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A ROMANY OF THE SNOWS

BEING A CONTINUATION OF THE PERSONAL HISTORIES OF "PIERRE AND HIS PEOPLE" AND THE LAST EXISTING RECORDS OF PRETTY PIERRE

By Gilbert Parker

To SIR WILLIAM C. VAN HORNE.

MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM,

To the public it will seem fitting that these new tales of "Pierre and His People" should be inscribed to one whose notable career is inseparably associated with the life and development of the Far North.

But there is a deeper and more personal significance in this dedication, for some of the stories were begotten in late gossip by your fireside; and furthermore, my little book is given a kind of distinction, in having on its fore-page the name of one well known as a connoisseur of art and a lover of literature.

Believe me,

DEAR SIR WILLIAM,

Sincerely yours,

GILBERT PARKER.

7 PARK PLACE.
ST. JAMES'S.
LONDON. S. W.

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INTRODUCTION

It can hardly be said that there were two series of Pierre stories. There never was but one series, in fact. Pierre moved through all the thirty-nine stories of Pierre and His People and A Romany of the Snows without any thought on my part of putting him out of existence in one series and bringing him to life again in another. The publication of the stories was continuous, and at the time that Pierre and His People appeared several of those which came between the covers of A Romany of the Snows were passing through the pages of magazines in England and America. All of the thirty-nine stories might have appeared in one volume under the title of Pierre and His People, but they were published in two volumes with different titles in England, and in three volumes in America, simply because there was enough material for the two and the three volumes. In America The Adventurer of the North was broken up into two volumes at the urgent request of my then publishers, Messrs. Stone & Kimball, who had the gift of producing beautiful books, but perhaps had not the same gift of business. These two American volumes succeeding Pierre were published under the title of An Adventurer of the North and A Romany of the Snows respectively. Now, the latter title, A Romany of the Snows, was that which I originally chose for the volume published in England as An Adventurer of the North. I was persuaded to reject the title, A Romany of the Snows, by my English publisher, and I have never forgiven myself since for being so weak. If a publisher had the infallible instinct for these things he would not be a publisher—he would be an author; and though an author may make mistakes like everybody else, the average of his hits will be far higher than the average of his misses in such things. The title, An Adventurer of the North, is to my mind cumbrous and rough, and difficult in the mouth. Compare it with some of the stories within the volume itself: for instance, The Going of the White Swan, A Lovely Bully, At Bamber's Boom, At Point o' Bugles, The Pilot of Belle Amour, The Spoil of the Puma, A Romany of the Snows, and The Finding of Fingall. There it was, however; I made the mistake and it sticks; but the book now will be published in this subscription edition under the title first chosen by me, A Romany of the Snows. It really does express what Pierre was.

Perhaps some of the stories in A Romany of the Snows have not the sentimental simplicity of some of the earlier stories in Pierre and His People, which take hold where a deeper and better work might not seize the general public; but, reading these later stories after twenty years, I feel that I was moving on steadily to a larger, firmer command of my material, and was getting at closer grips with intimate human things. There is some proof of what I say in the fact that one of the stories in A Romany of the Snows, called The Going of the

White Swan, appropriately enough published originally in Scribner's Magazine, has had an extraordinary popularity. It has been included in the programmes of reciters from the Murrumbidgee to the Vaal, from John O'Groat's to Land's End, and is now being published as a separate volume in England and America. It has been dramatised several times, and is more alive to-day than it was when it was published nearly twenty years ago. Almost the same may be said of The Three Commandments in the Vulgar Tongue.

It has been said that, apart from the colour, form, and setting, the incidents of these Pierre stories might have occurred anywhere. That is true beyond a doubt, and it exactly represents my attitude of mind. Every human passion, every incident springing out of a human passion to-day, had its counterpart in the time of Amenhotep. The only difference is in the setting, is in the language or dialect which is the vehicle of expression, and in race and character, which are the media of human idiosyncrasy. There is nothing new in anything that one may write, except the outer and visible variation of race, character, and country, which reincarnates the everlasting human ego and its scena.

The atmosphere of a story or novel is what temperament is to a man. Atmosphere cannot be created; it is not a matter of skill; it is a matter of personality, of the power of visualisation, of feeling for the thing which the mind sees. It has been said that my books possess atmosphere. This has often been said when criticism has been more or less acute upon other things; but I think that in all my experience there has never been a critic who has not credited my books with that quality; and I should say that Pierre and His People and A Romany of the Snows have an atmosphere in which the beings who make the stories live seem natural to their environment. It is this quality which gives vitality to the characters themselves. Had I not been able to create atmosphere which would have given naturalness to Pierre and his friends, some of the characters, and many of the incidents, would have seemed monstrosities—melodramatic episodes merely. The truth is, that while the episode, which is the first essential of a short story, was always in the very forefront of my imagination, the character or characters in the episode meant infinitely more to me. To my mind the episode was always the consequence of character. That almost seems a paradox; but apart from the phenomena of nature, as possible incidents in a book, the episodes which make what are called "human situations" are, in most instances, the sequence of character and are incidental to the law of the character set in motion. As I realise it now, subconsciously, my mind and imagination were controlled by this point of view in the days of the writing of Pierre and His People.

In the life and adventures of Pierre and his people I came, as I think, to a certain command of my material, without losing real sympathy with the simple nature of things. Dexterity has its dangers, and one of its dangers is artificiality. It is very difficult to be skilful and to ring true. If I have not wholly succeeded in A Romany of the Snows, I think I have not wholly failed, as the continued appeal of a few of the stories would seem to show.

ACROSS THE JUMPING SANDHILLS

"Here now, Trader; aisy, aisy! Quicksands I've seen along the sayshore, and up to me half-ways I've been in wan, wid a double-and-twist in the rope to pull me out; but a suckin' sand in the open plain—aw, Trader, aw! the like o' that niver a bit saw I."

So said Macavoy the giant, when the thing was talked of in his presence.

"Well, I tell you it's true, and they're not three miles from Fort O'Glory. The Company's—[Hudson's Bay Company]—men don't talk about it—what's the use! Travellers are few that way, and you can't get the Indians within miles of them. Pretty Pierre knows all about them—better than anyone else almost. He'll stand by me in it—eh, Pierre?"

Pierre, the half-breed gambler and adventurer, took no notice, and was silent for a time, intent on his cigarette; and in the pause Mowley the trapper said: "Pierre's gone back on you, Trader. P'r'aps ye haven't paid him for the last lie. I go one better, you stand by me—my treat—that's the game!"

"Aw, the like o' that," added Macavoy reproachfully. "Aw, yer tongue to the roof o' yer mouth, Mowley. Liars all men may be, but that's wid wimmin or landlords. But, Pierre, aff another man's bat like that—aw, Mowley, fill your mouth wid the bowl o' yer pipe."

Pierre now looked up at the three men, rolling another cigarette as he did so; but he seemed to be thinking of a distant matter. Meeting the three pairs of eyes fixed on him, his own held them for a moment musingly; then he lit his cigarette, and, half reclining on the bench where he sat, he began to speak, talking into the fire as it were.

"I was at Guidon Hill, at the Company's post there. It was the fall of the year, when you feel that there is nothing so good as life, and the air drinks like wine. You think that sounds like a woman or a priest? Mais, no. The seasons are strange. In the spring I am lazy and sad; in the fall I am gay, I am for the big things to do. This matter was in the fall. I felt that I must move. Yet, what to do? There was the thing. Cards, of course. But that's only for times, not for all seasons. So I was like a wild dog on a chain. I had a good horse—Tophet, black as a coal, all raw bones and joint, and a reach like a moose. His legs worked like piston-rods. But, as I said, I did not know where to go or what to do. So we used to sit at the Post loafing: in the daytime watching the empty plains all panting for travellers, like a young bride waiting her husband for the first time."

Macavoy regarded Pierre with delight. He had an unctuous spirit, and his heart was soft for women—so soft

that he never had had one on his conscience, though he had brushed gay smiles off the lips of many. But that was an amiable weakness in a strong man. “Aw, Pierre,” he said coaxingly, “kape it down; aisy, aisy. Me heart’s goin’ like a trip-hammer at thought av it; aw yis, aw yis, Pierre.”

“Well, it was like that to me—all sun and a sweet sting in the air. At night to sit and tell tales and such things; and perhaps a little brown brandy, a look at the stars, a half-hour with the cattle—the same old game. Of course, there was the wife of Hilton the factor—fine, always fine to see, but deaf and dumb. We were good friends, Ida and me. I had a hand in her wedding. Holy, I knew her when she was a little girl. We could talk together by signs. She was a good woman; she had never guessed at evil. She was quick, too, like a flash, to read and understand without words. A face was a book to her.

“Eh bien. One afternoon we were all standing outside the Post, when we saw someone ride over the Long Divide. It was good for the eyes. I cannot tell quite how, but horse and rider were so sharp and clear-cut against the sky, that they looked very large and peculiar—there was something in the air to magnify. They stopped for a minute on the top of the Divide, and it seemed like a messenger out of the strange country at the farthest north—the place of legends. But, of course, it was only a traveller like ourselves, for in a half-hour she was with us.

“Yes, it was a girl dressed as a man. She did not try to hide it; she dressed so for ease. She would make a man’s heart leap in his mouth—if he was like Macavoy, or the pious Mowley there.”

Pierre’s last three words had a touch of irony, for he knew that the Trapper had a precious tongue for Scripture when a missionary passed that way, and a bad name with women to give it point. Mowley smiled sourly; but Macavoy laughed outright, and smacked his lips on his pipe-stem luxuriously.

“Aw now, Pierre—all me little failin’s—aw!” he protested.

Pierre swung round on the bench, leaning upon the other elbow, and, cherishing his cigarette, presently continued:

“She had come far and was tired to death, so stiff that she could hardly get from her horse; and the horse too was ready to drop. Handsome enough she looked, for all that, in man’s clothes and a peaked cap, with a pistol in her belt. She wasn’t big built—just a feathery kind of sapling—but she was set fair on her legs like a man, and a hand that was as good as I have seen, so strong, and like silk and iron with a horse. Well, what was the trouble?—for I saw there was trouble. Her eyes had a hunted look, and her nose breathed like a deer’s in the chase. All at once, when she saw Hilton’s wife, a cry came from her and she reached out her hands. What would women of that sort do? They were both of a kind. They got into each other’s arms. After that there was nothing for us men but to wait. All women are the same, and Hilton’s wife was like the rest. She must get the secret first; then the men should know. We had to wait an hour. Then Hilton’s wife beckoned to us. We went inside. The girl was asleep. There was something in the touch of Hilton’s wife like sleep itself—like music. It was her voice—that touch. She could not speak with her tongue, but her hands and face were words and music. Bien, there was the girl asleep, all clear of dust and stain; and that fine hand it lay loose on her breast, so quiet, so quiet. Enfin, the real story—for how she slept there does not matter—but it was good to see when we knew the story.”

The Trapper was laughing silently to himself to hear Pierre in this romantic mood. A woman’s hand—it was the game for a boy, not an adventurer; for the Trapper’s only creed was that women, like deer, were spoils for the hunter. Pierre’s keen eye noted this, but he was above petty anger. He merely said: “If a man have an eye to see behind the face, he understands the foolish laugh of a man, or the hand of a good woman, and that is much. Hilton’s wife told us all. She had rode two hundred miles from the south-west, and was making for Fort Micah, sixty miles farther north. For what? She had loved a man against the will of her people. There had been a feud, and Garrison—that was the lover’s name—was the last on his own side. There was trouble at a Company’s post, and Garrison shot a half-breed. Men say he was right to shoot him, for a woman’s name must be safe up here. Besides, the half-breed drew first. Well, Garrison was tried, and must go to jail for a year. At the end of that time he would be free. The girl Janie knew the day. Word had come to her. She made everything ready. She knew her brothers were watching—her three brothers and two other men who had tried to get her love. She knew also that they five would carry on the feud against the one man. So one night she took the best horse on the ranch and started away towards Fort Micah. Alors, you know how she got to Guidon Hill after two days’ hard riding—enough to kill a man, and over fifty yet to do. She was sure her brothers were on her track. But if she could get to Fort Micah, and be married to Garrison before they came; she wanted no more.

“There were only two horses of use at Hilton’s Post then; all the rest were away, or not fit for hard travel. There was my Tophet, and a lean chestnut, with a long propelling gait, and not an ounce of loose skin on him. There was but one way: the girl must get there. Allons, what is the good? What is life without these things? The girl loves the man: she must have him in spite of all. There was only Hilton and his wife and me at the Post, and Hilton was lame from a fall, and one arm in a sling. If the brothers followed, well, Hilton could not interfere—he was a Company’s man; but for myself, as I said, I was hungry for adventure, I had an ache in my blood for something. I was tingling to the toes, my heart was thumping in my throat. All the cords of my legs were straightening as if I was in the saddle.

“She slept for three hours. I got the two horses saddled. Who could tell but she might need help? I had nothing to do; I knew the shortest way to Fort Micah, every foot—and then it is good to be ready for all things. I told Hilton’s wife what I had done. She was glad. She made a gesture at me as to a brother, and then began to put things in a bag for us to carry. She had settled all how it was to be. She had told the girl. You see, a man may be—what is it they call me?—a plunderer, and yet a woman will trust him, comme ca!”

“Aw yis, aw yis, Pierre; but she knew yer hand and yer tongue niver wint agin a woman, Pierre. Naw, niver a wan. Aw swate, swate, she was, wid a heart—a heart, Hilton’s wife, aw yis!”

Pierre waved Macavoy into silence. “The girl waked after three hours with a start. Her hand caught at her heart. ‘Oh,’ she said, still staring at us, ‘I thought that they had come!’ A little after she and Hilton’s wife went to another room. All at once there was a sound of horses outside, and then a knock at the door, and four men come in. They were the girl’s hunters.

“It was hard to tell what to do all in a minute; but I saw at once the best thing was to act for all, and to get all the men inside the house. So I whispered to Hilton, and then pretended that I was a great man in the Company. I ordered Hilton to have the horses cared for, and, not giving the men time to speak, I fetched out the old brown brandy, wondering all the time what could be done. There was no sound from the other room, though I thought I heard a door open once. Hilton played the game well, and showed nothing when I ordered him about, and agreed word for word with me when I said no girl had come, laughing when they told why they were after her. More than one of them did not believe at first; but, pshaw, what have I been doing all my life to let such fellows doubt me? So the end of it was that I got them all inside the house. There was one bad thing—their horses were all fresh, as Hilton whispered to me. They had only rode them a few miles—they had stole or bought them at the first ranch to the west of the Post. I could not make up my mind what to do. But it was clear I must keep them quiet till something shaped.

“They were all drinking brandy when Hilton’s wife come into the room. Her face was, mon Dieu! so innocent, so childlike. She stared at the men; and then I told them she was deaf and dumb, and I told her why they had come. Voila, it was beautiful—like nothing you ever saw. She shook her head so innocent, and then told them like a child that they were wicked to chase a girl. I could have kissed her feet. Thunder, how she fooled them! She said, would they not search the house? She said all through me, on her fingers and by signs. And I told them at once. But she told me something else—that the girl had slipped out as the last man came in, had mounted the chestnut, and would wait for me by the iron spring, a quarter of a mile away. There was the danger that some one of the men knew the finger-talk, so she told me this in signs mixed up with other sentences.

“Good! There was now but one thing—for me to get away. So I said, laughing, to one of the men. ‘Come, and we will look after the horses, and the others can search the place with Hilton.’ So we went out to where the horses were tied to the railing, and led them away to the corral.

“Of course you will understand how I did it. I clapped a hand on his mouth, put a pistol at his head, and gagged and tied him. Then I got my Tophet, and away I went to the spring. The girl was waiting. There were few words. I gripped her hand, gave her another pistol, and then we got away on a fine moonlit trail. We had not gone a mile when I heard a faint yell far behind. My game had been found out. There was nothing to do but to ride for it now, and maybe to fight. But fighting was not good; for I might be killed, and then the girl would be caught just the same. We rode on—such a ride, the horses neck and neck, their hoofs pounding the prairie like drills, rawbone to rawbone, a hell-to-split gait. I knew they were after us, though I saw them but once on the crest of a Divide about three miles behind. Hour after hour like that, with ten minutes’ rest now and then at a spring or to stretch our legs. We hardly spoke to each other; but, nom de Dieu! my heart was warm to this girl who had rode a hundred and fifty miles in twenty-four hours. Just before dawn, when I was beginning to think that we should easy win the race if the girl could but hold out, if it did not kill her, the chestnut struck a leg into the crack of the prairie, and horse and girl spilt on the ground together. She could hardly move, she was so weak, and her face was like death. I put a pistol to the chestnut’s head, and ended it. The girl stooped and kissed the poor beast’s neck, but spoke nothing. As I helped her on my Tophet I put my lips to the sleeve of her dress. Mother of Heaven! what could a man do—she was so dam’ brave.

“Dawn was just breaking oozy and grey at the swell of the prairie over the Jumping Sandhills. They lay quiet and shining in the green-brown plain; but I knew that there was a churn beneath which could set those swells of sand in motion, and make glory-to-God of an army. Who can tell what it is? A flood under the surface, a tidal river-what? No man knows. But they are sea monsters on the land. Every morning at sunrise they begin to eddy and roll—and who ever saw a stranger sight? Bien, I looked back. There were those four pirates coming on, about three miles away. What was there to do? The girl and myself on my blown horse were too much. Then a great idea come to me. I must reach and cross the Jumping Sandhills before sunrise. It was one deadly chance.

“When we got to the edge of the sand they were almost a mile behind. I was all sick to my teeth as my poor Tophet stepped into the silt. Sacre, how I watched the dawn! Slow, slow, we dragged over that velvet powder. As we reached the farther side I could feel it was beginning to move. The sun was showing like the lid of an eye along the plain. I looked back. All four horsemen were in the sand, plunging on towards us. By the time we touched the brown-green prairie on the farther side the sand was rolling behind us. The girl had not looked back. She seemed too dazed. I jumped from the horse, and told her that she must push on alone to the Fort, that Tophet could not carry both, that I should be in no danger. She looked at me so deep—ah, I cannot tell how! then stooped and kissed me between the eyes—I have never forgot. I struck Tophet, and she was gone to her happiness; for before ‘lights out!’ she reached the Fort and her lover’s arms.

“But I stood looking back on the Jumping Sandhills. So, was there ever a sight like that—those hills gone like a smelting-floor, the sunrise spotting it with rose and yellow, and three horses and their riders fighting what cannot be fought?—What could I do? They would have got the girl and spoiled her life, if I had not led them across, and they would have killed me if they could. Only one cried out, and then but once, in a long shriek. But after, all three were quiet as they fought, until they were gone where no man could see, where none cries out so we can hear. The last thing I saw was a hand stretching up out of the sands.”

There was a long pause, painful to bear. The Trader sat with eyes fixed humbly as a dog’s on Pierre. At last Macavoy said: “She kissed ye, Pierre, aw yis, she did that! Jist betune the eyes. Do yees iver see her now, Pierre?”

But Pierre, looking at him, made no answer.

A LOVELY BULLY

He was seven feet and fat. He came to Fort O’Angel at Hudson’s Bay, an immense slip of a lad, very much

in the way, fond of horses, a wonderful hand at wrestling, pretending a horrible temper, threatening tragedies for all who differed from him, making the Fort quake with his rich roar, and playing the game of bully with a fine simplicity. In winter he fattened, in summer he sweated, at all times he ate eloquently.

It was a picture to see him with the undercut of a haunch of deer or buffalo, or with a whole prairie-fowl on his plate, his eyes measuring it shrewdly, his coat and waistcoat open, and a clear space about him—for he needed room to stretch his mighty limbs, and his necessity was recognised by all.

Occasionally he pretended to great ferocity, but scowl he ever so much, a laugh kept idling in his irregular bushy beard, which lifted about his face in the wind like a mane, or made a kind of underbrush through which his blunt fingers ran at hide-and-seek.

He was Irish, and his name was Macavoy. In later days, when Fort O'Angel was invaded by settlers, he had his time of greatest importance.

He had been useful to the Chief Trader at the Fort in the early days, and having the run of the Fort and the reach of his knife, was little likely to discontinue his adherence. But he ate and drank with all the dwellers at the Post, and abused all impartially. "Malcolm," said he to the Trader, "Malcolm, me glutton o' the H.B.C., that wants the Far North for your footstool—Malcolm, you villain, it's me grief that I know you, and me thumb to me nose in token." Wiley and Hatchett, the principal settlers, he abused right and left, and said, "Wasn't there land in the East and West, that you steal the country God made for honest men—you robbers o' the wide world! Me tooth on the Book, and I tell you what, it's only me charity that kapes me from spoilin' ye. For a wink of me eye, an' away you'd go, leaving your tails behind you—and pass that shoulder of bear, you pirates, till I come to it sideways, like a hog to war."

He was even less sympathetic with Bareback the chief and his braves. "Sons o' Anak y'are; here today and away to-morrow, like the clods of the valley—and that's your portion, Bareback. It's the word o' the Pentytook—in pieces you go, like a potter's vessel. Don't shrug your shoulders at me, Bareback, you pig, or you'll think that Ballzeboob's loose on the mat. But take a sup o' this whisky, while you swear wid your hand on your chest, 'Amin' to the words o' Tim Macavoy."

Beside Macavoy, Pierre, the notorious, was a child in height. Up to the time of the half-breed's coming the Irishman had been the most outstanding man at Fort O'Angel, and was sure of a good-natured homage, acknowledged by him with a jovial tyranny.

Pierre put a flea in his ear. He was pensively indifferent to him even in his most royal moments. He guessed the way to bring down the gusto and pride of this Goliath, but, for a purpose, he took his own time, nodding indolently to Macavoy when he met him, but avoiding talk with him.

Among the Indian maidens Macavoy was like a king or khan; for they count much on bulk and beauty, and he answered to their standards—especially to Wonta's. It was a sight to see him of a summer day, sitting in the shade of a pine, his shirt open, showing his firm brawny chest, his arms bare, his face shining with perspiration, his big voice gurgling in his beard, his eyes rolling amiably upon the maidens as they passed or gathered near demurely, while he declaimed of mighty deeds in patois or Chinook to the braves.

Pierre's humour was of the quietest, most subterranean kind. He knew that Macavoy had not an evil hair in his head; that vanity was his greatest weakness, and that through him there never would have been more half-breed population. There was a tradition that he had a wife somewhere—based upon wild words he had once said when under the influence of bad liquor; but he had roared his accuser the lie when the thing was imputed to him.

At Fort Ste. Anne Pierre had known an old woman, by name of Kitty Whelan, whose character was all tatters. She had told him that many years agone she had had a broth of a lad for a husband; but because of a sharp word or two across the fire, and the toss of a handful of furniture, he had left her, and she had seen no more of him. "Tall, like a chimney he was," said she, "and a chest like a wall, so broad, and a voice like a huntsman's horn, though only a b'y, an' no hair an his face; an' little I know whether he is dead or alive; but dead belike, for he's sure to come rap agin' somethin' that'd kill him; for he, the darlin', was that aisy and gentle, he wouldn't pull his fightin' iron till he had death in his ribs."

Pierre had drawn from her that the name of this man whom she had cajoled into a marriage (being herself twenty years older), and driven to deserting her afterwards, was Tim Macavoy. She had married Mr. Whelan on the assumption that Macavoy was dead. But Mr. Whelan had not the nerve to desert her, and so he departed this life, very loudly lamented by Mrs. Whelan, who had changed her name with no right to do so. With his going her mind dwelt greatly upon the virtues of her mighty vanished Tim: and ill would it be for Tim if she found him.

Pierre had travelled to Fort O'Angel almost wholly because he had Tim Macavoy in his mind: in it Mrs. Whelan had only an incidental part; his plans journeyed beyond her and her lost consort. He was determined on an expedition to capture Fort Comfort, which had been abandoned by the great Company, and was now held by a great band of the Shunup Indians.

Pierre had a taste for conquest for its own sake, though he had no personal ambition. The love of adventure was deep in him; he adored sport for its own sake; he had had a long range of experiences—some discreditable—and now he had determined on a new field for his talent.

He would establish a kingdom, and resign it. In that case he must have a man to take his place. He chose Macavoy.

First he must humble the giant to the earth, then make him into a great man again, with a new kind of courage. The undoing of Macavoy seemed a civic virtue. He had a long talk with Wonta, the Indian maiden most admired by Macavoy. Many a time the Irishman had cast an ogling, rolling eye on her, and had talked his loudest within her ear-shot, telling of splendid things he had done: making himself like another Samson as to the destruction of men, and a Hercules as to the slaying of cattle.

Wonta had a sense of humour also, and when Pierre told her what was required of her, she laughed with a quick little gurgle, and showed as handsome a set of teeth as the half-breed's; which said much for her. She promised to do as he wished. So it chanced when Macavoy was at his favourite seat beneath the pine, talking

to a gaping audience, Wonta and a number of Indian girls passed by. Pierre was leaning against a door smoking, not far away. Macavoy's voice became louder.

"'Stand them up wan by wan,' says I, 'and give me a leg loose, and a fist free; and at that—'"

"At that there was thunder and fire in the sky, and because the great Macavoy blew his breath over them they withered like the leaves," cried Wonta, laughing; but her laugh had an edge.

