paper out of the violin and then I know that old Espaniol, the cunning old Espaniol, discovered it years before I did. This paper was a chart that he had made. I know it from the chart." Trasey hardly breathed.

"So, Amab, the copper is not yours."

"Do you think so too?" he asked.

"Madame Espaniol's and Parto's. But some people would have burned up the paper, wouldn't they, Amab?"

"I have it yet," he said.

"Well, I think then you had better give it to her; and—and—tell her everything."

"As you say—if you will come with me."

They went back to his house and while he went in for the fiddle and the papers Trasey waited. She saw Petit Bonhomme come into the sunlight and feel along the wall like a blind man. Her heart was very heavy. But she tried to clear her eyes of trouble as Amab came toward her with the pieces of Parto's violin in the bag she had made for his own. Together and silently they went toward Madame Espaniol's. In a sheltered spot in the path Trasey very gently took his hand. "Don't you think, Amab—that you could—find more copper—for us?" Love was very simple at Spirit River.

Madame Espaniol and Parto were both before the house. The widow was preparing to dye some reeds for her mats. Parto was lazily feeding the fire under the dye-kettle.

"Good morning, children, you see we are busy in this quarter of the world. Look how hard my lanky good-for-nothing is working! Since he lost his fiddle he is as busy as a beaver."

"I've brought it back," said Amab. "Pierrish had it." Madame Espaniol threw up her hands. The blood came rushing into Parto's face.

"The little tame fisher-devil! Jingoso the weasel, sure enough!" exclaimed Madame.

"But I must tell you he had broken it." Silently Parto took the fragments of his darling from the bag and held them in his arms. He sat down upon the platform in front of the house and great tears of anguish came into his eyes.

"These papers belong to you, Madame Espaniol. They were what Pierrish broke the fiddle to get. I thought I was very lucky to find a good copper vein this summer—well, these papers show that Espaniol knew it before I did." Madame Espaniol drew in her breath with a long sound as if she was tasting something very delicious.

"Well, Mon Dieu! he was a cunning one, Espaniol. You see—how bothered he was about these papers! A clever little devil that Pierrish. Well, you see, children—what difference does it make about the fiddle. Amab, you are a very good chap, but you see this has happened to many a better man than you, and of course you couldn't expect anything when Espaniol discovered the copper himself. Well, you scamp, have you thanked Amab for finding your fiddle? You ungrateful porcupine!" Madame Espaniol eagerly scanned the chart, holding the pieces of paper together in one hand. No one was looking at Parto, who had quietly placed the Maggini at his side. The baleful look with which he had regarded Father Pascal had come again into his eyes. He took three swift steps and snatched the papers out of his mother's hand.

"That's the way I thank him," he said in a mocking quiet tone: "I blame you for my broken fiddle—where is your copper mine now?" In a second, before any one could intervene, the papers were blazing in the fire under the dye-kettle. Madame Espaniol tottered back and sat down, tremblingly, wringing her hands.

"Parto! vein of my heart—how could you—there I told you children he was a bitter one." Trasey tried to comfort her. "Well, Amab—there—you know where the copper is and I'll share it with you—I was never grasping—no one can say that."

"Well, I will do what is fair," said Amab, looking at Trasey with a smile.

"But I'll tell you, Amab—you'll have to be careful—these lawyers are regular little devils—and they draw papers for us simple people and in the end only the little fish get into our nets. You want to get an option first—see—I have a paper with an option that Espaniol used. Oh, he was a cunning one—a regular bear-trap—once get them into that and they won't get out in a hurry."

Trasey and Amab as they returned waited a little while in the edge of the cedars. He put his arm about her and held one of her hands; with the other she smoothed his forehead and put back the hair from it. Love was very sweet at Spirit River.

VI

The winter was long and desperately cold. The little hamlet lay without shelter upon the iron shore of the lake, iron edged with ice, and no one came from or went to the great world. There was no token from Amab who was out there somewhere, doing his bravest and best to circumvent those who wanted to take from him what he had upon their own terms. Trasey waited as those wait who have great desire but no hope of hearing from their loves for weeks or months. She guarded and watched over Petit Bonhomme, determined to keep him from one course by which he endeavoured to show to the people of Spirit River that he was yet a giant as of old. By one other more innocent thing he showed them that his cunning had not departed, that he could yet read the face of the heavens. Upon the coldest night of the winter he would scoop a hole in the snow and, wrapped in his rabbit-skin robes, would sleep all night under the frozen stars. Again, when spring was to be expected, he would build a fire before his door, and every one then knew, by the prophetic flames, that spring was come.

But Trasey knew nothing about the signs of the heavens, and when she felt most secure in the mildness of the evening she awoke to hear the ice

splitting upon the lake, yelling as if in pain, and the long and bitter echo from the hills; awoke to feel the frost forcing the world together and to see a little black heap in the snow which told her that out in the cold, that made even the earth cry out as if tortured, lay Petit Bonhomme rolled up in his rabbit-skin robes.

Very tardily spring approached Spirit River. The snow went and Petit Bonhomme, working very painfully, collected wood for his spring fire. But it seemed as if the moment would never arrive when he might put flame to it. At length came Amab and with him spring for Trasey. To a powerful and wealthy company he had given the option as dictated by Madame Espaniol. "There, now, children," she cried, "we've got them in the bear-trap—before long, hear me, you good-for-nothing Parto, we'll have money enough to make the king of the fiddlers glue the top on your old violin."

And now Trasey must tell Petit Bonhomme the good news. She found him seated on a log by the heap of fuel he had slowly collected for his spring fire, the spring that was so long delayed. He was crouched together in the cold air from the hills. She laid her hand on his shoulder and he knew that she was there. She said simply, but with many pauses: "Grandfather, I am going to marry Amab—I am very, very happy—you know he has discovered a great deal of copper. Now we shall have everything we want—Parto is to have his fiddle mended—and, grandfather, you are to have your eyes cleared—you will be young again and see everything as you once did. Will you not speak to me—will you not be glad with the rest of us?"

Petit Bonhomme had the terrible primeval gift of silence; and the answer of silence has a greater power of defeat for tender hearts than the most violent words. Trasey trembled, spake no further, and went slowly away.

There sat Petit Bonhomme in smouldering rage, thinking of hated things, his age, his growing blindness, the success of his enemies. More poignant than anything else was the fear that he might be aided by his foe, that he might receive his sight again by the hand of a Seriza. Then in bitter mood he recalled the prowess of his youth; he summoned his strength that had departed, his cunning that had grown dim from long disuse. Constantly was his thought with Father Dugas, with that friend of his youth whose word was comfort as well as law to him. He sighed, rolled his head heavily and let it sink down upon his breast. How desolate is old age, he groaned as he thought, when all is gone that one values most.

Suddenly his strength seemed to rush back upon him from the fountains of youth and with it an access of savagery. He sprang to his feet and shook himself. Then his cunning mastered him. If he was to carry to a conclusion the plan that had just entered his mind, he must be wary. He sat down again

and plotted, and as he thought, the beauty and consistency of his plan grew every moment more plain. Amab Seriza, the son of his old enemy, the man who had escaped him by dying before Petit Bonhomme's revenge had visited him! Well, revenge keeps warm a long time, my chatterers! When he knew that he had been left alone by the absence of all sounds, for his hearing was the hearing of a lynx, he went into the house and brought something out which he hid in a dense cedar bush near the path. It seemed to him that he had only a few moments to wait before Madame Joubert and Trasey returned and were settled for the night. Then he rose from his bunk and went out into the gloom. It was absolutely dark, the air was still and shrewd, and the great lake seemed to breathe a coldness upon the land. Nowhere was any hint of spring.

Petit Bonhomme moved with eagerness and precision; he had the light impulsive step of a youth. He never faltered but he went noiselessly and all his instinct for sounds and scents were as keen as those of a hunting wolf. For a moment he paused at the cedar bush and then went down the path toward Seriza's house. "Ah, my gossips, my railers, I hear you say, 'Petit Bonhomme, he's no good, he's blind'; well, now, let us be young again—to-morrow every one will say, 'Well, Petit Bonhomme did just as he used to do when he was young; he is young again.'"

As he prowled through the night he showed no sign of blindness; there was never an error in his footsteps. When he came to Amab's house he took a short, happy breath. There was a light in the window. It had always been thus, luck had ever been upon his side. He approached the window stealthily; there was given to the fragment of vision that was left him a view of Amab, seated by his table. Excellent! Now what he had to do he could do without calling him out as he had planned. Amab was bending over as if he were reading. Petit Bonhomme drew up what he had so carefully carried and searched in his pocket for something; then he glanced again at Amab through the window.

Suddenly he let his burden fall and all his body stiffened. There had supervened between himself and Amab the shape of Father Dugas, but with greater distinctness, the distinctness of life and of perfect eyesight. There was the long grizzled beard, the rosy points of his cheeks showing above the hair, the little vivacious eyes; there was the rusty old *soutane* and the worn girdle with the crucifix. He was even stirring! Gently and steadily the hand went back toward the seam where the pocket was. That gesture! The lips moved! What was he saying? Petit Bonhomme stood transfixed. Then understanding came to him. Father Dugas was feeling for his pipe. He was saying, "Well, well, Petit Bonhomme, come, let us smoke a pipe of peace!"

The old man shut his eyes and cowered down, down to the very earth. Father Dugas's word was law for him. He crept back along the path slowly in great darkness of mind and body, crept back toward his own house. But as he crawled upon the earth he received a sign from the obscure heavens. Voices fell faintly down, great reedy voices, softened by their height in the air. He listened to them, as he had so often done before, with hope in his heart; now even in despair would he accept the presage. He bent over the heap of dry logs which he had collected with such great pain, and after a rain of golden sparks from flint and steel, rose the heavy smoke of his birch-bark. Soon the fire leaped up and while all Spirit River slept, Petit Bonhomme sat there, warmed by the glow, and, lighted by the radiance of his fire, and thinking much of his youth and the friend of his youth, let his head hang down upon his breast.

In the morning Amab found under his window Petit Bonhomme's long sinister-looking rifle, and wondered.

Ah, life is sweet in the springtime! The lake lay changing hues like a fire-hearted opal, a green flush played over the reeds, the breeze rose in long balmy floods and fell leaving a deeper sunshine. All up the valley there was something changing the trees. Spring had come to Spirit River.

V

Expiation

I

ABOVE the level ground upon which the buildings of the Missanabie Post are erected there rises a point of rock looking westward over the lake. At its foot lies a pool of water, black from its great depth, covered sometimes with gleams of dead colour from glorious sunsets, and sometimes with the fragile streaks of dawn that fly timidly through the mists.

From this point of rock an observer can see the lake to its farthest shores, can note the contour of its islands, and can hear the dulcet sound of all its small waves ringing like the tones of innumerable lute-players sounding their fairy music. The peculiarity of this place is its aloofness; for with the wide expanse before and the clear depth of the water below, it seems far removed from the mean huddle of buildings which is the metropolis of those silent environs of forest. Yet it is distant but the cast of a stone, and from the stockade any person may be seen upon the observation-point, standing or sitting.

The sight of a figure there during the last ten years had become so common that it attracted no attention from Indians or half-breeds, habitués of the post. It seemed part of the landscape, a continuation of the rock itself, rather than a human figure outlined against the sky. But no mass of rocks could express the strength of human feeling as that form expressed it. Something deeper than any simple emotion seemed to emanate from the man's figure.

Hardly any one noticed when he went there or when he came away. Sometimes a trader from beyond, some one who had heard of the man in his days of power, would stroll by in vulgar curiosity, thinking to hail him. The stranger had, perchance, just bought tobacco of him in the store; why should he not converse with him in the open air? But the inquisitive one passed by without a word. The figure sat there with an inscrutable air, unconsciously expressing itself with such intensity that none dared profane the sacredness of such silence. The mere elements of clothing which he wore, encompassing him, ample and rude, seemed to radiate the feeling, but particularly the fillet formed of three mink-skins, roughly sewn together, which he ever wore about his brow.

Forbes Macrimmon had been the chief trader at Missanabie, and a mighty man. The post was in the centre of a valuable hunting-ground, and three hundred Indians traded there. All went well until opposition came. There are some men who are resourceful only in adversity; there are others in whom rivalry breeds irritation and develops incompetency. Macrimmon was of the latter class. When Pierre Loudet, of the French Company—this was in the year 1808—appeared before his fort, laid peaceful siege to it, and endeavoured to undermine its trade, he was at his wits' end. Forbes was a Highlandman, proud of everything that went to make up the individual Macrimmon—his strength, his stature, his shrewdness in a trade, his ancestry, his power of drinking much rum, his quick temper, his politeness. His pride led him to say many foolish things.

"I'm not afraid of man, God, or devil," he would say. "Nothing touches me, love nor hate nor greed, and I can give up the thing that most men cherish as an Indian gives up an old pack-strap. I never sucked a drop of my mother's milk, and neither woman nor man has any control over me."

Thus he philosophised, knowing not at all what manner of man he was; but when the time was ripe God taught him.

Pierre Loudet was polished as a dancing-floor, but was any man to best a Macrimmon in politeness? They exchanged visits, drank quarts of each other's rum, and fought each other for the trade. The contest made Macrimmon anxious, irritable, and despondent, and he imagined that he was losing ground.

His chief hope lay in his servant, Daniel Wascowin. Daniel was almost a pure Indian, but there was a little white blood in him. He was a great hunter, who always took thrice as many skins as any one else, and his prowess gave him a position of control over the other Indians. As long as the Scotsman was sure of Daniel, the balance of trade was certain to be in his favour; and Daniel was firm in his allegiance. He thought that Macrimmon was the greatest of all earthly powers. His knowledge of heavenly powers was but dim and fitful, and of other earthly powers he knew nothing. Macrimmon might be a hard master, sudden, fierce, and inexplicable; but he was to be obeyed, he could do no wrong.

Loudet tried to corrupt Daniel, but he might as well have tried to gain an hour of May sunlight on a December day. He saw that until the power of Macrimmon's faithful henchman was humbled he would have no great success in trade at Missanabie.

Pierre Loudet was a cunning fellow. One evening, when Macrimmon had accepted his hospitality, and they were deep in the French Company's rum, he noticed on the table a little tin pail with a copper bottom, such as the

Indians use to make a drawing of tea. Now, he knew that his rival had none of these pails to sell, but an inferior sort, and that those with the copper bottoms were much esteemed by the Indians. As soon as Loudet saw that his guest's eye had caught the pail he began to praise Daniel.

"A fine fellow, that Wascowin!"

"Yes, as faithful as a dog," answered Macrimmon.

"Yes, he is a faithful fellow," said Loudet with an odd inflection; and saying the word, he poured a little water from the pail on the table.

"You have an odd way of speaking, Mr. Loudet," said Macrimmon, angry in a moment.

"Oh, no offence intended," said the Frenchman smoothly. "I was just saying your man was a good man—a very faithful man." But he gave his words such a singsong that Macrimmon did not like the tune.

"I wouldn't stand that from any man whose rum I was not drinking!" cried the trader, dashing down his pannikin, and with that he flared up and walked out of the house in a mighty rage.

The Frenchman had done a very simple thing, but it was full subtle. The fact of his having one of the Hudson's Bay Company's pails, and his peculiar look or accent in praising the faithful Daniel, worked down through Macrimmon's spirit like a drop of acid on a wound.

Next day the trader was very quiet, and very terrible in his quiet. He was watching an opportunity to prove his servant. Too proud, too irritable—in other words, too weak—to be patient, the slightest indication of guilt would serve his purpose. When his passion broke loose he promised himself that he would give them all a fine lesson. Toward evening, when he and Daniel Wascowin were alone in the store, he suddenly roared out:

"What have ye been doing with all the tea-pails?"

The question was so loud and violent that Daniel started. He looked up to where the pails hung, near the ceiling.

"They're not all there," he said slowly.

"No, they're not all there!"

"I haven't been selling any!" continued Daniel, thinking out loud, and wondering who could have taken them; he hardly thought of any one having stolen them.

Macrimmon watched his servant, his eyes furious and devouring. Daniel had never seen him so angry, and he quailed before him. Macrimmon saw guilt where there was only surprise. His anger was as hasty as fire in grass.

He leaped upon the Indian as a lion leaps on a gazelle, caught him by the throat, and forced him back against the wall.

"I'll give you a lesson, you red dog, you and all your red whelps. The like o' you in league with that frog-eater—to steal the good tea-pails, and then to lie about it! There was the lie in your eyes." As he pressed Daniel against the wall with his left hand, he whipped out his double-barrelled pistol with the right. "Do you hear this?" he raged. "It'll be the last thing ye hear, and ye'll remember it. Get out of this quick, and when ye come back let it be for a better reason than because ye think I can't get on without ye. There's a charge for each side of your head!"

"Bang!" went the pistol at Daniel's left ear, and the bullet crashed into the wall. "Bang!" went the pistol at his right ear, and the bullet crashed into the wall. Macrimmon drove the hot muzzle against the Indian's forehead.

"Let me set eyes on ye to-morrow, and I'll put a ball *there*!"

Dashing down the pistol, he caught Daniel and cast him through the door into the yard. The Indians, excited by the shots, came curiously forward by ones and twos. Daniel's wife, crossing the yard with a pail of water, saw him trying to get to his feet, but reeling and groping, as if he were stricken with a mastering illness. Blood ran from his ears; his face was scorched and blackened by flame and powder. Dropping her pail with a cry, she half carried, half led him away to his wigwam.

A little later, when the evening mist had begun to gather in the long reeds by the shore, a canoe crept through it, gliding in silence, an intensified shadow within the shadow. Then nothing was there but a ripple in the water under the mist.

The bark had been stripped from Daniel's wigwam; the stars looked through the poles. He was obedient. He had departed.

II

From that time forward things went very badly with Macrimmon. His anger had disappeared, though suspicions of Daniel were still in his thoughts; but Daniel was gone, and a calmer state of mind would not serve to call him back. Without Daniel he was nothing. There had been no one else to trust, and now he must do everything, watch everybody, be everywhere himself. It was an impossible task, and he saw Pierre Loudet profit by his confusion. The continued politeness of the Frenchman maddened him, and he wore down his spirit in the effort to carry himself as urbanely and jauntily as his triumphant opponent.

Without Daniel's restraining influence, the Indians became impudent, ran about, traded where they pleased. In the autumn some of the best hunters took their credits from the French Company; in the following spring Loudet got the best of the furs, and many Indians did not even attempt to repay the advances Macrimmon had given them. The Scotsman's defeat was thorough. His fur-packs were so light that, in shame, he shirked taking them down to the district headquarters himself, and sent them with a crew of Indians. These careless fellows upset one canoe in a rapid; one of them was drowned and part of the load lost.

Unnumbered times Macrimmon wished for Daniel Wascowin, but he had disappeared. The Indians reported that he had deserted his old hunting-grounds. There was a vague rumour that he had been seen somewhere in the far north, but it was only a rumour.

During that spring and summer Macrimmon formed the habit of standing or sitting on the top of the rock and looking forth over the lake. He had learned much about himself, and was deeply conning the lesson. He was like one doomed, expecting some final change, the close of a chapter of his life. The end came when the trading canoes returned. A man had been sent to supersede him at the post; he had been degraded; he was to act as clerk and helper. The fact that his master was an Englishman named Gooderich was the annihilation of his pride.

This Gooderich was a bright, bustling little fellow, and he soon controlled the Indians. By the second spring he had won back so much of the trade that Pierre Loudet thought it best to travel farther westward. When Loudet was gone the truth came out.

"What an ass you were, Macrimmon," Gooderich said one day, "to let this Frenchman deceive you! One of the half-breeds told me just now that Loudet put him up to steal the tea-pails; you must have been drunk!"

"Yes, I was drunk," said Macrimmon quietly.

Through long brooding over his humiliation he came to the knowledge that he had been drunk with pride and arrogance. The intimation that Daniel was innocent fell upon his new mood like a stroke of lightning. His injustice, his violence, rose up against him. He would have recompensed his faithful servant a thousandfold had it been possible.

III

One evening in May an Indian came into the store and said quietly to Macrimmon:

"Daniel Wascowin has come back."

Gooderich had gone off for the day, and Macrimmon was alone. He gazed at the Indian in a dazed way and walked to the door. But a flash of his old pride sprang up in him.

"Tell him to bring his furs to the store," he said gruffly.

When the messenger had gone, Macrimmon paced to and fro excitedly. Daniel had returned—yes, he had come home. He thought of his servant just as he had been, strong and alert, striding up with a huge bundle of furs on his back, as he had often seen him in the old days when he used to pour out a tot of rum for him and shake his hand.

But Wascowin did not come. Impatient of the delay, Macrimmon went to meet him, forgetful of the last stirring of his pride. Just outside the door he met a woman whom he did not recognise at first. She was gaunt, and her eyes glittered with a famished lustre. The skin was drawn tightly over the bones of her face, and she had no expression except the fixed one of weary hunger. It was Daniel's wife. In her hands she held three mink-skins.

"What's the matter with you?" he cried, fearful of what the figure might portend.

"You sent for Daniel's furs. I am his wife. I have brought them myself."

She held out the three pitiful mink-skins. In days gone by there had been many prime skins of otter and beaver and mink and marten, and of silver fox not a few. She held out three mink-skins!

Macrimmon saw the whole history of three years in those skins. He trembled. He set his teeth.

"Where is Daniel?" he said hoarsely.

She pointed toward the boat-landing.

Daniel had crawled out of his canoe, and lay at the landing-place, unable to move. There was just a spark of spirit left in his body of bone and skin. He tried to smile as Macrimmon bent over him. On his forehead he saw the mark he had put there—the two crescents made by the hot pistol-barrels, blackened by powder as if tattooed.

Yielding up at that moment everything of self there was in him, Macrimmon lifted the Indian in his arms, carried him to the house, and put him in his own bed. Daniel had no strength to tell him that it was impossible to hunt when in one ear there was silence, and in the other a roaring like the rapids on the Missanabie, which the trappers call Hell's Gate. Moreover, no man can hunt with a broken spirit. He was obedient to the last; he had come back for a good reason.

In the dead of night, when they were alone, Macrimmon cried out in the anguish of his soul, and told of his grievous downfall. But Daniel could not

hear a word; that was the bitterness of it. He only knew the great honour of lying in that bed; he ventured and put his hand on the white man's arm. That touch, and his confession, purged Macrimmon's spirit. He was not the man he had been. There was a peculiar strength grown up in him, but not the fatal strength of pride.

In the morning light the two men could only look helplessly into each other's eyes; and in a little while two of the eyes were darkened.

Macrimmon tanned the three mink-skins, which seemed to him symbols of the grievous wrong that he had cast upon his servant, and of his own degradation. Roughly he sewed them together; and he wore them ever after like a fillet bound about his brow.

VI

In the Year 1806

IN the year 1806 there was a small and unimportant outpost of the North West Company at Lac Achigan. It had been located there by the policy of the fur trade in an attempt to gain ground from the Hudson's Bay Company in a territory famous for the quality of its mink-skins, but without much success. The situation of the Post seemed unfortunate. The rival company had located upon a spot loved of old by the Indians, and Lac Achigan was to them no more than scores of lakes. An Indian at Lac Achigan was merely in transit to Fort la Touche, which flew the Hudson's Bay Company's flag.

The Lac Achigan post had been held during the winter by a trader called Nairn, Andrew Nairn, and his helper, Alec Pendarvies.

When the spring came and the time had elapsed when the Indians should have brought in their furs, the last and absolute failure of the adventure became apparent. But the springtime revealed more than that. Fate had thrown together for a year two men who were as ill assorted a couple as might be. Pendarvies came from the high parts of Wales; a quick thinking, thin-skinned fellow, chary of speech, but full of broodings and weak proud imaginings. Nairn was a lowland Scot; a teasing man, without a trace of fine feeling, and, withal, a tremendous talker. His ceaseless babble was filled with sharp personalities.

The dénouement in the clash of these two personalities was foregone. Pendarvies had passed through a winter of agonies and had emerged into the spring changed as only such agonies can change. His lean, drawn face was cadaverous; his soul stood just behind his eyes trying to escape. He looked as if he had passed through a maddening illness. Nairn was fatter, his long red beard was silky and sleek, and he was blind to the change in his companion. He was so fond of the sound of his own hard voice that he had not perceived that since the seventeenth of February Alec Pendarvies had never spoken to him. It was then the tenth of May.

In the morning of that day Nairn said to Pendarvies: "I am awa' to the Fort, do ye ken, don't stand there like a loon. I'm going to sell the Hudson's Bay Company our furs as are not worth taking out and then we'll pack up and be off. Ye doited idiot! did ye no have your breakfast that ye're sucking in yer cheeks and chewing them like that?" Pendarvies paid no heed. Nairn

began one peculiar form of torture; he would sing all his Scotch songs to Pendarvies' name. This time it was "Annie Laurie"—

"Pendarvies' braes are bonny
When early fas the dew
And 'twas there P. E. N. Darvies
Gied her his promise true.

'Twas P. E. N. Darvies,
'Twas P. E. N. Darvies,
'Twas there P. E. N. Darvies
Gied her his promise true."

A familiar, tingling shudder ran through Alec's frame. Hate, hate, hate, inarticulate, blasting, consuming. He felt the familiar shudder quiver in his neck and jaws! All other consciousness fell into a mist; he paid no heed to the preparations for departure. "I'll be back in three days, do ye ken? Have an eye to things when I'm gone." He did not expect an answer and Alec heard him go off singing down the trail between the wands of the poplars just sprayed with green,—"Pendarvies' braes are bonny"—the high, ringing, mocking tones!

Long after the silence closed around him Alec still sat on the bench in the sun; gradually he began to realise that he was alone, alone for the first time in thirteen months, free of the presence that he loathed. He dropped his head in his hands. The release of the torture was too swift. He could have borne more of the torture, but not this sudden end of it. He was free for three days. How could he measure that idea? Alone, alone, for three days. It was a bit of time; he tried to measure it. It had no end.

Then something snapped within his mind. He sprang to his feet; he did not know what he was doing. He waved his arms and tried to shout; he shook his fists high in the air. Then he ran furiously down to the lake near the boat landing and rushed into the water up to his knees. He clung to the boat landing and walked out farther; then he found that he was in the water and began to laugh and pulled himself out on the boat landing and laughed idiotically till his ribs ached.

Then he came to himself and found that he was stretched on the boat landing and the moon was up—a large moon on the lake. He tried to pull his rabbit-skin robe over him and felt his chill damp trousers instead of the soft fur. Still he did not move. His eyes stared at the moon and he tried to remember what it was. That groping effort ceased and long afterwards he

felt as if something was striking him in the face. It was the sun, high over the water. Stupefied, he sat up and made a great effort to draw his legs under him. There was a mist. Yes, but he was free; that came to him in a flash. He would go to the house; he saw it towering like a castle above him. What he wanted was something to eat. He found some cold fried fish and bannock. He ate with gusto. He was free, free.

How long after that, as he sat at the table staring at the wall, did he notice something reflected in the looking glass? He moved his head about, but could only see it at a certain angle; then he recognised it and screamed violently—once, twice. It was Nairn's wallet; he had left it on the table. The mist came again, drifting—but after long intervals small clear spaces appeared. He could think. Free, free—but Nairn's wallet—he had forgotten his wallet. He saw the wallet in the looking glass—free, yes, for three days; but he would come back for his wallet; he could do no business without his wallet. Had he just gone or was it years and years ago?—Then nothing but mist. He heard a sound in the mist. Nairn's voice! It was only a few minutes ago he had left;—he was coming back for his wallet, singing—listen, listen—a smothered sound—"Pendarvies' braes are bonny." Lost now, lost. No, clearer, nearer—"Pendarvies' braes are bonny."

He laughed a cunning, small laugh—No, no, Nairn, wouldn't you leave me for three days even? He had taken a rifle off the rack. The door was there where the sunlight was pouring through. He knew he was a deadly shot. He stood at the door. The voice came strong and clear—"And for sweet P. E. N. Darvies I'd lay me down and die." Nairn's figure came out clearly on the trail through the poplars and Alec fired. The body threw up one hand and fell back heavily. The mist came again.

He found himself on the bench in the sun. He remembered—free, free, yes, he was free now for three days; no, no, Mr. Nairn, for longer than three days. He chuckled with low laughter, low and cunning. Stop! What would he do with the body? He was in the poplars now, and there it was on the trail. The eyes were open. He was not afraid of it, but he was in a hurry. He bent over and placed his arm under the small of the back and lifted a little; the body was yet warm and lissome; it fell back. He was terribly hurried. There was a little natural meadow in a circle of poplars. He was digging there with a spade. The sweat poured from him. Hours he worked—sunset came and went; he worked in the dark, then the moon gave him light. Then he came to hard clay. He could go down no deeper; he could walk about in the grave. How much longer? He was cold, cold to the bone, but the sun was bright enough. If he could get through that mist. He remembered now he had something to perform: a great important act that was decided upon so long

ago that he had almost forgotten. He was to bury a dead man, and he must find something to wrap him in. One of the old canvas boat covers would do. He rolled the stiff body in it and dragged it to the grave. There was plenty of room, but ages were in the mist before he found the spade and covered all in, close and well.

How much time was measured? He found his elbows on the table and he was chewing and he had an unfamiliar feeling. He put his hand to his head. His cap! Yes, he always wore his cap, he even slept in his cap, and he had lost his cap; he began to grope for it. Well, it was lost, that was all. Then he remembered everything. No, no, Mr. Nairn, you couldn't leave me alone for three days. Well, you'll be longer than three days where you are now. He laughed with dry satisfaction.

Suddenly he saw the looking glass and something else—no, not the wallet reflected there. He tip-toed over, then he sprang back defending himself with his arms and elbows. It was Nairn's face in the glass. He pressed his back against the opposite wall and tried to push through the wall. Then he caught up things that were near him and tried to hit the glass and break it. He threw hundreds of things and at last one was well aimed. The glass shivered to the floor, only a small V-shaped splinter remained in the frame. He went towards it stealthily. He threw himself back—even in the splinter he could see Nairn's face, like a miniature.

There was a great gulf of mist. Then a dull knocking began—he was very near the lake, but it was stiff and glittering. He picked up a paddle and struck it, once and twice with all his force. It cracked like a mirror from side to side with a piercing sound.

All was in perfect calm, a long, slow, soothing calm, and he sat on the bench by the wall. Time had lost its significance for him, but he was living in light and calm. He had been released into deep wondrous calm. In the quiet he heard a sound, a sound of singing. He could distinguish the words, "Pendarvies' braes are bonny." He heard it just once, or did he hear? Then an appearance seemed to glide along amid the poplars. The figure of Nairn, the figure of Nairn! He rose on his tip-toes and backed off, brushing the air away as if to brush away the figure. He knew that he had killed Nairn and buried him; so this was Nairn's ghost. He could see the lips moving, but could not hear a word that was said. Time was lost. Suddenly he felt himself held by a horrible thing, the phantom had him. He struggled and broke away from it.

Measure a deep darkness. He was over the grave in the meadow. He had done a cunning thing; he had possession of the rifle and the ghost had vanished. No, there it was, floating about the house, peering from the door.

He could shoot it easily at any time. A long pause, a little whispering stir in the poplars. He turned quickly; there was the ghost in the trees, but before he could gain the rifle it had disappeared. Then he saw the spade. He would get the grave ready, when he killed the ghost he could bury them together. Now that he had the idea everything seemed easy. He worked like mad, throwing out the earth tirelessly. He looked up once in a while and laughed, low and inwardly, when he saw the phantom seated not very far away watching intently. "This goes well," he chuckled. "As soon as I come to the canvas boat cover I'll shoot you and you come down here too."

By and by he struck that hard clay again. Then he unearthed a bit of cloth; it was the boat cover. No, it was not the boat cover; it was something soft and small; he picked it up; his cap. There was a pause. His cap? What then? He had lost his cap; his cap was next the hard clay; all earthy he put it on his head. Then his cap must have been under the body; he must have thrown the body out. He clambered over the earth; nothing was there. He took up the gun. Well, he would shoot the ghost; he could bury the ghost. It had vanished. Measure the immeasurable, the deeps of the darkness. He was on the boat landing and the lake was below him. He was tired beyond any mortal conception of weariness. He was parched with thirst and reached his hand to the water. It was stiff as glass and as he leaned over and looked down, up peered the face of Nairn. That was all.

The trader ventured at last to the boat landing and felt safe when he gained possession of the rifle, but it was not capped and the old charge was still in it. He was not troubled with tenderness, but he carried Alec's body carefully to the house and laid it on the bench and placed it decently and reposefully. Nothing had been disturbed in the house, nothing had been touched but the rifle, the looking glass hung unbroken on the wall and there were fragments of food on the table and his wallet, which he had not intended to take with him. In the little meadow, where he had watched Alec so long clutching the spade and the gun, the earth was not disturbed and the spade was lying where Alec had dropped it. In the morning he went there and dug a grave deep as the hard clay. Then he bethought him of some old, but stout canvas boat-covers and wrapping the body in one he buried it. The moon had risen before he found that he had covered the grave close and smoothed it well.

VII

At Plangeant's Locks

WE were seated in the linden shade at Plangeant's Locks, on the Rideau Canal, with our lines in a bass pool. The whole world seemed half fallen asleep to the lull of the water escaping through the waste weir. Sometimes its sound seemed a joyous expression of freedom from the toil of lifting and lowering like a slave in the Canal Locks, sometimes like a murmur at its idle lot, as it lapsed beyond the channels of commerce, passing even a stone mill whose water wheel had so long been thrown out of gear that the lever for that purpose had quite rotted and dropped away. The lock behind us was full of cool deep shadowed water, covered with flat flakes of foam, as delicate in outline as the surface of that flower called "Queen Anne's Lace Handkerchief." Against them one might see the bass veer by.

Upon a little rise the lockmaster's house was covered with oak shadows. Terrace above terrace from the lock were tiers of pansy beds, clumps of sweet William, and the discs of hollyhocks in distinct gem-like colours hanging like little bucklers on their shafts of sage-green. The sense of these things hidden from view was present in the dark wall of trees that bordered the clear shore of the fishing pool. Amid the green started the blossom of an acacia, so heavy that the branches bowed to the water. Each bloom lived once in clear air, and again in clear water, the whole mass, substance and reflection, forming a hemisphere of green lit with the lustrous lantern-like heads of flowers. Only at times the light wind blurred the under half of the picture and brought over its ghost in a faint perfume recalling the fragile scent of lemons. When the odour ebbed and the water-half of the picture came again, an oriole flashed across and up, quenching in the dense shade the fire of his vivid wings.

I was lapsing into a state harmonious with the charm of the drowsy atmosphere when my companion touched my arm recalling me to the responsibilities of the rod. His voice sounded ancient, as it was; and far off, although he was at my elbow.

"Don't 'ee let the bait float low, there be always Lieutenants asnuzzling about in the mud."

"And what may Lieutenants be?" I inquired, raising my frog into a zone of safety.

"Lieutenants? That's a name we have hereabouts for eels, because they take things as doesn't belong to them. Lieutenants for short, Lieutenant Ansteys for long. Although I don't suppose there be more'n two or three people about here, and those very old, that could tell 'e the rights of that story."

I encouraged him to proceed, and rather than look directly at him I watched his shadow in the water. There he was mirrored, the round, small, resolute head, with the grey hair and moustache cropped close; the face almost without wrinkles, and brown as if stained with butternut juice. There was the colour from a faded red coat; over his breast it was barred with stripes of ribbon that marked the places for medals won at Alma and at Balaclava. As he talked I watched all the movements of pipe-filling and the wreathes of smoke that passed above his head out upon the shining breast of the pool.

. . . . . .

All this happened in my father's time. In his day he was the master at Plangeant's Locks, and after wandering half over the world I came back to be the master, and now my son takes the place. So you see it goes from father to son. It happened when the canal was a-building, years ago, in 1828. The work was done by the Royal Engineers, and the Sappers and Miners, and on the way from Kingston to Bytown, as Ottawa City was first called, there were many men of all sorts from as high as lords' sons to as low as a Scotch pick-man or an Irish hod-carrier. Roll them all up together in your mind, they were a rough lot, and at times there were strange doings. But you could pick fine gentlemen out of the pack, and honest-hearted coarse men as ever breathed life's breath. Two of the fine gentlemen were Major John and his brother Captain Cavendish Lancegaye of the Royal Engineers, and one of the honest-hearted was my father. He was handy man to Captain Lancegaye, who picked him out from the list, and the old Colonel, Strauben was his name, let him serve as if the Captain was an officer in his own regiment. The Major and his brother were fast friends, as were David and Jonathan; and they were nephews to Lord Plangeant, sons of his own younger brother. That's how this bit of the world came to be called Plangeant's Locks, as you will see in the end. The Major was heir to the title, as Lord Plangeant had never married.

Now there was hereabouts a quarry for stone and out of it came the pieces for these locks and others, the stone being easily got and of a very good kind. Over the quarry-men was one called McKenzie Maxwell, a man from the other side of Scotland somewhere, a tall, burly, knowing-looking

sort of person, my father used to say; just the sort to beat down a lot of wild fellows who had come up from the ends of the world to meet there in that unheard-of place to do a little stone-quarrying. But the story is not so much of McKenzie Maxwell as of his daughter Maraquita, although the stubborness of the man was a part of it.

My father used always to begin to describe Maraquita Maxwell, and as often his thoughts would outmeasure his words and he would end in confusion. She had her beauty and her name from her Spaniard mother. My father could get as far as her eyes that were as brown as these water-pools, and her dark piled-up hair, blue black like spruces in shadow, but her mouth and the shape of her face, and her expression of conquering everything, he failed upon. Somewhat he had to say plainly about the way she held herself, and the manner of her walk, that was the cause of all the love that was stirred up by her. Another cause of it was that she was slave to her stepmother, a low woman, and a vile spoken one that rises up into a quarrel at a word. Maraquita looked forlorn with all the second brood of Maxwell brats about and under her proud feet, and it galled all men who saw her waste patience upon such.

Now it was Major John Lancegaye who had charge and oversight of this section of the works, and under him was his brother, my father's master, Captain Cavendish Lancegaye, and under him was a Lieutenant, Lieutenant Anstey. (Unconsciously at the mention of the Lieutenant I again raised my bait, which during the narrative had sunk into dangerous depths.)

My father believed that they were, the three of them, in love at the same time with Maraquita Maxwell, although there was nothing at all to prove that his master, the Captain, had been overcome by her, nothing whatever to prove it at the time. They all knew her and saw her in her father's bit of a place back from the quarry on a knoll, for each one of them was passing back and forth inspecting and superintending the works. But he who saw her the oftenest was the Lieutenant who had charge of the stone, so to speak, and its transport.

There was no manner of doubt that the Lieutenant was in love with Maraquita Maxwell, and there was also no manner of doubt that she hated him. But yet he had some peculiar influence over her. He had risen from the ranks and was of no very good family. A heavy, tall, forbidding-looking person he was, strong beyond all belief, and with a tongue that would thrash and wheedle; the one as well as the other. There was one real uncanny thing about him and that was the way his eyes were set in his head, too far apart for nature, and the colour of them a stone-green. My father would say the dear Maraquita was the contrast to him in every way, and she fled away from

him when she could, fawn from panther. Only at times, in Maxwell's bit of a house, there was no fleeing, she had to sit in the glitter of his eyes. It was then she changed under his power and sat as if mazed with her hands in her lap.

If the Lieutenant was ugly there were no handsomer men anywhere than the Lancegayes, only about Major John there was the oddity that one of his eyes was blue and the other hazel.

Well, it happened in the autumn of the year in September month, that Major Lancegaye came up to make an inspection of the works. He had with him a fine party of friends, and among them was the chaplain, Todhunter of the 41st, and Captain Cavendish and my father. After a day or two they parted, the Major with his party went to report himself to the Colonel at By Town, and the Captain went back to Kingston, my father with him. And so far as any one seemed to know, there was nothing happened at that meeting out of the ordinary; but there was, as you shall soon hear.

It was toward the middle of November, with the ice not yet taken, when my father happened to come here with some instructions for the Lieutenant, and as his luck would have it, he arrived just in the nick.

The whole Maxwell establishment was in a perfect storm. Mrs. Maxwell was in high voice that morning, and her words were like a cloud of hornets. She was calling Maraquita every vile name under the sun that is applied by one low woman to another woman when she thinks that other is not all she should be. Maraquita was as quiet and cold as one of those same frosty mornings, neither answering yea nor nay, and her father was as bad and strong against her. Just as they were at the worst in walked Lieutenant Anstey.

"What is all this about, Maxwell?" he said.

"It's trouble that has come to a respectable family," answered Mrs. Maxwell, taking the words away from her husband. Anstey looked at Maraquita, and my father saw her shiver and try to sit down. The Lieutenant handed her a chair and whispered something to her, whereupon she was quiet and said not a word. Then spoke Anstey, standing up ugly and strong, and my father heard his very words:

"If I have wronged your daughter, Maxwell, I will make amends. I will make her my wife."

"Is this true, Maraquita?" said Maxwell. "Should this man be your husband?"

Poor Maraquita glanced up and eyes quivered and misty look came over them, and she dropped her head. She seemed all abroad.

"Huht! the jade has never a word to say when a gentleman wants to make her an honest woman," cried Mrs. Maxwell.

"Close your mouth," said Maxwell sternly. "Lieutenant Anstey and I will settle this between us." And out they walked and off into the air. My father could not stand hearing Mrs. Maxwell's abuse any longer, and away he went deep in his own thoughts.

But after that night he had something more to think of. He was to go back to Kingston the next morning and at dusk he was down at the shore pitching his canoe with an Indian that had come with him. They had a handful of fire to warm the pitch, and there were many stars in the sky. Suddenly some one bent over him and he saw the half of Maraquita's scared face.

"Soldier, for the love of God and the love of your own women folk, take me away from here. They will make me marry a man I hate."

My father was a gallant man. "Indeed; I shall do that," he said. "Be you here before daybreak to-morrow and we'll have a good start of them at sunrise."

"May God bless you," she whispered. But as she went away my father saw Anstey's figure up against the cold north sky on the edge of the over-hill.

In the morning he waited until sunrise, and he thought he heard a call or scream, but Maraquita never came. When my father got to Kingston he told Captain Cavendish what had happened. He just walked the floor night after night.

"I will never believe that of Maraquita Maxwell!" he said over and over again, but after a week he sat down and showed no sign. It was maybe in ten days that my father was here again to see Lieutenant Anstey hammer at Maxwell's door to be driven off like a thieving dog. One of the women told him:

"Aye, it is ever like that; some say he and the daughter are married, some say no; but whether or no, neither bite nor bed does Anstey have in the Maxwell house." It was true. My father knew no more then but that Maxwell, now he had had his rash way, would have it further; and listening to Maraquita's pleadings, would not let Anstey so much as look upon her.

That winter set in with hard frost without snow, and the lakes were strong ice from shore to shore. So what should Major Lancegaye do but skate from the Ottawa with his friends, all except the chaplain. When they got here they rested. Major Lancegaye asked Maxwell for the news, and

Maxwell answered him very civilly, for he respected him. Then the Major asked for Maraquita.

"We've had a wedding since you were here, Major."

"Yes!" said the Major, smiling. "I shall have to drink the bride's health."

"Then it will be Maraquita's!" said Maxwell.

"You're joking, Maxwell," said the Major, choking in his speech.

"Not at all; she's married to Lieutenant Anstey."

The Major fell down on a bench by the door as if he had been shot.

"Tell me about this, Maxwell, man. I cannot understand you."

"That's the plain fact!"

"But a clergyman?"

"Well, there was no clergyman within eighteen miles of here, so according to law we drove over to Mr. Peter's, who is a Justice of the Peace."

"I fear there has been some terrible mistake, Maxwell!"

He got so far but had no further chance for questions or explanations, for Lieutenant Anstey crowded in at his elbow.

"What is that you say, Major?"

"I was not speaking to you, you damned sorcerer," cried the Major, jumping to his feet.

"I heard what you were saying. It was an insult to my wife, Major Lancegaye."

The Major did not wait to hear more. He was a proud imperious young man and he struck the Lieutenant a peeling blow across the face with his skate-strap.

"You shall pay for this dearly," said the Lieutenant, touching his face where the buckle had marked him.

"As you please, and when you please."

There had been several officer friends of Major Lancegaye's who had come near, hearing the quarrel, and they now began to interfere with the Major and tell him that he could not fight.

"Gentlemen," he said, quite calm and collected, "this is no ordinary quarrel, so great and deep is it that no rank shall stand between us."

Then there was a great to-do about weapons, as no one there had either pistols or swords. It happened that there was near Maxwell's house a tool shed and against this there were several hammers of the kind the workmen used to tap the wedges when splitting the stones.

"We'll fight with these," said the Major, swinging up one of the sledges.

"Certainly," replied the Lieutenant, "you have chosen the weapons."

They went down into the quarry where there was a level place and there they fought it out. The Major whispered to some of his friends:

"I am going to knock this bully's brains out, but if anything happens to me, give Cavendish my love and remind him that I always said he would bear the title."

Well, in this sort of a duel the Lieutenant had the advantage with his long reach and his height. But the Major was as valiant as could be. They had many rallies and counter strokes, till at last the Major made a terrible blow at Anstey's head. The force was so great that when it missed Lancegaye fell forward a little, and the hammer nearly dropped from his hand. Then Anstey shortened his grip and gave him a jab behind the ear and broke his neck; yes, broke his neck. There he lay as dead as dead.