Macavoy stopped short, open-mouthed, breathing hard in his great beard. He was astonished at Wonta's raillery; the more so when she presently snapped her fingers, and the other maidens, laughing, did the same. Some of the half-breeds snapped their fingers also in sympathy, and shrugged their shoulders. Wonta came up to him softly, patted him on the head, and said: "Like Macavoy there is nobody. He is a great brave. He is not afraid of a coyote, he has killed prairie-hens in numbers as pebbles by the lakes. He has a breast like a fat ox,"—here she touched the skin of his broad chest,—"and he will die if you do not fight him."

Then she drew back, as though in humble dread, and glided away with the other maidens, Macavoy staring after her, with a blustering kind of shame in his face. The half-breeds laughed, and, one by one, they got up, and walked away also. Macavoy looked round: there was no one near save Pierre, whose eye rested on him lazily. Macavoy got to his feet, muttering. This was the first time in his experience at Fort O'Angel that he had been bluffed—and by a girl; one for whom he had a very soft place in his big heart. Pierre came slowly over to him.

"I'd have it out with her," said he. "She called you a bully and a brag."

"Out with her?" cried Macavoy. "How can ye have it out wid a woman?"

"Fight her," said Pierre pensively.

"Fight her? fight her? Holy smoke! How can you fight a woman?"

"Why, what—do you—fight?" asked Pierre innocently.

Macavoy grinned in a wild kind of fashion. "Faith, then, y'are a fool. Bring on the divil an' all his angels, say I, and I'll fight thim where I stand."

Pierre ran his fingers down Macavoy's arm, and said "There's time enough for that. I'd begin with the five."

"What five, then?"

"Her half-breed lovers: Big Eye, One Toe, Jo-John, Saucy Boy, and Limber Legs."

"Her lovers? Her lovers, is it? Is there truth on y'r tongue?"

"Go to her father's tent at sunset, and you'll find one or all of them there."

"Oh, is that it?" said the Irishman, opening and shutting his fists. "Then I'll carve their hearts out, an' ate thim wan by wan this night."

"Come down to Wiley's," said Pierre; "there's better company there than here."

Pierre had arranged many things, and had secured partners in his little scheme for humbling the braggart. He so worked on the other's good nature that by the time they reached the settler's place, Macavoy was stretching himself with a big pride. Seated at Wiley's table, with Hatchett and others near, and drink going about, someone drew the giant on to talk, and so deftly and with such apparent innocence did Pierre, by a word here and a nod there, encourage him, that presently he roared at Wiley and Hatchett:

"Ye shameless buccaneers that push your way into the tracks of honest men, where the Company's been three hundred years by the will o' God—if it wasn't for me, ye Jack Sheppards—"

Wiley and Hatchett both got to their feet with pretended rage, saying he'd insulted them both, that he was all froth and brawn, and giving him the lie.

Utterly taken aback, Macavoy could only stare, puffing in his beard, and drawing in his legs, which had been spread out at angles. He looked from Wiley to the impassive Pierre. "Buccaneers, you callus," Wiley went on; "well, we'll have no more of that, or there'll be trouble at Fort O'Angel."

"Ah, sure y'are only jokin'," said Macavoy, "for I love ye, ye scoundrels. It's only me fun."

"For fun like that you'll pay, ruffian!" said Hatchett, bringing down his fist on the table with a bang.

Macavoy stood up. He looked confounded, but there was nothing of the coward in his face. "Oh, well," said he, "I'll be goin', for ye've got y'r teeth all raspin'."

As he went the two men laughed after him mockingly. "Wind like a bag," said Hatchett. "Bone like a marrow-fat pea," added Wiley.

Macavoy was at the door, but at that he turned. "If ye care to sail agin' that wind, an' gnaw on that bone, I'd not be sayin' you no."

"Will to-night do—at sunset?" said Wiley.

"Bedad, then, me b'ys, sunset'll do—an' not more than two at a time," he added softly, all the roar gone from his throat. Then he went out, followed by Pierre.

Hatchett and Wiley looked at each other and laughed a little confusedly. "What's that he said?" muttered Wiley. "Not more than two at a time, was it?"

"That was it. I don't know that it's what we bargained for, after all." He looked round on the other settlers present, who had been awed by the childlike, earnest note in Macavoy's last words. They shook their heads now a little sagely; they weren't so sure that Pierre's little game was so jovial as it had promised.

Even Pierre had hardly looked for so much from his giant as yet. In a little while he had got Macavoy back to his old humour.

"What was I made for but war!" said the Irishman, "an' by war to kape thim at peace, wherever I am." Soon he was sufficiently restored in spirits to go with Pierre to Bareback's lodge, where, sitting at the tent door, with idlers about, he smoked with the chief and his braves. Again Pierre worked upon him adroitly, and again he became loud in speech, and grandly patronising.

"I've stood by ye like a father, ye loafers," he said, "an' I give you my word, ye howlin' rogues—"

Here Bareback and a half-dozen braves came up suddenly from the ground, and the chief said fiercely: “You speak crooked things. We are no rogues. We will fight.”

Macavoy’s face ran red to his hair. He scratched his head a little foolishly, and gathered himself up. “Sure, ‘twas only me tasin’, darlins,” he said, “but I’ll be comin’ again, when y’are not so narvis.” He turned to go away.

Pierre made a sign to Bareback, and the Indian touched the giant on the arm. “Will you fight?” said he.

“Not all o’ ye at once,” said Macavoy slowly, running his eye carefully along the half-dozen; “not more than three at a toime,” he added with a simple sincerity, his voice again gone like the dove’s. “At what time will it be convaynyint for ye?” he asked.

“At sunset,” said the chief, “before the Fort.” Macavoy nodded and walked away with Pierre, whose glance of approval at the Indians did not make them thoroughly happy.

To rouse the giant was not now so easy. He had already three engagements of violence for sunset. Pierre directed their steps by a roundabout to the Company’s stores, and again there was a distinct improvement in the giant’s spirits. Here at least he could be himself, he thought, here no one should say him nay. As if nerved by the idea, he plunged at once into boisterous raillery of the Chief Trader. “Oh, ho,” he began, “me freebooter, me captain av the looters av the North!” The Trader snarled at him. “What d’ye mean, by such talk to me, sir? I’ve had enough—we’ve all had enough—of your brag and bounce; for you’re all sweat and swill-pipe, and I give you this for your chewing, that though by the Company’s rules I can’t go out and fight you, you may have your pick of my men for it. I’ll take my pay for your insults in pounded flesh—Irish pemmican!”

Macavoy’s face became mottled with sudden rage. He roared, as, perhaps, he had never roared before: “Are ye all gone mad-mad-mad? I was jokin’ wid ye, whin I called ye this or that. But by the swill o’ me pipe, and the sweat o’ me skin, I’ll drink the blood o’ yees, Trader, me darlin’. An’ all I’ll ask is, that ye mate me to-night whin the rest o’ the pack is in front o’ the Fort—but not more than four o’ yees at a time—for little scrawney rats as y’are, too many o’ yees wad be in me way.” He wheeled and strode fiercely out. Pierre smiled gently.

“He’s a great bully that, isn’t he, Trader? There’ll be fun in front of the Fort to-night. For he’s only bragging, of course—eh?”

The Trader nodded with no great assurance, and then Pierre said as a parting word: “You’ll be there, of course—only four av ye!” and hurried out after Macavoy, humming to himself—

“For the King said this, and the Queen said that,
But he walked away with their army, O!”

So far Pierre’s plan had worked even better than he expected, though Macavoy’s moods had not been altogether after his imaginings. He drew alongside the giant, who had suddenly grown quiet again. Macavoy turned and looked down at Pierre with the candour of a schoolboy, and his voice was very low:

“It’s a long time ago, I’m thinkin’,” he said, “since I lost me frinds—ages an’ ages ago. For me frinds are me inimies now, an’ that makes a man old. But I’ll not say that it cripples his arm or humbles his back.” He drew his arm up once or twice and shot it out straight into the air like a catapult. “It’s all right,” he added, very softly, “an’, Half-breed, me b’y, if me frinds have turned inimies, why, I’m thinkin’ me inimy has turned frind, for that I’m sure you were, an’ this I’m certain y ‘are. So here’s the grip av me fist, an’ y’ll have it.” Pierre remembered that disconcerting, iron grip of friendship for many a day. He laughed to himself to think how he was turning the braggart into a warrior. “Well,” said Pierre, “what about those five at Wonta’s tent?”

“I’ll be there whin the sun dips below the Little Red Hill,” he said, as though his thoughts were far away, and he turned his face towards Wonta’s tent. Presently he laughed out loud. “It’s manny along day,” he said, “since—”

Then he changed his thoughts. “They’ve spoke sharp words in me teeth,” he continued, “and they’ll pay for it. Bounce! sweat! brag! wind! is it? There’s dancin’ beyant this night, me darlins!”

“Are you sure you’ll not run away when they come on?” said Pierre, a little ironically.

“Is that the word av a frind?” replied Macavoy, a hand fumbling in his hair.

“Did you never run away when faced?” Pierre asked pitilessly.

“I never turned tail from a man, though, to be sure, it’s been more talk than fight up here: Fort Ste. Anne’s been but a graveyard for fun these years.”

“Eh, well,” persisted Pierre, “but did you never turn tail from a slip of a woman?”

The thing was said idly. Macavoy gathered his beard in his mouth, chewing it confusedly. “You’ve a keen tongue for a question,” was his reply. “What for should anny man run from a woman?”

“When the furniture flies, an’ the woman knows more of the world in a day than the man does in a year; and the man’s a hulking bit of an Irishman—bien, then things are so and so!”

Macavoy drew back dazed, his big legs trembling. “Come into the shade of these maples,” said Pierre, “for the sun has set you quaking a little,” and he put out his hand to take Macavoy’s arm.

The giant drew away from the hand, but walked on to the trees. His face seemed to have grown older by years on the moment. “What’s this y’are sayin’ to me?” he asked hoarsely. “What do you know av—av that woman?”

“Malahide is a long way off,” said Pierre, “but when one travels why shouldn’t the other?”

Macavoy made a helpless motion with his lumbering hand. “Mother o’ saints,” he said, “has it come to that, after all these years? Is she—tell me where she is, me frind, and you’ll niver want an arm to fight for ye, an’ the half av a blanket, while I have wan!”

“But you’ll run as you did before, if I tell you, an’ there’ll be no fighting to-night, accordin’ to the word you’ve given.”

“No fightin’, did ye say? an’ run away, is it? Then this in your eye, that if ye’ll bring an army, I’ll fight till the skin is in rags on me bones, whin it’s only men that’s before me; but woman—and that wan! Faith, I’d run, I’m thinkin’, as I did, you know when—Don’t tell me that she’s here, man; arrah, don’t say that!”

There was something pitiful and childlike in the big man’s voice, so much so that Pierre, calculating gamester as he was, and working upon him as he had been for many weeks, felt a sudden pity, and dropping his fingers on the other’s arm, said: “No, Macavoy, my friend, she is not here; but she is at Fort Ste. Anne—or was when I left there.”

Macavoy groaned. “Does she know that I’m here?” he asked.

“I think not. Fort Ste. Anne is far away, and she may not hear.”

“What—what is she doing?”

“Keeping your memory and Mr. Whelan’s green.” Then Pierre told him somewhat bluntly what he knew of Mrs. Macavoy.

“I’d rather face Ballzeboob himself than her,” said Macavoy. “An’ she’s sure to find me.”

“Not if you do as I say.”

“An’ what is it ye say, little man?”

“Come away with me where she’ll not find you.”

“An’ where’s that, Pierre darlin’?”

“I’ll tell you that when to-night’s fighting’s over. Have you a mind for Wonta?” he continued.

“I’ve a mind for Wonta an’ many another as fine, but I’m a married man,” he said, “by priest an’ by book; an’ I can’t forget that, though the woman’s to me as the pit below.”

Pierre looked curiously at him. “You’re a wonderful fool,” he said, “but I’m not sure that I like you less for that. There was Shon M’Gann—but it is no matter.” He sighed and continued: “When to-night is over, you shall have work and fun that you’ve been fattening for this many a year, and the woman’ll not find you, be sure of that. Besides—” he whispered in Macavoy’s ear.

“Poor divil, poor divil, she’d always a throat for that; but it’s a horrible death to die, I’m thinkin’.” Macavoy’s chin dropped on his breast.

When the sun was falling below Little Red Hill, Macavoy came to Wonta’s tent. Pierre was not far away. What occurred in the tent Pierre never quite knew, but presently he saw Wonta run out in a frightened way, followed by the five half-breeds, who carried themselves awkwardly. Behind them again, with head shaking from one side to the other, travelled Macavoy; and they all marched away towards the Fort. “Well,” said Pierre to Wonta, “he is amusing, eh?—so big a coward, eh?”

“No, no,” she said, “you are wrong. He is no coward. He is a great brave. He spoke like a little child, but he said he would fight them all when—”

“When their turn came,” interposed Pierre, with a fine “bead” of humour in his voice; “well, you see he has much to do.” He pointed towards the Fort, where people were gathering fast. The strange news had gone abroad, and the settlement, laughing joyously, came to see Macavoy swagger; they did not think there would be fighting.

Those whom Macavoy had challenged were not so sure. When the giant reached the open space in front of the Fort, he looked slowly round him. A great change had come over him. His skin seemed drawn together more firmly, and running himself up finely to his full height, he looked no longer the lounging braggart. Pierre measured him with his eye, and chuckled to himself. Macavoy stripped himself of his coat and waistcoat, and rolled up his sleeves. His shirt was flying at the chest.

He beckoned to Pierre.

“Are you standin’ me frind in this?” he said. “Now and after,” said Pierre.

His voice was very simple. “I never felt as I do since the day the coast-guardsmin dropped on me in Ireland far away, an’ I drew blood an every wan o’ them—fine beautiful b’ys they looked—stretchen’ out on the ground wan by wan. D’ye know the double-an’-twist?” he suddenly added, “for it’s a honey trick whin they gather in an you, an’ you can’t be layin’ out wid yer fists. It plays the divil wid the spines av thim. Will ye have a drop av drink—cold water, man—near, an’ a sponge betune whiles? For there’s manny in the play—makin’ up for lost time. Come on,” he added to the two settlers, who stood not far away, “for ye began the trouble, an’ we’ll settle accordin’ to a, b, c.”

Wiley and Hatchett were there. Responding to his call, they stepped forward, though they had now little relish for the matter. They were pale, but they stripped their coats and waistcoats, and Wiley stepped bravely in front of Macavoy. The giant looked down on him, arms folded. “I said two of you,” he crooned, as if speaking to a woman. Hatchett stepped forward also. An instant after the settlers were lying on the ground at different angles, bruised and dismayed, and little likely to carry on the war. Macavoy took a pail of water from the ground, drank from it lightly, and waited. None other of his opponents stirred. “There’s three Injins,” he said, “three rid divils, that wants showin’ the way to their happy huntin’ grounds.... Sure, y’are comin’, ain’t you, me darlins?” he added coaxingly, and he stretched himself, as if to make ready.

Bareback, the chief, now harangued the three Indians, and they stepped forth warily. They had determined on strategic wrestling, and not on the instant activity of fists. But their wiliness was useless, for Macavoy’s double-and-twist came near to lessening the Indian population of Fort O’Angel. It only broke a leg and an arm, however. The Irishman came out of the tangle of battle with a wild kind of light in his eye, his beard all torn, and face battered. A shout of laughter, admiration and wonder went up from the crowd. There was a moment’s pause, and then Macavoy, whose blood ran high, stood forth again. The Trader came to him.

“Must this go on?” he said; “haven’t you had your fill of it?”

Had he touched Macavoy with a word of humour the matter might have ended there; but now the giant spoke loud, so all could hear.

“Had me fill av it, Trader, me angel? I’m only gittin’ the taste av it. An’ ye’ll plaze bring on yer men—four it

was—for the feed av Irish pemmican."

The Trader turned and swore at Pierre, who smiled enigmatically. Soon after, two of the best fighters of the Company's men stood forth. Macavoy shook his head. "Four, I said, an' four I'll have, or I'll ate the heads aff these."

Shamed, the Trader sent forth two more. All on an instant the four made a rush on the giant; and there was a stiff minute after, in which it was not clear that he was happy. Blows rattled on him, and one or two he got on the head, just as he tossed a man spinning senseless across the grass, which sent him staggering backwards for a moment, sick and stunned.

Pierre called over to him swiftly: "Remember Malahide!"

This acted on him like a charm. There never was seen such a shattered bundle of men as came out from his hands a few minutes later. As for himself, he had but a rag or two on him, but stood unmindful of his state, and the fever of battle untameable on him. The women drew away.

"Now, me babes o' the wood," he shouted, "that sit at the feet av the finest Injin woman in the North,—though she's no frind o' mine—and aren't fit to kiss her moccasin, come an wid you, till I have me fun wid your spines."

But a shout went up, and the crowd pointed. There were the five half-breeds running away across the plains.

The game was over.

"Here's some clothes, man; for Heaven's sake put them on," said the Trader.

Then the giant became conscious of his condition, and like a timid girl he hurried into the clothing.

The crowd would have carried him on their shoulders, but he would have none of it.

"I've only wan frind here," he said, "an' it's Pierre, an' to his shanty I go an' no other."

"Come, mon ami," said Pierre, "for to-morrow we travel far."

"And what for that?" said Macavoy.

Pierre whispered in his ear: "To make you a king, my lovely bully."

THE FILIBUSTER

Pierre had determined to establish a kingdom, not for gain, but for conquest's sake. But because he knew that the thing would pall, he took with him Macavoy the giant, to make him king instead. But first he made Macavoy from a lovely bully, a bulk of good-natured brag, into a Hercules of fight; for, having made him insult—and be insulted by—near a score of men at Fort O'Angel, he also made him fight them by twos, threes, and fours, all on a summer's evening, and send them away broken. Macavoy would have hesitated to go with Pierre, were it not that he feared a woman. Not that he had wronged her; she had wronged him: she had married him. And the fear of one's own wife is the worst fear in the world.

But though his heart went out to women, and his tongue was of the race that beguiles, he stood to his "lines" like a man, and people wondered. Even Wonta, the daughter of Foot-in-the-Sun, only bent him, she could not break him to her will. Pierre turned her shy coaxing into irony—that was on the day when all Fort O'Angel conspired to prove Macavoy a child and not a warrior. But when she saw what she had done, and that the giant was greater than his years of brag, she repented, and hung a dead coyote at Pierre's door as a sign of her contempt.

Pierre watched Macavoy, sitting with a sponge of vinegar to his head, for he had had nasty joltings in his great fight. A little laugh came crinkling up to the half-breed's lips, but dissolved into silence.

"We'll start in the morning," he said.

Macavoy looked up. "Whin you plaze; but a word in your ear; are you sure she'll not follow us?"

"She doesn't know. Fort Ste. Anne is in the south, and Fort Comfort, where we go, is far north."

"But if she kem!" the big man persisted.

"You will be a king; you can do as other kings have done," Pierre chuckled.

The other shook his head. "Says Father Nolan to me," says he, "tis till death us do part, an' no man put asunder'; an' I'll stand by that, though I'd slice out the bist tin years av me life, if I niver saw her face again."

"But the girl, Wonta—what a queen she'd make!"

"Marry her yourself, and be king yourself, and be damned to you! For she, like the rest, laughed in me face, whin I told thim of the day whin I—"

"That's nothing. She hung a dead coyote at my door. You don't know women. There'll be your breed and hers abroad in the land one day."

Macavoy stretched to his feet—he was so tall that he could not stand upright in the room. He towered over Pierre, who blandly eyed him. "I've another word for your ear," he said darkly. "Keep clear av the likes o' that wid me. For I've swallowed a tribe av divils. It's fightin' you want. Well, I'll do it—I've an itch for the throats av men, but a fool I'll be no more wid wimin, white or red—that hell-cat that spoilt me life an' killed me child, or—"

A sob clutched him in the throat.

"You had a child, then?" asked Pierre gently.

"An angel she was, wid hair like the sun, an' 'd melt the heart av an iron god: none like her above or below. But the mother, ah, the mother of her! One day whin she'd said a sharp word, wid another from me, an' the

child clinging to her dress, she turned quick and struck it, meanin' to anger me. Not so hard the blow was, but it sent the darlin's head agin' the chimney-stone, and that was the end av it. For she took to her bed, an' agin' the crowin' o' the cock wan midnight, she gives a little cry an' snatched at me beard. 'Daddy,' says she, 'daddy, it hurts!' An' thin she floats away, wid a stitch av pain at her lips."

Macavoy sat down now, his fingers fumbling in his beard. Pierre was uncomfortable. He could hear of battle, murder, and sudden death unmoved—it seemed to him in the game; but the tragedy of a child, a mere counter yet in the play of life—that was different. He slid a hand over the table, and caught Macavoy's arm. "Poor little waif!" he said.

Macavoy gave the hand a grasp that turned Pierre sick, and asked: "Had ye iver a child av y'r own, Pierre-iver wan at all?"

"Never," said Pierre dreamily, "and I've travelled far. A child—a child—is a wonderful thing.... Poor little waif!"

They both sat silent for a moment. Pierre was about to rise, but Macavoy suddenly pinned him to his seat with this question: "Did y' iver have a wife, thin, Pierre?"

Pierre turned pale. A sharp breath came through his teeth. He spoke slowly: "Yes, once."

"And she died?" asked the other, awed.

"We all have our day," he replied enigmatically, "and there are worse things than death.... Eh, well, mon ami, let us talk of other things. To-morrow we go to conquer. I know where I can get five men I want. I have ammunition and dogs."

A few minutes afterwards Pierre was busy in the settlement. At the Fort he heard strange news. A new batch of settlers was coming from the south, and among them was an old Irishwoman who called herself now Mrs. Whelan, now Mrs. Macavoy. She talked much of the lad she was to find, one Tim Macavoy, whose fame Gossip had brought to her at last.

She had clung on to the settlers, and they could not shake her off. "She was comin'," she said, "to her own darlin' b'y, from whom she'd been parted manny a year, believin' him dead, or Tom Whelan had nivir touched hand o' hers."

The bearer of the news had but just arrived, and he told it only to the Chief Trader and Pierre. At a word from Pierre the man promised to hold his peace. Then Pierre went to Wonta's lodge. He found her with her father alone, her head at her knees. When she heard his voice she looked up sharply, and added a sharp word also.

"Wait," he said; "women are such fools. You snapped your fingers in his face, and laughed at him. Bien, that is nothing. He has proved himself great. That is something. He will be greater still, if the other woman does not find him. She should die, but then some women have no sense."

"The other woman!" said Wonta, starting to her feet; "who is the other woman?"

Old Foot-in-the-Sun waked and sat up, but seeing that it was Pierre, dropped again to sleep. Pierre, he knew, was no peril to any woman. Besides, Wonta hated the half-breed, as he thought.

Pierre told the girl the story of Macavoy's life; for he knew that she loved the man after her heathen fashion, and that she could be trusted.

"I do not care for that," she said, when he had finished; "it is nothing. I would go with him. I should be his wife, the other should die. I would kill her, if she would fight me. I know the way of knives, or a rifle, or a pinch at the throat—she should die!"

"Yes, but that will not do. Keep your hands free of her."

Then he told her that they were going away. She said she would go also. He said no to that, but told her to wait and he would come back for her.

Though she tried hard to follow them, they slipped away from the Fort in the moist gloom of the morning, the brown grass rustling, the prairie-hens fluttering, the osiers soughing as they passed, the Spirit of the North, ever hungry, drawing them on over the long Divides. They did not see each other's faces till dawn. They were guided by Pierre's voice; none knew his comrades. Besides Pierre and Macavoy, there were five half-breeds—Noel, Little Babiche, Corvette, Josh, and Jacques Parfaite. When they came to recognise each other, they shook hands, and marched on. In good time they reached that wonderful and pleasant country between the Barren Grounds and the Lake of Silver Shallows. To the north of it was Fort Comfort, which they had come to take. Macavoy's rich voice roared as of old, before his valour was questioned—and maintained—at Fort O'Angel. Pierre had diverted his mind from the woman who, at Fort O'Angel, was even now calling heaven and earth to witness that "Tim Macavoy was her Macavoy and no other, an' she'd find him—the divil and darlin', wid an arm like Broin Borhoime, an' a chest you could build a house on—if she walked till Doomsday!"

Macavoy stood out grandly, his fat all gone to muscle, blowing through his beard, puffing his cheek, and ready with tale or song. But now that they were facing the business of their journey, his voice got soft and gentle, as it did before the Fort, when he grappled his foes two by two and three by three, and wrung them out. In his eyes there was the thing which counts as many men in any soldier's sight, when he leads in battle. As he said himself, he was made for war, like Malachi o' the Golden Collar.

Pierre guessed that just now many of the Indians would be away for the summer hunt, and that the Fort would perhaps be held by only a few score of braves, who, however, would fight when they might easier play. He had no useless compunctions about bloodshed. A human life he held to be a trifle in the big sum of time, and that it was of little moment when a man went, if it seemed his hour. He lived up to his creed, for he had ever held his own life as a bird upon a housetop, which a chance stone might drop.