"I'll call you to witness, gentlemen," said Anstey, as pious as a deacon, "that this quarrel was none of my picking." But no one paid any attention to him, as they tried with all their arts to bring Major Lancegaye back to life.

My father heard all this afterwards, just as it was told Captain Lancegaye. He used to say he never saw a man grieve as his master did. There was his dear brother killed by a scoundrel, and him baulked of all sudden revenge for there was another General Order at once against all manner of duelling. So he had to brood upon it and bide his time.

As weeks went on he seemed to feel remorse for something that was very heavy upon him. My father used to hear him muttering as he walked the floor:

"Never, never, so help me God. I shall never accept."

It seemed to be something in regard to the lands and titles of Lord Plangeant; but, although my father was close in touch with his master, who often asked for his advice, he could not rightly make out what it was that so bothered him. As the winter wore on the Captain became so dejected that he applied for leave of absence to visit England.

You must know that letters kept coming addressed to the Major from those who did not know he was dead. Captain Cavendish would not open them but laid them away one by one in a drawer in his cabinet.

"You should open them every one, sir," my father said time and again; "you should read them, sir, there may be business of importance to attend to, and you should answer to it."

But no,—Captain Cavendish only shook his head.

"You're wrong, sir," my father would say, "if you will pardon your obedient and faithful servant for saying so."

It was in the month of March one day when my father was called in to find the Captain seated at his desk with a lot of letters before him. He was as pale as a lily.

"I have at last taken your advice," he said, "and I wish I had done so before; will you tell me what you think of that?"

"I will do so, sir, thanking you for your confidence in me," says my father.

"I value your advice," said the Captain, "next to no live man's. Let me have it."

The letter was from Lord Plangeant to the Major who had asked his permission to marry, as that was the old custom of the family. The Earl gave it in very gracious terms, and said he would have Edendene put in order for the Major and his bride. There was one amazing sentence.

"If Miss Maxwell is as beautiful and good as you describe her, your old uncle will be the first to acknowledge it, as he is the first to wish you well."

My father did not know whether to believe his eyes or not.

"What do you think of that? Tell me what I am to do?"

"I think," said my father slowly, "that for more reasons than one it is a damned shame that it wasn't the other way round and that the Major had broken that devil's neck." Only he put it much stronger than that.

"I think with you," said the young man with a groan. "What am I to do?" They saw it all perfectly clear how the quarrel had come between the Major and Anstey.

"You can do nothing just now."

"So it seems to me. You're a wonderful man." But my father used to tell me that he always tried to say what he knew his master would think, and then if necessary draw him on from that.

The Captain was pacing up and down when he stopped suddenly and struck his heel on the floor.

"Do you realise this?" he cried.

"I do," said my father.

"Well, let's hear what you make of it."

"The woman that your brother (as gallant a gentleman as ever said his prayers) would have married is now married to as vile a bloody villain as ever smoked with the devil." Only he put it much stronger than that.

"That's it," said he. "That's the way I think of it."

"And you tell me she's—"

"They say so."

"My God, what a fate. Look upon this picture and then upon that!—" He sat him down and hid his face in the bundle of opened letters.

As he said nothing more my father left him; and he said nothing more when he was at dinner, but he looked grave and worn, and chose but a morsel or so. In the middle of the night my father heard him call and went into him. The poor young man had not gone to bed. He looked haggard and tormented in the light of the candles that were burned nearly into their sockets.

"Do you realise this; tell me do you know what this means?" My father went over it again while the Captain paced the room and bit his fingers, and when my father was done he stopped and looked at him.

"No," he says after awhile, sadly, "there is more than that, much more than that!" He sat down and threw himself along the table.

"I understand, sir, God help you!"

"Try to realise it, you cannot, man!"

"Ah, sir, you find yourself now in the position the Major was in when he fought that day with the villain Anstey." For my father now discovered that he loved Maraquita.

"By God," he cried, "I'll kill him. He shall not escape me!"

"So, but at present you will get to your bed, or he will be the death of you also."

It was just three days after that when the post came in and there were many letters from England for Captain Lancegaye. My father laid them out for him and he read them during breakfast. He seemed to be much exercised by the contents of several, particularly one in a large stout blue envelope. He kept muttering, "Never, never!" under his breath. After an hour he called in my father.

"Pollock!" he said, "what think you of this?" It was a letter from a lawyer firm, out of the big blue envelope telling him that Lord Plangeant was dead and that he had succeeded to the title and estates.

"I think you are to be congratulated, sir, and without sorrow, for Lord Plangeant was full of years and weary of it all."

"Oh! Pollock," he cried out, "I cannot accept it; I am unworthy of it."

"You may think so," said my father, "but the next of kin is hardly more worthy!"

"I'll tell you plainly why I am unworthy. When you came to me, Pollock, with word of John's death, the first thing that I thought of was that I was now heir to the title!"

"That was bad, sir. It was low and bad!"

"No cad could have done worse," groaned the young man.

"That is true, but there is deep vileness in the heart of every man, and you sorrowed afterwards!"

"I was broken-hearted, but that will not wipe out this inward stain, Pollock."

"There is plenty of time to decide; I would take a day or two! You may be in haste now, but that wouldn't bring the old Earl alive again!"

"Think it over yourself, Pollock, and let me hear what you decide!"

"Thank you, sir, I will," said my father. Nothing more was said upon the subject that day. Early the next morning he went in, according to his custom, to open the shutters in the Captain's room; when he turned about the young officer had his hands under his head and was wide-awake.

"Your Lordship's bath is ready!"

"Pollock!"

"Yes, my Lord." The young man sprang up in bed and tried to say something. And from that day onward, to the day of his death, he was Lord Plangeant.

There had been some delay in granting the Captain's leave of absence, but shortly afterwards it was granted and early in May he prepared to set out for England. My father was, of course, packing his belongings, when one morning in his cabinet he came upon the drawer where the dead Major's letters had been put, and in it were yet three or four.

"Did you open all the Major's letters, my Lord?"

"I believe so, Pollock. Don't 'my lord' so much."

"It is necessary for you to get well wonted to the sound of it. There are several letters here unopened."

"Then open them, Pollock, and hand them to me to read."

My father did so; to two of them he paid no attention; the third gave him a changed face.

"A letter from poor Todhunter," he said, "and only the other day we were reading that he had died of ship's fever in Quebec. My God! what have we here?"

He handed the papers to my father. It was a letter from the Chaplain, Todhunter, who apologised for not having sent the inclosure sooner; he hoped that the Major would soon hear from Lord Plangeant, and that all was well. The inclosed was in a separate envelope addressed to Mistress John Lancegaye. It was her certificate of marriage to the Major, dated September twentieth, 1828!

"Here is a to-do!" said Lord Plangeant. "What think you of this, Pollock?"

"It's damned bad, sir. Maraquita is a fair bigamist, and against her will somehow I dare swear."

"Her child, if a boy, might be . . . eh, Pollock?"

"True, my Lord, when born he might be rightful heir to the title."

"And I would be no longer Lord Plangeant?"

"True, my Lord."

"It strikes me, Pollock, I'm no more 'my lord' than you are."

"There is some room for doubt; the other marriage now—who is to prove that the child—!"

"I shall never believe that of Maraquita Maxwell," he said fiercely. Then after a pause he added, looking up sharply, "How many months, Pollock?"

My father counted on his fingers up to eight! Lord Plangeant whistled softly.

"Tell me, what do you think I should do?"

"I should go there and see for myself. No one knows what has happened. If there is any doubt whose the child is, my Lord, you have but to keep this paper. The Rev. John Todhunter is dead; the secret is between us."

Two days after that they were here in the dusk of the evening. Lord Plangeant sent my father up to Maxwell's to reconnoitre. When he came back Maxwell was with him.

"It is all right, my Lord," he said.

"All right?"

"Aye, Maxwell, here, will explain."

Maxwell stood up tall between them, his bonnet in his hand.

"My Lord Plangeant," he said, "until Anstey killed your brother, the Major, I did not know that he was true husband to my Maraquita. She had vowed to him, my Lord, that she would tell no one until he had received word that his uncle was willing he should marry. She kept her vow."

"But, Anstey—" broke in Lord Plangeant impatiently, "I want to hear—"

"My Lord," said Maxwell, "I had force and he had witchcraft, and between us we married the maid. But he was never husband to her; no, it was one thing to protect my daughter's good name, as I thought I was doing, and another to force her to live with Anstey. That she never could do, and I stood by her. When I found out the truth, although Maraquita has nought to prove it, I did not know what to do, being an ignorant man."

"By God," cried Lord Plangeant, breaking away from my father and throwing back his cloak, "I shall kill him—this fellow Anstey, before I go farther."

"Some one has done that for you!" said my father, taking off his cap.

"Cheated of revenge also!" cried Lord Plangeant. "Who has slipped in here?"

"God Almighty. Anstey took to drink, my Lord, and the other night he fell into one of the quarry pits and knocked his brains out."

Lord Plangeant went apart and wrapped himself in his cloak and thought upon it all, and so did my father. Then he waved Maxwell to one side.

"Pollock," he said, "what would you do if you were in my place?"

"My Lord, I should first make sure of myself—whether I was in love with the lady—then—"

Lord Plangeant started up and was half up the hill to Maxwell's.

"My Lord, rashness is no valour here. You must remember that a marriage with your dead brother's wife would not be legal in England." He came back sadly.

"Then there is nothing to be done."

"Destroy the evidence!"

"There is no villain here so exquisite as that."

"Unless Maraquita would do it!"

"What?"

"Burn the certificate."

"No one could suggest it."

"She will argue maybe after this fashion, if a rude soldier may think what is in a woman's head. She may not love you now, let that be. You are to offer her marriage and with that goes a sure title, and you may be certain she has often thought of that in her pride. The child she bears may be a boy, well and good; and if that comes to pass you hand her the very paper that will overset your claim. She will think then of your generosity. But it may be a girl, and then, at best, she is dowager countess and a pensioner upon your bounty. By her marriage with you, my Lord, she would gain much surely:

her registered marriage with Anstey is in the past, her standing and issue is secure. You trust her and hand her the certificate; she trusts you, and burns it."

"I could not suggest such a thing, Pollock."

"Make your honourable offer, My Lord; leave the rest to Maraquita."

"Poor John!" he said as he walked up the hill to Maxwell's house, "Poor John!"

My father watched through a little window into the Maxwells' living room while he was waiting. There they sat and talked. Maraquita kept her dark eyes downcast, and was folding and unfolding a paper, when my father saw her raise it and slowly and deliberately set it on fire in the candle flame. It fell down in ashes.

In a few minutes Lord Plangeant came out to my father. "Go," he said hurriedly, "to Kingston, bring the Rev. Stuart with you; we shall leave here to-morrow morning, and we shall be married where we meet."

Two evenings after, they met at the third portage. My father said he could never forget the beautiful Maraquita, as she stood there and was married to the Lord Plangeant in the light of the camp fire. She was shrouded in a military cloak belonging to the Major (her first husband, so to speak) with two silver lion's heads for clasps, and each lion had one eye a sapphire and the other a topaz. It had been given him by the old Earl, and the jewels were a play, so to speak, upon the Major's eyes, the one being blue, and the other hazel.

Not more than three weeks after that the little Lord Edendene was born, and the Almighty had given Lord Plangeant a sign of Maraquita's honesty, for when the baby's eyes cleared, they were his father's, one blue and one hazel.

That was long years ago, and I would not be telling you now this family secret, but that Maraquita had no more children and Lord Edendene died unmarried, so the title went to another branch of the family.

. . . . . .

His voice had hardly ceased when the mirror of the pool into which I had been looking, unconsciously, was shattered. My line gyrated furiously, sending ripples crossing each other in all directions. I felt a series of mad jerks that made my arm tingle to the shoulder.

"There," I heard a voice saying, "a Lieutenant sure enough. I told ye to keep the bait afloat, they be always asnuzzling about in the mud."

VIII

Labrie's Wife

[BEING AN EXCERPT FROM THE MANUSCRIPT JOURNAL OF ARCHIBALD MUIR, CLERK OF THE HONOURABLE THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY, AT NEPIGON HOUSE IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1815.]

May Twenty-second, 1815

TO-DAY something happened which is bound to be of consequence in this outlandish place, and that I will set down here and make of record. Alec, who is getting more gumption now, although as unsteady in all his performances as he was ever, returned from his trip to the Flat Rock, and arrived safe with his two canoes and Ogemah-ga-bow, little Needic and his two sons. It appears they had, by reason of the rough weather, to lay by at Dry Beaver Islands and had like to have starved if the wind had not gone down, for these fools of Indians will never learn not to devour half their rations in the first day out from the Post. They came in looking like wasps, their belts girt so tightly about their middles.

I could tell the moment I clapped eyes upon Alec that he had some bee in his bonnet, for he can no more control his countenance than an otter can help fishing. His face was all of a jump, and he spoke as if he had no spittal under his tongue. I have a plan to let the youngster speak when he is ready, and by this means I have the enjoyment of witnessing him cast about to get me to question him and assist him out with his story. When we were having a bit of dinner he fairly simmered, but he did not boil until I lit my pipe. Then he could stand my coolness no longer.

"We're to have an opposition!" he blurted out. I did not want to show any astonishment, but I nearly dropped my pipe, such a matter never having been thought of in the Nepigon before. "You see," he went on, "I determined when I was at that part of the lake to go over to Keg Island and see if the cache was all right, and on St. Paul's Island, when we went ashore to roast some fish, we found two canoes loaded, and a Frenchman and three Indians."

"He asked me if I was with the English, and I lied to him straight enough, and said No! I was trading alone. Then he wanted to know where our Post was, and I said it was beyond the large island to the west. He said his name was Labrie, and that he was for the North West Company, and was

sent in opposition to the English on the lake. So I decided to camp where I was, and not to go to Keg Island, but to come on here. I told him to keep due west, and not to land until he struck the big island, which was Cariboo Island, and not for any reason to camp on a little flat island half way there, which was full of snakes."

The youngster was mighty proud of himself at outwitting the Frenchman, but, to take down his pride a bit, I provoked him by saying, "Well, poor Donald used to call you a clavering idiot, but if he had lived to this day he'd have had to invent a new kind of word for you. If your Labrie is anything of a trader he watched you away in the morning, and he will treat us in good Hudson's Bay Company rum when we first meet, having visited your little flat island full of snakes." Off went Alec trying to bite his beard, aping Donald's manner, poor lad; but he has yet a beard no longer than a pinfeather.

May Twenty-third, 1815

I was up before sun this day, as I had a restless night, thinking what I should do now we were to have opposition on the lake, a thing new to me who have scant experience. I determined to be smooth with them and observe them closely, and spoil them if I might with a fair face, and in all events to fight them with what weapons they may choose. I had wakened from a light doze with the sudden thought that I should possess myself of the point of land below the Post where I have always said the buildings should have been placed, which commands and oversees our present position. If it were seized by these pirates of Frenchmen, what then would become of our trade? They would eat it like a bear eats honeycomb. Alec could not see that, and provoked me with much grumbling that it was a useless work and a weary waste of muscle. It is curious how blockheaded he is about all matters connected with trade: he has some acuteness belike but of what sort God alone knows. In the end I was mightily satisfied to see a stout staff with the ensign flying, and a small boat-landing, with one of the boats moored. We had the work done before mid-day, and for the rest of the time I had pleasure in looking down at the point which had an inhabited and secure look, under the Hudson's Bay Company's flag. If the Frenchmen have any idea of the shore about here there will be some *sacréing* when they find the point taken up, for northwards there is no place for a foothold, and only in a cove, half a mile to the south, can they find level land enough for building upon. So when our Indians come down, and they should be here in a matter of four weeks, they are bound to reach the Post first, and I can keep my eye upon

the rascals, who would, if they could, trade with the newcomers and forget old kindnesses and obligations.

May Twenty-fourth, 1815

Ogemah-ga-bow came up to say that one of Needic's boys had died last night, having over-eaten himself after his fast on the Dry Beaver Islands. Rain to-day.

May Twenty-sixth, 1815

Sun-down yesterday on my bench before the door, whereby Needic had made a smudge to keep off the flies, which are now very bad, when I saw a canoe that was none of ours land at the point, and a man step out onto the new boat landing. He looked all about him as if he was making an inventory of the place, and then he came slowly up the hill. He was a stout-shouldered, low-set fellow, with a black beard and small, bad eyes. Said I to myself as I saw him approach, "There is something mainly dishonest in your make-up, my man, and whatever one may have to do to keep trade from you it won't be very savoury in the doing if your methods are to be used."

"My name's Labrie," he said, running his hand through his hair.

I got upon my legs and said politely, "I heard of your being in the Lake from my man. Will you be seated?"

He said "No" and looked over his shoulder at the Point.

"You have the Point under your flag," he remarked.

"Aye," I said, as dry as I could.

"The work has marks of newness."

"You are right, it was only finished yesterday."

The blood came into his face in an ugly way.

"Well, there can be no great objection to my trading a little."

"Not there," said I bluntly. "Under my company's flag what we take we claim and keep."

He breathed rather heavily, but held his tongue, and was going to walk away.

"Hold on," said I, "strangers are not treated so here, you must have a dram."

I called Alec, who brought the rum and the glasses. We drank healths courteously, that were ready to cut one another's throats.

"Did you ever taste better than that?" said I.

"I have as good," said he, "though it is the best I can match it."

"Match it!" said I in a tone of surprise, winking at Alec, who flew as red as a bubble jock. We parted then but just as he was getting away he said over his shoulder, "Your man there has a damned queer idea of direction."

May Twenty-seventh, 1815

Sent Needic and his live boy and Ogemah-ga-bow's brother to Poplar Lodge, to have news of the hunters. The Osnaburgh packs from the north should now be two weeks out, unless the ice is later this year than last. To-morrow I will put Alec and Ogemah-ga-bow to work clearing out the storehouse and setting things to rights. I am much exercised in mind over my responsibilities. It was bad enough last year, but now I have the whole management, and this opposition to contend with upon the back of it. I begin to be worn with it, what with loss of sleep at night, and thinking about nought else in the day. No sign of Labrie or any of his party.

May Thirtieth, 1815

This morning Labrie came up to borrow an adze, which I lent to him without any question. He seemed to want to be civil enough. When I asked him, however, if Madame Labrie had arrived, he seemed quite put about and mumbled something in his beard, which sounded nearly like "What affair is that of yours?" I paid no attention to him, not wishing to quarrel yet awhile, and without any further parley off he went with the adze, which I am fortunate if I ever see again.

Heat intense to-day, bringing on a great storm of thunder and much rain. Had a great debate with Alec, when we were indoors, as to when the Osnaburgh packs will be in. I calculate in three weeks, as the water is like to be high, they will take the route through Mud Lakes to Negodina, as I wrote Godfrey. The old route to Wabinosh would take them much longer and, what with broken water and two desperate, long carries, there is a great risk of loss by that way. Alec thinks they will be down sooner. There is no doubt they have had a fine winter and if the pack can be safely landed it will be a great matter, and no doubt I shall hear good of it from the partners.

May Thirty-first, 1815

This morning when I was cleaning my pistols I heard a clear sound of laughter. Now laughter is an uncommon thing in this country, visiting us very infrequently. To be sure the Indians laugh, but that to me always has an unmeaning sound, and sometimes a bestial. Moreover, this laughter was different in kind, and one must have listened to it however absorbed he might have been. It was high-pitched and very clear and had something

merry and withal innocent about it. It was contagious also and the mere sound of it made my very muscles twitch. There was no one visible, but after I had gazed awhile I saw Alec come up the steps from the warehouse. Not to appear interested before the lad I went back to my work. After a little he came in. I noticed his face was flushed and his manner excited. I paid no attention to him until he had knocked a dish off the table. It broke into three pieces. I was angry with him, good crockery not being by any means very plentiful in this country.

"Good God, man!" I cried. "If you're in such a state that you cannot avoid breaking the dishes, will you lie upon your bed for a while." He glared at me terribly, but had not a word to say. Then I kept quiet for as much as a quarter of an hour, and I could see it was fretting him; he fidgeted about greatly. Then he got up and went to the door.

"It seems to me you take mighty small interest in things."

I said never a word.

"Are you deaf this morning?"

I made no sound. He made no move for a minute, then he said, just as he was going out of the door, in an exasperated way, "That was Labrie's wife."

I could have laughed to myself, but when I had thought upon it for a time I began to perceive something bitter in his tone, and I reflected that of late I had treated him much as poor Donald used unthinkingly to treat me, and that he must be occupying my old position of complaint, and my heart was softened a bit, and I resolved to be more kind to him in future, who is in much a good boy and canny in a sort about many things.

June First, 1815

I saw Labrie's wife for the first time this morning. An uncommon looking wench, with black hair and eyes and a mouthful of white teeth. I discussed her thoroughly with Alec, who sticks up for it that she is a handsome one. So she is, after her manner, though that I do not acknowledge to Alec. She looked me all over as if I were for sale, and when I coolly turned my back on her, that she might have a good look at that, she went off in a mighty huff.

Alec reports that there are two other women in Labrie's party, rather old and haggish. I have not clapped eyes upon them, not having visited the Cove. Although she went off in a huff, the young wench is a merry one, and it amuses her to hear Alec so aboundingly polite to her with his "Madame Labrie." "Madame Labrie" this and "Madame Labrie" that, whereupon she giggles or breaks out into wild laughter.

June Third, 1815

Needic back from Poplar Lodge, where everything is all right. Had an amusing conversation with the lad Alec anent Labrie's wife. The huzzy comes about the house constantly, even when we are not here.

"Now what is she after?" said I.

"You have no understanding of women," he replied. "Of course she will come back when you treat her in that way."

"Now in what way?" said I. "Never do I look at her or pass the time of day with her."

"That is it," he retorts. "You are fairly insulting her, and she comes back."

"Do you try and be sweet to her and mayhap she would stay away."

"It is different with me," he says, biting his whiskers (?) and shrugging up his shoulders, just as the wench does herself. He has taken on a sort of mincing, balancing, half-Frenchified accent, and shrugs his shoulders.

"Are you afrait she would fall into the love weez you, Alec?" I remarked, trying hard to imitate the accent.

"It is not me she will be in love with."

"No, who then? Needic?"

"Needic!" he cried, going off with a great French shrug.

June Fourth, 1815

No word from Godfrey about the packs. I am getting a trifle anxious. Alec says there are more guns than yardsticks in Labrie's quarters, and makes out they are on for a fight. Labrie's wife came up at noon and made us an omelette with gull's eggs and fresh onion-tops. She is a clever wench and sat looking at me as I devoured it. I talked a bit to her. After she left, Alec sat frowning.

"You were very free with her."

"I merely spoke to her, but then she made a good omelette."

"You said too much to her. You nearly told her we expected the packs at Negodina by the Mud Lake route this year instead of Wabinosh."

"Well, and if I did?"

"It is all she wanted to know."

"Well, you seem to be always ready to stand up for the spy, if she be one," said I, turning the French accent upon him. This made him wroth, as it always does.

"You never seem to understand that a woman's not like a man. The best of them you have to watch, and more particularly when one of them is in love with you."

"That does not apply here," I said, "unless you have her assurances yourself."

"I would not make love to a married woman," he said hotly.

"That's why you guard yourself so carefully, is it? You are mighty pious. It is a pity you are not like me. Now for me Mr. Labrie's wife has no attraction whatever, commandments or no commandments."

This set him off again.

"Be careful you, Archibald Muir, that is what I have to say to you."

We could hear the lady herself laughing down at the landing, and it sounded so innocent that I could not refrain from smiling at the boy.

June Fifth, 1815

We had a scene last night with Labrie's wife, for which Alec has to be thanked, and in which I think he had a small revenge for my baiting of him. I will set down the occurrence here although it be against myself, and our national instrument. She had been hardly before the house, and it was in the dusk of the evening, when she asked me to play upon the pipes.

"Will you play upon the bag-pipes, Mr. Muir?" she said in a very civil voice. "I have never heard the bag-pipes."

Now I am always at pains to oblige a lady, if it be possible, so I went in and got the pipes, hearing Alec urge me also, so I had two willing to be pleased.

Well, scarcely had I begun to get the skin filled with wind when Labrie's wife began to laugh. Now I am willing to admit that the foreword to a performance on the pipes may be dispiriting, but I charge that what follows after when the instrument is well controlled, and when the melody pours forth in full cry, would serve to obliterate a greatly more dispiriting prelude. But in this case I did not get beyond that stage, for Labrie's wife laughed with so little judgment that I was put about. I saw something in Alec's face which led me to think that the whole matter was preconceived by him, and with that I laid down my pipes on the bench beside me. Not another note would I play. I am not much versed in women's ways, and what Labrie's wife did puzzled me. But of that I shall give Alec's explanation. At first she kept on laughing, and then she stopped suddenly and came forward looking sober enough, but with the wrinkles of the laughter not yet gone out of her

face. There she stood about four feet from me with a bit of her dress in her hand, as I have seen school girls stand abashed having been found at fault.

"You are angry because I laughed?" she said.

I did not answer.

"Are you angry with me because I could not help laughing?"

I did not answer.

Then she came close to me and made as if to put her hands upon my shoulders, and when I looked straight upon her eyes she dropped her hands, made a sound in her throat, and turned and went away.

Then young Alec began to strut about like a bantam cock.

"I have to thank you for that performance," I said.

"Why would you prevent a woman from laughing?" says he, in a rage. "Don't you know enough of women to let them laugh and let them talk."

"I can lay no claim to such a knowledge as yourself," said I, in a mighty sneering voice. "In truth I know naught about them."

"You have proved that this night," retorted Alec.

"Expound that, you young oracle," said I.

"Expound? You have sent her away with a sore heart, and she was minded to be playful with you, and that cuts sore on a heart such as hers. Don't you see it, man?" he cried, sort of dashing his hands down.

"I see nothing of the sort. She was angry simply because I wouldn't speak back to her."

"You might have spoken to her or not spoken, and she would never have minded if you hadn't looked at her in the way you did."

I saw it was no use my trying to fathom the young donkey, so I would speak no more to him.

June Sixth, 1815

Labrie's wife was up last night but I would not go out to see her, being tired of the body and her endless chatter. Alec and she talked for an hour; the boy would be contented to go on vapouring forever, I believe. I pretended to be busy with my papers, and in the end she went away. She came to the window just before she went, and I heard her fingers on the sash, but I did not look up, and I heard her low gurgling laugh as she ran away from Alec, who would go down to the landing with her.

He is as polite to her and as formal as if he were living by a code of court etiquette. I twitted him with that.

"Well," he says, mighty stiff, and pulling a solemn face, "she is a woman, and she is another man's wife."

"The last is her great virtue," said I, with a tone of sarcasm, at which he looked scornful and exceeding pious.

June Seventh, 1815

Good news yesterday. Toma came in with a message from Godfrey. The Osnaburgh packs are safe at Cache Point on the Mud Lake route. The water is high and they have not had a mishap. In three days they should reach Negodina at the end of the lake. It is, as I have always said, a route more clean and handy than the Wabinosh route, and it will be adopted now from this out.

June Eighth, 1815

Woke up with a mighty sore head this morning and had words with Alec. It is inconceivable how domineering that lad has become.

"You were drinking with Madame Labrie last night," he said.

"And my lord is jealous," I replied, sneering at him.

"Ye have made a fool of yourself. What did you tell her?"

"Nothing that I rightly remember. Since when were you ordained my catechist?"

"Now I have told you many times," he said in a parsoning way, "that you did not understand the nature of women, and that you would let slip something that Labrie wanted to know. Now you have done so, I believe, between a glass too much of whiskey and a pretty woman."

"Do you call yon a pretty woman?" I said, mocking his accent.

"I pity you!" he said, with great contempt.

He went away swinging his shoulders, much more the master than the man.

To set down the truth, although it be against myself, Labrie's wife came up in the evening of yesterday. I was more decent with the bitch having had the good news, and I treated her to some whiskey, and drank with her. Alec was off watching Toma, as he thought Labrie might try to get hold of him. I do not just remember when she went away. God forgive me, I do not rightly remember anything about it.

Hardly had Alec dismissed himself when he came back very greatly excited, but in anger this time.

"They have gone," said he.

"Who?" said I, not thinking for a moment.

"Who! My God! Who? Why, Labrie."

"Well, what of that?" I said. "It is a good riddance of a vile lot of thieves out of God's country."

"That is all you see to it?" he said.

"Well, what more?" I replied.

"I seem to see that last night you told Madame Labrie the packs were coming by the Mud Lake route to Negodina, and that they have gone to stop them. I have my doubt they will not barter with them. I seem to see that they will capture the furs and that by no very gentle means."

"You have said it before," I cried out, wroth with him and with myself. "So yon slut is what I have always supposed her to be."

A dark look came into his face. "Choose your words!" he cried, taking a step towards me.

"I'll neither pick nor choose my words," I said. "What do you call her then that would take our hospitality and then do us wrong?"

"Madaline would do no such thing," he cried, strutting about in a way that looked comical to me. I laughed at him.

"Madaline! Madaline! We shall see what Madaline will have done when we lose our furs. Why, man, you said out of your own mouth that she had done it."

"You lie," he cried, but it was here not impudence, so I paid no attention to him.

After some parley and conversation, I sent him with three canoes and all the able men, except Needic, to Negodina to see what had fallen out. He is to send me back a letter, as soon as he can, with the word. I am here now quite alone, and in mind very much put about. I have been striving to recall what passed between Labrie's wife and myself, but without any clear recollection. Ah, those women! I well remember my father used to say, "At the bottom of every trouble, there you will find a woman," and my mother used to retort, "And likewise at the bottom of every happiness." Whereupon he would kiss her.

June Tenth, 1815

Last night—waiting for word from Alec. This morning I went down to Labrie's camp with Needic. They had left two tents and some rubbish, and a little green box marked "M.L." Turning the lot over I found two empty kegs marked "H.B. Co.," once full of rum, which they had stolen from the cache

on Keg Island. So we heaped all together and set fire to it. It burned merrily, and they are at least by that much the poorer.

June Eleventh, 1815

I am in great spirits to-day. Last night I was wakened by Needic, who had his boy with him. Everything had reached Negodina safely, and there was no sign anywhere of Labrie's party. They will push on at once.

June Twelfth, 1815

This morning Labrie came back. Needic came up and told me, so about noon I took my pistols and went down with him to the cove. They had one tent up and the women were making the fire. The men went off and none of them would speak to us. I stood smiling in a taunting way, and just as I was about to leave, Labrie's wife came over to me. I perceived she had her arm wound in a cloth.

"Well, Madame Labrie, how did you hurt your arm?"

"Why do you call me Madame Labrie?"

"One must call you something. My boy Alec calls you Madaline."

Her face grew a darker red.

"You have been away for a while?"

"Yes," she said, "we were at Wabinosh, and I see you burned my box when I was gone.

"Were you ever in love?" she asked suddenly.

"Never," said I, "praise be to God."

"When you are I pray heaven you may be tortured in it."

"I am thankful for your good wishes."

"The other night you told me your packs were coming by Negodina. You understand? It was Labrie who shot me through the arm. He wanted to kill me for taking them to Wabinosh, but the others would not let him."

"The low rascal," I said, "to shoot a woman."

"And *you* have nothing to say about *me*?" She looked at me curiously, and put an odd emphasis on the *you* and the *me*.

"It is fortunate you made a mistake."

"A mistake!" said she. "Your boy Alec is twice the man that you are."

The huzzy said that with a fluff of pride.

"Good-bye," said I from my canoe.

"Is that all, Archibald Muir, is that all?"

"Good-bye," said I, "and I hope your husband won't shoot at you again."

I looked back when we had gone a bit, and she still stood there. She did not make any sign towards me, though I waved to her in courtesy. Then she covered up her face in her hands.

No word of Godfrey and Alec. I sent Needic to Labrie's wife with two gold guineas for the box I had burned, probably the only gold she ever clapped her eyes on, as it is unknown in this trade almost.

June Thirteenth, 1815

The packs came in yesterday evening. Godfrey and the men all well. I mixed a keg of spirits for them and they made a hideous night of it. Too busy to write much now, but can do nothing more to-night. Looking back in the store ledgers I can see no such winter's catch. Great good luck. Labrie's party still hanging around. Alec went down as soon as he got back, and stayed longer than he ought, so I berated him soundly. To-night at supper he said:

"Labrie shot her through the arm because she had taken them to Wabinosh and had misled them."

I paid no attention to him. By and by he said:

"You will be glad to know that she says you told her nothing about the packs."

"Did she?" said I, puzzled, as she had told me the contrary.

"I don't believe her," he added.

"You're complimentary to the ladies," I remarked.

"Here is something she asked me to give you."

It was the money I had sent her for that box of hers I burnt.

June Fourteenth, 1815

Busy all day between the storehouse and the fur press. Half the Indians are drunk yet. Alec says Labrie and his party have gone. May the devil's luck go with them. I thought Alec looked a trifle white in the face, and as if he was impatient to make me talk, but I had no time to be spending with him.

June Fifteenth, 1815

A wonderfully warm day, and the flies very bad, enough to madden one. Have pressed all the packs and now everything is in order for a move. What a grand night for the partners it will be when they see our canoes full of the

finest come to land at Fort William. It should be of profit to me, and I expect to come back here or go somewhere a factor, if I comprehend the rules properly. About an hour ago I had just finished writing the last words when Alec's shadow came over the window. He seemed to stand there over long, and I was just on the point of crying out to him when he moved off. In a moment he came in to me. I did not look up from my writing when he flung a scrap of paper down before me.

"There!" he said, in an odd voice. "I found it under the sash. It fell face down, so, as I saw printing on the back, I thought it was but a scrap torn off a fur bill.

"Read it," said he.

I turned it over and observed that there were some words in writing on the other side. I made them out to be: "Why do you call me Labrie's wife? She is my aunt. Do you think I would marry an ugly fellow like Labrie. They brought me up here to help their plans. We shall see. If you want to know my name it's Madaline Lesage. I learned to write from the Sister St. Theresa at Wikwemikong. Is it not pretty? M. L."

Then I recalled how she had come to the window, one night not very long ago, when I opine she had left the paper there.

"Well!" I said coolly, "and what is it now that you have to say about Madaline Lesage?"

His face had a tortured look upon it. He tried to speak. "She was—she was the bravest, the dearest"—he stopped there and hung down his head. "Oh, my God, you cannot understand. You can never understand!"

He moved away and stood by the door. I thought upon what he had said. No, I did not understand. Then I tried once more to go on with my page. But I was detained by a sound which is as uncommon as that of laughter in these outlandish parts. The sound of sobbing. Just for a moment it brought back to me the sound of my sister's voice as she sobbed for her lover when they brought him back dead and dripping out of the sea. I had a vision of it as if it were snapped upon my eye in a flash of lightning, she leaning her forehead upon her wrists against the wall. I looked up at Alec and there he was leaning at the door-post, his shoulders all moving with his sobs. I understood in a flash. I pray God to forgive me for the sin of blindness, and for always being so dead to others in my own affairs. I went towards him knowing that I could not give him any comfort. So he went out from the house and walked alone through the gloaming. I perceived that a change had come over him. I had always considered him a bit of a boy to be ordered about, but there was a man walking away from me, resolute in his steps, big in his bulk, and

weighed down as if he was carrying a load, bearing it as if he were proud of it, with energy and trust in himself.

IX

The Winning of Marie-Louise

THERE is, not many miles above the High Falls on the Rivière des Lièvres, a level plateau from which the hills seem to have withdrawn to leave an arena for some spectacle, some ancient, savage pageant. Here, in days before the white man, trooped the Indians, Algonquins and Ottawas; streaming through the rift in the mountains from the east towards Timiscamingue, or coming up the river in canoes like a cloud of dragon-flies from the wilderness of the south, pitching their tepees at sundown and trading there for weeks in the yellow sunlight, while the river flooded by and the hills kept watch around. Here, now, lies the Iroquois farm, and a little farther Notre Dame de Low, and beyond that the loneliness of Lac des Sables, and beyond that again the river in its sources, fed by the north snows melting until midsummer.

At the Iroquois Farm lived Monique Bellefontaine, and this is the story of how Marie-Louise Bellefontaine won her husband and is Madame Pierre Voyer at this date. Monique's house stood back from the river, where he had built it with his own hands, and it was a famous house from Buckingham to Lac des Sables. People who knew not the house had heard of the fame of Monique, for he was a mighty man in those parts, and was renowned for fiddle-playing and dancing and hewing and fighting. In his young days no one could beat him at shooting with a rifle; no man had ever knocked him off his legs. He could follow a trail in the woods like a hound, and could make a canoe like an Indian, and had been known to walk over a hundred and fifty miles on snowshoes without eating, resting or sleeping. And when his fame was becoming a trifle dim by reason of age, his daughter, Marie-Louise, revived the tradition of the house, and became the noted beauty, as he in his day had been the noted bravo, of the river. In the wintertime many a teamster stopped his horses and wended his way to Monique's, for no reason at all but to renew an impression of Marie-Louise's laughing eyes. And in the summer, when the "drive" came down the river, the longest stage they had was the ten miles above and below Monique's.

There is something fateful in being a beauty and having a mighty man for a father, for amid all Marie-Louise's lovers was not one who had the courage to walk up to the hero and demand her hand. It had become noised abroad that the man who had that courage would have to prove his right by a

series of hand-to-hand encounters with Monique, and there were traditions of fights in which he had broken jawbones and cracked brain-pans, and of milder meetings in which he had danced every adversary off his legs, and played the fiddle until only one hair was left in the bow. For modest men, these recollections of their fathers were deterrents; and as time went by it became clear that the strength and prowess of her father's hands were to rise up against Marie-Louise and be the blame of her maiden days.

But even such destinies are altered by circumstances from without, and it was the advent of Pierre Voyer, from some region beyond the Lièvres and its environs, which gave Marie-Louise joy. In October of a certain year she was looking from her window upon the river. It was toward evening. From the dusk of the point where the water turned she could hear faint singing, and the hard, short blow of the oars in the rowlocks. Soon the boats rounded the point; one, two, three. Twenty men in each boat, pulling altogether, they sang:

Descendez à l'ombre,
Ma jolie blonde.

They made gay colour in the boats with their bright shirts and their red caps and blue tunics. Each brilliant group doubled itself in the still water. Madame Bellefontaine was adding the last loaves to a cord of bread which she had made in two days. "Here they come," she cried. Monique sauntered down to the landing. Soon the song began to die off, and individual voices came out in halloos, and laughter rang clear. Some one threw a dog from a leading boat, and he swam on in front yelping with excitement. This was the arrival of the first gang of men for the upper river; and on this evening, for the first time, Marie-Louise saw Pierre Voyer. He was not very tall, but taller than he looked. Dark hair he had, and blue, resolute eyes. That evening he had a red handkerchief tied about his hair, and blue leggings, and looked a bit of a dandy in his high-heeled shoes. An earring he wore in his left ear, and his right arm was tattooed with a figure of a heart with a dove fluttering over it. There was a bold, free look about him as he strode around the open fires where the cooks were making the supper. When he stood still he was like a young pine in a clearance of the forest.

Old Monique took a fancy to him, and asked him his name, and swung his hand and hit him two or three blows in the chest to see if he was as sound as he looked. He was; so Monique brought the handsome fellow up to the house and said, "Here, old woman, Madame Bellefontaine, here's a young fellow called Voyer from away beyond. This is Marie-Louise." So down they sat and had supper, and it was found the young fellow had a

tongue in his head. Oh! he made them laugh. Then he told a story about a friend of his, and every one knew that it was a story about himself. Old Monique slapped his hand on his thigh and cried out, "Just like me when I was a lad!" And then he felt sorry that he had so flattered the young fellow. All the while, as Pierre Voyer talked, his eyes kept up a conversation with Marie-Louise, until old Monique, who was as sharp as a weasel, felt that there was something in the wind, and broke up the party *sans cérémonie*.

On the edge of the river the men had set up their tents, and there was a hubbub of fiddles and songs, disputes and loud laughter. The scene was illuminated by the smoking fires, and here and there a glaring birch-bark torch. Presently the men had wrangled themselves to sleep, and, as Marie-Louise looked from her window, the only sound she heard was the strong current of the river; the dark tents she saw rising upon the bank, and now and again roving sparks started out in little golden companies from the half-dead fires. Across the river, moving ever in a faint light of its own, she saw the black mountains behind which fell the stars. Marie-Louise wondered if down there under one of the tents merry Pierre was planning to dare Monique and marry her.

In the morning on the way they went, bound for the pineries at the head-waters of the Lièvres; and Monique Bellefontaine, who was foreman of the gang, went with them. Marie-Louise remained at home to watch the river freeze over and the snow sift in behind the trees on the mountain, and to remember Pierre Voyer, whose memory she adored, even to the earring in his ear.

It was not until near the middle of the winter that Pierre Voyer mentioned Marie-Louise Bellefontaine's name to any one, but he had thought of it many, many times. He had heard talk around the camboose, and at noon in the still, snowy pine woods when they stopped work for lunch, that the man who married Marie-Louise must be a better man than her father. He had taken time to measure her father. Occasionally he would take an axe, just to show the boys how to chop a tree; casually he would leap two feet farther than the best jumper in the camp; with an instructive air he would sometimes take a fiddle in hand and play a tune in the second position. Pierre Voyer had taken note of these things.

One day Monique Bellefontaine and Pierre Voyer slipped on their snowshoes, took each a wedge of bread and three square inches of pork, each an axe, and started. The foreman wanted to look at a new area of pine, and he chose to take Pierre Voyer because—well, because, for a youngster, he had less ignorance about pine than any one Monique had met. They walked fifteen miles, and began to get into the new region. They did not talk

much; Monique was estimating the trees on one side, Pierre on the other. They spoke little on matters foreign to their speculation; about them was the great silence of the wood.

They rested for lunch on the border of a lake. It looked like a cleared plain in the centre of the forest. The level snow was fretted all across in ripples, delicate in blue shadows and crystal curves. A chickadee came down and chirped about as they sat munching in the cold. Pierre Voyer thought that was a good time to speak, so he stood up as formally as he could, and, as if making an announcement, he said: "My name is Pierre Voyer. I come from Sagamook; my father has the big farm there; I want to marry Marie-Louise Bellefontaine."

His heart thumped his ribs like a woodpecker trying a hollow tree. All his instinct told him, by the way Monique kept silence and seemed to look at the chickadee, that his work was before him. By and by Monique spoke. "Very well, we shall see. Pierre Voyer has got to be a pretty good man to marry Marie-Louise." He did not propose any trial of strength like the ancient heroes, but went on with his work. Pierre was expectant. The afternoon began to wear away, and long after the time when they should have started for the shanty Monique was staring at the pine-trees. Suddenly he straightened himself, threw his axe over his shoulder, and broke into a trot. Pierre gave a tug at his belt and followed. Close he kept at Monique's heels. He went for a mile or two at that rate, and then began a long, moose-like stride, rapid and powerful, that seemed to lift him over the snow. Pierre laboured after him, seeing the wide space between them gradually widen. Then Monique stopped to fix his shoe, and Pierre overtook him. But in a moment he was flying on ahead, snow dancing about his heels.

Unexpectedly they came to a drop over a brow of rock. Monique leaped down ten feet and lit like a bird, and on he went. Pierre hesitated a moment, thumped down clumsily sideways, slid two feet and came to a dead stand, his shoes weighted with a mass of snow. On went the terrible Monique, up a hill, never once looking behind. They had gone for five miles, when Pierre began to lose sight of him. He had a stabbing stitch in his side; his breath seemed all in his throat. Then he began to think that Monique was a tree moving, and then that the tree was Monique standing still; and then he lost him hopelessly.

He kept on in a vexed, blind, maddened way until his lungs became like stone. When he had rested awhile, he took up the trail and followed those tremendous strides to the shanty. Supper was well over. Monique reclined in his bunk, and never glanced toward the door when Pierre came in. He felt

that throughout the company, from the cook to the culler, the rumour had spread that some one had asked for the hand of Marie-Louise Bellefontaine.

It took Pierre ten days to swallow the chagrin of that defeat. When one night Monique nodded to him as he passed through the door, Pierre followed like a man who obeys a dictator. The moon stood straight overhead. Monique walked along the hard snow road for a mile, and then he turned and said to Pierre: "You and me are going to wrestle."

At it they went in the moonlight that flooded the snow and chased it with the shadows of the hardwood trees. First it was catch-as-catch-can. Pierre got the best hold, and heaved at Monique as if he were lifting a ton. He seemed rooted in granite like a mountain. They crouched almost immovable; a mass of iron muscle on the strain. Pierre, through his starting eyes, saw their shadows thrown on the snow in a strange dwarfed shape.

Suddenly he felt as if some weight were crushing him. He strove against it terribly. One foot was forced out of the snow. All the blood of his body seemed in his eyes. Then he went up very slowly into the air; all his grasp was broken away, and in a moment more he flew over Monique's head and lay in the road. The moon looked down on him.

They tried collar and elbow. Pierre was a valiant lad, and he was fighting for Marie-Louise. Monique's arms were like bars of iron. Pierre could not move him. Then Monique began to play him back and forth and give him sudden jerks that made his head feel as if it would be snapped off. Then he slowly turned him over on his side as if he were a tired child and let him rest in the snow.