He was glad afterwards that he had decided to fight, for there was one in Fort Comfort against whom he had an old grudge—the Indian, Young Eye, who, many years before, had been one to help in killing the good Father Halen, the priest who dropped the water on his forehead and set the cross on top of that, when he was at his mother's breasts. One by one the murderers had been killed, save this man. He had wandered north,

lived on the Coppermine River for a long time, and at length had come down among the warring tribes at the Lake of Silver Shallows.

Pierre was for direct attack. They crossed the lake in their canoes, at a point about five miles from the Fort, and, so far as they could tell, without being seen. Then ammunition went round, and they marched upon the Fort. Pierre eyed Macavoy—measured him, as it were, for what he was worth. The giant seemed happy. He was humming a tune softly through his beard. Suddenly Jose paused, dropped to the foot of a pine, and put his ear to it. Pierre understood. He had caught at the same thing. “There is a dance on,” said Jose, “I can hear the drum.”

Pierre thought a minute. “We will reconnoitre,” he said presently.

“It is near night now,” remarked Little Babiche. “I know something of these. When they have a great snake dance at night, strange things happen.” Then he spoke in a low tone to Pierre.

They halted in the bush, and Little Babiche went forward to spy upon the Fort. He came back just after sunset, reporting that the Indians were feasting. He had crept near, and had learned that the braves were expected back from the hunt that night, and that the feast was for their welcome.

The Fort stood in an open space, with tall trees for a background. In front, here and there, were juniper and tamarac bushes. Pierre laid his plans immediately, and gave the word to move on. Their presence had not been discovered, and if they could but surprise the Indians the Fort might easily be theirs. They made a detour, and after an hour came upon the Fort from behind. Pierre himself went forward cautiously, leaving Macavoy in command. When he came again he said:

“It’s a fine sight, and the way is open. They are feasting and dancing. If we can enter without being seen, we are safe, except for food; we must trust for that. Come on.”

When they arrived at the margin of the woods a wonderful scene was before them. A volcanic hill rose up on one side, gloomy and stern, but the reflection of the fires reached it, and made its sides quiver—the rock itself seemed trembling. The sombre pines showed up, a wall all round, and in the open space, turreted with fantastic fires, the Indians swayed in and out with weird chanting, their bodies mostly naked, and painted in strange colours. The earth itself was still and sober. Scarce a star peeped forth. A purple velvet curtain seemed to hang all down the sky, though here and there the flame bronzed it. The Indian lodges were empty, save where a few children squatted at the openings. The seven stood still with wonder, till Pierre whispered to them to get to the ground and crawl close in by the walls of the Fort, following him. They did so, Macavoy breathing hard—too hard; for suddenly Pierre clapped a hand on his mouth.

They were now near the Fort, and Pierre had seen an Indian come from the gate. The brave was within a few feet of them. He had almost passed them, for they were in the shadow, but Jose had burst a puffball with his hand, and the dust, flying up, made him sneeze. The Indian turned and saw them. With a low cry and the spring of a tiger Pierre was at his throat; and in another minute they were struggling on the ground. Pierre’s hand never let go. His comrades did not stir; he had warned them to lie still. They saw the terrible game played out within arm’s length of them. They heard Pierre say at last, as the struggles of the Indian ceased: “Beast! You had Father Halen’s life. I have yours.”

There was one more wrench of the Indian’s limbs, and then he lay still.

They crawled nearer the gate, still hidden in the shadows and the grass. Presently they came to a clear space. Across this they must go, and enter the Fort before they were discovered. They got to their feet, and ran with wonderful swiftness, Pierre leading, to the gate. They had just reached it when there was a cry from the walls, on which two Indians were sitting. The Indians sprang down, seized their spears, and lunged at the seven as they entered. One spear caught Little Babiche in the arm as he swung aside, but with the butt of his musket Noel dropped him. The other Indian was promptly handled by Pierre himself. By this time Corvette and Jose had shut the gates, and the Fort was theirs—an easy conquest. The Indians were bound and gagged.

The adventurers had done it all without drawing the attention of the howling crowd without. The matter was in its infancy, however. They had the place, but could they hold it? What food and water were there within? Perhaps they were hardly so safe besieged as besiegers. Yet there was no doubt on Pierre’s part. He had enjoyed the adventure so far up to the hilt. An old promise had been kept, and an old wrong avenged.

“What’s to be done now?” said Macavoy. “There’ll be hell’s own racket; and they’ll come on like a flood.”

“To wait,” said Pierre, “and dam the flood as it comes. But not a bullet till I give the word. Take to the chinks. We’ll have them soon.”

He was right: they came soon. Someone had found the dead body of Young Eye; then it was discovered that the gate was shut. A great shout went up. The Indians ran to their lodges for spears and hatchets, though the weapons of many were within the Fort, and soon they were about the place, shouting in impotent rage. They could not tell how many invaders were in the Fort; they suspected it was the Little Skins, their ancient enemies. But Young Eye, they saw, had not been scalped. This was brought to the old chief, and he called to his men to fall back. They had not seen one man of the invaders; all was silent and dark within the Fort; even the two torches which had been burning above the gate were down. At that moment, as if to add to the strangeness, a caribou came suddenly through the fires, and, passing not far from the bewildered Indians, plunged into the trees behind the Fort.

The caribou is credited with great powers. It is thought to understand all that is said to it, and to be able to take the form of a spirit. No Indian will come near it till it is dead, and he that kills it out of season is supposed to bring down all manner of evil.

So at this sight they cried out—the women falling to the ground with their faces in their arms—that the caribou had done this thing. For a moment they were all afraid. Besides, as a brave showed, there was no mark on the body of Young Eye.

Pierre knew quite well that this was a bull caribou, travelling wildly till he found another herd. He would carry on the deception. “Wail for the dead, as your women do in Ireland. That will finish them,” he said to Macavoy.

The giant threw his voice up and out, so that it seemed to come from over the Fort to the Indians, weird and

crying. Even the half-breeds standing by felt a light shock of unnatural excitement. The Indians without drew back slowly from the Fort, leaving a clear space between. Macavoy had uncanny tricks with his voice, and presently he changed the song into a shrill, wailing whistle, which went trembling about the place and then stopped suddenly.

"Sure, that's a poor game, Pierre," he whispered; "an' I'd rather be pluggin' their hides wid bullets, or givin' the double-an'-twist. It's fightin' I come for, and not the trick av Mother Kilkevin."

Pierre arranged a plan of campaign at once. Every man looked to his gun, the gates were slowly opened, and Macavoy stepped out. Pierre had thrown over the Irishman's shoulders the great skin of a musk-ox which he had found inside the stockade. He was a strange, immense figure, as he walked into the open space, and, folding his arms, looked round. In the shadow of the gate behind were Pierre and the halfbreeds, with guns cocked.

Macavoy had lived so long in the north that he knew enough of all the languages to speak to this tribe. When he came out a murmur of wonder ran among the Indians. They had never seen anyone so tall, for they were not great of stature, and his huge beard and wild shock of hair were a wonderful sight. He remained silent, looking on them. At last the old chief spoke. "Who are you?"

"I am a great chief from the Hills of the Mighty Men, come to be your king," was his reply.

"He is your king," cried Pierre in a strange voice from the shadow of the gate, and he thrust out his gun-barrel, so that they could see it.

The Indians now saw Pierre and the half-breeds in the gateway, and they had not so much awe. They came a little nearer, and the women stopped crying. A few of the braves half-raised their spears. Seeing this, Pierre instantly stepped forward to the giant. He looked a child in stature thereby. He spoke quickly and well in the Chinook language.

"This is a mighty man from the Hills of the Mighty Men. He has come to rule over you, to give all other tribes into your hands; for he has strength like a thousand, and fears nothing of gods nor men. I have the blood of red men in me. It is I who have called this man from his distant home. I heard of your fighting and foolishness: also that warriors were to come from the south country to scatter your wives and children, and to make you slaves. I pitied you, and I have brought you a chief greater than any other. Throw your spears upon the ground, and all will be well; but raise one to throw, or one arrow, or axe, and there shall be death among you, so that as a people you shall die. The spirits are with us. ... Well?"

The Indians drew a little nearer, but they did not drop their spears, for the old chief forbade them.

"We are no dogs nor cowards," he said, "though the spirits be with you, as we believe. We have seen strange things"—he pointed to Young Eye—"and heard voices not of men; but we would see great things as well as strange. There are seven men of the Little Skins tribe within a lodge yonder. They were to die when our braves returned from the hunt, and for that we prepared the feast. But this mighty man, he shall fight them all at once, and if he kills them he shall be our king. In the name of my tribe I speak. And this other," pointing to Pierre, "he shall also fight with a strong man of our tribe, so that we shall know if you are all brave, and not as those who crawl at the knees of the mighty."

This was more than Pierre had bargained for. Seven men at Macavoy, and Indians too, fighting for their lives, was a contract of weight. But Macavoy was blowing in his beard cheerfully enough.

"Let me choose me ground," he said, "wid me back to the wall, an' I'll take thim as they come."

Pierre instantly interpreted this to the Indians, and said for himself that he would welcome their strongest man at the point of a knife when he chose.

The chief gave an order, and the Little Skins were brought. The fires still burned brightly, and the breathing of the pines, as a slight wind rose and stirred them, came softly over. The Indians stood off at the command of the chief. Macavoy drew back to the wall, dropped the musk-ox skin to the ground, and stripped himself to the waist. But in his waistband there was what none of these Indians had ever seen—a small revolver that barked ever so softly. In the hands of each Little Skin there was put a knife, and they were told their cheerful exercise. They came on cautiously, and then suddenly closed in, knives flashing. But Macavoy's little bulldog barked, and one dropped to the ground. The others fell back. The wounded man drew up, made a lunge at Macavoy, but missed him. As if ashamed, the other six came on again at a spring. But again the weapon did its work smartly, and one more came down. Now the giant put it away, ran in upon the five, and cut right and left. So sudden and massive was his rush that they had no chance. Three fell at his blows, and then he drew back swiftly to the wall. "Drop your knives," he said, as they cowered, "or I'll kill you all." They did so. He dropped his own.

"Now come on, ye scuts!" he cried, and suddenly he reached and caught them, one with each arm, and wrestled with them, till he bent the one like a willow-rod, and dropped him with a broken back, while the other was at his mercy. Suddenly loosing him, he turned him towards the woods, and said: "Run, ye rid divil, run for y'r life!"

A dozen spears were raised, but the rifles of Pierre's men came in between: the Indian reached cover and was gone. Of the six others, two had been killed, the rest were severely wounded, and Macavoy had not a scratch.

Pierre smiled grimly. "You've been doing all the fighting, Macavoy," he said.

"There's no bein' a king for nothin'," he replied, wiping blood from his beard.

"It's my turn now, but keep your rifles ready, though I think there's no need."

Pierre had but a short minute with the champion, for he was an expert with the knife. He carried away four fingers of the Indian's fighting hand, and that ended it; for the next instant the point was at the red man's throat. The Indian stood to take it like a man; but Pierre loved that kind of courage, and shot the knife into its sheath instead.

The old chief kept his word, and after the spears were piled, he shook hands with Macavoy, as did his braves one by one, and they were all moved by the sincerity of his grasp: their arms were useless for some

time after. They hailed as their ruler, King Macavoy I.; for men are like dogs—they worship him who beats them. The feasting and dancing went on till the hunters came back. Then there was a wild scene, but in the end all the hunters, satisfied, came to greet their new king.

The king himself went to bed in the Fort that night, Pierre and his bodyguard—by name Noel, Little Babiche, Corvette, Jose, and Parfaite—its only occupants, singing joyfully:

"Did yees iver hear tell o' Long Barney,
That come from the groves o' Killarney?
He wint for a king, oh, he wint for a king,
But he niver keen back to Killarney
Wid his crown, an' his soord, an' his army!"

As a king Macavoy was a success, for the brag had gone from him. Like all his race he had faults as a subject, but the responsibility of ruling set him right. He found in the Fort an old sword and belt, left by some Hudson's Bay Company's man, and these he furbished up and wore.

With Pierre's aid he drew up a simple constitution, which he carried in the crown of his cap, and he distributed beads and gaudy trappings as marks of honour. Nor did he forget the frequent pipe of peace, made possible to all by generous gifts of tobacco. Anyone can found a kingdom abaft the Barren Grounds with tobacco, beads, and red flannel.

For very many weeks it was a happy kingdom. But presently Pierre yawned, and was ready to return. Three of the half-breeds were inclined to go with him. Jose and Little Babiche had formed alliances which held them there—besides, King Macavoy needed them.

On the eve of Pierre's departure a notable thing occurred.

A young brave had broken his leg in hunting, had been picked up by a band of another tribe, and carried south. He found himself at last at Fort O'Angel. There he had met Mrs. Whelan, and for presents of tobacco, and purple and fine linen, he had led her to her consort. That was how the king and Pierre met her in the yard of Fort Comfort one evening of early autumn. Pierre saw her first, and was for turning the King about and getting him away; but it was too late. Mrs. Whelan had seen him, and she called out at him:

"Oh, Tim! me jool, me king, have I found ye, me imp'ror!"

She ran at him, to throw her arms round him. He stepped back, the red of his face going white, and said, stretching out his hand, "Woman, y'are me wife, I know, whativer y' be; an' y've right to have shelter and bread av me; but me arms, an' me bed, are me own to kape or to give; and, by God, ye shall have nayther one nor the other! There's a ditch as wide as hell betune us."

The Indians had gathered quickly; they filled the yard, and crowded the gate. The woman went wild, for she had been drinking. She ran at Macavoy and spat in his face, and called down such a curse on him as, whoever hears, be he one that's cursed or any other, shudders at till he dies. Then she fell in a fit at his feet. Macavoy turned to the Indians, stretched out his hands and tried to speak, but could not. He stooped down, picked up the woman, carried her into the Fort, and laid her on a bed of skins.

"What will you do?" asked Pierre.

"She is my wife," he answered firmly.

"She lived with Whelan."

"She must be cared for," was the reply. Pierre looked at him with a curious quietness. "I'll get liquor for her," he said presently. He started to go, but turned and felt the woman's pulse. "You would keep her?" he asked.

"Bring the liquor." Macavoy reached for water, and dipping the sleeve of his shirt in it, wetted her face gently.

Pierre brought the liquor, but he knew that the woman would die. He stayed with Macavoy beside her all the night. Towards morning her eyes opened, and she shivered greatly.

"It's bither cold," she said. "You'll put more wood on the fire, Tim, for the babe must be kept warrum."

She thought she was at Malahide.

"Oh, wurra, wurra, but 'tis freezin'!" she said again. "Why d'ye kape the door opin whin the child's perishin'?"

Macavoy sat looking at her, his trouble shaking him.

"I'll shut the door meself, thin," she added; "for 'twas I that lift it opin, Tim." She started up, but gave a cry like a wailing wind, and fell back.

"The door is shut," said Pierre.

"But the child—the child!" said Macavoy, tears running down his face and beard.

THE GIFT OF THE SIMPLE KING

Once Macavoy the giant ruled a tribe of Northern people, achieving the dignity by the hands of Pierre, who called him King Macavoy. Then came a time when, tiring of his kingship, he journeyed south, leaving all behind, even his queen, Wonta, who, in her bed of cypresses and yarrow, came forth no more into the morning. About Fort Guidon they still gave him his title, and because of his guilelessness, sincerity, and generosity, Pierre called him "The Simple King." His seven feet and over shambled about, suggesting unjointed power, unshackled force. No one hated Macavoy, many loved him, he was welcome at the fire and the cooking-pot; yet it seemed shameful to have so much man useless—such an engine of life, which might do

great things, wasting fuel. Nobody thought much of that at Fort Guidon, except, perhaps, Pierre, who sometimes said, “My simple king, some day you shall have your great chance again; but not as a king—as a giant, a man—voila!”

The day did not come immediately, but it came. When Ida, the deaf and dumb girl, married Hilton, of the H.B.C., every man at Fort Guidon, and some from posts beyond, sent her or brought her presents of one kind or another. Pierre’s gift was a Mexican saddle. He was branding Ida’s name on it with the broken blade of a case-knife when Macavoy entered on him, having just returned from a vagabond visit to Fort Ste. Anne.

“Is it digging out or carvin’ in y’are?” he asked, puffing into his beard.

Pierre looked up contemptuously, but did not reply to the insinuation, for he never saw an insult unless he intended to avenge it; and he would not quarrel with Macavoy.

“What are you going to give?” he asked.

“Aw, give what to who, hop-o’-me-thumb?” Macavoy said, stretching himself out in the doorway, his legs in the sun, head in the shade.

“You’ve been taking a walk in the country, then?” Pierre asked, though he knew.

“To Fort Ste. Anne: a buryin’, two christ’nin’s, an’ a weddin’; an’ lashin’s av grog an’ swill-aw that, me button o’ the North!”

“La la! What a fool you are, my simple king! You’ve got the things end foremost. Turn your head to the open air, for I go to light a cigarette, and if you breathe this way, there will be a grand explode.”

“Aw, yer thumb in yer eye, Pierre! It’s like a baby’s, me breath is, milk and honey it is—aw yis; an’ Father Corraine, that was doin’ the trick for the love o’ God, says he to me, ‘Little Tim Macavoy,’—aw yis, little Tim Macavoy,—says he, ‘when are you goin’ to buckle to, for the love o’ God?’ says he. Ashamed I was, Pierre, that Father Corraine should spake to me like that, for I’d only a twig twisted at me hips to kape me trousies up, an’ I thought ‘twas that he had in his eye! ‘Buckle to,’ says I, ‘Father Corraine? Buckle to, yer riv’rince?’—feelin’ I was at the twigs the while. ‘Ay, little Tim Macavoy,’ he says, says he, ‘you’ve bin ‘atin’ the husks av idleness long enough; when are you goin’ to buckle to? You had a kingdom and ye guv it up,’ says he; ‘take a field, get a plough, and buckle to,’ says he, ‘an’ turn back no more’—like that, says Father Corraine; and I thinkin’ all the time ‘twas the want o’ me belt he was drivin’ at.”

Pierre looked at him a moment idly, then said: “Such a tom-fool! And where’s that grand leather belt of yours, eh, my monarch?”

A laugh shook through Macavoy’s beard. “For the weddin’ it wint: buckled the two up wid it for better or worse—an’ purty they looked, they did, standin’ there in me cinch, an’ one hole left—aw yis, Pierre.”

“And what do you give to Ida?” Pierre asked, with a little emphasis of the branding-iron.

Macavoy got to his feet. “Ida! Ida!” said he. “Is that saddle for Ida? Is it her and Hilton that’s to ate aff one dish togither? That rose o’ the valley, that bird wid a song in her face and none an her tongue. That daisy dot av a thing, steppin’ through the world like a sprig o’ glory. Aw, Pierre, thim two!—an’ I’ve divil a scrap to give, good or bad. I’ve nothin’ at all in the wide wurruld but the clothes an me back, an’ thim hangin’ on the underbrush!”—giving a little twist to the twigs. “An’ many a meal an’ many a dipper o’ drink she’s guv me, little smiles dancin’ at her lips.”

He sat down in the doorway again, with his face turned towards Pierre, and the back of his head in the sun. He was a picture of perfect health, sumptuous, huge, a bull in beauty, the heart of a child looking out of his eyes, but a sort of despair, too, in his bearing.

Pierre watched him with a furtive humour for a time, then he said languidly: “Never mind your clothes, give yourself.”

“Yer tongue in yer cheek, me spot o’ vinegar. Give meself! What’s that for? A purty weddin’ gift, says I? Handy thing to have in the house! Use me for a clothes-horse, or shtand me in the garden for a fairy bower-aw yis, wid a hole in me face that’d ate thim out o’ house and home!”

Pierre drew a piece of brown paper towards him, and wrote on it with a burnt match. Presently he held it up. “Voila, my simple king, the thing for you to do: a grand gift, and to cost you nothing now. Come, read it out, and tell me what you think.”

Macavoy took the paper, and in a large, judicial way, read slowly:

“On demand, for value received, I promise to pay to... IDA HILTON... or order, meself, Tim Macavoy, standin’ seven foot three on me bare fut, wid interest at nothin’ at all.”

Macavoy ended with a loud smack of the lips. “McGuire!” he said, and nothing more.

McGuire was his strongest expression. In the most important moments of his career he had said it, and it sounded deep, strange, and more powerful than many usual oaths. A moment later he said again “McGuire!” Then he read the paper once more out loud. “What’s that, me Frinchman?” he asked. “What Ballzeboob’s tricks are y’at now?”

Pierre was complacently eyeing his handiwork on the saddle. He now settled back with his shoulders to the wall, and said: “See, then, it’s a little promissory note for a wedding-gift to Ida. When she says some day, ‘Tim Macavoy, I want you to do this or that, or to go here or there, or to sell you or trade you, or use you for a clothes-horse, or a bridge over a canyon, or to hold up a house, or blow out a prairie-fire, or be my second husband,’ you shall say, ‘Here I am’; and you shall travel from Heaven to Halifax, but you shall come at the call of this promissory.”

Pierre’s teeth glistened behind a smile as he spoke, and Macavoy broke into a roar of laughter. “Black’s the white o’ yer eye,” he said at last, “an’ a joke’s a joke. Seven fut three I am, an’ sound av wind an’ limb—an’ a weddin’-gift to that swate rose o’ the valley! Aisy, aisy, Pierre. A bit o’ foolin’ ‘twas ye put on the paper, but truth I’ll make it, me cock o’ the walk. That’s me gift to her an’ Hilton, an’ no other. An’ a dab wid red wax it shall have, an’ what more be the word o’ Freddy Tarlton the lawyer?”

“You’re a great man,” said Pierre with a touch of gentle irony, for his natural malice had no play against the huge ex-king of his own making. With these big creatures—he had connived with several in his time—he had

ever been superior, protective, making them to feel that they were as children beside him. He looked at Macavoy musingly, and said to himself: “Well, why not? If it is a joke, then it is a joke; if it is a thing to make the world stand still for a minute sometime, so much the better. He is all waste now. By the holy, he shall do it. It is amusing, and it may be great by and by.”

Presently Pierre said aloud: “Well, my Macavoy, what will you do? Send this good gift?”

“Aw yis, Pierre; I shtand by that from the crown av me head to the sole av me fut sure. Face like a mornin’ in May, and hands like the tunes of an organ, she has. Spakes wid a look av her eye and a twist av her purty lips an’ swaying body, an’ talkin’ to you widout a word. Aw motion—motion—motion; yis, that’s it. An’ I’ve seen her an tap av a hill wid the wind blowin’ her hair free, and the yellow buds on the tree, and the grass green beneath her feet, the world smilin’ betune her and the sun: pictures—pictures, aw yis! Promissory notice on demand is it anny toime? Seven fut three on me bare toes—but Father o’ Sin! when she calls I come, yis.”

“On your oath, Macavoy?” asked Pierre; “by the book av the Mass?”

Macavoy stood up straight till his head scraped the cobwebs between the rafters, the wild indignation of a child in his eye. “D’ye think I’m a thafe to stale me own word? Hut! I’ll break ye in two, ye wisp o’ straw, if ye doubt me word to a lady. There’s me note av hand, and ye shall have me fist on it, in writin’, at Freddy Tarlton’s office, wid a blotch av red an’ the Queen’s head at the bottom. McGuire!” he said again, and paused, puffing his lips through his beard.

Pierre looked at him a moment, then waving his fingers idly, said, “So, my straw-breaker! Then tomorrow morning at ten you will fetch your wedding-gift. But come so soon now to M’sieu’ Tarlton’s office, and we will have it all as you say, with the red seal and the turn of your fist—yes. Well, well, we travel far in the world, and sometimes we see strange things, and no two strange things are alike—no; there is only one Macavoy in the world, there was only one Shon McGann. Shon McGann was a fine fool, but he did something at last, truly yes: Tim Macavoy, perhaps, will do something at last on his own hook. Hey, I wonder!” He felt the muscles of Macavoy’s arm musingly, and then laughed up in the giant’s face. “Once I made you a king, my own, and you threw it all away; now I make you a slave, and we shall see what you will do. Come along, for M’sieu’ Tarlton.”

Macavoy dropped a heavy hand on Pierre’s shoulder. “‘Tis hard to be a king, Pierre, but ‘tis aisy to be a slave for the likes o’ her. I’d kiss her dirty shoe sure!”

As they passed through the door, Pierre said, “Dis done, perhaps, when all is done, she will sell you for old bones and rags. Then I will buy you, and I will burn your bones and the rags, and I will scatter to the four winds of the earth the ashes of a king, a slave, a fool, and an Irishman—truly!”

“Bedad, ye’ll have more earth in yer hands then, Pierre, than ye’ll ever earn, and more heaven than ye’ll ever shtand in.”

Half an hour later they were in Freddy Tarlton’s office on the banks of the Little Big Swan, which tumbled past, swelled by the first rain of the early autumn. Freddy Tarlton, who had a gift of humour, entered into the spirit of the thing, and treated it seriously; but in vain did he protest that the large red seal with Her Majesty’s head on it was unnecessary; Macavoy insisted, and wrote his name across it with a large indistinctness worthy of a king. Before the night was over everybody at Guidon Hill, save Hilton and Ida, knew what gift would come from Macavoy to the wedded pair.