Pierre's sensations gave him matter for thought for weeks. Spring was coming on, and if he had been fortunate in his encounters he might have looked forward to meeting Marie-Louise with confidence. There was one test left. He could play the fiddle; yes, he was aware that he could play the fiddle. He did not believe that Monique could equal him in that, which was surely why he had never accepted the challenge, as Pierre had often played before him. One night, just before they began to drive the logs in to the Lièvres, Pierre took his fiddle and played as he had never played before. Such fire, such tone, such extraordinary sweeps and gyrations of the bow! Could anything surpass that? he thought.

By and by, some time after he had ceased, amid the chatter and laughter of the camp arose a penetrating sound which made the silence fall as stars come out after rain. Low and firm and equal, note followed note; flowing strongly, slowly, earnestly, note followed note. What was the melody he played? No one there had heard it before, and still each man seemed to recognise it. It grew up like a flower in the ferny spaces of deep woods. It

gathered depth as the night does, star following star. It ceased as the dawn comes with quiet colour. A few deep notes and it was done. Pierre covered up his head in silence.

When the drive reached Bellefontaine's place, Marie-Louise heard all about these adventures from her cousin Ulric, who was in the camp, and her heart burned for Pierre. He would not come near the house, as he had no right to; and he sulked in his tent. Marie-Louise remembered him just as he looked the night he came up the river with his earring in his ear, his black locks bound with the red handkerchief. She longed to see him again and crown him for his valiancy. But Monique stood between them, and she did a better thing. She wrote him a note, which was borne to him by the cousin. Pierre Voyer read it by the waning light the same evening. It bore these magic words: "Dad kant swim.—Marie-Louise."

Pierre studied these words. What did they mean? Suddenly light broke in upon his dark mind. He knew that Marie-Louise loved him; and that if she had her will his labours would be closed; that she had heard of his defeats and honoured them. For, what did she say? "Dad kant swim." He put the scrap of paper over his heart. Monique, like Achilles and many another hero, had one vulnerable point. His daughter had betrayed it.

A week after this Bellefontaine was as quiet as before, and the drive had reached the High Falls. Here the river takes a sharp turn and rolls all its brown water over two preliminary cascades, and then down one tremendous leap of a hundred feet. Every log that slips the boom and goes over the fall is marred or broken. Every log that goes down the prepared chute glides like an arrow, swift as light, and drops uninjured into the pool. This chute begins in the placid water at the head of the first cascade. It is a V-shaped trough supported on trestles, six feet wide at the top, three feet at the bottom; it is about four feet deep. It slopes and bends down among the trees for four hundred yards. The timbers which form it are bleached clean as bones by the sun and the rain. Through this trough spins constantly a solid stream of rapid water.

Until they reached the Falls Pierre had no opportunity of using his newly acquired knowledge. But one day as he stood in the sunshine at the head of the chute guiding the logs into the current an idea came into his head. He looked down the chute and followed the hurrying logs and water with his eyes. He had heard of men going down there, some alive, some who were merely names forever after. He weighed the chances, and he remembered Marie-Louise and his lost battles for her in the woods. He knew he could swim. Monique was working very near him, directing operations from a stout timber which bridged the chute. Gradually, without attracting attention,

Pierre drew closer to him, closer to him. He waited his opportunity. It came. Monique turned to call something down the chute; he had one foot off the timber and was raising it on the other. Quick as a flash, Pierre slipped his pike-pole under that foot and pried it up. Without knowing what had happened, Monique found himself in the terrific water. All the men saw, after they heard him yell, was a flash of red at the turn. He was gone. Before any one could move Pierre had plunged into the stream and was gone, head first, out of sight.

He could not realise the speed at which he was rushing. The two iron bars let into the sides of the chute, polished like silver, looked like ribbons spinning by. There were flashes and yells as he shot past the points where the men were stationed. He saw the calm blue sky far, far above him. And in an instant he felt the deep waters cover him. He fought with them, and came into the light again, swimming strongly. He was in a whirlpool, and just beyond him he saw Monique's face, whiter than the white foam. It disappeared. Pierre struck out desperately. Then he found Monique under his hands; he grasped him. They were locked together, and for a moment Pierre held him by the throat and spoke to him and shook him.

Then Monique gave himself up in fear, and Pierre battled for their lives. Slowly, with enormous power, he edged out of the whirlpool, and felt the sucking of the cross-current that set out of the bay around the point. Beyond that point lay the rapids, short but fierce and dangerous. He struggled to gain that point, but swiftly it turned and flew by.

Then in the mighty pull of the current he floated and saved his strength. Monique lay back, his eyes closed, his mouth catching the water. Up came the roar, the clamour from the rapids, louder and louder. Suddenly Pierre grasped Monique around the body, his arms like the grip of a vise, and they went into the waters that seemed to hurl them on and crowd upon them for their lives. It was only a minute of confusion, without breath, without sight, without heart-beats. They were covered and overwhelmed. The water forced them until the sinews of Pierre's arms cracked with the strain; together they rolled into the deep quiet eddy at the foot of the last plunge. Together and alive!

When Monique wrung the water out of his eyes he saw Pierre standing on the shore. He knew Pierre's arm was broken by the way it hung. "I'm all right," he was saying, with the blood trickling out of the roots of his hair from a wound concealed by it.

A few minutes later Monique was yelling to his gang, "Look alive, you fellows! Do you think I keep you to look like sheep in a thunder-storm? Get a canoe and paddle to Notre Dame de Low and bring back Dr. Boisblanc.

And you, Ulric," he called to his nephew, "go up to the house and bring Marie-Louise down, if she wants to come. Tell her there's a man down here that knows how to swim, and his name is Pierre Voyer."

Marie-Louise came.

X

A Legend of Welly Legrave

THERE are many songs on the river that play about the name of Welly Legrave. You can hear them by camp-fires as far north as the Temagami; and beyond the height of land where the rivers turn to Hudson Bay, many a lonely trapper shouts the name of this hero as he passes the last portage and sees the new moon in the deep pine-shadow of the clear lake. The deeds of this hero are preserved in verse, and he is a proud man who knows the whole interminable rhyme, and who can put the matter into sufficient prose with the proper details, when a youngster or a novice to the river from Becancour or beyond asks him to expound these dark sayings.

No one knew when Welly Legrave was born, or who were his parents, or how he died, but there are legends about these things. One will tell you how his mother was Algonquin and his father French, out of old France, and how he was known on the river as Count Paul from something he said one day when he was down at the Chats. Another will tell you that he had no touch of savage about him; that his mother was a white girl and his father a Spaniard from the Silver Islets in the Great Superior, and that Welly just wandered and came East for the love of life. It was true he was known from Spanish River to the Montagnais country; and the traditions about his burning eyes has something Spanish running through it.

But another will lead you aside when he hears these vain stories, and with awe in his mouth will tell you that Welly Legrave was a child of the spirit which lives in the pine woods, and that he was found after a great storm on the shore of Lake Temiscamingue by a party of trappers wrapped in a red shirt which vanished when the human hand touched him, and that a voice like thunder roared in the forest. He will offer to show you the very point of land, and here you will find a rude cross with the initials W. L., for no one would dare to cut the letters of his name.

The exploits of the hero are sometimes visionary and sometimes human, and their colour depends upon the character of the minds which have preserved them and handed them on from one generation to another. Now there is Laurent Pombère who can remember his grandfather, and whose grandfather could remember Welly Legrave. He has many a story of him, some of them deep in the charm of the woods, and others full of the strange

life and the turmoil, wild intrigue, and sudden spring of danger in those old days when the toil of the lumbermen on the Ottawa had a dash of romance.

Sometimes Laurent Pombère will talk, remembering the things his grandfather told him; sometimes you could not get him to utter the name of Welly Legrave; and he will for hours remain as dumb as an idol, smoking his pipe, until it has come time to tread on the fire. Then you know that another evening has gone by and the oracle has not spoken.

When he begins to hum! then you should listen. He will begin to hum, fixing his pipe, maybe, by the light of the fire, or maybe splicing a favourite paddle that has given under strain. The humming will go on, formless, and avoiding tune; then you will catch a word or two, then under his breath he will chant something that has both tune and words; then he will say, without looking up, as if he were talking to himself—"You never heard about that? eh!"

"About what?"

"About that Welly Legrave."

"That story about Welly Legrave you told the other night, about the Wendigo?"

Then he will look up at you in a pitying way, with such innocence in his face that you will begin to wonder whether he did really tell you the story.

"Who told you the story about Welly Legrave and the Wendigo? Nobody knew that story but my grandfather; he wouldn't tell me."

Then he will relapse into silence and you will fancy you have blundered, and have yourself to thank for nothing instead of a new yarn. But he will break out again.

"You heard what that fool Batiste Laroque tried to sing at the portage to-day; you remember now. He made it go—

The Remacs roar and The Remacs call,
  Welly Legrave, Welly Legrave.
Where are the boys that went over the fall,
  Welly Legrave?
Apjohn was the only one to tell,
  Welly Legrave, Welly Legrave,
How Billy Dormandy went to hell,
  Welly Legrave.

That's the way they all sing it, but they don't know what they mean. You ask them; you ask Batiste Laroque now, and he will tell you nothing at all, for he

don't know. He will say, 'Oh, you ask Laurent Pombère; his grandfather told him everything; he knows.' But that's a story in those verses. I will tell that in my grandfather's way. He's dead now, and gone to heaven, if God has forgotten his sins. He was a wild one, I tell you—no holding him—he was a wild one.

"That Welly Legrave they make the verses about, he was on this river fifty years ago; he was never an old man and never a young man; he was always the same; he came one day, and many days after he went away, and that was all there was to it. Many people said he had the magic, and that when he liked he could call up a spirit that came out of the water like a black snake. My grandfather, he used to laugh at that, but when I asked him, 'Well, you don't believe that?' he would shut up his mouth, and would not say he did not believe it. My grandfather said he was a grand man, not too big, but iron all over and great brains in his head; quick and cunning as a wild thing, and he was something else besides. But it was queer that when my grandfather tried to tell what *that* was he would get muddled up and begin to talk as if he had swallowed too much brandy.

"Those were the days of the square timber on the river. They never put any trash into the water then, and there was mighty little sawing done. Those pieces were squared off and bound into cribs, and the rafts came down like cities. Those were great days. Now, this Welly Legrave was a great man on the river; great in every way. He knew the woods as a priest knows his mass-book. He knew every bit of the river, asleep or awake. He knew trees, and no one had any timber that he knew half as well as Welly Legrave knew it. And he knew men, too; whenever a new man came along he took his measure and set him just over where he belonged.

"Now all this made the big men wild to get hold of him, but they couldn't. He wouldn't come for wages; you might offer him a bake-kettle full of money, and he would turn his back on you. He wouldn't come for fair talk or for anything under the sun, so far as any one could see, but he would go just where he pleased and leave when he pleased, and no man was his master. And whoever he took up with was a happy man, for he got the best of his timber; and he got it to Quebec quicker and safer than any one else.

"There was another queer thing, and that is at the bottom of this story that they sing about: he would never be foreman, no; some other fellow was always the foreman, and Welly Legrave was head over him; and if they pulled together, all right, and if they pulled apart, all the men pulled with Welly Legrave, and the foreman just bossed himself. And sometimes it happened just so—on one side one man, big as a house, with all the power,

and him drawing the pay, mad, mad all the time; and on the other that Welly Legrave, smiling all the time and the whole gang pulling with him.

"Now, it was one winter a long time ago my grandfather said they were working on a limit back on the Coulonge for old McTavish Hamilton. It was a terrible winter—the snow was deep and the frost was heavy all the time; but that wasn't the worst of it. They had for foreman a man called Apjohn, a man from Wales, and he was a son of the prince of devils. Nothing ever suited him, no matter how it went. If the work was bad, he seemed to like it better, for he could strike then; and if it went well he could only swear. He could strike, too; strike men, beat them; and when he once hit a man he went wild and every one had to stand clear. He hit pretty freely that winter, but all of a sudden he stopped.

"It was one night when he and the only man who was friendly with him, by name Dormandy, came in on snowshoes, about twenty miles from a camp back in the bush. His supper wasn't ready, for the cook had frozen his heels and couldn't walk very lively; and when they came in there were two of the men helping him—my grandfather over the soup-kettle, and a man by name Lemab Seriza making batter for pancakes. When he saw his supper wasn't ready he flew on the nearest like a wolf, which happened to be Lemab, and hit him over the head with an iron pan, the first thing he laid hands on.

"Lemab turned half round after the first blow, caught another full in the face, and went into the fire on his back. My grandfather wasn't very much afraid of anything, so he went right under Apjohn's nose and pulled Lemab out. He would have burned up, for he lay on the floor like stone, his hair singed off and blood on his face. Apjohn went raging round so wild he didn't know what he was wild about. The men got into corners, and my grandfather and the cook held Lemab. In a few minutes his soul came back and he sat up on the floor. He looked at Apjohn, who had got himself down a bit, and tried to get onto his feet. He did at last, and my grandfather held him, for the cook had to stand on his toes and was no good when it came to holding a half-dead man on his legs. There they stood, swinging to and fro, my grandfather, and Lemab, with ashes in his burnt hair and the scar on his face, with his eyes on Apjohn, fierce as an otter. He spoke the English well and after awhile he let out on him:

"'Me cooking your supper, and you to come behind and strike me, you cowardly devil. You're a mean man and a bully. Your mother made you a strong man, but you'd break your own mother. There's no marrow in your bones, but they're as iron as your heart.'

"My grandfather, trying to hold him steady, mind you, and Apjohn, standing up stiff and horrible, looking ready to kill them both when Lemab

got through. But Lemab wouldn't stop.

"'Come on, hit me again, now you have half-killed me, and take me down the river lashed to the crib-timber to show the Bytown people how you bossed the job on the Coulonge. If you leave me alive, day nor night will I rest till I have my revenge of you. I'll see you whine for your life yet. There is one man on the river that'll do for you, and that's Welly Legrave. Ah! you shiver at his name, and every one sees the coward you are.'

"Now, no one knew where Welly Legrave was that winter; he was in none of the camps and there was talk that he had gone back to the Spanish River, but no one knew. My grandfather said he wondered that Apjohn didn't kill them both when Lemab taunted him with Welly Legrave, but something that happened made him hold his hand. You must know that it was a perfectly still night—not a sound, no wolves or anything, when suddenly, just as Lemab called out Welly's name for the first time, something began a long way off like a cry, and it grew and grew till it came so loud about the shanty that no one could bear the sound, worse than a jam when it breaks and the logs roar in the water. There stood Lemab and kept calling out, 'Welly Legrave, Welly Legrave!' and every one thought he had gone crazy. What with that terrible cry outside and Lemab shouting like a fool inside, my grandfather thought he would lose his wits. But the noise outside and Lemab stopped at the same time, and just when everybody thought the silence would end with killing, the door opened and in stepped Welly Legrave!

"My grandfather said it was a great sight that, and it was great to hear Welly say, as quiet as you like, 'Put that boy in his bunk.' Oh, dear, but it was a great sight to see Apjohn, with never a word out of his head, stand and have Welly look him over as if he was a steer for sale.

"There was no more bullying or striking after that. Apjohn might as well have taken to snowshoes and gone down to the depot. No one paid any attention to him but Dormandy. The whole gang worked for Welly with a song, as merry as a fiddle, and the Welsh devil and Billy Dormandy had their heads down all the time like two bear-cubs at a honeycomb; but it wasn't honey they were chewing. They were brewing some plot all the time and skimming the pot whenever they got alone; and my grandfather didn't spy on them, but the wind one day brought him over what they were saying:

"'And you will write the letter to-night?' said Dormandy.

"'I will write it to-night,' said Apjohn.

"'And you will make it plain that the men are drunk all the time?'

"'I will so, and no stroke of the work doing at all.'

" 'Well, I will take it to the depot myself.'

"And that night my grandfather watched Apjohn working his pen, and the next morning away went Dormandy with the letter. But the boys never paid any attention, they just worked away with Welly. Dormandy came back, black as a cloud, and my grandfather saw he brought no joy with him.

"My grandfather didn't take the letter, but it dropped out of Apjohn's pocket and the wind blew it over to him. It was English, and Lemab read it out to my grandfather. It told that Welshman that he would be docked five dollars for every word if he wrote a letter like that again, and everybody could see that the boss at the depot was wild that Welly had come, and he knew that McTavish Hamilton would be a glad man, for he said, 'And I have written to Mr. Hamilton every word you wrote me.'

"So these plotters were not very well pleased, as you may well know, being cut so short by the boss at the depot, and they began to hold their hate as a cloud holds lightning, ready to drop it anywhere, when the time came.

"The time came. Winter went away with a rush, as a hard winter often does, and they had plenty of water for the drive, and the dear spring was very good to enjoy after that winter, and the young summer, too, when they slept out on the cribs they were building at the mouth of the Coulonge. They were building them up solid out of that good white pine; solid, so that when they passed all the rapids and slides, and came into the coves at Quebec, they would be as good as a ship. Welly Legrave was a great hand at building a crib, and the men worked with him and there was no fighting in any way, but there was Billy Dormandy and John Apjohn. Sometimes they would work and sometimes they wouldn't work; but 'just as you please, my gentlemen.' Nobody paid any attention to them, but treated them well, polite to them! for the gang was in good humour. Sometimes my grandfather would get the right side of the wind and hear them use great words against Welly Legrave and the men. But it wasn't until the raft was all bound up and well on the way to Bytown that he heard anything but hard words. Just the day before they got to The Remacs he heard something different.

"The Remacs is a bad rapid. Many a man has got into The Remacs and never come out again. It has an evil name, and many a heart living and dead remembers that name for something wicked and cruel. Every raft that comes there has to be broken up, and crib after crib goes down alone into the rapids, crosses the middle stream, and then back again to shore, and if you don't get back—well, the timber gets through, stick by stick, but never any live men. Now what my grandfather heard the day before they got to The Remacs was this, and he told it to Welly Legrave, for he thought it was curious. He was dead asleep and suddenly he was wide-awake, and he heard

Apjohn and Dormandy talking outside in the moonlight. All that he heard was, 'And the crib will go into the rapids and over the rapids, and what will come out do you think?' and it was Dormandy's voice saying the words. He could not hear any more for the wind was springing around and tossing water at the edge of the raft.

"Welly Legrave didn't seem to think much of what my grandfather heard; but he took it into his head, and the next day they came to The Remacs, and the whole raft was tied up. Two days they worked taking the cribs down, and the second night nearly half of them were down safe. The crib with the little houses where Welly and the men slept was to go down the first thing the next morning. My grandfather said they had music that night after supper, and Lemab danced and Welly Legrave told a story, and it was night before they thought of turning in. There was a bit of a fire on the crib and the wind from off shore blew little sparks from it out on the dark water. The moon was up and in clouds, and the clouds moved along slowly; when the light came full you could see the little dark houses covered with green boughs and flags standing out to the river, and the men sitting round smoking. One by one they went to their bunks until there was only Welly and my grandfather left. But there was Apjohn and Billy Dormandy sitting on the next crib away from the rest of the boys all evening. And Dormandy spoke up:

"'We are thinking of going back to a dance at LaBelle's to-night.'

"'It is five miles to LaBelle's,' said Welly Legrave.

"'We will be back before morning.'

"'Mr. Apjohn is the foreman!' said Welly.

"'We were not asking your leave,' said Apjohn, as wild as he dared to be.

"'You were just telling me and Mr. Pombère?' answered Welly with a little rise in his voice.

"'We were that,' said Dormandy.

"'And you will not be back till morning?' said Welly.

"'We will be back in time for the work,' said Dormandy again, for Apjohn, with rage, was long past speaking.

"'Well, we will sleep sound,' said Welly as they started over the raft to the shore, Apjohn springing over the logs and looking back, every little while, over his shoulder, to curse Welly.

"Well, every one was gone to bed and so went Welly and my grandfather, and the moon got into a grove of clouds, and the night got dark. It got still, too, and the wind made the only sound with the flags and the

cedar-boughs on the houses, and the water slapping on the side of the raft. Before three hours there were two men coming over the raft from the shore. It must have been a short dance at LaBelle's when Apjohn and Dormandy were back so soon; five miles away and the LaBelle girls as pretty as *Belle de Jour* in a garden-bed. They came along slowly and without any noise until they were on the crib. Instead of going to their bunks, they began to work in the dark, stooping over the edges of the crib. They were cutting the withes which bound the crib to the raft. After a while they both rose up, and, standing on the crib, began to shove against the raft with pikepoles.

"In a moment there were inches of black water between the crib and the raft; soon there were feet; soon no man could jump across. Then they could no longer lean against the pikepoles; they drew them in quietly. There they were, leaving the raft slowly; it grew more like the shoreline, and the fringe of cedars on the bank seemed rooted on the dark level. Pulled up half way upon the crib, with her stern in the water, was one of the boats with the ropes coiled in her, and the oars.

"The wind was off shore and the current set out to the centre of the river half a mile away. It was no work to take a crib out there, but to get it back when the rocks were passed and when the growl of The Remacs could be heard! Six men it would take to do that, and now there were only two. Dormandy had an oar at one end, and Apjohn an oar at the other, and they never took them out of the water. Soon they came to the only cross current, where they had to work to keep her from swinging. Apjohn was pulling at his great oar, but Dormandy let her slew a bit. She might have swung round, but Apjohn braced himself on his oar like a rock and they got through safely. They let her float now, and came together, whispering alongside one of the houses.

"You could know, my grandfather said, that Dormandy made up this scheme.

" 'Is it time yet to take to the boat?' said Apjohn.

" 'Not till we have them well into the current. Then we'll go and you'll hear no more of Welly Legrave on this river.'

" 'Will they find us out, do you think?' said Apjohn, with his mind always turning coward.

" 'Never. We just had time to save ourselves, and that is our story.' "

The water began to grow rougher; the current pulled like an ox at the skidway, between the crib and the north shore the river was grey with foam, and the hammering of the rapids came up louder.

" 'Now we'll start,' said Dormandy.

"It was just at that point where the men begin to work the cribs back toward the shore into the safe current. To remain where they were for five minutes would be dangerous, the current would carry the crib beyond all hope of escape into the bad places of The Remacs, where the dead men never come away.

"They turned to the boat. But there was no boat there; the edge of the crib was as clear as a table, and the black water ripped by.

" 'The boat, the boat!'

"It was Dormandy crying out, for it came over him that he couldn't swim a stroke. Just then the moon turned out of a cloud as you might take a lantern out of your coat, and they saw the speck of a boat farther down the river, moving like a shadow in a faster current. Then they knew, both together, that when they had come through the cross current the water had caught the boat and pulled her off the crib.