II

The next morning was almost painfully beautiful, so delicate in its clearness, so exalted by the glory of the hills, so grand in the limitless stretch of the green-brown prairie north and south. It was a day for God’s creatures to meet in, and speed away, and having flown round the boundaries of that spacious domain, to return again to the nest of home on the large plateau between the sea and the stars. Gathered about Ida’s home was everybody who lived within a radius of a hundred miles. In the large front room all the presents were set: rich furs from the far north, cunningly carved bowls, rocking-chairs made by hand, knives, cooking utensils, a copy of Shakespeare in six volumes from the Protestant missionary who performed the ceremony, a nugget of gold from the Long Light River; and outside the door, a horse, Hilton’s own present to his wife, on which was put Pierre’s saddle, with its silver mounting and Ida’s name branded deep on pommel and flap. When Macavoy arrived, a cheer went up, which was carried on waves of laughter into the house to Hilton and Ida, who even then were listening to the first words of the brief service which begins, “I charge you both if you do know any just cause or impediment—” and so on.

They did not turn to see what it was, for just at that moment they themselves were the very centre of the universe. Ida being deaf and dumb, it was necessary to interpret to her the words of the service by signs, as the missionary read it, and this was done by Pierre himself, the half-breed Catholic, the man who had brought Hilton and Ida together, for he and Ida had been old friends. After Father Corraine had taught her the language of signs, Pierre had learned them from her, until at last his gestures had become as vital as her own. The delicate precision of his every movement, the suggestiveness of look and motion, were suited to a language which was nearer to the instincts of his own nature than word of mouth. All men did not trust Pierre, but all women did; with those he had a touch of Machiavelli, with these he had no sign of Mephistopheles, and few were the occasions in his life when he showed outward tenderness to either: which was equally effective. He had learnt, or knew by instinct, that exclusiveness as to men and indifference as to women are the greatest influences on both. As he stood there, slowly interpreting to Ida, by graceful allusive signs, the words of the service, one could not think that behind his impassive face there was any feeling for the man or for the woman. He had that disdainful smile which men acquire who are all their lives aloof from the hopes of the hearthstone and acknowledge no laws but their own.

More than once the eyes of the girl filled with tears, as the pregnancy of some phrase in the service came home to her. Her face responded to Pierre’s gestures, as do one’s nerves to the delights of good music, and there was something so unique, so impressive in the ceremony, that the laughter which had greeted Macavoy passed away, and a dead silence; beginning from where the two stood, crept out until it covered all the prairie. Nothing was heard except Hilton’s voice in strong tones saying, “I take thee to be my wedded wife,”

etc.; but when the last words of the service were said, and the newmade bride turned to her husband's embrace, and a little sound of joy broke from her lips, there was plenty of noise and laughter again, for Macavoy stood in the doorway, or rather outside it, stooping to look in upon the scene. Someone had lent him the cinch of a broncho and he had belted himself with it, no longer carrying his clothes about "on the underbrush." Hilton laughed and stretched out his hand. "Come in, King," he said, "come and wish us joy."

Macavoy parted the crowd easily, forcing his way, and instantly was stooping before the pair—for he could not stand upright in the room.

"Aw, now, Hilton, is it you, is it you, that's pluckin' the rose av the valley, snatchin' the stars out av the sky! aw, Hilton, the like o' that! Travel down I did yesterday from Fort Ste. Anne, and divil a word I knew till Pierre hit me in the eye wid it last night—and no time for a present, for a wedding-gift—no, aw no!"

Just here Ida reached up and touched him on the shoulder. He smiled down on her, puffing and blowing in his beard, bursting to speak to her, yet knowing no word by signs to say; but he nodded his head at her, and he patted Hilton's shoulder, and he took their hands and joined them together, hers on top of Hilton's, and shook them in one of his own till she almost winced. Presently, with a look at Hilton, who nodded in reply, Ida lifted her cheek to Macavoy to kiss—Macavoy, the idle, ill-cared-for, boisterous giant. His face became red like that of a child caught in an awkward act, and with an absurd shyness he stooped and touched her cheek. Then he turned to Hilton, and blurted out, "Aw, the rose o' the valley, the pride o' the wide wurruld! aw, the bloom o' the hills! I'd have kissed her dirty shoe. McQuire!"

A burst of laughter rolled out on the clear air of the prairie, and the hills seemed to stir with the pleasure of life. Then it was that Macavoy, following Hilton and Ida outside, suddenly stopped beside the horse, drew from his pocket the promissory note that Pierre had written, and said, "Yis, but all the weddin'-gifts aren't in. 'Tis nothin' I had to give-divil a cent in the wurruld, divil a pound av baccy, or a pot for the fire, or a bit av linin for the table; nothin' but meself and me dirty clothes, standin' seven fut three an me bare toes. What was I to do? There was only meself to give, so I give it free and hearty, and here it is wid the Queen's head an it, done in Mr. Tarlton's office. Ye'd better had had a dog, or a gun, or a ladder, or a horse, or a saddle, or a quart o' brown brandy; but such as it is I give it ye—I give it to the rose o' the valley and the star o' the wide wurruld."

In a loud voice he read the promissory note, and handed it to Ida. Men laughed till there were tears in their eyes, and a keg of whisky was opened; but somehow Ida did not laugh. She and Pierre had seen a serious side to Macavoy's gift: the childlike manliness in it. It went home to her woman's heart without a touch of ludicrousness, without a sound of laughter.

III

After a time the interest in this wedding-gift declined at Fort Guidon, and but three people remembered it with any singular distinctness—Ida, Pierre, and Macavoy. Pierre was interested, for in his primitive mind he knew that, however wild a promise, life is so wild in its events, there comes the hour for redemption of all I O U's.

Meanwhile, weeks, months, and even a couple of years passed, Macavoy and Pierre coming and going, sometimes together, sometimes not, in all manner of words at war, in all manner of fact at peace. And Ida, out of the bounty of her nature, gave the two vagabonds a place at her fireside whenever they chose to come. Perhaps, where speech was not given, a gift of divination entered into her instead, and she valued what others found useless, and held aloof from what others found good. She had powers which had ever been the admiration of Guidon Hill. Birds and animals were her friends—she called them her kinsmen. A peculiar sympathy joined them; so that when, at last, she tamed a white wild duck, and made it do the duties of a carrier-pigeon, no one thought it strange.

Up in the hills, beside the White Sun River, lived her sister and her sister's children; and, by and by, the duck carried messages back and forth, so that when, in the winter, Ida's health became delicate, she had comfort in the solicitude and cheerfulness of her sister, and the gaiety of the young birds of her nest, who sent Ida many a sprightly message and tales of their good vagrancy in the hills. In these days Pierre and Macavoy were little at the Post, save now and then to sit with Hilton beside the fire, waiting for spring and telling tales. Upon Hilton had settled that peaceful, abstracted expectancy which shows man at his best, as he waits for the time when, through the half-lights of his fatherhood, he shall see the broad fine dawn of motherhood spreading up the world—which, all being said and done, is that place called Home. Something gentle came over him while he grew stouter in body and in all other ways made a larger figure among the people of the West.

As Pierre said, whose wisdom was more to be trusted than his general morality, "It is strange that most men think not enough of themselves till a woman shows them how. But it is the great wonder that the woman does not despise him for it. Quel caractere! She has so often to show him his way like a babe, and yet she says to him, Mon grand homme! my master! my lord! Pshaw! I have often thought that women are half saints, half fools, and men half fools, half rogues. But Quelle vie!—what life! without a woman you are half a man; with one you are bound to a single spot in the world, you are tied by the leg, your wing is clipped—you cannot have all. Quelle vie—what life!"

To this Macavoy said: "Spit-spat! But what the devil good does all yer thinkin' do ye, Pierre? It's argufy here and argufy there, an' while yer at that, me an' the rest av us is squeezin' the fun out o' life. Aw, go 'long wid ye. Y'are only a bit o' hell and grammar, annyway. Wid all yer cuttin' and carvin' things to see the internals av thim, I'd do more to the call av a woman's finger than for all the logic and knowalogy y' ever chewed—an' there y'are, me little tailor o' jur'sprudince!"

"To the finger call of Hilton's wife, eh?"

Macavoy was not quite sure what Pierre's enigmatical tone meant. A wild light showed in his eyes, and his tongue blundered out: "Yis, Hilton's wife's finger, or a look av her eye, or nothin' at all. Aisy, aisy, ye wasp! Ye'd go stalkin' divils in hell for her yerself, so ye would. But the tongue av ye—but, it's gall to the tip."

"Maybe, my king. But I'd go hunting because I wanted; you because you must. You're a slave to come and to go, with a Queen's seal on the promissory."

Macavoy leaned back and roared. “Aw, that! The rose o’ the valley—the joy o’ the wurruld! S’t, Pierre—” his voice grew softer on a sudden, as a fresh thought came to him—“did y’ ever think that the child might be dumb like the mother?”

This was a day in the early spring, when the snows were melting in the hills, and freshets were sweeping down the valleys far and near. That night a warm heavy rain came on, and in the morning every stream and river was swollen to twice its size. The mountains seemed to have stripped themselves of snow, and the vivid sun began at once to colour the foothills with green. As Pierre and Macavoy stood at their door, looking out upon the earth cleansing itself, Macavoy suddenly said: “Aw, look, look, Pierre—her white duck off to the nest on Champak Hill!”

They both shaded their eyes with their hands. Circling round two or three times above the Post, the duck then stretched out its neck to the west, and floated away beyond Guidon Hill, and was hid from view.

Pierre, without a word, began cleaning his rifle, while Macavoy smoked, and sat looking into the distance, surveying the sweet warmth and light. His face blossomed with colour, and the look of his eyes was that of an irresponsible child. Once or twice he smiled and puffed in his beard, but perhaps that was involuntary, or was, maybe, a vague reflection of his dreams, themselves most vague, for he was only soaking in sun and air and life.

Within an hour they saw the wild duck-again passing the crest of Guidon, and they watched it sailing down to the Post, Pierre idly fondling the gun, Macavoy half roused from his dreams. But presently they were altogether roused, the gun was put away, and both were on their feet; for after the pigeon arrived there was a stir at the Post, and Hilton could be seen running from the store to his house, not far away.

“Something’s wrong there,” said Pierre.

“D’ye think ‘twas the duck brought it?” asked Macavoy.

Without a word Pierre started away towards the Post, Macavoy following. As they did so, a half-breed boy came from the house, hurrying towards them.

Inside the house Hilton’s wife lay in her bed, her great hour coming on before the time, because of ill news from beyond the Guidon. There was with her an old Frenchwoman, who herself, in her time, had brought many children into the world, whose heart brooded tenderly, if uncouthly, over the dumb girl. She it was who had handed to Hilton the paper the wild duck had brought, after Ida had read it and fallen in a faint on the floor.

The message that had felled the young wife was brief and awful. A cloud-burst had fallen on Champak Hill, had torn part of it away, and a part of this part had swept down into the path that led to the little house, having been stopped by some falling trees and a great boulder. It blocked the only way to escape above, and beneath, the river was creeping up to sweep away the little house. So, there the mother and her children waited (the father was in the farthest north), facing death below and above. The wild duck had carried the tale in its terrible simplicity. The last words were, “There mayn’t be any help for me and my sweet chicks, but I am still hoping, and you must send a man or many. But send soon, for we are cut off, and the end may come any hour.”

Macavoy and Pierre were soon at the Post, and knew from Hilton all there was to know. At once Pierre began to gather men, though what one or many could do none could say. Eight white men and three Indians watched the wild duck sailing away again from the bedroom window where Ida lay, to carry a word of comfort to Champak Hill. Before it went, Ida asked for Macavoy, and he was brought to her bedroom by Hilton. He saw a pale, almost unearthly, yet beautiful face, flushing and paling with a coming agony, looking up at him; and presently two trembling hands made those mystic signs which are the primal language of the soul. Hilton interpreted to him this: “I have sent for you. There is no man so big or strong as you in the north. I did not know that I should ever ask you to redeem the note. I want my gift, and I will give you your paper with the Queen’s head on it. Those little lives, those pretty little dears, you will not see them die. If there is a way, any way, you will save them. Sometimes one man can do what twenty cannot. You were my wedding-gift: I claim you now.”

She paused, and then motioned to the nurse, who laid the piece of brown paper in Macavoy’s hand. He held it for a moment as delicately as if it were a fragile bit of glass, something that his huge fingers might crush by touching. Then he reached over and laid it on the bed beside her and said, looking Hilton in the eyes, “Tell her, the slip av a saint she is, if the breakin’ av me bones, or the lettin’ av me blood’s what’ll set all right at Champak Hill, let her mind be aisy—aw yis!”

Soon afterwards they were all on their way—all save Hilton, whose duty was beside this other danger, for the old nurse said that, “like as not,” her life would hang upon the news from Champak Hill; and if ill came, his place was beside the speechless traveller on the Brink.

In a few hours the rescuers stood on the top of Champak Hill, looking down. There stood the little house, as it were, between two dooms. Even Pierre’s face became drawn and pale as he saw what a very few hours or minutes might do. Macavoy had spoken no word, had answered no question since they had left the Post. There was in his eye the large seriousness, the intentness which might be found in the face of a brave boy, who had not learned fear, and yet saw a vast ditch of danger at which he must leap. There was ever before him the face of the dumb wife; there was in his ears the sound of pain that had followed him from Hilton’s house out into the brilliant day.

The men stood helpless, and looked at each other. They could not say to the river that it must rise no farther, and they could not go to the house, nor let a rope down, and there was the crumbled moiety of the hill which blocked the way to the house: elsewhere it was sheer precipice without trees.

There was no corner in these hills that Macavoy and Pierre did not know, and at last, when despair seemed to settle on the group, Macavoy, having spoken a low word to Pierre, said: “There’s wan way, an’ maybe I can an’ maybe I can’t, but I’m fit to try. I’ll go up the river to an aisy p’int a mile above, get in, and drift down to a p’int below there, thin climb up and loose the stuff.”

Every man present knew the double danger: the swift headlong river, and the sudden rush of rocks and

stones, which must be loosed on the side of the narrow ravine opposite the little house. Macavoy had nothing to say to the head-shakes of the others, and they did not try to dissuade him; for women and children were in the question, and there they were below beside the house, the children gathered round the mother, she waiting—waiting.

Macavoy, stripped to the waist, and carrying only a hatchet and a coil of rope tied round him, started away alone up the river. The others waited, now and again calling comfort to the woman below, though their words could not be heard. About half an hour passed, and then someone called out: “Here he comes!” Presently they could see the rough head and the bare shoulders of the giant in the wild churning stream. There was only one point where he could get a hold on the hillside—the jutting bole of a tree just beneath them, and beneath the dyke of rock and trees.

It was a great moment. The current swayed him out, but he plunged forward, catching at the bole. His hand seized a small branch. It held him an instant, as he was swung round, then it snapt. But the other hand clenched the bole, and to a loud cheer, which Pierre prompted, Macavoy drew himself up. After that they could not see him. He alone was studying the situation.

He found the key-rock to the dyked slide of earth. To loosen it was to divert the slide away, or partly away, from the little house. But it could not be loosened from above, if at all, and he himself would be in the path of the destroying hill.

“Aisy, aisy, Tim Macavoy,” he said to himself. “It’s the woman and the darlins av her, an’ the rose o’ the valley down there at the Post!”

A minute afterwards, having chopped down a hickory sapling, he began to pry at the boulder which held the mass. Presently a tree came crashing down, and a small rush of earth followed it, and the hearts of the men above and the woman and children below stood still for an instant. An hour passed as Macavoy toiled with a strange careful skill and a superhuman concentration. His body was all shining with sweat, and sweat dripped like water from his forehead. His eyes were on the keyrock and the pile, alert, measuring, intent. At last he paused. He looked round at the hills-down at the river, up at the sky-humanity was shut away from his sight. He was alone. A long hot breath broke from his pressed lips, stirring his big red beard. Then he gave a call, a long call that echoed through the hills weirdly and solemnly.

It reached the ears of those above like a greeting from an outside world. They answered, “Right, Macavoy!”

Years afterwards these men told how then there came in reply one word, ringing roundly through the hills—the note and symbol of a crisis, the fantastic cipher of a soul:

“M’Guire!”

There was a loud booming sound, the dyke was loosed, the ravine split into the swollen stream its choking mouthful of earth and rock; and a minute afterwards the path was clear to the top of Champak Hill. To it came the unharmed children and their mother, who, from the warm peak sent the wild duck “to the rose o’ the valley,” which, till the message came, was trembling on the stem of life. But Joy, that marvellous healer, kept it blooming with a little Eden bird nestling near, whose happy tongue was taught in after years to tell of the gift of the Simple King; who had redeemed, on demand, the promissory note for ever.

MALACHI

“He’ll swing just the same to-morrow. Exit Malachi!” said Freddy Tarlton gravely.

The door suddenly opened on the group of gossips, and a man stepped inside and took the only vacant seat near the fire. He glanced at none, but stretched out his hands to the heat, looking at the coals with drooping introspective eyes.

“Exit Malachi,” he said presently in a soft ironical voice, but did not look up.

“By the holy poker, Pierre, where did you spring from?” asked Tarlton genially.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and—” Pierre responded, with a little turn of his fingers.

“And the wind doesn’t tell where it’s been, but that’s no reason Pierre shouldn’t,” urged the other.

Pierre shrugged his shoulders, but made no answer. “He was a tough,” said a voice from the crowd. “To-morrow he’ll get the breakfast he’s paid for.” Pierre turned and looked at the speaker with a cold inquisitive stare. “Mon Dieu!” he said presently, “here’s this Gohawk playing preacher. What do you know of Malachi, Gohawk? What do any of you know about Malachi? A little of this, a little of that, a drink here, a game of euchre there, a ride after cattle, a hunt behind Guidon Hill!—But what is that? You have heard the cry of the eagle, you have seen him carry off a lamb, you have had a pot-shot at him, but what do you know of the eagle’s nest? Mais non.

“The lamb is one thing, the nest is another. You don’t know the eagle till you’ve been there. And you, Gohawk, would not understand, if you saw the nest. Such cancan!”

“Shut your mouth!” broke out Gohawk. “D’ye think I’m going to stand your—”

Freddy Tarlton laid a hand on his arm. “Keep quiet, Gohawk. What good will it do?” Then he said, “Tell us about the nest, Pierre; they’re hanging him for the lamb in the morning.”

“Who spoke for him at the trial?” Pierre asked.

“I did,” said Tarlton. “I spoke as well as I could, but the game was dead against him from the start. The sheriff was popular, and young; young—that was the thing; handsome too, and the women, of course! It was sure from the start; besides, Malachi would say nothing—didn’t seem to care.”

“No, not to care,” mused Pierre. “What did you say for him to the jury—I mean the devil of a thing to make them sit up and think, ‘Poor Malachi!’—like that.”

“Best speech y’ever heard,” Gohawk interjected; “just emptied the words out, split ‘em like peas, by gol! till he got to one place right before the end. Then he pulled up sudden, and it got so quiet you could ‘a heard a pin drop. ‘Gen’lemen of the jury,’ says Freddy Tarlton here—gen’lemen, by gol! all that lot—Lagan and the rest! ‘Gen’lemen of the jury,’ he says, ‘be you danged well sure that you’re at one with God A’mighty in this; that you’ve got at the core of justice here; that you’ve got evidence to satisfy Him who you’ve all got to satisfy some day, or git out. Not evidence as to shootin’, but evidence as to what that shootin’ meant, an’ whether it was meant to kill, an’ what for. The case is like this, gen’lemen of the jury,’ says Freddy Tarlton here. ‘Two men are in a street alone. There’s a shot, out comes everybody, and sees Fargo the sheriff laid along the ground, his mouth in the dust, and a full-up gun in his fingers. Not forty feet away stands Malachi with a gun smokin’ in his fist. It seems to be the opinion that it was cussedness—just cussedness—that made Malachi turn the sheriff’s boots to the sun. For Malachi was quarrelsome. I’ll give you a quarter on that. And the sheriff was mettlesome, used to have high spirits, like as if he’s lift himself over the fence with his bootstraps. So when Malachi come and saw the sheriff steppin’ round in his paten’ leathers, it give him the needle, and he got a bead on him—and away went Sheriff Fargo—right away! That seems to be the sense of the public.’ And he stops again, soft and quick, and looks the twelve in the eyes at once. ‘But,’ says Freddy Tarlton here, ‘are you goin’ to hang a man on the little you know? Or are you goin’ to credit him with somethin’ of what you don’t know? You haint got the inside of this thing, and Malachi doesn’t let you know it, and God keeps quiet. But be danged well sure that you’ve got the bulge on iniquity here; for gen’lemen with pistols out in the street is one thing, and sittin’ weavin’ a rope in a court-room for a man’s neck is another thing,’ says Freddy Tarlton here. ‘My client has refused to say one word this or that way, but don’t be sure that Some One that knows the inside of things won’t speak for him in the end.’ Then he turns and looks at Malachi, and Malachi was standin’ still and steady like a tree, but his face was white, and sweat poured on his forehead. ‘If God has no voice to be heard for my client in this court-room to-day, is there no one on earth—no man or woman—who can speak for one who won’t speak for himself?’ says Freddy Tarlton here. Then, by gol! for the first time Malachi opened. ‘There’s no one,’ he says. ‘The speakin’ is all for the sheriff. But I spoke once, and the sheriff didn’t answer.’ Not a bit of beg-yer-pardon in it. It struck cold. ‘I leave his case in the hands of twelve true men,’ says Freddy Tarlton here, and he sits down.”

“So they said he must walk the air?” suggested Pierre.

“Without leavin’ their seats,” someone added instantly.

“So. But that speech of ‘Freddy Tarlton here’?” “It was worth twelve drinks to me, no more, and nothing at all to Malachi,” said Tarlton. “When I said I’d come to him to-night to cheer him up, he said he’d rather sleep. The missionary, too, he can make nothing of him. ‘I don’t need anyone here,’ he says. ‘I eat this off my own plate.’ And that’s the end of Malachi.”

“Because there was no one to speak for him—eh? Well, well.”

“If he’d said anything that’d justify the thing—make it a manslaughter business or a quarrel—then! But no, not a word, up or down, high or low. Exit Malachi!” rejoined Freddy Tarlton sorrowfully. “I wish he’d given me half a chance.”

“I wish I’d been there,” said Pierre, taking a match from Gohawk, and lighting his cigarette.

“To hear his speech?” asked Gohawk, nodding towards Tarlton.

“To tell the truth about it all. T’sh, you bats, you sheep, what have you in your skulls? When a man will not speak, will not lie to gain a case for his lawyer—or save himself, there is something! Now, listen to me, and I will tell you the story of Malachi. Then you shall judge.

“I never saw such a face as that girl had down there at Lachine in Quebec. I knew her when she was a child, and I knew Malachi when he was on the river with the rafts, the foreman of a gang. He had a look all open then as the sun—yes. Happy? Yes, as happy as a man ought to be. Well, the mother of the child died, and Malachi alone was left to take care of the little Norice. He left the river and went to work in the mills, so that he might be with the child; and when he got to be foreman there he used to bring her to the mill. He had a basket swung for her just inside the mill not far from him, right where she was in the shade; but if she stretched out her hand it would be in the sun. I’ve seen a hundred men turn to look at her where she swung, singing to herself, and then chuckle to themselves afterwards as they worked.

“When Trevoor, the owner, come one day, and saw her, he swore, and was going to sack Malachi, but the child—that little Norice—leaned over the basket, and offered him an apple. He looked for a minute, then he reached up, took the apple, turned round, and went out of the mill without a word—so. Next month when he come he walked straight to her, and handed up to her a box of toys and a silver whistle. ‘That’s to call me when you want me,’ he said, as he put the whistle to her lips, and then he put the gold string of it round her neck. She was a wise little thing, that Norice, and noticed things. I don’t believe that Trevoor or Malachi ever knew how sweet was the smell of the fresh sawdust till she held it to their noses; and it was she that had the saws—all sizes—start one after the other, making so strange a tune. She made up a little song about fairies and others to sing to that tune. And no one ever thought much about Indian Island, off beyond the sweating, baking piles of lumber, and the blistering logs and timbers in the bay, till she told stories about it. Sure enough, when you saw the shut doors and open windows of those empty houses, all white without in the sun and dark within, and not a human to be seen, you could believe almost anything. You can think how proud Malachi was. She used to get plenty of presents from the men who had no wives or children to care for—little silver and gold things as well as others. She was fond of them, but no, not vain. She loved the gold and silver for their own sake.”