"They just looked at it a second or two; then ApJohn, who was foxy when he was in danger, with plenty of pluck, yelled:

" 'Boys, turn out, the crib's broke loose. Welly Legrave, Pombère, Lemab.' He knew their only chance was to set the whole gang at work, and there would be time, maybe, to pull into the safe current. He expected to see the boys tumble out, blind with sleep, Welly Legrave at their head.

"But there was silence in those little houses. No one moved. Dormandy was in pieces from fear. Apjohn rushed into the nearest house and tore at the bunks. Nothing but blankets—blankets rolled up as if men were inside them, but not a live boy on the whole of that crib but Dormandy and Apjohn.

" 'Now, what do you think of Welly Legrave?' my grandfather used to say. 'He wasn't very much asleep, was he? with those brave boys safe as the world, and only the two foxes alone in The Remacs. Oh! he understood!' And to have found out the whole thing from just those words my grandfather heard, and he couldn't understand them, but Welly Legrave had understood, and all the brave lads had slipped away when Welly gave them the word, and the great plotters with their backs turned making play to go to LaBelle's!

"When Apjohn came out to the danger his face was set like stone. The moonlight had left the boat and was feeling its way across the black water; then it broke all around the crib. It showed the men the swift river and the eddies going like spindles, and the long lines of current twisted like wire ropes.

"Apjohn looked a moment and knew what his one chance was. In a second he was pulling off his heavy boots and socks. Dormandy watched

him with a white face, with terror crawling over it.

"'You're not going to leave me?' he cried.

"'I am that. Every man for himself; you planned this, and you put yourself against Welly Legrave, and now you can swim for it and take your chances.' Dormandy took one look at the water he hated and sprang upon Apjohn. But he had been watching for him; he leaped away and Dormandy fell between the crib-timbers.

"'I waste no strength on you,' he cried; 'you stick to the crib,' and with never another word he leaped as far into the water as he could.

"Then Dormandy stood up and looked after him into the water, and he knew then in his heart that the life was surely gone out of him. My grandfather told grandly how he put his hands in the water and paddled there like a dog, afraid to swim, and howled, and ran along the crib, where the foam came up white to look at him and went away when he caught at it. And how the crib began to heave in the long waves, and the logs to play and grind against one another until the water twisted them and came crawling over the whole length of the timber; and how, when the boilers came up from below, the withes broke up and out spread the logs like a fan, and there was Dormandy astride of two, like a man with his feet on the backs of wild horses, with the light from the moon and the foam crossing his white face. And how there came a roar and a plunge, with a great hill of foam and black water, and the big timber sticks playing like feathers in the air, and never any more on the river or in the woods a boy to answer to the name of Billy Dormandy, and make his mark on the pay-roll when scores were settled, and the work all over and done.

"My grandfather would tell you how Apjohn swam, who could swim like an otter, how he fought with the current when he had to fight, and how he floated with the eddies and struggled with the whirlpools, and lay to rest in the dead water, then out again, when the current came against him like the shoulder of a strong man, and he had to work and force himself by inches; and how the drift-wood caught at his throat, and him with no breath at all in his body; and how the moon followed him; and how he heard Dormandy cry, going down to death in the heavy water.

"But by and by he got in under the south shore, and the moon, like a good friend, showed him where he was and a pier that he knew, and he got his breath. He would need it to get to that pier, across a bit of current that ran like a tail-race. He swam slowly up with the eddy until he was a hundred feet above the pier. Then he went into the current with a dash. The heart almost went out of him when he felt it tug—he was drawn down like a chip. He was throwing himself through the water, but just as he was under the pier

something rose up like a whale out of the blackness under his hand. It was a bit of boom timber, chained at one end to shore, kept swinging by the current. His strength was all gone when he grabbed it, but he might as well have tried to hold lightning. It was slippery with ooze and slime, and the current dragged him down the whole length of it while one lights a match.

"But his hand caught in the hole at the end of the stick, and there were a few links of chain, and there he clung for a few minutes more of dear life. The current played him out like a bit of flag on a pole; he could not draw himself up against the strong water, so well-done was he; and the boom dipped and rolled. The water washed over him when it liked and the boom dragged him up and down. There he floated, losing strength like a maskalonge at the end of a line.

"Then the moon turned into a clear sky and he looked up at the pier, not fifteen feet away. There he saw, standing up against the sky, the brave boys he wanted to drown, all of them, standing in a row with their arms locked looking down at him. And he was so far gone he thought they were happy spirits, or the holy saints in the parish church, and he called them by name to help him.

" 'Lemab Seriza,' he cried, 'save me!'

"No one answered and the boom swung far with him.

" 'Laurent Pombère' (and that was my grandfather), 'save me!'

"No one said a word and he went down for the first time out of sight in the black water.

" 'Alexis Lachance—save me!'

"No one moved and he lay straight in the current. One by one he called them as he sank and struggled, until there was only one left. He came up just for a moment, and he knew then for sure they were ghosts standing there so calm with not a movement. But when his face came into the moonlight he just said, under his breath:

" 'Welly—Legrave—save—me!'

"And then Welly sprang off that pier, a leap that made my grandfather swear ever after that he flew, and lit on that boom swinging there in the black water, as a hawk lights on a blue pigeon, and took Apjohn by the arm with such a grip that he broke both the bones of it, and dragged him alive right up out of the throat of the current, and laid him down in the moonlight on the shore.

"And that's the story my grandfather told me about those verses the men sing, and he told me many another story of Welly Legrave and of those days

when there were men on the river and big trees in the forest."

XI

An Adventure of Mrs. Mackenzie's

"Oh, it's just seraphic!" says the widow. "It's just the breath of incense, and the pealing of the organ at the Cathedral at Montreal. Rosey doesn't remember Montreal. She was a wee, wee child. She was born on the voyage out, and christened at sea. *You* remember, Goby."

"Gad, I promised and vowed to teach her her catechism; but gad I haven't," says Captain Goby. "We were between Montreal and Quebec for three years with the Hundredth, the Hundred and Twentieth Highlanders and the Twenty-third Dragoon Guards a part of the time; Fipley commanded them, and a very jolly time we had. Much better than the West Indies, where a fellow's liver goes to the deuce with hot pickles and sangaree. Mackenzie was a devilish wild fellow," whispers Captain Goby to his neighbour (the present biographer indeed), "and Mrs. Mack was—was as pretty a little woman as ever you set your eyes on" (Captain Goby winks, and looks peculiarly sly as he makes this statement). "Our regiment wasn't on your side of India, Colonel."—*The Newcomes*; Chapter XXIII.

EVERY one, from the Chief Justice, who was on his way to Chambers and who had as keen an eye (the sly old dog) for a pretty woman as any one on the Bench, to Jean Baptiste, the carriole driver, gazed after the trim little figure as it flitted across the Haymarket and turned down St. James Street, in the City of Montreal. The old Justice thumped his heavy cane upon the ice and damned his eyes if he ever saw a more enchanting vision.

"That must be Mrs. Mackenzie," he says to himself, "wife of that rascal of a Captain Mackenzie, of the —th. How these officers do play the devil with the women. What difference is there between a bag-wig and a small sword and a red coat and a pair of spurs? Yet I'm dashed if a pretty girl wouldn't turn her back on the one and run after the other."

Jean Baptiste, enveloped in his bearskin coat, suspended, for a moment, the operation of lighting his pipe and grunted to himself with a sort of ursine satisfaction as he compared the yacht-like lines of the receding figure with the barge-like amplitude of his own "bonne femme."

If the latter had not that very morning denied Jean Baptiste the twenty-five sous necessary to purchase a twist of native tobacco, and if he had not tried for the fifth time to extract a little more smoke from his already burnt-out pipe, his reflections might not have been quite so acrimonious.

While these unspoken comments were in progress Mrs. Mackenzie—for it was indeed she, as the Chief Justice opined—continued her course down

St. James Street, pausing now and then to gaze through a shop window. She was dressed in a skirt of green cloth, closely fitted to her figure, and trimmed about the skirt and bodice with strips of Russian sable.

Her dainty head was crowned by a jaunty cap of the same rich fur, set off in a coquettish way, with the tails of the little beasts—and in her hand she carried a muff of ample depth and fulness, in which the choicest skins gave an effect of unsurpassable richness and beauty. The muff Mrs. Mackenzie handled with greatest effect, now nestling her little face in it until nothing but the arch eyes glanced out over the sable, like stars from the edge of a cloud, now holding it to one dainty ear, while her glances dropped upon the snow, only to flash up again with renewed brilliance, which they seemed to have borrowed, somehow, from the sparkling crystals upon which they had gazed. These sables and their wearer formed the subject of many a malicious comment by Mrs. Bagg, wife of Captain Bagg of the —th, who was a lady of uncertain age and ample proportions, and whose sinister aspect was heightened by a drooping eyelid and strands of hair which reminded the beholder of that molasses candy which French-Canadian children call *latire*.

Mrs. Bagg averred—and with what justice we will leave our readers to decide—that if it had not been for M. Antoine Sabervois, the above-mentioned sables would never have adorned the *petite* person of Mrs. Mackenzie; that for her part she thought it a burning shame and disgrace; that there should be a law against such proceedings; that she would rather wear cat-skin than accept ignominy in the shape of Russian sables from the hand of the richest Nor'wester that ever breathed; that every one knew where they came from, and what Mrs. Mackenzie was, for every one knew what was Captain Mackenzie's pay and that he had no private fortune and was naught else but a profligate, and a wild, gambling good-for-nothing fellow, with much more to the same tune.

Happily, we are not obliged to believe this alarming tale of Mrs. Bagg's, for Mrs. Mackenzie more than once hinted that she had a rich brother in India.

"A half-brother, my dear, Mr. Jas. Binnie, who is as rich as a rajah and as generous as he is rich, and is so fond of his little sister, whom he hardly knew, for she was an infant in arms when he went away to India—so fond of her, my dear, that he would pour out his wealth at her feet like a river if she were even to hint at the straits to which she was sometimes put on account of the way poor dear Mackenzie goes on. Even as it is, he is the most generous of brothers."

So, as it frequently happens in life, we may take our choice of the stories for the best or the worst.

Mrs. Mackenzie proceeded down St. James Street until she came to the corner of the Place d'Armes, where she turned to the right, crossed the road and went toward Notre Dame Street. At the corner of that street she paused a moment as if undecided which direction to take; then she crossed to the gateway of the seminary, and strolled toward the Parish Church, with many an attractive little feminine movement. Mounting the steps, she had soon advanced along the path and disappeared beneath the frowning portal of the church.

Mrs. Mackenzie might often be seen to seek the solitude of the great spaces of Notre Dame, and she had already attracted the attention of at least one of the fathers on his way to the confessional, and he, who had means of knowing every soul in the city, at once heard of Mrs. Mackenzie—her position and antecedents. He even heard of the Russian sables, as the old fellow who carted away the ashes from the House had a friend who was a relative of the cook at Captain Bagg's. So are our affairs inextricably involved, warp and woof, making the pattern called life, and through all flies the cackling shuttle of gossip. Mrs. Mackenzie loved the cool, deep glooms of the great church, with candles burning in the dusky chapels dedicated to strange saints, and the wall-spaces hung with glowing pictures of Our Lord's Passion. She loved the immense inclosed space, in whose altitude, it seemed, the stars might swing; she loved to watch the quiet movements of the acolytes, bound on mysterious errands, and to hear the voices of the choir-boys practising some ancient cadence in a remote chapel. If she happened to meet M. Antoine Sabervois there it was by the merest accident. M. Antoine having stepped in, devout Catholic that he was, to regulate his conscience, as he himself said, was sometimes surprised and delighted to find Mrs. Mackenzie in the first pew to the left of the altar dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua, his titular saint. But that Mrs. Mackenzie had any motive in her visits to Notre Dame, you, fair reader, will not for a moment imagine.

To tell the truth, although Mrs. Mackenzie had been brought up severely under the shadow of the Old Kirk, and had been nurtured upon the amenities of the Shorter Catechism, and although of a Sabbath she attended the morning service at St. Gabriel Street, much to the spiritual confusion of many of the youths, whose eyes found her pink-gloved fingers, holding the psalm-book, more attractive than the black-gloved fingers of the Rev. Mr. Blank, she had, nevertheless, that florid and sentimental temperament which demands an outward and visible sign, and whose devotions ascend more readily upon a cloud of incense, through a groined roof and mullioned window to a heaven of glory beyond. She thrilled as the deepest organ pipes thickened the air with their immense vibration imparted even to the

insensate woodwork, so that she imagined each haloed saint shaken to his inmost plaster-of-Paris heart, and even the radiant apostles upon the windows to respire with music and rapture. She rarely left the church, and never when she was alone did she leave it, without dipping her dainty fingers in the font of holy water placed near the door for all true believers.

From the seat under the protection of St. Anthony of Padua, where she had been rapt in meditation, she would rise, and with a genuflection before the altar, would pass, with the bearing of one newly sanctified, down the aisle, pausing for a moment to moisten her fingers at the font, and make the sign of the cross; and murmuring the few Latin words in her vocabulary with a devotional sentiment, she would seek the brilliant air and space of the Place d'Armes.

Whatever the vicious Mrs. Bagg may have said to the contrary, upon this particular morning in February, Mrs. Mackenzie had no expectation of seeing the eccentric and captivating M. Antoine Sabervois. She was aware, not by direct information from M. Sabervois himself, for that might imply a degree of intimacy in no way consonant with fact, that he was out of town, that he had gone to Three Rivers to inquire into a matter of business, and could not possibly return before a week had passed. Mrs. Mackenzie had her information from M. Sabervois' sister, who was her dear friend, "the incomparable Adrienne," she called her. Adrienne also bore a Scotch name, as she was the widow of Captain Gordon, an officer of a Highland regiment, who had died five years previously of a fox bite, received while hunting. Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. Mackenzie were quite inseparable in spirit, although divided somewhat in presence by the jealousy and violence of Captain Mackenzie, who would not hear of Mrs. Mackenzie spending an hour with Mrs. Gordon in her brother's fine house on the mountain. Now this was a sore trial to Mrs. Mackenzie, who loved ease and luxurious surroundings—and to whom the atmosphere of the Sabervois manor would have been a welcome relief after the stuffiness of the quarters, the unreasonableness of Mackenzie, and the task of keeping in order the small French-Canadian maid, who looked after the wants of little Rosey. But the captain was inexorable; to Sabervois she was not allowed to go, and so her darling Adrienne had to visit her slyly, or they had to resort to voluminous correspondence, many portions of which, I have no doubt, would have been of interest to certain inhabitants of Montreal *de ce jour*!

What was Mrs. Mackenzie's surprise, therefore, when she had barely seated herself, buried her face in her muff and glanced upwards to meet, not the benevolent features of St. Anthony of Padua, but the handsome countenance of M. Antoine Sabervois. He had stolen down the aisle softly

upon moccasined feet; he was dressed in a trapper costume of buckskin, highly ornamented with figures wrought in silk and beads, which he wore from whim, as he donned many strange changes of garment, and had seated himself so silently that Mrs. Mackenzie had not been aware of his advent.

She looked up with a pretty confusion, rendered all the more attractive by the flush which spread over her face; then she hid her face in her muff to conceal her agitation, and finally darting a scintillating glance at M. Sabervois, she said, under her breath: "Why, M. Sabervois, I thought you were at Three Rivers!"

"And so you came here to console yourself during my absence, and to say a little prayer to my patron for my safe return?"

"You men are all alike," she said; "as vain as peacocks. I am sure I was guilty of no other motive than to warm my fingers!"

"And does not your muff keep those charming fingers warm?" remarked her companion, with an accent which was certainly curious if that protection had arisen from the bounty of Mr. James Binnie. Mrs. Mackenzie merely gave him one of those arch looks from which her cavalier could take what meaning he pleased.

"To tell the truth," he said, "if it had not been for a lucky accident, I would be in Three Rivers at this moment, instead of talking to the prettiest woman in Canada; but as chance would have it, I met, half way at the inn, as we changed horses, the very man I was bound to see, and there we transacted our business, and I have just had breakfast at Rasco's."

"And now, Monsieur, you have come to make your devoirs for a safe return. I will not hinder you."

She rose and tried to pass him laughingly.

But after a quarter of an hour they had become so absorbed in their conversation, and Mrs. Mackenzie was so bubbling over with sly laughter and minor expletives of pleasure that they did not heed the approach of Father Champagne, who frowned down upon M. Antoine, whom he had known from his boyhood, and who touched him upon his shoulder as he passed to his confessional, where he was to hear the weary tale of transgressions great and small. It had become apparent to the good father's mind that Madame Mackenzie would never become a convert to his faith.

Captain Goby, one of whose favourite stories over the mess-table was that of the famous encounter between Captain Mackenzie and M. Sabervois, had no knowledge of this *tête-à-tête* in Notre Dame. He came into the plot a little later; but he certainly saw Mrs. Mackenzie that morning leave the

cathedral and trip over to McDonald's store in Muir's building opposite, for he was never done expatiating upon her beauties in his richest vocabulary.

"By gad, sir," he would say, "she was a picture, as pretty a little woman as ever you set eyes upon, and that morning with the frost making her eyes dance like Cupid's heels, by gad, sir, she was divine. Little devil that she was, too," the captain would add, with a sly wink, as if satanic qualities in a woman were to be sought after and cherished.

"It was my friend Captain Sabervois, not of Ours, you know, but a militia officer, who came to me about it. Every one in Montreal knew Captain Sabervois. By gad, sir, one of the best fellows that ever drew breath, and a merry devil at that, son of one of those old Nor'westers who made money out of skins and whose company afterwards amalgamated with the Hudson's Bay Company. The old Sabervois made money and the young one was lucky enough to hang onto it, although he spent it, too, like wild-fire; threw it around, God bless my soul, as if it were gravel; imported horses and bred them; used to drive down St. Paul Street with three stallions abreast, a white one in the middle and two jets on the outside, hitched to a damned rickety Russian sleigh which he had got from God knows where. Drive! it was a clear runaway from the start, *habitants' traîneaux*, tradesmen's sleighs, doctors' berlins and all the rest dodging out of the way, him touching his cap as he went, and his sister, Mrs. Gordon, not winking an eyelid, sitting by him as steady as a gunner, by gad! He had a suite of rooms at Rasco's and a house at Lachine, where many a time Sabervois, Chummy Adspeth, Allan Cunningham, McTavish and I used to drive out and play a little quiet game and back in the morning, and a regular palace for that country, built on the mountain, where Mrs. Gordon presided. (Gordon, you remember? Of the —th Highlanders.) She seldom went to Bellevue, the place at Lachine. All that I had to do with the matter was to see Adspeth and find out what he and Captain Mack were to do the next night."

Whether Captain Goby was innocent as regards all complicity in the arrangements as he averred, we leave our readers to decide for themselves; but there was a lively rumour current at that time that he was more than interested in Mrs. Gordon, and giving this rumour weight, and adding to it the captain's love of gallantry, it would seem probable that he was more deeply involved in the preliminaries than his own confession allowed.

However that may be (and by way of digression, gentle reader, did you ever among your acquaintances or friends meet with any one whose responsibility did not stop far short of any vital point in the catastrophe. He or she took an *important* part, of course, was *au courant* of the whole matter, but no taint or suspicion of criminality could in any way be attached to him

or her! Whoever gives the gentle, disinterested little push that precipitates a fraud, a quarrel, or a marriage, can never be found!)—however that may be, Mrs. Mackenzie had a visit from Mrs. Gordon that very next day, and Mrs. Mackenzie packed Marie off with Rosey, so that in their narrow quarters nothing need disturb them. There was much confidential chatter, and Mrs. Mackenzie ecstatically pronounced that it would be enchanting, lovely beyond compare, but the captain? And then Mrs. Gordon remarked that Captain Goby ("That dear fellow!" Mrs. Mackenzie interjected) had ascertained from Adspeth that he and Captain Mackenzie were going to drive over to Longueuil on the ice, that Fipley knew they were going and that if Captain Goby wanted to play out that match at Orr's he had better postpone it for a day.

"Which means, my dear, that they will certainly not return until day after to-morrow."

This may somehow account for the parting between Captain Mackenzie and his lively wife. The former did not often leave the door with such a cheerful parting, so many kisses, such buttoning of gloves, pulling up of collars and down of caps, such wifely counsel as to precautions against colds. Truth to tell, Mrs. Mackenzie oftener complained bitterly and used her vocabulary unstintingly, and told the captain what she thought of him, which, being uncomplimentary, was therefore unpleasant. And he being departed, she gamboled with Rosey and allowed her to pull down her hair, while she rolled the small person over and pretended to bite her, when they both screamed with laughter and made as pretty a picture of innocent frolic as you could wish to see.

About an hour or so after the valiant captain's departure, Mrs. Bagg was convinced that she saw Captain Sabervois' tandem prancing through the street, and, could her eyes deceive her, or did the horses stop at the corner, and did some one jump out of the sleigh and ring Captain Mackenzie's bell, and did a figure, a female figure, closely wrapped, emerge from the house and mount beside the driver? Was the said driver Captain Sabervois himself; was the cloaked figure the fragile Mrs. Mackenzie? Was the messenger and attendant Captain Goby, the hated rival of Captain Bagg?

Mrs. Bagg could not be absolutely certain. She had an outlook only as big as her hand through the frosted pane. To leave that, and whip on her jacket and cap, would mean the loss of any information that might be gleaned from the porthole. To rush into the street without their protection would be to court the miseries of influenza, fomentations and floods of tisane. Now, if Mrs. Bagg had let well enough alone she might have enjoyed the delightful uncertainty, which was at the same time a certainty, but she

was prompted to send her maid to inquire whether Mrs. Mackenzie would be pleased to come over and have a game of backgammon with her; but she only learned that Mrs. Mackenzie had retired with a splitting headache, upon receipt of which information Mrs. Bagg fell into a confusion.

How these most singular duplications fall out in society it would puzzle the present chronicler to elucidate, but it is a certainty that at the very moment when Marie reported her mistress as being unable to enjoy the charming society of Mrs. Bagg, she was on the front seat of M. Sabervois' sleigh, behind two of the finest horses in the colony harnessed in tandem, buried in buffalo robes, and fairly started on the drive to Bellevue.

The moon was high, flooding all the snow with clear light; the air was nimble with particles of frost; there was no cloud in the sky. Captain Goby, who, by the way, was the occupant of the back seat with the fair Mrs. Gordon, used to exult in this drive, and, in fact, in all the winter scenes in Canada.

"By gad, sir, it was sublime; we were actually whirled along to the chiming of bells. Sabervois' leader seemed to dance, so dainty was he upon his hoofs. By my side I had one of the sweetest women in Christendom. Mrs. Mackenzie kept up a chatter like a wren, we laughed and sparkled at nothing. Sabervois made a dashed good pun in English, for a Frenchman, you know, and damn me but I have forgotten it! Mrs. Mackenzie asked him, 'Did you shoot these buffaloes yourself, M. Sabervois?' and he said something dashed good in reply."