Pierre paused. “I knew a youngster once,” said Gohawk, “that—”

Pierre waved his hand. “I am not through, M’sieu’ Gohawk the talker. Years went on. Now she took care of the house of Malachi. She wore the whistle that Trevoor gave her. He kept saying to her still, ‘If ever you need me, little Norice, blow it, and I will come.’ He was droll, that M’sieu’ Trevoor, at times. Well, she did not blow, but still he used to come every year, and always brought her something. One year he brought his nephew, a young fellow of about twenty-three. She did not whistle for him either, but he kept on coming. That was the beginning of ‘Exit Malachi.’ The man was clever and bad, the girl believing and good. He was young,

but he knew how to win a woman's heart. When that is done, there is nothing more to do—she is yours for good or evil; and if a man, through a woman's love, makes her to sin, even his mother cannot be proud of him-no. But the man married Norice, and took her away to Madison, down in Wisconsin. Malachi was left alone—Malachi and Trevoor, for Trevoor felt towards her as a father.

"Alors, sorrow come to the girl, for her husband began to play cards and to drink, and he lost much money. There was the trouble—the two together. They lived in a hotel. One day a lady missed a diamond necklace from her room. Norice had been with her the evening before. Norice come into her own room the next afternoon, and found detectives searching. In her own jewel-case, which was tucked away in the pocket of an old dress, was found the necklace. She was arrested. She said nothing—for she waited for her husband, who was out of town that day. He only come in time to see her in court next morning. She did not deny anything; she was quiet, like Malachi. The man played his part well. He had hid the necklace where he thought it would be safe, but when it was found, he let the wife take the blame—a little innocent thing. People were sorry for them both. She was sent to jail. Her father was away in the Rocky Mountains, and he did not hear; Trevoor was in Europe. The husband got a divorce, and was gone. Norice was in jail for over a year, and then she was set free, for her health went bad, and her mind was going, they thought. She did not know till she come out that she was divorced. Then she nearly died. But then Trevoor come."

Freddy Tarlton's hands were cold with excitement, and his fingers trembled so he could hardly light a cigar.

"Go on, go on, Pierre," he said huskily.

"Trevoor said to her—he told me this himself—'Why did you not whistle for me, Norice? A word would have brought me from Europe.' 'No one could help me, no one at all,' she answered. Then Trevoor said, 'I know who did it, for he has robbed me too.' She sank in a heap on the floor. 'I could have borne it and anything for him, if he hadn't divorced me,' she said. Then they cleared her name before the world. But where was the man? No one knew. At last Malachi, in the Rocky Mountains, heard of her trouble, for Norice wrote to him, but told him not to do the man any harm, if he ever found him—ah, a woman, a woman!... But Malachi met the man one day at Guidon Hill, and shot him in the street."

"Fargo the sheriff!" roared half-a-dozen voices. "Yes; he had changed his name, had come up here, and because he was clever and spent money, and had a pull on someone,—got it at cards perhaps,—he was made sheriff."

"In God's name, why didn't Malachi speak?" said Tarlton; "why didn't he tell me this?"

"Because he and I had our own plans. The one evidence he wanted was Norice. If she would come to him in his danger, and in spite of his killing the man, good. If not, then he would die. Well, I went to find her and fetch her. I found her. There was no way to send word, so we had to come on as fast as we could. We have come just in time."

"Do you mean to say, Pierre, that she's here?" said Gohawk.

Pierre waved his hand emphatically. "And so we came on with a pardon."

Every man was on his feet, every man's tongue was loosed, and each ordered liquor for Pierre, and asked him where the girl was. Freddy Tarlton wrung his hand, and called a boy to go to his rooms and bring three bottles of wine, which he had kept for two years, to drink when he had won his first big case.

Gohawk was importunate. "Where is the girl, Pierre?" he urged.

"Such a fool as you are, Gohawk! She is with her father."

A half-hour later, in a large sitting-room, Freddy Tarlton was making eloquent toasts over the wine. As they all stood drinking to Pierre, the door opened from the hall-way, and Malachi stood before them. At his shoulder was a face, wistful, worn, yet with a kind of happiness too; and the eyes had depths which any man might be glad to drown his heart in.

Malachi stood still, not speaking, and an awe or awkwardness fell on the group at the table.

But Norice stepped forward a little, and said: "May we come in?"

In an instant Freddy Tarlton was by her side, and had her by the hand, her and her father, drawing them over.

His ardent, admiring look gave Norice thought for many a day.

And that night Pierre made an accurate prophecy.

THE LAKE OF THE GREAT SLAVE

When Tybalt the tale-gatherer asked why it was so called, Pierre said: "Because of the Great Slave;" and then paused.

Tybalt did not hurry Pierre, knowing his whims. If he wished to tell, he would in his own time; if not, nothing could draw it from him. It was nearly an hour before Pierre, eased off from the puzzle he was solving with bits of paper and obliged Tybalt. He began as if they had been speaking the moment before:

"They have said it is legend, but I know better. I have seen the records of the Company, and it is all there. I was at Fort O'Glory once, and in a box two hundred years old the factor and I found it. There were other papers, and some of them had large red seals, and a name scrawled along the end of the page."

Pierre shook his head, as if in contented musing. He was a born story-teller. Tybalt was aching with interest, for he scented a thing of note.

"How did any of those papers, signed with a scrawl, begin?" he asked.

"'To our dearly-beloved,' or something like that," answered Pierre. "There were letters also. Two of them were full of harsh words, and these were signed with the scrawl."

“What was that scrawl?” asked Tybalt.

Pierre stooped to the sand, and wrote two words with his finger. “Like that,” he answered.

Tybalt looked intently for an instant, and then drew a long breath. “Charles Rex,” he said, hardly above his breath.

Pierre gave him a suggestive sidelong glance. “That name was droll, eh?”

Tybalt’s blood was tingling with the joy of discovery. “It is a great name,” he said shortly.

“The Slave was great—the Indians said so at the last.”

“But that was not the name of the Slave?”

“Mais non. Who said so! Charles Rex—like that! was the man who wrote the letters.”

“To the Great Slave?”

Pierre made a gesture of impatience. “Very sure.”

“Where are those letters now?”

“With the Governor of the Company.” Tybalt cut the tobacco for his pipe savagely. “You’d have liked one of those papers?” asked Pierre provokingly.

“I’d give five hundred dollars for one,” broke out Tybalt.

Pierre lifted his eyebrows. “T’sh, what’s the good of five hundred dollars up here? What would you do with a letter like that?”

Tybalt laughed with a touch of irony, for Pierre was clearly “rubbing it in.”

“Perhaps for a book?” gently asked Pierre.

“Yes, if you like.”

“It is a pity. But there is a way.”

“How?”

“Put me in the book. Then—”

“How does that touch the case?”

Pierre shrugged a shoulder gently, for he thought Tybalt was unusually obtuse. Tybalt thought so himself before the episode ended.

“Go on,” he said, with clouded brow, but interested eye. Then, as if with sudden thought: “To whom were the letters addressed, Pierre?”

“Wait!” was the reply. “One letter said: ‘Good cousin, We are evermore glad to have thee and thy most excelling mistress near us. So, fail us not at our cheerful doings, yonder at Highgate.’ Another—a year after—said: ‘Cousin, for the sweetening of our mind, get thee gone into some distant corner of our pasturage—the farthest doth please us most. We would not have thee on foreign ground, for we bear no ill-will to our brother princes, and yet we would not have thee near our garden of good loyal souls, for thou hast a rebel heart and a tongue of divers tunes. Thou lovest not the good old song of duty to thy prince. Obeying us, thy lady shall keep thine estates untouched; failing obedience, thou wilt make more than thy prince unhappy. Fare thee well.’ That was the way of two letters,” said Pierre.

“How do you remember so?”

Pierre shrugged a shoulder again. “It is easy with things like that.”

“But word for word?”

“I learned it word for word.”

“Now for the story of the Lake—if you won’t tell me the name of the man.”

“The name afterwards-perhaps. Well, he came to that farthest corner of the pasturage, to the Hudson’s Bay country, two hundred years ago. What do you think? Was he so sick of all, that he would go so far he could never get back? Maybe those ‘cheerful doings’ at Highgate, eh? And the lady—who can tell?”

Tybalt seized Pierre’s arm. “You know more. Damnation, can’t you see I’m on needles to hear? Was there anything in the letters about the lady? Anything more than you’ve told?”

Pierre liked no man’s hand on him. He glanced down at the eager fingers, and said coldly:

“You are a great man; you can tell a story in many ways, but I in one way alone, and that is my way—mais oui!”

“Very well, take your own time.”

“Bien. I got the story from two heads. If you hear a thing like that from Indians, you call it ‘legend’; if from the Company’s papers, you call it ‘history.’ Well, in this there is not much difference. The papers tell precise the facts; the legend gives the feeling, is more true. How can you judge the facts if you don’t know the feeling? No! what is bad turns good sometimes, when you know the how, the feeling, the place. Well, this story of the Great Slave—eh?... There is a race of Indians in the far north who have hair so brown like yours, m’sieu’, and eyes no darker. It is said they are of those that lived at the Pole, before the sea swamped the Isthmus, and swallowed up so many islands. So. In those days the fair race came to the south for the first time, that is, far below the Circle. They had their women with them. I have seen those of to-day: fine and tall, with breasts like apples, and a cheek to tempt a man like you, m’sieu’; no grease in the hair—no, M’sieu’ Tybalt.”

Tybalt sat moveless under the obvious irony, but his eyes were fixed intently on Pierre, his mind ever travelling far ahead of the tale.

“Alors: the ‘good cousin’ of Charles Rex, he made a journey with two men to the Far-off Metal River, and one day this tribe from the north come on his camp. It was summer, and they were camping in the Valley of the Young Moon, more sweet, they say, than any in the north. The Indians cornered them. There was a fight, and one of the Company’s men was killed, and five of the other. But when the king of the people of the Pole saw that the great man was fair of face, he called for the fight to stop.

“There was a big talk all by signs, and the king said for the great man to come and be one with them, for they liked his fair face—their forefathers were fair like him. He should have the noblest of their women for his wife, and be a prince among them. He would not go: so they drew away again and fought. A stone-axe brought the great man to the ground. He was stunned, not killed. Then the other man gave up, and said he would be one of them if they would take him. They would have killed him but for one of their women. She said that he should live to tell them tales of the south country and the strange people, when they came again to their camp-fires. So they let him live, and he was one of them. But the chief man, because he was stubborn and scorned them, and had killed the son of their king in the fight, they made a slave, and carried him north a captive, till they came to this lake—the Lake of the Great Slave.

“In all ways they tried him, but he would not yield, neither to wear their dress nor to worship their gods. He was robbed of his clothes, of his gold-handled dagger, his belt of silk and silver, his carbine with rich chasing, and all, and he was among them almost naked,—it was summer, as I said, yet defying them. He was taller by a head than any of them, and his white skin rippled in the sun like soft steel.”

Tybalt was inclined to ask Pierre how he knew all this, but he held his peace. Pierre, as if divining his thoughts, continued:

“You ask how I know these things. Very good: there are the legends, and there were the papers of the Company. The Indians tried every way, but it was no use; he would have nothing to say to them. At last they came to this lake. Now something great occurred. The woman who had been the wife of the king’s dead son, her heart went out in love of the Great Slave; but he never looked at her. One day there were great sports, for it was the feast of the Red Star. The young men did feats of strength, here on this ground where we sit. The king’s wife called out for the Great Slave to measure strength with them all. He would not stir. The king commanded him; still he would not, but stood among them silent and looking far away over their heads. At last, two young men of good height and bone threw arrows at his bare breast. The blood came in spots. Then he gave a cry through his beard, and was on them like a lion. He caught them, one in each arm, swung them from the ground, and brought their heads together with a crash, breaking their skulls, and dropped them at his feet. Catching up a long spear, he waited for the rest. But they did not come, for, with a loud voice, the king told them to fall back, and went and felt the bodies of the men. One of them was dead; the other was his second son—he would live.

“‘It is a great deed,’ said the king, ‘for these were no children, but strong men.’

“Then again he offered the Great Slave women to marry, and fifty tents of deerskin for the making of a village. But the Great Slave said no, and asked to be sent back to Fort O’Glory.

“The king refused. But that night, as he slept in his tent, the girl-widow came to him, waked him, and told him to follow her. He came forth, and she led him softly through the silent camp to that wood which we see over there. He told her she need not go on. Without a word, she reached over and kissed him on the breast. Then he understood. He told her that she could not come with him, for there was that lady in England—his wife, eh? But never mind, that will come. He was too great to save his life, or be free at the price. Some are born that way. They have their own commandments, and they keep them.

“He told her that she must go back. She gave a little cry, and sank down at his feet, saying that her life would be in danger if she went back.

“Then he told her to come, for it was in his mind to bring her to Fort O’Glory, where she could marry an Indian there. But now she would not go with him, and turned towards the village. A woman is a strange creature—yes, like that! He refused to go and leave her. She was in danger, and he would share it, whatever it might be. So, though she prayed him not, he went back with her; and when she saw that he would go in spite of all, she was glad: which is like a woman.

“When he entered the tent again, he guessed her danger, for he stepped over the bodies of two dead men. She had killed them. As she turned at the door to go to her own tent, another woman faced her. It was the wife of the king, who had suspected, and had now found out. Who can tell what it was? Jealousy, perhaps. The Great Slave could tell, maybe, if he could speak, for a man always knows when a woman sets him high. Anyhow, that was the way it stood. In a moment the girl was marched back to her tent, and all the camp heard a wicked lie of the widow of the king’s son.

“To it there was an end after the way of their laws.

“The woman should die by fire, and the man, as the king might will. So there was a great gathering in the place where we are, and the king sat against that big white stone, which is now as it was then. Silence was called, and they brought the girl-widow forth. The king spoke:

“‘Thou who hadst a prince for thy husband, didst go in the night to the tent of the slave who killed thy husband; whereby thou also becamest a slave, and didst shame the greatness which was given thee. Thou shalt die, as has been set in our laws.’

“The girl-widow rose, and spoke. ‘I did not know, O king, that he whom thou madest a slave slew my husband, the prince of our people, and thy son. That was not told me. But had I known it, still would I have set him free, for thy son was killed in fair battle, and this man deserves not slavery or torture. I did seek the tent of the Great Slave, and it was to set him free—no more. For that did I go, and, for the rest, my soul is open to the Spirit Who Sees. I have done naught, and never did, nor ever will, that might shame a king, or the daughter of a king, or the wife of a king, or a woman. If to set a great captive free is death for me, then am I ready. I will answer all pure women in the far Camp of the Great Fires without fear. There is no more, O king, that I may say, but this: she who dies by fire, being of noble blood, may choose who shall light the faggots—is it not so?’

“Then the king replied: ‘It is so. Such is our law.’

“There was counselling between the king and his oldest men, and so long were they handling the matter backwards and forwards that it seemed she might go free. But the king’s wife, seeing, came and spoke to the king and the others, crying out for the honour of her dead son; so that in a moment of anger they all cried out for death.

“When the king said again to the girl that she must die by fire, she answered: ‘It is as the gods will. But it is so, as I said, that I may choose who shall light the fires?’

“The king answered yes, and asked her whom she chose. She pointed towards the Great Slave. And all, even the king and his councillors, wondered, for they knew little of the heart of women. What is a man with a matter like that? Nothing—nothing at all. They would have set this for punishment: that she should ask for it was beyond them. Yes, even the king’s wife—it was beyond her. But the girl herself, see you, was it not this way?—If she died by the hand of him she loved, then it would be easy, for she could forget the pain, in the thought that his heart would ache for her, and that at the very last he might care, and she should see it. She was great in her way also—that girl, two hundred years ago.

“Alors, they led her a little distance off,—there is the spot, where you see the ground heave a little, and the Great Slave was brought up. The king told him why the girl was to die. He went like stone, looking, looking at them. He knew that the girl’s heart was like a little child’s, and the shame and cruelty of the thing froze him silent for a minute, and the colour flew from his face to here and there on his body, as a flame on marble. The cords began to beat and throb in his neck and on his forehead, and his eyes gave out fire like flint on an arrow-head.

“Then he began to talk. He could not say much, for he knew so little of their language. But it was ‘No!’ every other word. ‘No—no—no—no!’ the words ringing from his chest. ‘She is good!’ he said. ‘The other-no!’ and he made a motion with his hand. ‘She must not die—no! Evil? It is a lie! I will kill each man that says it, one by one, if he dares come forth. She tried to save me—well?’ Then he made them know that he was of high place in a far country, and that a man like him would not tell a lie. That pleased the king, for he was proud, and he saw that the Slave was of better stuff than himself. Besides, the king was a brave man, and he had strength, and more than once he had laid his hand on the chest of the other, as one might on a grand animal. Perhaps, even then, they might have spared the girl was it not for the queen. She would not hear of it. Then they tried the Great Slave, and he was found guilty. The queen sent him word to beg for pardon. So he stood out and spoke to the queen. She sat up straight, with pride in her eyes, for was it not a great prince, as she thought, asking? But a cloud fell on her face, for he begged the girl’s life. Since there must be death, let him die, and die by fire in her place! It was then two women cried out: the poor girl for joy—not at the thought that her life would be saved, but because she thought the man loved her now, or he would not offer to die for her; and the queen for hate, because she thought the same. You can guess the rest: they were both to die, though the king was sorry for the man.

“The king’s speaker stood out and asked them if they had anything to say. The girl stepped forward, her face without any fear, but a kind of noble pride in it, and said: ‘I am ready, O king.’

“The Great Slave bowed his head, and was thinking much. They asked him again, and he waved his hand at them. The king spoke up in anger, and then he smiled and said: ‘O king, I am not ready; if I die, I die.’ Then he fell to thinking again. But once more the king spoke: ‘Thou shalt surely die, but not by fire, nor now; nor till we have come to our great camp in our own country. There thou shalt die. But the woman shall die at the going down of the sun. She shall die by fire, and thou shalt light the faggots for the burning.’

“The Great Slave said he would not do it, not though he should die a hundred deaths. Then the king said that it was the woman’s right to choose who should start the fire, and he had given his word, which should not be broken.

“When the Great Slave heard this he was wild for a little, and then he guessed altogether what was in the girl’s mind. Was not this the true thing in her, the very truest? Mais oui! That was what she wished—to die by his hand rather than by any other; and something troubled his breast, and a cloud came in his eyes, so that for a moment he could not see. He looked at the girl, so serious, eye to eye. Perhaps she understood. So, after a time, he got calm as the farthest light in the sky, his face shining among them all with a look none could read. He sat down, and wrote upon pieces of bark with a spear-point—those bits of bark I have seen also at Fort O’Glory. He pierced them through with dried strings of the slippery-elm tree, and with the king’s consent gave them to the Company’s man, who had become one of the people, telling him, if ever he was free, or could send them to the Company, he must do so. The man promised, and shame came upon him that he had let the other suffer alone; and he said he was willing to fight and die if the Great Slave gave the word. But he would not; and he urged that it was right for the man to save his life. For himself, no. It could never be; and if he must die, he must die.

“You see, a great man must always live alone and die alone, when there are only such people about him. So, now that the letters were written, he sat upon the ground and thought, looking often towards the girl, who was placed apart, with guards near. The king sat thinking also. He could not guess why the Great Slave should give the letters now, since he was not yet to die, nor could the Company’s man show a reason when the king asked him. So the king waited, and told the guards to see that the Great Slave did not kill himself.

“But the queen wanted the death of the girl, and was glad beyond telling that the Slave must light the faggots. She was glad when she saw the young braves bring a long sapling from the forest, and, digging a hole, put it stoutly in the ground, and fetch wood, and heap it about.

“The Great Slave noted that the bark of the sapling had not been stripped, and more than once he measured, with his eye, the space between the stake and the shores of the Lake: he did this most private, so that no one saw but the girl.

“At last the time was come. The Lake was all rose and gold out there in the west, and the water so still so still. The cool, moist scent of the leaves and grass came out from the woods and up from the plain, and the world was so full of content that a man’s heart could cry out, even as now, while we look—eh, is it not good? See the deer drinking on the other shore there!” Suddenly Pierre became silent, as if he had forgotten the story altogether. Tybalt was impatient, but he did not speak. He took a twig, and in the sand he wrote “Charles Rex.” Pierre glanced down and saw it.

“There was beating of the little drums,” he continued, “and the crying of the king’s speaker; and soon all was ready, and the people gathered at a distance, and the king and the queen, and the chief men nearer; and the girl was brought forth.

“As they led her past the Great Slave, she looked into his eyes, and afterwards her heart was glad, for she knew that at the last he would be near her, and that his hand should light the fires. Two men tied her to the stake. Then the king’s man cried out again, telling of her crime, and calling for her death. The Great Slave was brought near. No one knew that the palms of his hands had been rubbed in the sand for a purpose. When he was brought beside the stake, a torch was given him by his guards. He looked at the girl, and she smiled at him, and said: ‘Good-bye. Forgive. I die not afraid, and happy.’

“He did not answer, but stooped and lit the sticks here and there. All at once he snatched a burning stick, and it and the torch he thrust, like lightning, in the faces of his guards, blinding them. Then he sprang to the stake, and, with a huge pull, tore it from the ground, girl and all, and rushed to the shore of the Lake, with her tied so in his arms.

“He had been so swift that, at first, no one stirred. He reached the shore, rushed into the water, dragging a boat out with one hand as he did so, and, putting the girl in, seized a paddle and was away with a start. A few strokes, and then he stopped, picked up a hatchet that was in the boat with many spears, and freed the girl. Then he paddled on, trusting, with a small hope, that through his great strength he could keep ahead till darkness came, and then, in the gloom, they might escape. The girl also seized an oar, and the canoe—the king’s own canoe—came on like a swallow.

“But the tribe was after them in fifty canoes, some coming straight along, some spreading out to close in later. It was no equal game, for these people were so quick and strong with the oars, and they were a hundred or more to two. There could be but one end. It was what the Great Slave had looked for: to fight till the last breath. He should fight for the woman who had risked all for him—just a common woman of the north, but it seemed good to lose his life for her; and she would be happy to die with him.

“So they stood side by side when the spears and arrows fell round them, and they gave death and wounds for wounds in their own bodies. When, at last, the Indians climbed into the canoe, the Great Slave was dead of many wounds, and the woman, all gashed, lay with her lips to his wet, red cheek. She smiled as they dragged her away; and her soul hurried after his to the Camp of the Great Fires.”

It was long before Tybalt spoke, but at last he said: “If I could but tell it as you have told it to me, Pierre!” Pierre answered: “Tell it with your tongue, and this shall be nothing to it, for what am I? What English have I, a gipsy of the snows? But do not write it, mais non! Writing wanders from the matter. The eyes, and the tongue, and the time, that is the thing. But in a book—it will sound all cold and thin. It is for the north, for the camp-fire, for the big talk before a man rolls into his blanket, and is at peace. No, no writing, monsieur. Speak it everywhere with your tongue.”

“And so I would, were my tongue as yours. Pierre, tell me more about the letters at Fort O’Glory. You know his name—what was it?”

“You said five hundred dollars for one of those letters. Is it not?”

“Yes.” Tybalt had a new hope.

“T’sh! What do I want of five hundred dollars! But, here, answer me a question: Was the lady—his wife, she that was left in England—a good woman? Answer me out of your own sense, and from my story. If you say right you shall have a letter—one that I have by me.”

Tybalt’s heart leapt into his throat. After a little he said huskily: “She was a good woman—he believed her that, and so shall I.”

“You think he could not have been so great unless, eh? And that ‘Charles Rex,’ what of him?”

“What good can it do to call him bad now?” Without a word, Pierre drew from a leather wallet a letter, and, by the light of the fast-setting sun, Tybalt read it, then read it again, and yet again.

“Poor soul! poor lady!” he said. “Was ever such another letter written to any man? And it came too late; this, with the king’s recall, came too late!”

“So—so. He died out there where that wild duck flies—a Great Slave. Years after, the Company’s man brought word of all.”

Tybalt was looking at the name on the outside of the letter.

“How do they call that name?” asked Pierre. “It is like none I’ve seen—no.”

Tybalt shook his head sorrowfully, and did not answer.

THE RED PATROL

St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, had given him its licentiate’s hood, the Bishop of Rupert’s Land had ordained him, and the North had swallowed him up. He had gone forth with surplice, stole, hood, a sermon-case, the prayer-book, and that other Book of all. Indian camps, trappers’ huts, and Company’s posts had given him hospitality, and had heard him with patience and consideration. At first he wore the surplice, stole, and hood, took the eastward position, and intoned the service, and no man said him nay, but watched him curiously and was sorrowful—he was so youthful, clear of eye, and bent on doing heroical things.

But little by little there came a change. The hood was left behind at Fort O’Glory, where it provoked the derision of the Methodist missionary who followed him; the sermon-case stayed at Fort O’Battle; and at last the surplice itself was put by at the Company’s post at Yellow Quill. He was too excited and in earnest at first to see the effect of his ministrations, but there came slowly over him the knowledge that he was talking into space. He felt something returning on him out of the air into which he talked, and buffeting him. It was the Spirit of the North, in which lives the terror, the large heart of things, the soul of the past. He awoke to his inadequacy, to the fact that all these men to whom he talked, listened, and only listened, and treated him with a gentleness which was almost pity—as one might a woman. He had talked doctrine, the Church, the

sacraments, and at Fort O'Battle he faced definitely the futility of his work. What was to blame—the Church—religion—himself?