In truth, there was never a more innocent excursion, and do not charge Mrs. Mackenzie, my dear madam, with any of the sins you avoid so carefully. She had merely run away for a moment, as it were, from the husband who never spent an evening at home with her, who gambled, who drank much more than was good for him, who was jealous and suspicious. Be candid now, if Mr. Paragon was not the model spouse that all the world knows him to be, if his vices were as thick and vigorous as his virtues, would you not be tempted once in a while to hoodwink his jealousy, and pay off his libertinism by some innocent prank, which might for a moment allow you to feel that you had resumed your maiden independence?

When the party reached Bellevue it had become apparent that some change in the weather was brewing, but no note was taken of such a small matter when the end of the journey was reached with the pleasant light of fire and candle pouring from the windows of the house.

It stood upon the bank of the River St. Lawrence, within sound of the famous Lachine Rapids, surrounded by groups of gnarled pear trees, as old as the colony itself.

M. Sabervois' hospitality was well known, and it was not outshone by the hospitality of a nobleman of France whose guests, under another flag and king, made the chambers ring with their mirth and jollity. Mrs. Mackenzie was delighted with everything she saw; she was shown over the old house from the vaults where the furs used to be stored, which were as strong as dungeons, to the attic, with its deep dormers and low, broad chambers under the roof. Each room was crowded with curios brought from every district of the North, from Ungava to Fraser River, trophies of the chase, and articles the possession of which made the old house the envy of continental museums.

It would be a mere cataloguing of pleasures to set down all that was said and done between nine of the clock and twelve on that memorable evening. The redoubtable Captain Goby could never remember half of it; his recollections met an insurmountable barrier at the supper, an exploit of M. Sabervois' French cook. After that affairs merely floated indistinctly in a mist of pleasure.

There was a round or two of écarté, of that he was certain, then Mrs. Mackenzie sang divinely to Mrs. Gordon's accompaniment upon an Erard piano, the only one in the colony. Then M. Sabervois and his charming sister sang old French chansons to admiration. Then Mrs. Mackenzie must play a Scotch reel upon a spinet which had once been caressed by the fingers of no less a person than the Duchess de Langlois, who gave it to M. Sabervois' grandmother.

Now, if the advice of M. Sabervois had been taken, given when he heard that the wind had risen from the east and was driving the snow in clouds before it, the occurrence which made such a noise in the colony, might never have happened, and this chronicle would never have been written. But no sooner were there any obstacles or difficulties set up between Mrs. Mackenzie and home than she must needs insist upon returning to town that night. In vain were all protestations and counter propositions.

What would Rosey do? she appealed to Mrs. Gordon. What would become of her darling child, left for twenty-four hours to the care of a careless slattern of a maid? How could she ever look the dear innocent in the face again if Marie should allow her to fall and break her nose, or if that odious little Hector Bagg should poke a stick into her eye? Never! She should return to Montreal even if she walked every step of the way. Whereupon, M. Sabervois ordered the horses to be harnessed at once.

After the storm was over, very early the following morning, the oldest inhabitant of the island failed to remember any such storm in his time. The

roads were heaped with many feet of snow, and those running north and south were for days impassable.

Lucky it was for our party of adventurers that there was about three miles from Montreal an inn called "Les Trois Beaux Canards." When they had gone thus far, they could neither go farther nor return; there was nothing for it but to spend the night or until such time as the storm should abate at "Les Trois Beaux Canards."

The reputation of mine host, Gagnon, and his hostelry were not unknown to the ladies, but the case had become one which was neatly fitted by the adage, "Any port in a storm."

"By gad, sir," Captain Goby would say, "we were so smothered in snow that old Gagnon was not cordial to us at all, so I thought. He was a great tun of a fellow, as big as Falstaff; I had never been to his den before (which the reader may believe or not as he chooses), but it was on the land of Sabervois, and he was damned civil when he saw who was head of our party. There was an air of apprehension about the man which was explained when he drew me aside.

"I have two of your officers, they are *bons garçons*, and they have vowed themselves to have a good time. Mon Dieu! What am I now to do with your parties?"

"So I said, 'And where are the *bons garçons* now?'

" 'They are in the *cuisine au large*.'

"Whereupon, like a dashed fool, I had to tell the women, and Mrs. Mackenzie laid a wager with me that it was Gibbs and Anstruther. So I went into a little pantry which opened from the dining room and took all its light from the kitchen through some window arrangements. I had hardly taken in the scene when I heard a little scream by my side, and there was Mrs. Mackenzie, by gad, had stepped upon my chair, and then upon a broad shelf, and was looking through the window with me. We both saw the same sight. There was that damned fool, Mackenzie, had got on an apron like a kitchen wench, and in his shirtsleeves was dropping croquenoles into a pot on the hob. Adspeth, in the same mountebank garb, was turning a spit, where a partridge was roasting, and there were a couple of Marie-Louises, or whatever you call 'em, giggling around those two gay dogs of war!

"Eh, gad, sir, I thought I should burst with laughter. But Mrs. Mackenzie did not laugh, sir. She turned as pale as a cloth, with pure fury, mind you, and back she goes into the parlour. 'You've won, captain,' she says, as cool as ice; and in a minute or two what does she do? Why, she sits down to a dashed old trap of a piano and began to warble a ballad in her best voice.

The rest of the party carried it off, for they knew nothing, but I felt dashed uncomfortable, for I knew that trouble would be brewing.

"By this time those donkeys in the kitchen must have heard that some party had arrived, and like as not Mackenzie had his head out of the kitchen door listening, but madame had not got well into the second verse, 'Our Monarch's hindmost year but ane,' her voice was going as steady as a mill wheel, when in walks Mackenzie, his coat on, his apron gone, and as red as a turkey-cock. Mrs. Mackenzie stopped and turned around when she heard him address Sabervois.

"'So this is the way you take advantage of my absence!' he roared. But Mrs. Mackenzie was upon him like a tiger-cat before the words were well out of his mouth. You can never tell anything about these merry women," said the captain, reflectively, "and Mrs. Mackenzie laid him out about as neatly as it could be done. It was a little family affair, and the lady forgot her manners and spoke awfully plain language.

"She tired herself out and faltered when she saw she had gone too far. Then Mackenzie came in again.

"'Our quarrel we can settle elsewhere. Madame, you must come with me.' And I am damned if she didn't permit herself to be walked off and locked up. Strange cattle, these women."

With which reflection the captain would pause either to drain or replenish his glass. Captain Goby was the sole person who could or would tell this tale in after years. So far as the present chronicler could gather, it never became apparent why Mackenzie and Adspeth had changed their plans, and had not gone to Longueuil. Poor little Adspeth was drowned not long after at the Back River. Mrs. Mackenzie would never refer to it, except in the most general and euphemistic way, and Mrs. Gordon and Sabervois had cogent reasons for not repeating the incidents of a misadventure which grew out of one of the most harmless and innocent of pleasure excursions.

Indeed, M. Sabervois was rather touchy upon the matter, and was hardly seen in Montreal for two years, as he visited some remote Posts of the Company with Sir George Simpson, and highly resented any reference to his stiff elbow, which considerably interfered with the grace of his carriage, or to his altered handwriting, of which originally he had been vain.

My fair readers will protest that these gentlemen would assuredly not be allowed to present pistols with two such interested ladies as the wife of one and the sister of the other in the company. But we have just seen one marched to custody in the picturesque narrative of Captain Goby, and when he emerged from a conference with Adspeth, Mrs. Gordon had joined her.

"My man," Captain Goby would say, "was willing to do anything in reason to prevent an ugly quarrel, but Mackenzie was bound to have blood. You see, it was no flash-in-the-pan quarrel, but one that had been growing steadily for months, and was to Mackenzie, at least, a serious affair. Sabervois, I believe, had never bothered his head over it. He was the most unthinking devil, and had like as not forgotten all about Mackenzie's threats. But now that they were face to face there was hardly the chance of escaping an encounter. Mackenzie and Adspeth were in the outer room, and Sabervois and I were in the little room with the piano. I watched him a moment through the door, and saw by the way he chewed his beard that his bad blood was up.

" 'You'll have to fight him,' says I to Sabervois.

"Old Gagnon went from one camp to the other, tearing his hair, and talking broken English.

" 'Mon Dieu! Have mercy, gentlemen; do not spill your blood on this little rest house of "Les Trois Beaux Canards." It will be my fall-down, my disgrace, my license they will take him away, the Bishop he will condemn my soul to hell. I am not in order; these excitements, these agitations will kill me; my great flesh is what you call unwholthy; this fat you see comes uncalled for between my meat and my skin. Why will you desolate a poor man?' "

But we must leave the babble of Captain Goby for a moment in order to explain the departure of Mrs. Gordon. Mrs. Mackenzie wishing to have her for an ally, or for a comfort, or merely for a companion in her cell, had pounded on the door and made such a hullabaloo that mine host of "Les Trois Beaux Canards" was compelled to ascertain what she wanted. It was communicated to Captain Mackenzie that it was Mrs. Gordon that she wanted, whereupon Captain Mackenzie sends the key of the room to M. Sabervois, who might, if he chose, conduct his sister to the captain's wife. Whereupon it became necessary, such is the honour of male mortals, for M. Sabervois to turn the key upon both ladies, despite their protestations, and to return it to Captain Mackenzie by the hand of his own messenger. So that whatever influence the two ladies might have had, fair reader, was neutralised by four walls and a stout deal door.

The preliminaries, in their absence, were neatly arranged by Adspeth and Goby, who were experts in such matters. The snow storm had begun to abate somewhat, and about dawn the sky was clear, except to the northwest, which showed the rear-guard of cloud retreating in heavy black masses. Although it had piled up snow upon the face of the country, the storm had deftly swept the little inn-yard as clear as a floor. In the early light of the morning which

fell fresh and pure and cold upon the snow, marking the curve of mound and drift with blue shadows, the two men faced each other. It was once more the petty passions of man displayed before the grand calm of nature. Such a morning should have furnished the atmosphere for pure austerities, for sublime contemplation. On high one glorious star burned between the coming sun and the receding cloud.

They stood for a moment in the keen air, bareheaded and stripped to their shirts, and with bare arms. Upon the signal, they fired, their shots ringing sharp in the tense atmosphere.

M. Sabervois' bullet following his aim, went whistling over the roof of "Les Trois Beaux Canards," to sink harmless somewhere in the snow. But Mackenzie's weapon had been directed with a different purpose.

Captain Goby was by Sabervois' side in a moment, staunching the drip of blood from his shattered elbow, which had spattered the pure snow where he stood, with crimson drops. Gagnon, the publican, who had been peering from a crack of the door, the pallor of terror upon his face, his enormous bulk shaking like a reed in the wind, his men servants and his maid servants gathered behind him looking over his shoulders or through his arms in terrified curiosity, now rushed out and endeavoured to carry M. Sabervois bodily into the house. The captain was, however, well able to walk, and with slight assistance from Goby, regained his quarters in the parlour.

Simultaneously with the shot there was one scream which sounded faintly in the yard, and a dull shock which did not sound there at all. Mrs. Gordon had fainted suddenly and had fallen heavily upon the floor of the chamber. Whatever had passed between the two ladies has never been repeated by either, but the truth remains that from that day onward they were irreconcilable enemies, and it cost Mrs. Mackenzie no little self-denial to treat as a foe one who had surroundings so pleasant, and resources of entertainment so unlimited. But she never even made any attempt at reconciliation, and not long after, the removal of the regiment put such an effort out of her power.

It was but natural that Mrs. Gordon should suffer much trepidation at her brother's danger. Mrs. Mackenzie, beneath her merry exterior, had an unfailing resource of courage, and although she was sensible of her share of the responsibility in the *dénouement*, and had a double anxiety in that her husband and her friend were each in danger, she never blanched, and Goby always said that it was her promptitude which extracted the party from an untenable situation.

"Here we would have been packed into a little ten-by-ten box of an inn, for God knows how long, as the roads in that colony are sometimes blocked

for days, and, as you may imagine, it would have been cursedly unpleasant, if it hadn't been that she insisted on going back to Montreal, forced Mackenzie to get two pairs of snowshoes, and started off with him to walk the three miles over the drifts, like a brick that she was. At first, you know, Sabervois would make light of his wound, and would hear no word of a doctor, but after an hour or so of agony he let one of Gagnon's men go to the city. He had hardly started before Dr. Bruneau walked in, red in the face from his tramp on snowshoes. (It was two days before the roads were broken, and we could get to the city in our sleighs.) He confided to me afterwards that it was Mrs. Mackenzie who rushed into his office just as he had seated himself at breakfast, and besought him to walk out to "Les Trois Beaux Canards," and save M. Sabervois, who was dying of a wound received in a fight with Captain Mackenzie.

"Yes, she plumped out the whole story; she knew she could trust Bruneau, and there was no time for lies that morning. Sabervois was not dying of his wound, but he was damned uncomfortable, and showed it, too. With all her faults, the little Mackenzie was a trump in those days, damn me if she wasn't!"

It was with a lively curiosity that Mrs. Bagg beheld Mrs. Mackenzie, who over night, she had been informed, was sick of a headache, and Captain Mackenzie, who was, so Bagg had assured her, gone upon an excursion to Longueuil with that desperate Adspeth, walk peaceably and unitedly down the street, the captain with two pairs of snowshoes over his broad back!

It was long afterwards that she heard the details of the story seriatim. They came to her bit by bit as a child makes up a picture puzzle, but it was not until the fate which shakes us like dice in a box had thrown her together with one of those same handmaidens of "Les Trois Beaux Canards," that she found as it were the key-block which completes the picture.

Then if her mind could have groped into the past so far she might have found some explanation for a matter which had always puzzled her, viz.—the total disappearance after a certain date of the sable furs which had once heightened the beauty of Mrs. Mackenzie.

The present historian, who, of course, knows everything, might repeat an exclamation of Mrs. Mackenzie's to Marie about the same sables which the willing handmaiden was offering for the adornment of her mistress.

"Ugh, take them away, there is blood on them!"

Which, the reader may justly reason, was a curious instance of feminine inconsequence, if the said sables had come through the bounty of Mr. James Binnie.

XII

The Escapade of the Rev. Joshua Geer

THE REV. JOSHUA GEER had no right to the title which he bore in and around Dunham. He was merely a "local preacher" and as such the term "Reverend" was officially denied him but the people, one half in jest and one half in recognition of the offices which he sometimes performed had prefixed the word to his name and it was as firmly his as if authorised by the customary benediction and laying on of hands. There was certainly something ironical in the employment of the word to distinguish Joshua Geer from his fellow men. His countenance was so pinched, and so devoid of any liveliness or elevation that he never could have been instinctively revered by any mortal. He was small of stature, his gait was feeble, and his attitude to the world seemed almost apologetic. Yet behind his small eyes there was sufficient shrewdness and the very quaintness of his difference from other men had served him in good stead.

During the absence of the minister who had charge of the Methodist Congregation of Dunham he frequently had to perform his duties. He took the pulpit whenever he had an opportunity to do so and regularly every Sunday he ministered to the charge at Mutton Corners, one of the stations on the Dunham circuit.

He was a man of many and various employments. He was the village postmaster, always a position of importance in such a place as Dunham; a position which in this instance the official magnified hugely. He also kept a small store where one could buy anything from boneless codfish to axle grease, and if one chanced to ask for something not upon the shelves or in the warehouse he was told, "We are just out, but have a new supply at Cowensville which will be here to-morrow." This to-morrow was frequently like the proverbial to-morrow and never came. So successful had his operations been that he had another establishment at East Dunham which he referred to as the "Branch Store" which was in charge of a distant relative whom he called nothing but Abner. He also owned the only hearse in the village and drove it himself and when the need arose had been known not only to drive but to read the burial service and improve the occasion at some length. This hearse was a shabby vehicle with curtains instead of glass, painted with lackluster black paint; and when Joshua was perched upon the

seat clad in his soberest weeds and his old horse Jerry in the shafts the solemn conveyance was a sight not to be forgotten.

The store and postoffice were in one room and under the same roof as Joshua's dwelling. Everything about the house was a marvel of neatness and cleanliness. It was as trim as a ship's cabin. Joshua himself had a turn for things orderly but his only daughter Ann Mercy had a passion for them. She was the child of his third marriage and she had had a stepmother and rumour more than whispered that there would be a fifth Mrs. Geer if Joshua had his way. But apparently Ann Mercy was to have hers.

In the frigidly, gloomily neat parlour there was a collection of many things, from the original haircloth furniture of Mrs. Geer the First to the wax work flowers and the bowl of the lamp filled with red and blue flannel of Mrs. Geer the Fourth. There was much needle-work belonging to each period, and each epoch had contributed its quota of crochet-work, and knitting. The walls were adorned with many pictures and one case of hairwork, the material and skill for which were both supplied by Mrs. Geer the Third. Upon the wall, and immediately over a large double box stove which projected into the room from the hall, hung side by side the portraits of the deceased Mesdames Geer and over them this legend worked in blue, the colour of hope, "The Lord will provide," from which it might appear that Joshua had not entirely abandoned matrimonial projects despite the jealous care of Ann Mercy.

He had been in some danger for the last year from a certain Miss Dawson, a member of his Class, who was an elderly spinster with attractions, but Ann Mercy had been more powerful and had so far prevailed. The Chairman of the District too had advised him not to marry when Joshua following the Discipline closely had laid the project before him, so that he had abandoned his idea at least for the present, and it had left only one outward trace. He was apt to murmur abstractedly when anything disturbing occurred, "Dear me, dear me, whatever would Miss Dawson say?"

Dunham was one of those villages which had outlived its own greatness. There was sufficient bustle there in the old days before the railroad passed by on the other side, but now the little village seems asleep at the foot of its guardian hill from whose top you can see on clear days a silver bay of Lake Champlain and on the very verge of the horizon a little cloud of smoke under which lies Montreal.

But tranquil and well ordered as was the life of this village a change came upon it, and in one night a sword had fallen in Dunham, and its quiet seemed like a veritable dream out of the horn gate. For fifty years the village

had dozed between the hills of Missisquoi undisturbed but it would take year upon year to settle back into its wonted quietude if it could ever indeed regain that dreamy existence upon which sprang, tiger like, the Rouville murder. It was early for the trees to lose their summer green and to take on the fire and splendour of autumn, for September had hardly gained its meridian. But already the frost had clouted the green round of the maples with patches of crimson and here and there a tree had turned a pillar of flame, burning yet not consumed. The delicate vines on the northern walls had dropped, leaf by leaf, diminishing like some splendid firework falling into a molten decay, and the asters in the gardens bloomed amid the wreck of the sweet pea vines, flattened abroad by the brusque wind. But the wind had for days withdrawn and left this ruddy and golden ruin heaped tranquilly beneath the hazy sun; and in this stillness and amid the consistent colour word was passed in the hushed and terrified village that within that peaceful gracious looking farmhouse on the north road Simon Rouville had murdered his wife.

To every house the story carried a shudder, for Simon and his wife and their little girl Priscilla had all been born and brought up in Dunham and every one felt as if the blood was upon his own hearthstone. The Rev. Joshua Geer was past utterance for both had been scholars in his Sunday school class and Simon had for years been a special mark for his admonitions. “Dear me, dear me, Ann Mercy, to think upon it! For me to have been at the christening of him and the wedding of them both! and now!!” Ann Mercy was immovable; she had had in her youth to bear up under a disappointment in love and her burden had scarred her. Always stoical and indifferent, in this crisis she seemed to have hardened into stone, but occasionally her lips had moved and a change had come into her eyes which seemed to betoken that she might at any moment shatter her silence. “What could have made him do it! and where is poor little Priscilla? He has disappeared, has Simon, and there is no trace anywhere of him or the girl.” Joshua looked fearfully over his spectacles and his eyes watered feebly. “The Lord must have had a judgment for Dunham and surely now we are responsible like the cities of the plain.”

“As I take it,” said Ann Mercy, looking coldly at her father, “the Almighty is responsible for making Lizzie Peasley and the whole Peasley family. What I have said I stick to, where Simon Rouville made his mistake was marrying into the Peasley family.” Her voice had no tremor and there was nothing in the tone which would have betrayed that Ann Mercy was touching the depths of her old tribulation. “Any one could have seen what would come of that.”

"Ann Mercy, you were always terribly set against the Peasleys, but you can't make that an excuse for Simon."

"It just seems to me there was nothing else for him to do," she said in her iron voice. "I'd have done the same myself, I guess, knowing the Peasleys as I do. I, for one, hope Simon will get off."

"That's a terrible state of mind for you to be in, Ann Mercy. Dear me, dear me, whatever would Miss Dawson say? There is nothing ought to be left undone to catch him and to get back poor little Priscilla."

"There was never anything about Priscilla like the Peasleys; she was a Rouville and I guess Simon would do a little not to have her brought up by a Peasley even if she was her own mother."

"But, Ann Mercy, to kill her, his own wife. Dear me, dear me."

Just then the stage with the morning mail came in and Joshua crept into the office to distribute it. It was Tuesday morning, the murder had been committed presumably on Sunday night or early Monday morning, and the village was full of reporters and detectives. Every one had his theory but there was as yet not a clue to the whereabouts of the murderer. Full two columns of the "Gazette" were taken up with the particulars, and these Joshua read to Ann Mercy as they sat over the dinner table. That young lady scorned the theories of the reporters as to Simon's whereabouts. "Don't tell me; Simon's too clever a fellow to do any such fool thing as they imagine. I guess if they were to look in the right place they'd find Priscilla, and that's at Simon's Uncle Bennet's down on the Line, but by *this* time I fancy Simon's not there and nowhere on *this* side of the Line."

Joshua had a great opinion of Ann Mercy's acuteness and he pondered her words. He had ample time to do so, for that afternoon he had an appointment to attend a funeral at Mutton Corners; after he had put Jerry in the hearse, he donned his black coat, slipped a long piece of crêpe over his high hat and set forth. It was a drive of about three miles and for the whole distance the one subject occupied his mind. His horror deepened as he thought of Simon Rouville alive somewhere under the sky, and his little daughter Priscilla who had disappeared with him. Her delicate face and her clear hazel eyes haunted him and he could see her peering up at him as she had done the last Sunday he had preached in the Dunham church when she had come in from early Sunday school and had sat in the pew under the pulpit. He had prepared a eulogy upon the deceased Mr. Bland which became disjointed in the delivery by the impromptu insertion of a reference to Simon Rouville and he forgot altogether his minatory peroration addressed to those who would not flee from the wrath to come.

On the way home he was perplexed about many things, but chiefly as to his duty in telling the detectives what Ann Mercy had said about Simon's probable movements. He had unbounded faith in his daughter's sagacity and moreover her remark had been dictated by sympathy. He did not wish to feel that any, even the least, secret hint of the whereabouts of either Simon or Priscilla should remain hidden in his bosom. If the child could be discovered at Simon's Uncle Bennet's, that might be a valuable clue and his recollection of Ann Mercy's remark that very few people knew that Simon had a relative near the Line pushed him suddenly to the resolve that he must tell what he knew.

He left the hearse standing without the "Selby House" and requested to be shown to the apartment of the detective. Holding what he had to offer in such high esteem he was dashed at the reception it obtained from the official. His manner was cool and almost abstracted; there was nothing of that rushing eagerness which Joshua had expected when he had imparted his information. However, he was listened to with attention, and notes of his remarks were made with care in a book which lay open on the table. He was asked but one question, "Is there more than one road to the place?" "Only one; up over the hill down by Selby Lake, the first turn to the right and round the Pinnacle." "You must promise me, Mr. Geer, not to say anything of this to any one else for a day or two." Joshua promised.

In a moment he was again on his seat, driving slowly down the street toward home. He was still perplexed. Strangely his interview with the man of power had not brought him ease of mind. His action must be concealed from Ann Mercy, who would consider his crime blacker than Simon's: and for a man who had done his duty he was certainly uncomfortable. He felt suddenly that he would be late for tea and he struck Jerry with the reins and advised him to hurry his pace.

When he reached the stable he proceeded with unusual haste to unharness and give him his supper. He had taken off the harness with many an entreaty for him to be quiet, just as though he were as restive as an Arab barb and might at any instant break out and stand upon his hind legs. If that had ever happened it was in his youth and Jerry had forgotten all about it, and now he was so accustomed to hear the imprecation "Jerry, up, you villain" every time he stamped a foot that it had lost all the force of a rebuke. Jerry's stable was a warehouse in the days of Dunham's prosperity, but its owner was now glad enough to rent it for any purpose whatever. By tearing down a few partitions on the second floor for his supply of hay, and by erecting a box-stall in the large space below, with bins for his oats, Joshua had made a tolerably handsome stable, and there was plenty of room

to run the hearse out of the weather and protect the bags of salt, the barrels of cement, and the other articles which were too bulky to find place in the well packed store.

He had given Jerry his supply of oats and had ascended the stairs and was forking hay into the stall when he was fiercely, suddenly, and silently seized from behind. His throat was in the crook of a powerful elbow; there was an iron knee in his back. He tried to support himself with the fork but its glassy handle slipped through his grasp and he was hurled face downward on the hay. His favourite hymn had always been, "Poor worms of earth for help we cry," but he had never before felt so like a worm as he did under the crushing weight that pressed him into the hay and at the same time seemed to tighten around his neck. His puny writhings were of no avail and after a momentary struggle he lay perfectly quiet. Then the grasp was slightly loosened from his neck and he took in a dusty breath amid the hay. "You're fast," said a voice in his ear, "and you must be still. I could break your back with my knee, and if you don't promise to keep your mouth shut and do as you're told I will *do* it." Joshua felt the iron pressure again and terror took hold of his limbs. As well as he could articulate he said, "I'll do as you want, sir, I will be perfectly quiet." The humbleness of his tone seemed to assure the power that held him for he felt himself free to get up, but at the same time he was securely held.

It was now quite dark in the loft for the one window with its broken glass was boarded up and in the gloom he could distinguish nothing with his confused eyes. He felt himself pushed from behind towards a door that led to the unused rooms which had not been thrown into the larger space to make the loft. With his gradually clearing senses he observed that the grasp upon his arm was human although a few minutes before he had been willing to think it mighty enough for the Evil One himself. He noticed also that this person, whoever it might be, moved with difficulty and from a sharp hissing of the indrawn breath it seemed as if he was in pain. It was only four steps, at the most, to the door past the head of the stairs, below which were Jerry and safety, and yet it took long enough for Joshua to review some of the circumstances of his life in the light of the first danger that he had ever fronted. The door was ajar and he was shoved through it into the lighter room beyond; for there the window was whole and admitted sufficient of the sunset light to make the interior visible. He heard the door click behind him and the same moment he found himself free.

When his artificial support was gone he felt suddenly weak and almost collapsed, stumbling forward a step or two. "What, what do you want?" he muttered, afraid to look around. "Joshua Geer," cried a voice behind him, a

voice that gave him a shock with its unexpected familiarity amid such untoward circumstances. With his clearing senses he seemed to recognise it. He turned with a start and there leaning against the door, with the deep light falling upon him, with a face pale as ashes and drawn with lines of pain, as sharp and immovable as if cut in marble, stood Simon Rouville. Joshua gave a cry of surprise and terror and went backwards instinctively until the wall stopped him. Luckily enough there was an empty butter tub turned upside down against the wall or he would have fallen on the floor; instead he sat down upon it suddenly.

Keeping his eyes fixed upon the figure before him, that seemed to bear a tragic and solemn import, Joshua realised that he was gazing at a murderer, a man upon whom for a day he had been passing sentence of death. Now he was completely in his power and for all he knew his purpose might be to kill him as a second victim, or a third, for where was Priscilla? The figure moved from the door toward Joshua, coming forward slowly and with effort. If he could have for one moment taken his eyes from that face he would have observed that from some hurt to the left foot it was useless and gave its owner agony every time it touched the floor. But he was transfixed by the familiar face which seemed to wear such a new and terrible expression. As it approached him slowly, inevitably, he cried out quietly but fearfully with his hand up, "Simon, Simon, Simon Rouville." When he came near the wall the man steadied himself with both hands for a moment then said with the short gasps of a person exhausted by pain, "Let me sit down." Joshua leaped up and gave him the seat, upon which Rouville sank, stretched his injured limb, threw his head back against the wall, covered his face with his hands and gave a groan. "Simon, Simon," Joshua murmured.

The man took his hands from his face and straightened himself with the movement of one who had resolved to carry out a well considered plan. "Keep quiet. Have you a Testament with you?" Joshua started at the unexpectedness of his question, and as he gasped out "No—no—really, I have not." He was thinking swiftly—"What can he want it for, is he repentant, is he?"—but his thoughts were checked by another question, "What have you in your pocket, then?" Joshua wore a decorous black coat with long tails and there was evidence, when he moved, of something weighty in one of the pockets. "It's my Liturgy," he said. "I was burying Mr. Bland back at Mutton Corners." Simon's ideas of what a Liturgy was were vague, but he set it down as a sacred book of some kind. "Give it to me," he said. Joshua had been working away trying to disengage it from the lining of his pocket. "Is it a good book?" asked Simon again. "A very good book. It has many passages of scripture from the old books and the new," answered

Joshua, his mind still running on the theory of repentance. "Well, I'm going to swear you on it. Take it in your hand." Joshua had objections to taking an oath at any time, but he felt the Liturgy thrust into his hand, and a momentary glance at Rouville, whose face was darkly earnest, made him realise the hopelessness of any resistance. So he held the book tightly in his hand and was solemnly sworn not to divulge the hiding place of the murderer, to provide him with food at once, and to assist him to escape at the most opportune moment. He shivered as the oath bound him but the alternative to be himself a victim to this desperate fellow, was too convincing.

But the solemnity of taking the oath helped to brace his nerves, and when, after he had kissed the book, Rouville remarked, "Now as soon as you can, bring us something to eat." He caught at the "us" and said, "You have Priscie with you, Simon, eh? Then Ann Mercy was right." Rouville growled an assent. "Dear me, Simon, dear me. I always knew you'd come to some bad end, and I always said so." "This is no time for preaching," said Rouville. "What you want to do is to get us something to eat and then get us out of this." "But," said Joshua, making his way hesitatingly to the door with constant glances over his shoulder, "you must wait patiently. I have to reckon with Ann Mercy, and she is a particularly sharp and observant woman, Simon." "Remember your oath," were the last words that he had from Simon and they echoed in his ears as he made his way down the dark stairs.

It seemed to Joshua providential that he was not late for tea; Ann Mercy was just setting the hot water jug on the table as he entered the room. If such a thing was possible his natural pallor was increased but his daughter did not seem to notice it. At his meals he always sat in a rocking chair on a soft down cushion. His jaw dropped and for a moment or two he rocked slowly to and fro, with his eyes fixed on the cloth. Ann Mercy passed him his steaming cup of tea and he took it abstractedly. A moment later he heard her voice as if he were in a dream. She said very quickly, "I wonder where poor Simon is to-night." Joshua clutched his cup and scalded himself with the hot tea. The condition of mind into which this remark threw him was almost intolerable. He felt the necessity of saying something but dared not open his mouth. Behind his well ordered table seemed to hang a picture equally distinct in which the figure of Simon formed a third in their company.

Now that his excitement had somewhat abated he began to realise his position. Sitting in his chair, opposite the daughter whose intelligence he dreaded, and surrounded by the mementos of years of peaceful life, he was the sworn accomplice of a murderer. While a few hours before he had

denounced him vehemently and had done what little lay in his power to bring him to justice, now he was the only one in the world, except Priscilla, who knew where the hand of the law must be laid to touch him; and by the sacredness of his oath he was bound to hedge him about and conduct him to safety if such a misdeed were possible. His mind was a chaos; and to add to his confusion Ann Mercy kept handing him food as if nothing had happened. "Hannibal Garrett was in here while you were at the funeral and he says they are going to search every place in the village. I'd like to see them search this place if I knew Simon was anywhere about." She said this with the sternness of threatening, and with a determined eye. Joshua found his voice, which sounded to him piping and false; he had to produce his words carefully. "When will—they do it—Ann Mercy?" "To-morrow maybe. There is to be an inquest and I offered to give testimony." Joshua looked at her strangely. "Does any one suppose that I am going to keep back what I know about the Peasley family?" Ann Mercy expected to hear that what he knew of the misdemeanours of Rouville's boyhood would be at the disposal of the coroner, but he said nothing. He was thinking that before to-morrow he would have played a part in the tragedy in comparison with which his daughter's presence at the inquest was a paltry incident.

After tea he went into his shop, which was lighted by a coal oil lamp near the ceiling, with a reflector that threw the light glaringly into every corner. He went behind the counter, sat down on his stool, and thought what he should do. Clearly the first thing to be done was to supply the refugees with food. He took an empty egg pail, and put into it two pounds of soda biscuits, which he weighed carefully, and a wedge of cheese which he shaved away until it tipped the scales at just a pound and a half. Then, surveying his shelves, he took down a can of peaches of a brand which had been unsalable, for even in this extremity he was a prudent man. This completed his provision, and taking a small tin pail for water he sallied forth.

It was dark in the stable, but Jerry recognised his master's footfall, and gave an unexpected whinny that made the cold perspiration break out over Joshua as he groped for the stairs. Simon had crawled to the head of the steps in the extremity of his hunger, and lay there awaiting the arrival of Joshua.

"You weren't long or anything, were you?" he growled savagely, as he snatched the first thing his hand touched in the dark. "You brought mighty little, I fancy; you were always a stingy old beggar."

Joshua felt this to be extremely unhandsome considering the risk he had run, but he answered nothing, merely saying, "I will come over again in an

hour, Simon; the evening mail will be in now in a short while."

"And when you come back have a plan to get us out of here. I don't want to be caught like a rat in a hole."

When Joshua returned, the usual crowd had begun to assemble to await the arrival of the evening stage. When it turned the corner and swung into the yard, the little room was packed so closely that the mail bags had to be handed in over heads. Most of the people never received anything by the post, and never expected anything, but they watched the distribution with as much eagerness as if they were devotees at a religious ceremony. At last the excitement was over, and Joshua could sit down beside the little rack of pigeonholes and give himself up to his thoughts.

What was he to do? The more he reflected the more did the peril of his undertaking loom up before him. To his inward eye the long street of Dunham seemed to lengthen interminably, and each house to become a living, accusing consciousness. The opinion of the people he respected came down on him like eagles, to carry him to enormous heights, and to drop him earthward from their altitudes of virtue. If instead of keeping his oath he could fly to the Selby House and crown his interview of the afternoon by delivering the fugitive.

Was it an oath, he asked himself? The Liturgy was not the complete Book—no—he could not be held bound by that. He half started up. Then he remembered the solemn words in the burial service, and he sank back with a sharp intaken breath. Clearly, before his Maker he was bound; a doomed soul. Perhaps the Calvinists were right after all, he thought; perhaps he was born to be burned in eternal fire for his sin, and he could not escape it.

Whereupon a sort of recklessness took hold upon him; his mind cleared like a sky swept clean by a norther; he began to think with a rapidity and eagerness unknown to his brain, a stranger to such stimulating excitement. His eyes were fixed, glaring into the sudden pictures which his imagination sprang for him upon the dull wall. So absorbed was he that he did not notice Ann Mercy, who had been watching him. He did not start when she spoke, and he turned to her with an unwonted boldness produced by his abandonment to this reckless idea. In those few moments of intense thought he had formed a plan of action.

"Ann Mercy," he said, not answering her question, "I'm going to take some goods back to the branch store to-night. I have a sure sort of feeling that Abner has run short of cheese and flour, so I'm going to take Jerry and pull some things over to him, so as to be ready for to-morrow morning." Ann Mercy was a young woman who never suffered from surprise, and she said nothing when her father added, with a sort of ecstatic chuckle,

"Wouldn't it be queer if some people were to think I had Simon Rouville safe in my wagon?" But she gazed at him steadily, with a glance that seemed to sink and pierce. He was swung in a moment from his height. A panic seized him. Had he disclosed all by those impulsive words? "There, there, Ann Mercy; I was only joking. But I must certainly get those goods to East Dunham."

He finished determinedly, as if Ann Mercy were opposing him. But she offered no resistance, and said not a word as Joshua bustled about and tried to avoid her eye. She was thinking deeply, however, and kept her gaze fixed upon her father, whose movements were disconnected and foolish. Just as the old man felt as if he must shriek if she stood another moment, she left him.

It was a terrible relief when the time came to close the store, for although it signalled the commencement of his peril and adventure, it was an escape from the thoughts which were slowly wrecking him. It was a clear night; in the air there was a moist frostiness that held the pungent odour of burning leaves. The street was very still. There was as yet no indication of the moon, and the white road lay gleaming indistinctly between the great trees and the looming houses. Joshua crossed the street to the warehouse, which seemed to tower into the shadow with a portentous bulk.

He lit the stable lantern and ascended the stairs. There was Simon, seated upon the top step, his leg stretched out upon the floor for ease to his ankle, and his back propped against the partition.

"I used hard words to you, Mr. Geer, when you came over before, but no man has control of his tongue with an empty belly; so you must forget that. I was thankful enough—and now," Simon added gloomily, "what are you going to do for us?"

"Where do you want to get to, Simon?"

"I want to go to Uncle Bennet's, down on the Line."

Joshua dropped the lantern. The wildest thoughts plunged through him when he recollected in a flash his mission to the detective. Was he then to be saved by his own acts?

"It is close upon fifteen miles," he said; "Jerry is a slow old horse, and we cannot start until every one has gone to bed. But I have a plan. Sometimes I take goods back to my store at East Dunham in my hearse after night, and no one suspects what I have there. After I leave, you must bring Priscie down and put her in, and get in yourself; about one o'clock I will come over and we will start."

"Will we get there before dawn?" asked Simon wearily.

"Yes, easily, and coming back—"

"Oh, I don't want to hear anything about coming back. I have to go on—and on."

Joshua took his lantern and went down into the dark stable. Ann Mercy watched his rocking light as he crossed the road, but she asked no questions; it was not her habit. Her mind was poised above a conclusion, but it hovered.

About one o'clock, when her father thought her asleep, she seemed to see something unusual in the dark form of the hearse as it turned into the street, pulled slowly and heavily by the decrepit Jerry. Ann Mercy watched until the street was quiet, and then she turned to her bed. Then her heart, which she had so long cheated of tears, had its will. There was a smothered sound of weeping in the room, and she gave the bitter indulgence to the sorrow of her life.

When Joshua had made sure by a whispered inquiry that Simon was in the body of the hearse, he put Jerry in the shafts.

"And is dear little Priscie with you? Is there plenty of room, Simon?"

"Priscilla is all right; there is room enough," answered Simon, with a groan forced by a twinge of his ankle.

Leading Jerry into the yard, Joshua grasped the reins and mounted the seat. Before him lay the familiar street, half revealed by the glimmer which fell from the moon through the parting clouds. Here and there upper windows showed in gleams of light, but for the most part the houses were darkened. Joshua looked neither to the right nor to the left, but he was conscious of every foot of the way. He did not feel sure that he was not pursued until he began the first ascent of Cotesworth Hill.

When they reached the top of the main rise he drew in Jerry for a rest. The sound of the wheels fell into silence, and he could hear the bark of a dog at a distant farm. It was so quiet that he could hear the leaves tap and rustle in the maple overhead. Suddenly came the sound of horses' hoofs on the little bridge a mile distant, faint, but clear and distinct, the short rumble like the roll of a drum, and then silence. Horsemen on the bridge! The thought went through Joshua's mind like a flash.

Simon called out, "Did you hear? Don't rest any longer; go on." There was a terrified sound in his voice.

Jerry caught a smart stroke of the whip and plunged, tugging at his traces. There was a level in the road here, and then a rise to the very summit of the hill. At the foot of this last rise a road branched off into a disused quarry. Pausing here for a moment, the sound of a shouted laugh came up to

the fugitives. In a few moments more the horsemen would round the bend and have the road to the summit in full view.

"Turn into the quarry," cried Simon, who knew every foot of the hill.

Joshua turned Jerry and urged him forward. Down they went into the deep quarry, and turned a corner of the excavations. Although not more than a stone's throw from the road, they were completely hidden by the projecting rock. On the still air they could hear the sound of hoofs striking the stones on the road, and the voices of the riders. Very soon they could distinguish the words.

One voice was saying, "You heard wheels, you say?"

"Yes, but they may have turned off."

"No, that's an old quarry; no one would drive there."

"Nonsense, nonsense, let us go on; at this rate we will never reach Bennet's place."

They had stopped at the foot of the rise, but now they all moved on over the ascent, and soon the sound of their horses was lost in the hollow. Not until then did the fear which filled Joshua's heart begin to subside. He knew that the expedition to Bennet's had been undertaken upon his own information. Turning on his seat he called out timidly, as his conscience stabbed him:

"Simon, Simon, did you hear what they said?"

He saw a hand pale as death clutching the black curtains.

"I heard," the fugitive said, and his deep voice came strangely from the hollow of the hearse. "There is no chance for me now. Never any road by which I can be free again—never—never." Joshua shivered at the solemn sound. "When they have gone away, drive up the hill—drive to the top and wait there. I will tell you then what to do."

Slowly Joshua backed the vehicle, and turned it into the main road. He was soon at the top of the hill.

"Drive on," Simon cried; "drive on." The descent commenced. "Yes, stop now; it is here."

They had halted at a bend of the road. Below them, hidden partly by the shadow of its hills, lay the surface of Selby Lake, silvered over with moonlight. From the dark shallows by the shore a mist had crept, and lay white and still above the black water and below the blacker woods. A film, not of clouds but of a faint iridescent lustre, burned about the moon.

Joshua was aware that the curtains had parted, and that Simon was looking down upon the lake. He saw it, as he had seen it many times, when

he was a boy who came over the hill free of care and with an easy mind. Now he saw it breaking into brightness under the moon—unchanged, and he was changed. Suddenly he drew himself in, and said hoarsely, and so low that Joshua could just distinguish the words: "Drive to the bridge, and then stop."

The bridge spanned the weedy, rush-grown creek that flowed into the lake. On the bridge Joshua stopped. Apprehension seized him; what was about to happen? He heard the struggle as Simon shifted himself and slid from the hearse. He dared not look around. But he needed not to stir, for there was Simon's face under his hand, so close and so white that he could have screamed for terror. Through his uncontrollable trembling he could hear him saying:

"Good-bye, Joshua. You did the best you knew to get me off, and I thank you. Tell Ann Mercy for me to be good to Priscilla, for she has no one in the world. Now you can turn your face and go home; turn your face, and do not look again upon me unfortunate."

But Joshua could not turn his face from the figure which he saw moving away from him in the clear light. He could not call to him; he was under a spell of silence, and could only gaze.

Down Simon went, lost to sight behind bushes where the road ran along the beach; and when he came again into view his steps were in the water. Joshua heard the splash of it thrown by his feet, and saw the dark figure marching out above the circles of silver, the disturbed ripples and eddies that glanced and brightened.

Suddenly he was aware of the truth, and he called loudly, and implored, and raised his voice to a shriek. But still the figure went out and out across the track of moonlight into shadow. Then Joshua threw himself from his seat to the ground, and seizing the wheel with his hands, prayed and wrestled in prayer, and groaned, and travailed, and cried aloud. Then fell a silence, for he dropped against the wheel of his hearse and knew no more.

When he came to himself he was surrounded with mist, his clothing was covered with moisture, and he felt chilled and withered. He could not see the lake, but only the rail of the bridge, dripping with wet, and the nearest rushes in the stream. He could not remember, for a few moments, what had occurred; but from the sight of Jerry and the hearse, gradually his mind was restored to him.

"Oh, dear," groaned Joshua. "Simon, Simon!"

He backed Jerry off the bridge and turned him in the road. He mounted his seat with difficulty, for he was stiff with the chill. Rising on the hill, it

did not take him long to mount above the mist which filled the valley, and lay grey and immovable, hiding the lake. It was dawn, and the east had a low arc of deep crimson. Joshua looked down into the impenetrable mist with eyes that would have pierced it through. Suddenly he thought of Simon's last words. Priscilla! But where was Priscilla?

He leaped from his seat and groped in the hearse. His hands felt vacancy. She was not there. His poor mind, already racked and overburdened, fell into confusion; was she not certainly with Simon in the hearse? No! she could not have been. He would find her dead, then—killed by her father, in the upper room of his warehouse. Up he scrambled into his seat, and with a scream to Jerry and a stroke upon his back, set off up the hill. How long he took to cross it and descend into the long street of the sleeping village he never knew.

Gradually the light had become stronger and when he opened the door of his stable he could see the stairs and the landing. Half stumbling and half crawling, he reached the top. He threw open the door, tottered across the room, reeled and caught himself, and hurled forward on his knees beside the little girl, who awoke from sleep with a rosy cheek.

A few minutes later, Ann Mercy opened the door of the office. Her eyes were discoloured, and her brow, usually unruffled, showed signs of conflict. She saw her father leading the little Priscilla through the early morning light. He was without his hat, his clothing was covered with mud, his face was perturbed and haggard. The little girl, following, dragged upon his extended arm, and gazed back with averted face upon the shuttered windows of the warehouse.

"Ann Mercy," was all the old man could say as he drew Priscilla through the office into the dining room. He trusted his daughter to understand; and as he saw her mother the orphan in her arms, he hid his face and wept.

The next day all the world knew, but only the Rev. Joshua Geer knew all.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Witching of Elspie, A Book of Stories*, by Duncan Campbell Scott.]