It was at Fort O'Battle that he met Pierre, and heard a voice say over his shoulder, as he walked out into the icy dusk: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness... and he had sackcloth about his loins, and his food was locusts and wild honey."

He turned to see Pierre, who in the large room of the Post had sat and watched him as he prayed and preached. He had remarked the keen, curious eye, the musing look, the habitual disdain at the lips. It had all touched him, confused him; and now he had a kind of anger.

"You know it so well, why don't you preach yourself?" he said feverishly.

"I have been preaching all my life," Pierre answered drily.

"The devil's games: cards and law-breaking; and you sneer at men who try to bring lost sheep into the fold."

"The fold of the Church—yes, I understand all that," Pierre answered. "I have heard you and the priests of my father's Church talk. Which is right? But as for me, I am a missionary. Cards, law-breaking—these are what I have done; but these are not what I have preached."

"What have you preached?" asked the other, walking on into the fast-gathering night, beyond the Post and the Indian lodges, into the wastes where frost and silence lived.

Pierre waved his hand towards space. "This," he said suggestively.

"What's this?" asked the other fretfully.

"The thing you feel round you here."

"I feel the cold," was the petulant reply.

"I feel the immense, the far off," said Pierre slowly.

The other did not understand as yet. "You've learned big words," he said disdainfully.

"No; big things," rejoined Pierre sharply—"a few."

"Let me hear you preach them," half snarled Sherburne.

"You will not like to hear them—no."

"I'm not likely to think about them one way or another," was the contemptuous reply.

Pierre's eyes half closed. The young, impetuous half-baked college man. To set his little knowledge against his own studious vagabondage! At that instant he determined to play a game and win; to turn this man into a vagabond also; to see John the Baptist become a Bedouin. He saw the doubt, the uncertainty, the shattered vanity in the youth's mind, the missionary's half retreat from his cause. A crisis was at hand. The youth was fretful with his great theme, instead of being severe upon himself. For days and days Pierre's presence had acted on Sherburne silently but forcibly. He had listened to the vagabond's philosophy, and knew that it was of a deeper—so much deeper—knowledge of life than he himself possessed, and he knew also that it was terribly true; he was not wise enough to see that it was only true in part. The influence had been insidious, delicate, cunning, and he himself was only "a voice crying in the wilderness," without the simple creed of that voice. He knew that the Methodist missionary was believed in more, if less liked, than himself. Pierre would work now with all the latent devilry of his nature to unseat the man from his saddle.

"You have missed the great thing, alors, though you have been up here two years," he said. "You do not feel, you do not know. What good have you done? Who has got on his knees and changed his life because of you? Who has told his beads or longed for the Mass because of you? Tell me, who has ever said, 'You have showed me how to live'? Even the women, though they cry sometimes when you sing-song the prayers, go on just the same when the little 'bless-you' is over. Why? Most of them know a better thing than you tell them. Here is the truth: you are little—eh, so very little. You never lied—direct; you never stole the waters that are sweet; you never knew the big dreams that come with wine in the dead of night; you never swore at your own soul and heard it laugh back at you; you never put your face in the breast of a woman—do not look so wild at me!—you never had a child; you never saw the world and yourself through the doors of real life. You never have said, 'I am tired; I am sick of all; I have seen all.' You have never felt what came after—understanding. Chut, your talk is for children—and missionaries. You are a prophet without a call, you are a leader without a man to lead, you are less than a child up here. For here the children feel a peace in their blood when the stars come out, and a joy in their brains when the dawn comes up and reaches a yellow hand to the Pole, and the west wind shouts at them. Holy Mother! we in the far north, we feel things, for all the great souls of the dead are up there at the Pole in the pleasant land, and we have seen the Scarlet Hunter and the Kimash Hills. You have seen nothing. You have only heard, and because, like a child, you have never sinned, you come and preach to us!"

The night was folding down fast, all the stars were shooting out into their places, and in the north the white lights of the aurora were flying to and fro. Pierre had spoken with a slow force and precision, yet, as he went on, his eyes almost became fixed on those shifting flames, and a deep look came into them, as he was moved by his own eloquence. Never in his life had he made so long a speech at once. He paused, and then said suddenly: "Come, let us run."

He broke into a long, sliding trot, and Sherburne did the same. With their arms gathered to their sides they ran for quite two miles without a word, until the heavy breathing of the clergyman brought Pierre up suddenly.

"You do not run well," he said; "you do not run with the whole body. You know so little. Did you ever think how much such men as Jacques Parfaite know? The earth they read like a book, the sky like an animal's ways, and a man's face like—like the writing on the wall."

"Like the writing on the wall," said Sherburne, musing; for, under the other's influence, his petulance was gone. He knew that he was not a part of this life, that he was ignorant of it; of, indeed, all that was vital in it and in men and women.

"I think you began this too soon. You should have waited; then you might have done good. But here we are

wiser than you. You have no message—no real message—to give us; down in your heart you are not even sure of yourself."

Sherburne sighed. "I'm of no use," he said. "I'll get out. I'm no good at all."

Pierre's eyes glistened. He remembered how, the day before, this youth had said hot words about his card-playing; had called him—in effect—a thief; had treated him as an inferior, as became one who was of St. Augustine's, Canterbury.

"It is the great thing to be free," Pierre said, "that no man shall look for this or that of you. Just to do as far as you feel, as far as you are sure—that is the best. In this you are not sure—no. Hein, is it not?"

Sherburne did not answer. Anger, distrust, wretchedness, the spirit of the alien, loneliness, were alive in him. The magnetism of this deep penetrating man, possessed of a devil, was on him, and in spite of every reasonable instinct he turned to him for companionship.

"It's been a failure," he burst out, "and I'm sick of it—sick of it; but I can't give it up."

Pierre said nothing. They had come to what seemed a vast semicircle of ice and snow, a huge amphitheatre in the plains. It was wonderful: a great round wall on which the northern lights played, into which the stars peered. It was open towards the north, and in one side was a fissure shaped like a Gothic arch. Pierre pointed to it, and they did not speak till they had passed through it. Like great seats the steppes of snow ranged round, and in the centre was a kind of plateau of ice, as it might seem a stage or an altar. To the north there was a great opening, the lost arc of the circle, through which the mystery of the Pole swept in and out, or brooded there where no man may question it. Pierre stood and looked. Time and again he had been here, and had asked the same question: Who had ever sat on those frozen benches and looked down at the drama on that stage below? Who played the parts? Was it a farce or a sacrifice? To him had been given the sorrow of imagination, and he wondered and wondered. Or did they come still—those strange people, whoever they were—and watch ghostly gladiators at their fatal sport? If they came, when was it? Perhaps they were there now unseen. In spite of himself he shuddered. Who was the keeper of the house?

Through his mind there ran—pregnant to him for the first tine—a chanson of the Scarlet Hunter, the Red Patrol, who guarded the sleepers in the Kimash Hills against the time they should awake and possess the land once more: the friend of the lost, the lover of the vagabond, and of all who had no home:

"Strangers come to the outer walls—
(Why do the sleepers stir?)
Strangers enter the Judgment House—
(Why do the sleepers sigh?)
Slow they rise in their judgment seats,
Sieve and measure the naked souls,
Then with a blessing return to sleep—
(Quiet the Judgment House.)
Lone and sick are the vagrant souls—
(When shall the world come home?)"

He reflected upon the words, and a feeling of awe came over him, for he had been in the White Valley and had seen the Scarlet Hunter. But there came at once also a sinister desire to play a game for this man's life-work here. He knew that the other was ready for any wild move; there was upon him the sense of failure and disgust; he was acted on by the magic of the night, the terrible delight of the scene, and that might be turned to advantage.

He said: "Am I not right? There is something in the world greater than the creeds and the book of the Mass. To be free and to enjoy, that is the thing. Never before have you felt what you feel here now. And I will show you more. I will teach you how to know, I will lead you through all the north and make you to understand the big things of life. Then, when you have known, you can return if you will. But now—see: I will tell you what I will do. Here on this great platform we will play a game of cards. There is a man whose life I can ruin. If you win I promise to leave him safe; and to go out of the far north for ever, to go back to Quebec"—he had a kind of gaming fever in his veins. "If I win, you give up the Church, leaving behind the prayerbook, the Bible and all, coming with me to do what I shall tell you, for the passing of twelve moons. It is a great stake—will you play it? Come"—he leaned forward, looking into the other's face—"will you play it? They drew lots—those people in the Bible. We will draw lots, and see, eh?—and see?"

"I accept the stake," said Sherburne, with a little gasp.

Without a word they went upon that platform, shaped like an altar, and Pierre at once drew out a pack of cards, shuffling them with his mittened hands. Then he knelt down and said, as he laid out the cards one by one till there were thirty: "Whoever gets the ace of hearts first, wins—hein?"

Sherburne nodded and knelt also. The cards lay back upwards in three rows. For a moment neither stirred. The white, metallic stars saw it, the small crescent moon beheld it, and the deep wonder of night made it strange and dreadful. Once or twice Sherburne looked round as though he felt others present, and once Pierre looked out to the wide portals, as though he saw some one entering. But there was nothing to the eye—nothing. Presently Pierre said: "Begin."

The other drew a card, then Pierre drew one, then the other, then Pierre again; and so on. How slow the game was! Neither hurried, but both, kneeling, looked and looked at the card long before drawing and turning it over. The stake was weighty, and Pierre loved the game more than he cared about the stake. Sherburne cared nothing about the game, but all his soul seemed set upon the hazard. There was not a sound out of the night, nothing stirring but the Spirit of the North. Twenty, twenty-five cards were drawn, and then Pierre paused.

"In a minute all will be settled," he said. "Will you go on, or will you pause?"

But Sherburne had got the madness of chance in his veins now, and he said: "Quick, quick, go on!" Pierre drew, but the great card held back. Sherburne drew, then Pierre again. There were three left. Sherburne's face was as white as the snow around him. His mouth was open, and a little white cloud of frosted breath came out. His hand hungered for the card, drew back, then seized it. A moan broke from him. Then Pierre,

with a little weird laugh, reached out and turned over the ace of hearts!

They both stood up. Pierre put the cards in his pocket.

“You have lost,” he said.

Sherburne threw back his head with a reckless laugh. The laugh seemed to echo and echo through the amphitheatre, and then from the frozen seats, the hillocks of ice and snow, there was a long, low sound, as of sorrow, and a voice came after:

“Sleep—sleep! Blessed be the just and the keepers of vows.”

Sherburne stood shaking, as though he had seen a host of spirits. His eyes on the great seats of judgment, he said to Pierre:

“See, see, how they sit there, grey and cold and awful!”

But Pierre shook his head.

“There is nothing,” he said, “nothing;” yet he knew that Sherburne was looking upon the men of judgment of the Kimash Hills, the sleepers. He looked round, half fearfully, for if here were those great children of the ages, where was the keeper of the house, the Red Patrol?

Even as he thought, a figure in scarlet with a noble face and a high pride of bearing stood before them, not far away. Sherburne clutched his arm.

Then the Red Patrol, the Scarlet Hunter spoke: “Why have you sinned your sins and broken your vows within our house of judgment? Know ye not that in the new springtime of the world ye shall be outcast, because ye have called the sleepers to judgment before their time? But I am the hunter of the lost. Go you,” he said to Sherburne, pointing, “where a sick man lies in a hut in the Shikam Valley. In his soul find thine own again.” Then to Pierre: “For thee, thou shalt know the desert and the storm and the lonely hills; thou shalt neither seek nor find. Go, and return no more.”

The two men, Sherburne falteringly, stepped down and moved to the open plain. They turned at the great entrance and looked back. Where they had stood there rested on his long bow the Red Patrol. He raised it, and a flaming arrow flew through the sky towards the south. They followed its course, and when they looked back a little afterwards, the great judgment-house was empty, and the whole north was silent as the sleepers.

At dawn they came to the hut in the Shikam Valley, and there they found a trapper dying. He had sinned greatly, and he could not die without someone to show him how, to tell him what to say to the angel of the cross-roads.

Sherburne, kneeling by him, felt his own new soul moved by a holy fire, and, first praying for himself, he said to the sick man: “For if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Praying for both, his heart grew strong, and he heard the sick man say, ere he journeyed forth to the crossroads:

“You have shown me the way. I have peace.”

“Speak for me in the Presence,” said Sherburne softly.

The dying man could not answer, but that moment, as he journeyed forth on the Far Trail, he held Sherburne’s hand.

THE GOING OF THE WHITE SWAN

“Why don’t she come back, father?”

The man shook his head, his hand fumbled with the wolf-skin robe covering the child, and he made no reply. “She’d come if she knew I was hurted, wouldn’t she?”

The father nodded, and then turned restlessly toward the door, as though expecting someone. The look was troubled, and the pipe he held was not alight, though he made a pretence of smoking.

“Suppose the wild cat had got me, she’d be sorry when she comes, wouldn’t she?”

There was no reply yet, save by gesture, the language of primitive man; but the big body shivered a little, and the uncouth hand felt for a place in the bed where the lad’s knee made a lump under the robe. He felt the little heap tenderly, but the child winced.

“S-sh, but that hurts! This wolf-skin’s most too much on me, isn’t it, father?”

The man softly, yet awkwardly too, lifted the robe, folded it back, and slowly uncovered the knee. The leg was worn away almost to skin and bone, but the knee itself was swollen with inflammation. He bathed it with some water, mixed with vinegar and herbs, then drew down the deer-skin shirt at the child’s shoulder, and did the same with it. Both shoulder and knee bore the marks of teeth—where a huge wild cat had made havoc—and the body had long red scratches.

Presently the man shook his head sorrowfully, and covered up the small disfigured frame again, but this time with a tanned skin of the caribou. The flames of the huge wood fire dashed the walls and floor with a velvety red and black, and the large iron kettle, bought of the Company at Fort Sacrament, puffed out geysers of steam.

The place was a low but with parchment windows and rough mud-mortar lumped between the logs. Skins hung along two sides, with bullet-holes and knife-holes showing: of the great grey wolf, the red puma, the bronze hill-lion, the beaver, the bear, and the sable; and in one corner was a huge pile of them. Bare of the usual comforts as the room was, it had a sort of refinement also, joined to an inexpressible loneliness; you

could scarce have told how or why.

“Father,” said the boy, his face pinched with pain for a moment, “it hurts so all over, every once in a while.”

His fingers caressed the leg just below the knee. “Father,” he suddenly added, “what does it mean when you hear a bird sing in the middle of the night?” The woodsman looked down anxiously into the boy’s face. “It hasn’t no meaning, Dominique. There ain’t such a thing on the Labrador Heights as a bird singin’ in the night. That’s only in warm countries where there’s nightingales. So—bien sur!”

The boy had a wise, dreamy, speculative look. “Well, I guess it was a nightingale—it didn’t sing like any I ever heard.”

The look of nervousness deepened in the woodsman’s face. “What did it sing like, Dominique?”

“So it made you shiver. You wanted it to go on, and yet you didn’t want it. It was pretty, but you felt as if something was going to snap inside of you.”

“When did you hear it, my son?”

“Twice last night—and—and I guess it was Sunday the other time. I don’t know, for there hasn’t been no Sunday up here since mother went away—has there?”

“Mebbe not.”

The veins were beating like live cords in the man’s throat and at his temples.

“‘Twas just the same as Father Corraine bein’ here, when mother had Sunday, wasn’t it?”

The man made no reply, but a gloom drew down his forehead, and his lips doubled in as if he endured physical pain. He got to his feet and paced the floor. For weeks he had listened to the same kind of talk from this wounded, and, as he thought, dying son, and he was getting less and less able to bear it. The boy at nine years of age was, in manner of speech, the merest child, but his thoughts were sometimes large and wise. The only white child within a compass of three hundred miles or so; the lonely life of the hills and plains, so austere in winter, so melted to a sober joy in summer; listening to the talk of his elders at camp-fires and on the hunting-trail, when, even as an infant almost, he was swung in a blanket from a tree or was packed in the torch-crane of a canoe; and, more than all, the care of a good, loving—if passionate—little mother: all these had made him far wiser than his years. He had been hours upon hours each day alone with the birds, and squirrels, and wild animals, and something of the keen scent and instinct of the animal world had entered into his body and brain, so that he felt what he could not understand.

He saw that he had worried his father, and it troubled him. He thought of something. “Daddy,” he said, “let me have it.”

A smile struggled for life in the hunter’s face, as he turned to the wall and took down the skin of a silver fox. He held it on his palm for a moment, looking at it in an interested, satisfied way, then he brought it over and put it into the child’s hands; and the smile now shaped itself, as he saw an eager pale face buried in the soft fur.

“Good! good!” he said involuntarily.

“Bon! bon!” said the boy’s voice from the fur, in the language of his mother, who added a strain of Indian blood to her French ancestry.

The two sat there, the man half-kneeling on the low bed, and stroking the fur very gently. It could scarcely be thought that such pride should be spent on a little pelt by a mere backwoodsman and his nine-year-old son. One has seen a woman fingering a splendid necklace, her eyes fascinated by the bunch of warm, deep jewels—a light not of mere vanity, or hunger, or avarice in her face—only the love of the beautiful thing. But this was an animal’s skin. Did they feel the animal underneath it yet, giving it beauty, life, glory?

The silver-fox skin is the prize of the north, and this one was of the boy’s own harvesting. While his father was away he saw the fox creeping by the hut. The joy of the hunter seized him, and guided his eye over the sights of his father’s rifle, as he rested the barrel on the window-sill, and the animal was his! Now his finger ran into the hole made by the bullet, and he gave a little laugh of modest triumph. Minutes passed as they studied, felt, and admired the skin, the hunter proud of his son, the son alive with a primitive passion, which inflicts suffering to get the beautiful thing. Perhaps the tenderness as well as the wild passion of the animal gets into the hunter’s blood, and tips his fingers at times with an exquisite kindness—as one has noted in a lion fondling her young, or in tigers as they sport upon the sands of the desert. This boy had seen his father shoot a splendid moose, and as it lay dying, drop down and kiss it in the neck for sheer love of its handsomeness. Death is no insult. It is the law of the primitive world—war, and love in war.

They sat there for a long time, not speaking, each busy in his own way: the boy full of imaginings, strange, half-heathen, half-angelic feelings; the man roaming in that savage, romantic, superstitious atmosphere which belongs to the north, and to the north alone. At last the boy lay back on the pillow, his finger still in the bullet-hole of the pelt. His eyes closed, and he seemed about to fall asleep, but presently looked up and whispered: “I haven’t said my prayers, have I?”

The father shook his head in a sort of rude confusion.

“I can pray out loud if I want to, can’t I?”

“Of course, Dominique.” The man shrank a little.

“I forget a good many times, but I know one all right, for I said it when the bird was singing. It isn’t one out of the book Father Corraine sent mother by Pretty Pierre; it’s one she taught me out of her own head. P’r’aps I’d better say it.”

“P’r’aps, if you want to.” The voice was husky. The boy began:

“O bon Jesu, who died to save us from our sins, and to lead us to Thy country, where there is no cold, nor hunger, nor thirst, and where no one is afraid, listen to Thy child.... When the great winds and rains come down from the hills, do not let the floods drown us, nor the woods cover us, nor the snow-slide bury us; and do not let the prairie-fires burn us. Keep wild beasts from killing us in our sleep, and give us good hearts that we may not kill them in anger.”

His finger twisted involuntarily into the bullet-hole in the pelt, and he paused a moment.

“Keep us from getting lost, O gracious Saviour.” Again there was a pause, his eyes opened wide, and he said:

“Do you think mother’s lost, father?”

A heavy broken breath came from the father, and he replied haltingly: “Mebbe, mebbe so.”

Dominique’s eyes closed again. “I’ll make up some,” he said slowly. “And if mother’s lost, bring her back again to us, for everything’s going wrong.”

Again he paused, then went on with the prayer as it had been taught him.

“Teach us to hear Thee whenever Thou callest, and to see Thee when Thou visitest us, and let the blessed Mary and all the saints speak often to Thee for us. O Christ, hear us. Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Amen.”

Making the sign of the cross, he lay back, and said “I’ll go to sleep now, I guess.”

The man sat for a long time looking at the pale, shining face, at the blue veins showing painfully dark on the temples and forehead, at the firm little white hand, which was as brown as a butternut a few weeks before. The longer he sat, the deeper did his misery sink into his soul. His wife had gone, he knew not where, his child was wasting to death, and he had for his sorrows no inner consolation. He had ever had that touch of mystical imagination inseparable from the far north, yet he had none of that religious belief which swallowed up natural awe and turned it to the refining of life, and to the advantage of a man’s soul. Now it was forced in upon him that his child was wiser than himself, wiser and safer. His life had been spent in the wastes, with rough deeds and rugged habits, and a youth of hardship, danger, and almost savage endurance, had given him a half-barbarian temperament, which could strike an angry blow at one moment and fondle to death at the next.

When he married sweet Lucette Barbond his religion reached little farther than a belief in the Scarlet Hunter of the Kimash Hills and those voices that could be heard calling in the night, till their time of sleep be past, and they should rise and reconquer the north.

Not even Father Corraine, whose ways were like those of his Master, could ever bring him to a more definite faith. His wife had at first striven with him, mourning yet loving. Sometimes the savage in him had broken out over the little creature, merely because barbaric tyranny was in him—torture followed by the passionate kiss. But how was she philosopher enough to understand the cause?

When she fled from their hut one bitter day, as he roared some wild words at her, it was because her nerves had all been shaken from threatened death by wild beasts (of which he did not know), and his violence drove her mad. She had run out of the house, and on, and on, and on—and she had never come back. That was weeks ago, and there had been no word nor sign of her since. The man was now busy with it all, in a slow, cumbrous way. A nature more to be touched by things seen than by things told, his mind was being awakened in a massive kind of fashion. He was viewing this crisis of his life as one sees a human face in the wide searching light of a great fire. He was restless, but he held himself still by a strong effort, not wishing to disturb the sleeper. His eyes seemed to retreat farther and farther back under his shaggy brows.

The great logs in the chimney burned brilliantly, and a brass crucifix over the child’s head now and again reflected soft little flashes of light. This caught the hunter’s eye. Presently there grew up in him a vague kind of hope that, somehow, this symbol would bring him luck—that was the way he put it to himself. He had felt this—and something more—when Dominique prayed. Somehow, Dominique’s prayer was the only one he had ever heard that had gone home to him, had opened up the big sluices of his nature, and let the light of God flood in. No, there was another: the one Lucette made on the day that they were married, when a wonderful timid reverence played through his hungry love for her.

Hours passed. All at once, without any other motion or gesture, the boy’s eyes opened wide with a strange, intense look.

“Father,” he said slowly, and in a kind of dream, “when you hear a sweet horn blow at night, is it the Scarlet Hunter calling?”

“P’r’aps. Why, Dominique?” He made up his mind to humour the boy, though it gave him strange aching forebodings. He had seen grown men and women with these fancies—and they had died.

“I heard one blowing just now, and the sounds seemed to wave over my head. Perhaps he’s calling someone that’s lost.”

“Mebbe.”

“And I heard a voice singing—it wasn’t a bird tonight.”

“There was no voice, Dominique.”

“Yes, yes.” There was something fine in the grave, courteous certainty of the lad. “I waked and you were sitting there thinking, and I shut my eyes again, and I heard the voice. I remember the tune and the words.”

“What were the words?” In spite of himself the hunter felt awed.

“I’ve heard mother sing them, or something most like them:

“Why does the fire no longer burn?
(I am so lonely.)
Why does the tent-door swing outward?
(I have no home.)
Oh, let me breathe hard in your face!
(I am so lonely.)
Oh, why do you shut your eyes to me?
(I have no home.)”

The boy paused.

“Was that all, Dominique?”

“No, not all.”

“Let us make friends with the stars;
(I am so lonely.)
Give me your hand, I will hold it.
(I have no home.)
Let us go hunting together.
(I am so lonely.)
We will sleep at God’s camp to-night.
(I have no home.)”

Dominique did not sing, but recited the words with a sort of chanting inflection.

“What does it mean when you hear a voice like that, father?”

“I don’t know. Who told—your mother—the song?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I suppose she just made them up—she and God.... There! There it is again? Don’t you hear it—don’t you hear it, daddy?”

“No, Dominique, it’s only the kettle singing.”

“A kettle isn’t a voice. Daddy—” He paused a little, then went on, hesitatingly—“I saw a white swan fly through the door over your shoulder, when you came in to-night.”

“No, no, Dominique; it was a flurry of snow blowing over my shoulder.”

“But it looked at me with two shining eyes.”

“That was two stars shining through the door, my son.”

“How could there be snow flying and stars shining too, father?”

“It was just drift-snow on a light wind, but the stars were shining above, Dominique.”

The man’s voice was anxious and unconvincing, his eyes had a hungry, hunted look. The legend of the White Swan had to do with the passing of a human soul. The swan had come in—would it go out alone? He touched the boy’s hand—it was hot with fever; he felt the pulse—it ran high; he watched the face—it had a glowing light. Something stirred within him, and passed like a wave to the farthest courses of his being. Through his misery he had touched the garment of the Master of Souls. As though a voice said to him there, “Someone hath touched me,” he got to his feet, and, with a sudden blind humility, lit two candles, placed them on a shelf in a corner before a porcelain figure of the Virgin, as he had seen his wife do. Then he picked a small handful of fresh spruce twigs from a branch over the chimney, and laid them beside the candles. After a short pause he came slowly to the head of the boy’s bed. Very solemnly he touched the foot of the Christ on the cross with the tips of his fingers, and brought them to his lips with an indescribable reverence. After a moment, standing with eyes fixed on the face of the crucified figure, he said, in a shaking voice:

“Pardon, bon Jesu! Sauvez mon enfant! Ne me laissez pas seul!”

The boy looked up with eyes again grown unnaturally heavy, and said:

“Amen!... Bon Jesu!... Encore! Encore, mon pere!”

The boy slept. The father stood still by the bed for a time, but at last slowly turned and went toward the fire.

Outside, two figures were approaching the hut—a man and a woman; yet at first glance the man might easily have been taken for a woman, because of the long black robe which he wore, and because his hair fell loose on his shoulders and his face was clean-shaven.

“Have patience, my daughter,” said the man. “Do not enter till I call you. But stand close to the door, if you will, and hear all.”

So saying he raised his hand as in a kind of benediction, passed to the door, and after tapping very softly, opened it, entered, and closed it behind him-not so quickly, however, but that the woman caught a glimpse of the father and the boy. In her eyes there was the divine look of motherhood.

“Peace be to this house!” said the man gently as he stepped forward from the door.

The father, startled, turned shrinkingly on him, as if he had seen a spirit.

“M’sieu’ le cure!” he said in French, with an accent much poorer than that of the priest, or even of his own son. He had learned French from his wife; he himself was English.

The priest’s quick eye had taken in the lighted candles at the little shrine, even as he saw the painfully changed aspect of the man.

“The wife and child, Bagot?” he asked, looking round. “Ah, the boy!” he added, and going toward the bed, continued, presently, in a low voice: “Dominique is ill?”

Bagot nodded, and then answered: “A wild-cat and then fever, Father Corraine.”

The priest felt the boy’s pulse softly, then with a close personal look he spoke hardly above his breath, yet distinctly too:

“Your wife, Bagot?”

“She is not here, m’sieu’.” The voice was low and gloomy.

“Where is she, Bagot?”

“I do not know, m’sieu’.”

“When did you see her last?”

“Four weeks ago, m’sieu’.”

“That was September, this is October—winter. On the ranches they let their cattle loose upon the plains in winter, knowing not where they go, yet looking for them to return in the spring. But a woman—a woman and a wife—is different.... Bagot, you have been a rough, hard man, and you have been a stranger to your God, but I thought you loved your wife and child!”

The hunter's hands clenched, and a wicked light flashed up into his eyes; but the calm, benignant gaze of the other cooled the tempest in his veins. The priest sat down on the couch where the child lay, and took the fevered hand in his very softly.

"Stay where you are, Bagot," he said; "just there where you are, and tell me what your trouble is, and why your wife is not here.... Say all honestly—by the name of the Christ!" he added, lifting up a large iron crucifix that hung on his breast.

Bagot sat down on a bench near the fireplace, the light playing on his bronzed, powerful face, his eyes shining beneath his heavy brows like two coals. After a moment he began:

"I don't know how it started. I'd lost a lot of pelts—stolen they were, down on the Child o' Sin River. Well, she was hasty and nervous, like as not—she always was brisker and more sudden than I am. I—I laid my powder-horn and whisky-flask-up there!"

He pointed to the little shrine of the Virgin, where now his candles were burning. The priest's grave eyes did not change expression at all, but looked out wisely, as though he understood everything before it was told.

Bagot continued: "I didn't notice it, but she had put some flowers there. She said something with an edge, her face all snapping angry, threw the things down, and called me a heathen and a wicked heretic—and I don't say now but she'd a right to do it. But I let out then, for them stolen pelts were rasping me on the raw. I said something pretty rough, and made as if I was goin' to break her in two—just fetched up my hands, and went like this!—" With a singular simplicity he made a wild gesture with his hands, and an animal-like snarl came from his throat. Then he looked at the priest with the honest intensity of a boy.

"Yes, that is what you did—what was it you said which was 'pretty rough'?"

There was a slight hesitation, then came the reply: "I said there was enough powder spilt on the floor to kill all the priests in heaven."

A fire suddenly shot up into Father Corraine's face, and his lips tightened for an instant, but presently he was as before, and he said:

"How that will face you one day, Bagot! Go on. What else?"

Sweat began to break out on Bagot's face, and he spoke as though he were carrying a heavy weight on his shoulders, low and brokenly.

"Then I said, 'And if virgins has it so fine, why didn't you stay one?'"

"Blasphemer!" said the priest in a stern, reproachful voice, his face turning a little pale, and he brought the crucifix to his lips. "To the mother of your child—shame! What more?"

She threw up her hands to her ears with a wild cry, ran out of the house, down the hills, and away. I went to the door and watched her as long as I could see her, and waited for her to come back—but she never did.

"I've hunted and hunted, but I can't find her." Then, with a sudden thought, "Do you know anything of her, m'sieu'?"

The priest appeared not to hear the question. Turning for a moment toward the boy who now was in a deep sleep, he looked at him intently. Presently he spoke.

"Ever since I married you and Lucette Barbond, you have stood in the way of her duty, Bagot. How well I remember that first day when you knelt before me! Was ever so sweet and good a girl—with her golden eyes and the look of summer in her face, and her heart all pure! Nothing had spoiled her—you cannot spoil such women—God is in their hearts. But you, what have you cared? One day you would fondle her, and the next you were a savage—and she, so gentle, so gentle all the time. Then, for her religion and the faith of her child—she has fought for it, prayed for it, suffered for it. You thought you had no need, for you had so much happiness, which you did not deserve—that was it. But she: with all a woman suffers, how can she bear life—and man—without God? No, it is not possible. And you thought you and your few superstitions were enough for her.—Ah, poor fool! She should worship you! So selfish, so small, for a man who knows in his heart how great God is.—You did not love her."

"By the Heaven above, yes!" said Bagot, half starting to his feet.

"Ah, 'by the Heaven above,' no! nor the child. For true love is unselfish and patient, and where it is the stronger, it cares for the weaker; but it was your wife who was unselfish, patient, and cared for you. Every time she said an ave she thought of you, and her every thanks to the good God had you therein. They know you well in heaven, Bagot—through your wife. Did you ever pray—ever since I married you to her?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"An hour or so ago."

Once again the priest's eyes glanced towards the lighted candles.

Presently he said: "You asked me if I had heard anything of your wife. Listen, and be patient while you listen.... Three weeks ago I was camping on the Sundust Plains, over against the Young Sky River. In the morning, as I was lighting a fire outside my tent, my young Cree Indian with me, I saw coming over the crest of a land-wave, from the very lips of the sunrise, as it were, a band of Indians. I could not quite make them out. I hoisted my little flag on the tent, and they hurried on to me. I did not know the tribe—they had come from near Hudson's Bay. They spoke Chinook, and I could understand them. Well, as they came near I saw that they had a woman with them."

Bagot leaned forward, his body strained, every muscle tense. "A woman?" he said, as if breathing gave him sorrow—"my wife?"

"Your wife."

"Quick! Quick! Go on—oh, go on, m'sieu'—good father."

"She fell at my feet, begging me to save her.... I waved her off."

The sweat dropped from Bagot's forehead, a low growl broke from him, and he made such a motion as a

lion might make at its prey.

“You wouldn’t—wouldn’t save her—you coward!” He ground the words out.

The priest raised his palm against the other’s violence. “Hush!... She drew away, saying that God and man had deserted her.... We had breakfast, the chief and I. Afterwards, when the chief had eaten much and was in good humour, I asked him where he had got the woman. He said that he had found her on the plains she had lost her way. I told him then that I wanted to buy her. He said to me, ‘What does a priest want of a woman?’ I said that I wished to give her back to her husband. He said that he had found her, and she was his, and that he would marry her when they reached the great camp of the tribe. I was patient. It would not do to make him angry. I wrote down on a piece of bark the things that I would give him for her: an order on the Company at Fort o’ Sin for shot, blankets, and beads. He said no.”

The priest paused. Bagot’s face was all swimming with sweat, his body was rigid, but the veins of his neck knotted and twisted.

“For the love of God, go on!” he said hoarsely. “Yes, ‘for the love of God.’ I have no money, I am poor, but the Company will always honour my orders, for I pay sometimes, by the help of Christ. Bien, I added some things to the list: a saddle, a rifle, and some flannel. But no, he would not. Once more I put many things down. It was a big bill—it would keep me poor for five years.—To save your wife, John Bagot, you who drove her from your door, blaspheming, and railing at such as I.... I offered the things, and told him that was all that I could give. After a little he shook his head, and said that he must have the woman for his wife. I did not know what to add. I said—‘She is white, and the white people will never rest till they have killed you all, if you do this thing. The Company will track you down.’ Then he said, ‘The whites must catch me and fight me before they kill me.’... What was there to do?”

Bagot came near to the priest, bending over him savagely.

“You let her stay with them—you with hands like a man!”

“Hush!” was the calm, reproving answer. “I was one man, they were twenty.”

“Where was your God to help you, then?”

“Her God and mine was with me.”

Bagot’s eyes blazed. “Why didn’t you offer rum—rum? They’d have done it for that—one—five—ten kegs of rum!”

He swayed to and fro in his excitement, yet their voices hardly rose above a hoarse whisper all the time. “You forget,” answered the priest, “that it is against the law, and that as a priest of my order, I am vowed to give no rum to an Indian.”

“A vow? A vow? Name of God! what is a vow beside a woman—my wife?”

His misery and his rage were pitiful to see.

“Perjure my soul? Offer rum? Break my vow in the face of the enemies of God’s Church? What have you done for me that I should do this for you, John Bagot?”

“Coward!” was the man’s despairing cry, with a sudden threatening movement. “Christ Himself would have broke a vow to save her.”

The grave, kind eyes of the priest met the other’s fierce gaze, and quieted the wild storm that was about to break.

“Who am I that I should teach my Master?” he said solemnly. “What would you give Christ, Bagot, if He had saved her to you?”

The man shook with grief, and tears rushed from his eyes, so suddenly and fully had a new emotion passed through him.

“Give—give?” he cried; “I would give twenty years of my life!”

The figure of the priest stretched up with a gentle grandeur. Holding out the iron crucifix, he said: “On your knees and swear it, John Bagot.”

There was something inspiring, commanding, in the voice and manner, and Bagot, with a new hope rushing through his veins, knelt and repeated his words.

The priest turned to the door, and called, “Madame Lucette!”

The boy, hearing, waked, and sat up in bed suddenly. “Mother! mother!” he cried, as the door flew open. The mother came to her husband’s arms, laughing and weeping, and an instant afterwards was pouring out her love and anxiety over her child.

Father Corraine now faced the man, and with a soft exaltation of voice and manner, said:

“John Bagot, in the name of Christ, I demand twenty years of your life—of love and obedience of God. I broke my vow, I perjured my soul, I bought your wife with ten kegs of rum!”

The tall hunter dropped again to his knees, and caught the priest’s hand to kiss it.

“No, no—this!” the priest said, and laid his iron crucifix against the other’s lips.

Dominique’s voice came clearly through the room: “Mother, I saw the white swan fly away through the door when you came in.”

“My dear, my dear,” she said, “there was no white swan.” But she clasped the boy to her breast protectingly, and whispered an ave.

“Peace be to this house,” said the voice of the priest. And there was peace: for the child lived, and the man has loved, and has kept his vow, even unto this day.

For the visions of the boy, who can know the divers ways in which God speaks to the children of men?

AT BAMBER'S BOOM

His trouble came upon him when he was old. To the hour of its coming he had been of shrewd and humourous disposition. He had married late in life, and his wife had died, leaving him one child—a girl. She grew to womanhood, bringing him daily joy. She was beloved in the settlement; and there was no one at Bamber's Boom, in the valley of the Madawaska, but was startled and sorry when it turned out that Dugard, the river-boss, was married. He floated away down the river, with his rafts and drives of logs, leaving the girl sick and shamed. They knew she was sick at heart, because she grew pale and silent; they did not know for some months how shamed she was. Then it was that Mrs. Lauder, the sister of the Roman Catholic missionary, Father Halen, being a woman of notable character and kindness, visited her and begged her to tell all.

Though the girl—Nora—was a Protestant, Mrs. Lauder did this: but it brought sore grief to her. At first she could hardly bear to look at the girl's face, it was so hopeless, so numb to the world: it had the indifference of despair. Rumour now became hateful fact. When the old man was told, he gave one great cry, then sat down, his hands pressed hard between his knees, his body trembling, his eyes staring before him.

It was Father Halen who told him. He did it as man to man, and not as a priest, having travelled fifty miles for the purpose. "George Magor," said he, "it's bad, I know, but bear it—with the help of God. And be kind to the girl."

The old man answered nothing. "My friend," the priest continued, "I hope you'll forgive me for telling you. I thought 'twould be better from me, than to have it thrown at you in the settlement. We've been friends one way and another, and my heart aches for you, and my prayers go with you."

The old man raised his sunken eyes, all their keen humour gone, and spoke as though each word were dug from his heart. "Say no more, Father Halen." Then he reached out, caught the priest's hand in his gnarled fingers, and wrung it.

The father never spoke a harsh word to the girl. Otherwise he seemed to harden into stone. When the Protestant missionary came, he would not see him. The child was born before the river-drivers came along again the next year with their rafts and logs. There was a feeling abroad that it would be ill for Dugard if he chanced to camp at Bamber's Boom. The look of the old man's face was ominous, and he was known to have an iron will.

Dugard was a handsome man, half French, half Scotch, swarthy and admirably made. He was proud of his strength, and showily fearless in danger. For there were dangerous hours to the river life: when, for instance, a mass of logs became jammed at a rapids, and must be loosened; or a crib struck into the wrong channel, or, failing to enter a slide straight, came at a nasty angle to it, its timbers wrenched and tore apart, and its crew, with their great oars, were plumped into the busy current. He had been known to stand singly in some perilous spot when one log, the key to the jam, must be shifted to set free the great tumbled pile. He did everything with a dash. The handspike was waved and thrust into the best leverage, the long robust cry, "O-hee-hee-hoi!" rolled over the waters, there was a devil's jumble of logs, and he played a desperate game with them, tossing here, leaping there, balancing elsewhere, till, reaching the smooth rush of logs in the current, he ran across them to the shore as they spun beneath his feet.

His gang of river-drivers, with their big drives of logs, came sweeping down one beautiful day of early summer, red-shifted, shouting, good-tempered. It was about this time that Pierre came to know Magor.

It was the old man's duty to keep the booms of several great lumbering companies, and to watch the logs when the river-drivers were engaged elsewhere. Occasionally he took a place with the men, helping to make cribs and rafts. Dugard worked for one lumber company, Magor for others. Many in the settlement showed Dugard how much he was despised. Some warned him that Magor had said he would break him into pieces; it seemed possible that Dugard might have a bad hour with the people of Bamber's Boom. Dugard, though he swelled and strutted, showed by a furtive eye and a sinister watchfulness that he felt himself in an atmosphere of danger. But he spoke of his wickedness lightly as, "A slip—a little accident, mon ami."

Pierre said to him one day: "Bien, Dugard, you are a bold man to come here again. Or is it that you think old men are cowards?"

Dugard, blustering, laid his hand suddenly upon his case-knife.

Pierre laughed softly, contemptuously, came over, and throwing out his perfectly formed but not robust chest in the fashion of Dugard, added: "Ho, ho, monsieur the butcher, take your time at that. There is too much blood in your carcass. You have quarrels plenty on your hands without this. Come, don't be a fool and a scoundrel too."

Dugard grinned uneasily, and tried to turn the thing off as a joke, and Pierre, who laughed still a little more, said: "It would be amusing to see old Magor and Dugard fight. It would be—so equal." There was a keen edge to Pierre's tones, but Dugard dared not resent it.

One day Magor and Dugard must meet. The square-timber of the two companies had got tangled at a certain point, and gangs from both must set them loose. They were camped some distance from each other. There was rivalry between them, and it was hinted that if any trouble came from the meeting of Magor and Dugard the gangs would pay off old scores with each other. Pierre wished to prevent this. It seemed to him that the two men should stand alone in the affair. He said as much here and there to members of both camps, for he was free of both: a tribute to his genius at poker.

The girl, Nora, was apprehensive—for her father; she hated the other man now. Pierre was courteous to her, scrupulous in word and look, and fond of her child. He had always shown a gentleness to children, which seemed little compatible with his character; but for this young outlaw in the world he had something more. He even laboured carefully to turn the girl's father in its favour; but as yet to little purpose. He was thought ful of the girl too. He only went to the house when he knew her father was present, or when she was away. Once while he was there, Father Halen and his sister, Mrs. Lauder, came. They found Pierre with the child, rocking the cradle, and humming as he did so an old song of the coureurs de bois:

“Out of the hills comes a little white deer,
Poor little vaurien, o, ci, ci!
Come to my home, to my home down here,
Sister and brother and child o’ me
Poor little, poor little vaurien!”

Pierre was alone, save for the old woman who had cared for the home since Nora’s trouble came. The priest was anxious lest any harm should come from Dugard’s presence at Bamber’s Boom. He knew Pierre’s doubtful reputation, but still he knew he could speak freely and would be answered honestly. “What will happen?” he abruptly asked.

“What neither you nor I should try to prevent, m’sieu’,” was Pierre’s reply.

“Magor will do the man injury?”

“What would you have? Put the matter on your own hearthstone, eh?... Pardon, if I say these things bluntly.” Pierre still lightly rocked the cradle with one foot.

“But vengeance is in God’s hands.”

“M’sieu’,” said the half-breed, “vengeance also is man’s, else why did we ten men from Fort Cypress track down the Indians who murdered your brother, the good priest, and kill them one by one?”

Father Halen caught his sister as she swayed, and helped her to a chair, then turned a sad face on Pierre. “Were you—were you one of that ten?” he asked, overcome; and he held out his hand.

The two river-driving camps joined at Mud Cat Point, where was the crush of great timber. The two men did not at first come face to face, but it was noticed by Pierre, who smoked on the bank while the others worked, that the old man watched his enemy closely. The work of undoing the great twist of logs was exciting, and they fell on each other with a great sound as they were pried off, and went sliding, grinding, into the water. At one spot they were piled together, massive and high. These were left to the last.

It was here that the two met. Old Magor’s face was quiet, if a little haggard; and his eyes looked out from under his shaggy brows piercingly. Dugard’s manner was swaggering, and he swore horribly at his gang. Presently he stood at a point alone, working at an obstinate log. He was at the foot of an incline of timber, and he was not aware that Magor had suddenly appeared at the top of that incline. He heard his name called out sharply. Swinging round, he saw Magor thrusting a handspike under a huge timber, hanging at the top of the incline. He was standing in a hollow, a kind of trench. He was shaken with fear, for he saw the old man’s design. He gave a cry and made as if to jump out of the way, but with a laugh Magor threw his whole weight on the handspike, the great timber slid swiftly down and crushed Dugard from his thighs to his feet, breaking his legs terribly. The old man called down at him: “A slip—a little accident, mon ami!” Then, shouldering his handspike, he made his way through the silent gangs to the shore, and so on homewards.

Magor had done what he wished. Dugard would be a cripple for life; his beauty was all spoiled and broken: there was much to do to save his life. II

Nora also about this time took to her bed with fever. Again and again Pierre rode thirty miles and back to get ice for her head. All were kind to her now. The vengeance upon Dugard seemed to have wiped out much of her shame in the eyes of Bamber’s Boom. Such is the way of the world. He that has the last blow is in the eye of advantage. When Nora began to recover, the child fell ill also. In the sickness of the child the old man had a great temptation—far greater than that concerning Dugard. As the mother grew better the child became much worse. One night the doctor came, driving over from another settlement, and said that if the child got sleep till morning it would probably live, for the crisis had come. He left an opiate to procure the sleep, the same that had been given to the mother. If it did not sleep, it would die. Pierre was present at this time.

All through the child’s illness the old man’s mind had been tossed to and fro. If the child died, the living stigma would be gone; there would be no reminder of his daughter’s shame in the eyes of the world. They could go away from Bamber’s Boom, and begin life again somewhere. But, then, there was the child itself which had crept into his heart,—he knew not how, and would not be driven out. He had never, till it was taken ill, even touched it, nor spoken to it. To destroy its life!—Well, would it not be better for the child to go out of all possible shame, into peace, the peace of the grave?

This night he sat down beside the cradle, holding the bottle of medicine and a spoon in his hand. The hot, painful face of the child fascinated him. He looked from it to the bottle, and back, then again to the bottle. He started, and the sweat stood out on his forehead. For though the doctor had told him in words the proper dose, he had by mistake written on the label the same dose as for the mother! Here was the responsibility shifted in any case. More than once the old man uncorked the bottle, and once he dropped out the opiate in the spoon steadily; but the child opened its suffering eyes at him, its little wasted hand wandered over the coverlet, and he could not do it just then. But again the passion for its destruction came on him, because he heard his daughter moaning in the other room. He said to himself that she would be happier when it was gone. But as he stooped over the cradle, no longer hesitating, the door softly opened, and Pierre entered. The old man shuddered, and drew back from the cradle. Pierre saw the look of guilt in the old man’s face, and his instinct told him what was happening. He took the bottle from the trembling hand, and looked at the label.

“What is the proper dose?” he asked, seeing that a mistake had been made by the doctor.

In a hoarse whisper Magor told him. “It may be too late,” Pierre added. He knelt down, with light fingers opened the child’s mouth, and poured the medicine in slowly. The old man stood for a time rigid, looking at them both. Then he came round to the other side of the cradle, and seated himself beside it, his eyes fixed on the child’s face. For a long time they sat there. At last the old man said: “Will he die, Pierre?”

“I am afraid so,” answered Pierre painfully. “But we shall see.” Then early teaching came to him, never to be entirely obliterated, and he added: “Has the child been baptised?”

The old man shook his head. “‘Will you do it?” asked Pierre hesitatingly.

“I can’t—I can’t,” was the reply.

Pierre smiled a little ironically, as if at himself, got some water in a cup, came over, and said: “Remember, I’m a Papist!”

A motion of the hand answered him.

He dipped his fingers in the water, and dropped it ever so lightly on the child’s forehead.

“George Magor,”—it was the old man’s name,—“I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” Then he drew the sign of the cross on the infant’s forehead.

Sitting down, he watched beside the child. After a little he heard a long choking sigh. Looking up, he saw tears slowly dropping from Magor’s eyes.

And to this day the child and the mother of the child are dear to the old man’s heart.

THE BRIDGE HOUSE

It stood on a wide wall between two small bridges. These were approaches to the big covered bridge spanning the main channel of the Madawaska River, and when swelled by the spring thaws and rains, the two flanking channels divided at the foundations of the house, and rustled away through the narrow paths of the small bridges to the rapids. You could stand at any window in the House and watch the ugly, rushing current, gorged with logs, come battering at the wall, jostle between the piers, and race on to the rocks and the dam and the slide beyond. You stepped from the front door upon the wall, which was a road between the bridges, and from the back door into the river itself.

The House had once been a tavern. It looked a wayfarer, like its patrons the river-drivers, with whom it was most popular. You felt that it had no part in the career of the village on either side, but was like a rock in a channel, at which a swimmer caught or a vagrant fish loitered.

Pierre knew the place, when, of a night in the springtime or early summer, throngs of river-drivers and their bosses sauntered at its doors, or hung over the railing of the wall, as they talked and smoked.

The glory of the Bridge House suddenly declined. That was because Finley, the owner, a rich man, came to hate the place—his brother’s blood stained the barroom floor. He would have destroyed the house but that John Rupert, the beggared gentleman came to him, and wished to rent it for a dwelling.

Mr. Rupert was old, and had been miserably poor for many years, but he had a breeding and a manner superior to anyone at Bamber’s Boom. He was too old for a labourer, he had no art or craftsmanship; his little money was gone in foolish speculations, and he was dependent on his granddaughter’s slight earnings from music teaching and needlework. But he rented an acre of ground from Finley, and grew vegetables; he gathered driftwood from the river for his winter fire, and made up the accounts of the storekeeper occasionally. Yet it was merely keeping off starvation. He was not popular. He had no tongue for the meaningless village talk. People held him in a kind of awe, and yet they felt a mean satisfaction when they saw him shouldering driftwood, and piling it on the shore to be dragged away—the last resort of the poor, for which they blush.

When Mr. Rupert asked for the House, Finley knew the chances were he would not get the rental; yet, because he was sorry for the old man, he gave it to him at a low rate. He closed up the bar-room, however, and it was never opened afterwards.

So it was that Mr. Rupert and Judith, his granddaughter, came to live there. Judith was a blithe, lissome creature, who had never known comfort or riches: they were taken from her grandfather before she was born, and her father and mother both died when she was a little child. But she had been taught by her grandmother, when she lived, and by her grandfather, and she had felt the graces of refined life. Withal, she had a singular sympathy for the rude, strong life of the river. She was glad when they came to live at the Bridge House, and shamed too: glad because they could live apart from the other villagers; shamed because it exposed her to the curiosity of those who visited the House, thinking it was still a tavern. But that was only for a time.

One night Jules Brydon, the young river-boss, camped with his men at Bamber’s Boom. He was of parents Scotch and French, and the amalgamation of races in him made a striking product. He was cool and indomitable, yet hearty and joyous. It was exciting to watch him at the head of his men, breaking up a jam of logs, and it was a delight to hear him of an evening as he sang:

“Have you heard the cry of the Long Lachine,
When happy is the sun in the morning?
The rapids long and the banks of green,
As we ride away in the morning,
On the froth of the Long Lachine?”

One day, soon after they came, the dams and booms were opened above, and forests of logs came riding down to Bamber’s Boom. The current was strong, and the logs came on swiftly. As Brydon’s gang worked, they saw a man out upon a small raft of driftwood, which had been suddenly caught in the drive of logs, and was carried out towards the middle channel. The river-drivers laughed, for they failed to see that the man was old, and that he could not run across the rolling logs to the shore. The old man, evidently hopeless, laid down his pike-pole, folded his hands, and drifted with the logs. The river-drivers stopped laughing. They began to understand.

Brydon saw a woman standing at a window of the House waving her arms, and there floated up the river the words, “Father! father!” He caught up a pikepole, and ran over that spinning floor of logs to the raft. The old man’s face was white, but there was no fear in his eyes.

“I cannot run the logs,” he said at once; “I never did; I am too old, and I slip. It’s no use. It is my granddaughter at that window. Tell her that I’ll think of her to the last.... Good-bye!”

Brydon was eyeing the logs. The old man’s voice was husky; he could not cry out, but he waved his hand to the girl.

“Oh, save him!” came from her faintly.

Brydon’s eyes were now on the covered bridge. Their raft was in the channel, coming straight between two piers. He measured his chances. He knew if he slipped, doing what he intended, that both might be drowned, and certainly Mr. Rupert; for the logs were close, and to drop among them was a bad business. If they once closed over there was an end of everything.

“Keep quite still,” he said, “and when I throw you catch.”

He took the slight figure in his arms, sprang out upon the slippery logs, and ran. A cheer went up from the men on the shore, and the people who were gathering on the bridges, too late to be of service. Besides, the bridge was closed, and there was only a small opening at the piers. For one of these piers Brydon was making. He ran hard. Once he slipped and nearly fell, but recovered. Then a floating tree suddenly lunged up and struck him, so that he dropped upon a knee; but again he was up, and strained for the pier. He was within a few feet of it as they came to the bridge. The people gave a cry of fear, for they saw that there was no chance of both making it; because, too, at the critical moment a space of clear water showed near the pier. But Brydon raised John Rupert up, balanced himself, and tossed him at the pier, where two river-drivers stood stretching out their arms. An instant afterwards the old man was with his granddaughter. But Brydon slipped and fell; the roots of a tree bore him down, and he was gone beneath the logs!

There was a cry of horror from the watchers, then all was still. But below the bridge they saw an arm thrust up between the logs, and then another arm crowding them apart. Now a head and shoulders appeared. Luckily the piece of timber which Brydon grasped was square, and did not roll. In a moment he was standing on it. There was a wild shout of encouragement. He turned his battered, blood-stained face to the bridge for an instant, and, with a wave of the hand and a sharp look towards the rapids below, once more sprang out. It was a brave sight, for the logs were in a narrower channel and more riotous. He rubbed the blood out of his eyes that he might see his way. The rolling forest gave him no quarter, but he came on, rocking with weakness, to within a few rods of the shore. Then a half-dozen of his men ran out on the logs,—they were packed closely here,—caught him up, and brought him to dry ground.

They took him to the Bridge House. He was hurt more than he or they thought. The old man and the girl met them at the door. Judith gave a little cry when she saw the blood and Brydon’s bruised face. He lifted his head as though her eyes had drawn his, and, their looks meeting, he took his hat off. Her face flushed; she dropped her eyes. Her grandfather seized Brydon’s big hand, and said some trembling words of thanks. The girl stepped inside, made a bed for him upon the sofa, and got him something to drink. She was very cool; she immediately asked Pierre to go for the young doctor who had lately come to the place, and made ready warm water with which she wiped Brydon’s blood-stained face and hands, and then gave him some brandy. His comrades standing round watched her admiringly, she was so deft and delicate. Brydon, as if to be nursed and cared for was not manly, felt ashamed, and came up quickly to a sitting posture, saying, “Pshaw! I’m all right!” But he turned sick immediately, and Judith’s arms caught his head and shoulders as he fell back. His face turned, and was pillowed on her bosom. At this she blushed, but a look of singular dignity came into her face. Those standing by were struck with a kind of awe; they were used mostly to the daughters of habitants and fifty-acre farmers. Her sensitive face spoke a wonderful language: a divine gratitude and thankfulness; and her eyes had a clear moisture which did not dim them. The situation was trying to the river-drivers—it was too refined; and they breathed more freely when they got outside and left the girl, her grandfather, Pierre, and the young doctor alone with the injured man.

That was how the thing began. Pierre saw the conclusion of events from the start. The young doctor did not. From the hour when he bound up Brydon’s head, Judith’s fingers aiding him, he felt a spring in his blood new to him. When he came to know exactly what it meant, and acted, it was too late. He was much surprised that his advances were gently repulsed. He pressed them hard: that was a mistake. He had an idea, not uncommon in such cases, that he was conferring an honour. But he was very young. A gold medal in anatomy is likely to turn a lad’s head at the start. He falls into the error that the ability to demonstrate the medulla oblongata should likewise suffice to convince the heart of a maid. Pierre enjoyed the situation; he knew life all round; he had boxed the compass of experience.

He believed in Judith. The old man interested him: he was a wreck out of an unfamiliar life.

“Well, you see,” Pierre said to Brydon one day, as they sat on the high cross-beams of the little bridge, “you can’t kill it in a man—what he was born. Look, as he piles up the driftwood over there. Broken down, eh? Yes, but then there is something—a manner, an eye. He piles the wood like champagne bottles. On the raft, you remember, he took off his hat to death. That’s different altogether from us.”

He gave a sidelong glance at Brydon, and saw a troubled look.

“Yes,” Brydon said, “he is different; and so is she.”

“She is a lady,” Pierre said, with slow emphasis. “She couldn’t hide it if she tried. She plays the piano, and looks all silk in calico. Made for this?”—he waved his hand towards the Bridge House. “No, no! made for—”

He paused, smiled enigmatically, and dropped a bit of wood on the swift current.

Brydon frowned, then said: “Well, made for what, Pierre?”

Pierre looked over Brydon’s shoulder, towards a pretty cottage on the hillside. “Made for homes like that, not this,” he said, and he nodded first towards the hillside, then to the Bridge House. (The cottage belonged to the young doctor.) A growl like an animal’s came from Brydon, and he clinched the other’s shoulder. Pierre glanced at the hand, then at Brydon’s face, and said sharply: “Take it away.”

The hand dropped; but Brydon’s face was hot, and his eyes were hard.

Pierre continued: “But then women are strange. What you expect they will not—no. Riches?—it is nothing; houses like that on the hill, nothing. They have whims. The hut is as good as the house, with the kitchen in

the open where the river welts and washes, and a man—the great man of the world to them—to play the little game of life with.... Pshaw! you are idle: move; you are thick in the head: think hard; you like the girl: speak."

As he said this, there showed beneath them the front timbers of a small crib of logs with a crew of two men, making for the rapids and the slide below. Here was an adventure, for running the rapids with so slight a craft and small a crew was smart work. Pierre, measuring the distance, and with a "Look out, below!" swiftly let himself down by his arms as far as he could, and then dropped to the timbers, as lightly as if it were a matter of two feet instead of twelve. He waved a hand to Brydon, and the crib shot on. Brydon sat eyeing it abstractedly till it ran into the teeth of the rapids, the long oars of the three men rising and falling to the monotonous cry. The sun set out the men and the craft against the tall dark walls of the river in strong relief, and Brydon was carried away from what Pierre had been saying. He had a solid pleasure in watching, and he sat up with a call of delight when he saw the crib drive at the slide. Just glancing the edge, she shot through safely. His face blazed.

"A pretty sight!" said a voice behind him.

Without a word he swung round, and dropped, more heavily than Pierre, beside Judith.

"It gets into our bones," he said. "Of course, though it ain't the same to you," he added, looking down at her over his shoulder. "You don't care for things so rough, mebbe?"

"I love the river," she said quietly.

"We're a rowdy lot, we river-drivers. We have to be. It's a rowdy business."

"I never noticed that," she replied, gravely smiling. "When I was small I used to go to the river-drivers' camps with my brother, and they were always kind to us. They used to sing and play the fiddle, and joke; but I didn't think then that they were rowdy, and I don't now. They were never rough with us."

"No one'd ever be rough with you," was the reply. "Oh yes," she said suddenly, and turned her head away. She was thinking of what the young doctor had said to her that morning; how like a foolish boy he had acted: upbraiding her, questioning her, saying unreasonable things, as young egoists always do. In years she was younger than he, but in wisdom much older: in all things more wise and just. He had not struck her, but with his reckless tongue he had cut her to the heart. "Oh yes," she repeated, and her eyes ran up to his face and over his great stalwart body; and then she leaned over the railing and looked into the water.

"I'd break the man into pieces that was rough with you," he said between his teeth.

"Would you?" she asked in a whisper. Then, not giving him a chance to reply, "We are very poor, you know, and some people are rough with the poor—and proud. I remember," she went on, simply, dreamily, and as if talking to herself, "the day when we first came to the Bridge House. I sat down on a box and looked at the furniture—it was so little—and cried. Coming here seemed the last of what grandfather used to be. I couldn't help it. He sat down too, and didn't say anything. He was very pale, and I saw that his eyes ached as he looked at me. Then I got angry with myself, and sprang up and went to work—and we get along pretty well."

She paused and sighed; then, after a minute: "I love the river. I don't believe I could be happy away from it. I should like to live on it, and die on it, and be buried in it."

His eyes were on her eagerly. But she looked so frail and dainty that his voice, to himself, sounded rude. Still, his hand blundered along the railing to hers, and covered it tenderly—for so big a hand. She drew her fingers away, but not very quickly. "Don't!" she said, "and—and someone is coming!"

There were footsteps behind them. It was her grandfather, carrying a board fished from the river. He grasped the situation, and stood speechless with wonder. He had never thought of this. He was a gentleman, in spite of all, and this man was a common river-boss. Presently he drew himself up with an air. The heavy board was still in his arms. Brydon came over and took the board, looking him squarely in the eyes.

"Mr. Rupert," he said, "I want to ask something." The old man nodded.

"I helped you out of a bad scrape on the river?" Again the old man nodded.

"Well, mebbe, I saved your life. For that I'm going to ask you to draw no more driftwood from the Madawaska—not a stick, now or ever."

"It is the only way we can keep from freezing in winter." Mr. Rupert scarcely knew what he said. Brydon looked at Judith, who turned away, then answered: "I'll keep you from freezing, if you'll let me, you—and Judith."

"Oh, please let us go into the house," Judith said hastily.

She saw the young doctor driving towards them out of the covered bridge!

When Brydon went to join his men far down the river he left a wife behind him at the Bridge House, where she and her grandfather were to stay until the next summer. Then there would be a journey from Bamber's Boom to a new home.

In the late autumn he came, before he went away to the shanties in the backwoods, and again in the winter just before the babe was born. Then he went far up the river to Rice Lake and beyond, to bring down the drives of logs for his Company. June came, and then there was a sudden sorrow at the Bridge House. How great it was, Pierre's words as he stood at the door one evening will testify. He said to the young doctor: "Save the child, and you shall have back the I O U on your house." Which was also evidence that the young doctor had fallen into the habit of gambling.

The young doctor looked hard at him. He had a selfish nature. "You can only do what you can do," he said.

Pierre's eyes were sinister. "If you do not save it, one would guess why."

The other started, flushed, was silent, and then said: "You think I'm a coward. We shall see. There is a way, but it may fail."

And though he sucked the diphtheria poison from the child's throat, it died the next night.

Still, the cottage that Pierre and Company had won was handed back with such good advice as only a worldwise adventurer can give.

Of the child's death its father did not know. They were not certain where he was. But when the mother took

to her bed again, the young doctor said it was best that Brydon should come. Pierre had time and inclination to go for him. But before he went he was taken to Judith's bedside. Pierre had seen life and death in many forms, but never anything quite like this: a delicate creature floating away upon a summer current travelling in those valleys which are neither of this life nor of that; but where you hear the echoes of both, and are visited by solicitous spirits. There was no pain in her face—she heard a little, familiar voice from high and pleasant hills, and she knew, so wise are the dying, that her husband was travelling after her, and that they would be all together soon. But she did not speak of that. For the knowledge born of such a time is locked up in the soul.

Pierre was awe-stricken. Unconsciously he crossed himself.

"Tell him to come quickly," she said, "if you find him,"—her fingers played with the coverlet,—"for I wish to comfort him.... Someone said that you were bad, Pierre. I do not believe it. You were sorry when my baby went away. I am—going away—too. But do not tell him that. Tell him I cannot walk about. I want him to carry me—to carry me. Will you?" Pierre put out his hand to hers creeping along the coverlet to him; but it was only instinct that guided him, for he could not see. He started on his journey with his hat pulled down over his eyes.

One evening when the river was very high and it was said that Brydon's drives of logs would soon be down, a strange thing happened at the Bridge House.

The young doctor had gone, whispering to Mr. Rupert that he would come back later. He went out on tiptoe, as from the presence of an angel. His selfishness had dropped away from him. The evening wore on, and in the little back room a woman's voice said:

"Is it morning yet, father?"

"It is still day. The sun has not set, my child."

"I thought it had gone, it seemed so dark."

"You have been asleep, Judith. You have come out of the dark."

"No, I have come out into the darkness—into the world."

"You will see better when you are quite awake."

"I wish I could see the river, father. Will you go and look?"

Then there was a silence. "Well?" she asked.

"It is beautiful," he said, "and the sun is still bright."

"You see as far as Indian Island?"

"I can see the white comb of the reef beyond it, my dear."

"And no one—is coming?"

"There are men making for the shore, and the fires are burning, but no one is—coming this way.... He would come by the road, perhaps."

"Oh no, by the river. Pierre has not found him. Can you see the Eddy?"

"Yes. It is all quiet there; nothing but the logs tossing round it."

"We used to sit there—he and I—by the big cedar tree. Everything was so cool and sweet. There was only the sound of the force-pump and the swallowing of the Eddy. They say that a woman was drowned there, and that you can see her face in the water, if you happen there at sunrise, weeping and smiling also: a picture in the water.... Do you think it true, father?"

"Life is so strange, and who knows what is not life, my child?"

"When baby was dying I held it over the water beneath that window, where the sunshine falls in the evening; and it looked down once before its spirit passed like a breath over my face. Maybe, its look will stay, for him to see when he comes. It was just below where you stand.... Father, can you see its face?" "No, Judith; nothing but the water and the sunshine."

"Dear, carry me to the window."

When this was done she suddenly leaned forward with shining eyes and anxious fingers. "My baby! My baby!" she said.

She looked up the river, but her eyes were fading, she could not see far. "It is all a grey light," she said, "I cannot see well." Yet she smiled. "Lay me down again, father," she whispered.

After a little she sank into a slumber. All at once she started up. "The river, the beautiful river!" she cried out gently. Then, at the last, "Oh, my dear, my dear!"

And so she came out of the valley into the high hills. Later he was left alone with his dead. The young doctor and others had come and gone. He would watch till morning. He sat long beside her, numb to the world. At last he started, for he heard a low clear call behind the House. He went out quickly to the little platform, and saw through the dusk a man drawing himself up. It was Brydon. He caught the old man's shoulders convulsively. "How is she?" he asked. "Come in, my son," was the low reply. The old man saw a grief greater than his own. He led the husband to the room where the wife lay beautiful and still. "She is better, as you see," he said bravely.

The hours went, and the two sat near the body, one on either side. They knew not what was going on in the world.

As they mourned, Pierre and the young doctor sat silent in that cottage on the hillside. They were roused at last. There came up to Pierre's keen ears the sound of the river.

"Let us go out," he said; "the river is flooding. You can hear the logs."

They came out and watched. The river went swishing, swilling past, and the dull boom of the logs as they struck the piers of the bridge or some building on the shore came rolling to them.

"The dams and booms have burst!" Pierre said. He pointed to the camps far up the river. By the light of the camp-fires there appeared a wide weltering flood of logs and debris. Pierre's eyes shifted to the Bridge

House. In one room was a light. He stepped out and down, and the other followed. They had almost reached the shore, when Pierre cried out sharply: “What’s that?”

He pointed to an indistinct mass bearing down upon the Bridge House. It was a big shed that had been carried away, and, jammed between timbers, had not broken up. There was no time for warning. It came on swiftly, heavily. There was a strange, horrible, grinding sound, and then they saw the light of that one room move on, waving a little to and fro-on to the rapids, the cohorts of logs crowding hard after.

Where the light was two men had started to their feet when the crash came. They felt the House move. “Run-save yourself!” cried the old man quietly. “We are lost!”

The floor rocked.

“Go,” he said again. “I will stay with her.”

“She is mine,” Brydon said; and he took her in his arms. “I will not go.”

They could hear the rapids below. The old man steadied himself in the deep water on the floor, and caught out yearningly at the cold hands.

“Come close, come close,” said Brydon. “Closer; put your arms round her.”

The old man did so. They were locked in each other’s arms—dead and living.

The old man spoke, with a piteous kind of joy: “We therefore commit her body to the deep—!”

The three were never found.

THE EPAULETTES

Old Athabasca, chief of the Little Crees, sat at the door of his lodge, staring down into the valley where Fort Pentecost lay, and Mitawawa his daughter sat near him, fretfully pulling at the fringe of her fine buckskin jacket. She had reason to be troubled. Fyles the trader had put a great indignity upon Athabasca. A factor of twenty years before, in recognition of the chief’s merits and in reward of his services, had presented him with a pair of epaulettes, left in the Fort by some officer in Her Majesty’s service. A good, solid, honest pair of epaulettes, well fitted to stand the wear and tear of those high feasts and functions at which the chief paraded them upon his broad shoulders. They were the admiration of his own tribe, the wonder of others, the envy of many chiefs. It was said that Athabasca wore them creditably, and was no more immobile and grand-mannered than became a chief thus honoured above his kind.

But the years went, and there came a man to Fort Pentecost who knew not Athabasca. He was young, and tall and strong, had a hot temper, knew naught of human nature, was possessed by a pride more masterful than his wisdom, and a courage stronger than his tact. He was ever for high-handedness, brooked no interference, and treated the Indians more as Company’s serfs than as Company’s friends and allies. Also, he had an eye for Mitawawa, and found favour in return, though to what depth it took a long time to show. The girl sat high in the minds and desires of the young braves, for she had beauty of a heathen kind, a deft and dainty finger for embroidered buckskin, a particular fortune with a bow and arrow, and the fleetest foot. There were mutterings because Fyles the white man came to sit often in Athabasca’s lodge. He knew of this, but heeded not at all. At last Konto, a young brave who very accurately guessed at Fyles’ intentions, stopped him one day on the Grey Horse Trail, and in a soft, indolent voice begged him to prove his regard in a fight without weapons, to the death, the survivor to give the other burial where he fell. Fyles was neither fool nor coward. It would have been foolish to run the risk of leaving Fort and people masterless for an Indian’s whim; it would have been cowardly to do nothing. So he whipped out a revolver, and bade his rival march before him to the Fort; which Konto very calmly did, begging the favour of a bit of tobacco as he went.

Fyles demanded of Athabasca that he should sit in judgment, and should at least banish Konto from his tribe, hinting the while that he might have to put a bullet into Konto’s refractory head if the thing were not done. He said large things in the name of the H.B.C., and was surprised that Athabasca let them pass unmoved. But that chief, after long consideration, during which he drank Company’s coffee and ate Company’s pemmican, declared that he could do nothing: for Konto had made a fine offer, and a grand chance of a great fight had been missed. This was in the presence of several petty officers and Indians and woodsmen at the Fort. Fyles had vanity and a nasty temper. He swore a little, and with words of bluster went over and ripped the epaulettes from the chief’s shoulders as a punishment, a mark of degradation. The chief said nothing. He got up, and reached out his hands as if to ask them back; and when Fyles refused, he went away, drawing his blanket high over his shoulders. It was wont before to lie loosely about him, to show his badges of captaincy and alliance.

This was about the time that the Indians were making ready for the buffalo, and when their chief took to his lodge, and refused to leave it, they came to ask him why. And they were told. They were for making trouble, but the old chief said the quarrel was his own: he would settle it in his own way. He would not go to the hunt. Konto, he said, should take his place; and when his braves came back there should be great feasting, for then the matter would be ended.

Half the course of the moon and more, and Athabasca came out of his lodge—the first time in the sunlight since the day of his disgrace. He and his daughter sat silent and watchful at the door. There had been no word between Fyles and Athabasca, no word between Mitawawa and Fyles. The Fort was well-nigh tenantless, for the half-breeds also had gone after buffalo, and only the trader, a clerk, and a half-breed cook were left.

Mitawawa gave a little cry of impatience: she had held her peace so long that even her slow Indian nature could endure no more. “What will my father Athabasca do?” she asked. “With idleness the flesh grows soft, and the iron melts from the arm.”

“But when the thoughts are stone, the body is as that of the Mighty Men of the Kimash Hills. When the bow is long drawn, beware the arrow.”

“It is no answer,” she said: “what will my father do?”

“They were of gold,” he answered, “that never grew rusty. My people were full of wonder when they stood before me, and the tribes had envy as they passed. It is a hundred moons and one red midsummer moon since the Great Company put them on my shoulders. They were light to carry, but it was as if I bore an army. No other chief was like me. That is all over. When the tribes pass they will laugh, and my people will scorn me if I do not come out to meet them with the yokes of gold.”

“But what will my father do?” she persisted.

“I have had many thoughts, and at night I have called on the Spirits who rule. From the top of the Hill of Graves I have beaten the soft drum, and called, and sung the hymn which wakes the sleeping Spirits: and I know the way.”

“What is the way?” Her eyes filled with a kind of fear or trouble, and many times they shifted from the Fort to her father, and back again. The chief was silent. Then anger leapt into her face.

“Why does my father fear to speak to his child?” she said. “I will speak plain. I love the man: but I love my father also.”

She stood up, and drew her blanket about her, one hand clasped proudly on her breast. “I cannot remember my mother; but I remember when I first looked down from my hammock in the pine tree, and saw my father sitting by the fire. It was in the evening like this, but darker, for the pines made great shadows. I cried out, and he came and took me down, and laid me between his knees, and fed me with bits of meat from the pot. He talked much to me, and his voice was finer than any other. There is no one like my father—Konto is nothing: but the voice of the white man, Fyles, had golden words that our braves do not know, and I listened. Konto did a brave thing. Fyles, because he was a great man of the Company, would not fight, and drove him like a dog. Then he made my father as a worm in the eyes of the world. I would give my life for Fyles the trader, but I would give more than my life to wipe out my father’s shame, and to show that Konto of the Little Crees is no dog. I have been carried by the hands of the old men of my people, I have ridden the horses of the young men: their shame is my shame.”

The eyes of the chief had never lifted from the Fort: nor from his look could you have told that he heard his daughter’s words. For a moment he was silent, then a deep fire came into his eyes, and his wide heavy brows drew up so that the frown of anger was gone. At last, as she waited, he arose, put out a hand and touched her forehead.

“Mitawawa has spoken well,” he said. “There will be an end. The yokes of gold are mine: an honour given cannot be taken away. He has stolen; he is a thief. He would not fight Konto: but I am a chief and he shall fight me. I am as great as many men—I have carried the golden yokes: we will fight for them. I thought long, for I was afraid my daughter loved the man more than her people: but now I will break him in pieces. Has Mitawawa seen him since the shameful day?”

“He has come to the lodge, but I would not let him in unless he brought the epaulettes. He said he would bring them when Konto was punished. I begged of him as I never begged of my own father, but he was hard as the ironwood tree. I sent him away. Yet there is no tongue like his in the world; he is tall and beautiful, and has the face of a spirit.”

From the Fort Fyles watched the two. With a pair of field-glasses he could follow their actions, could almost read their faces. “There’ll be a lot of sulking about those epaulettes, Mallory,” he said at last, turning to his clerk. “Old Athabasca has a bee in his bonnet.”

“Wouldn’t it be just as well to give ‘em back, sir?” Mallory had been at Fort Pentecost a long time, and he understood Athabasca and his Indians. He was a solid, slow-thinking old fellow, but he had that wisdom of the north which can turn from dove to serpent and from serpent to lion in the moment.

“Give ‘em back, Mallory? I’ll see him in Jericho first, unless he goes on his marrow-bones and kicks Konto out of the camp.”

“Very well, sir. But I think we’d better keep an eye open.”

“Eye open, be hanged! If he’d been going to riot he’d have done so before this. Besides, the girl—!” Mallory looked long and earnestly at his master, whose forehead was glued to the field-glass. His little eyes moved as if in debate, his slow jaws opened once or twice. At last he said: “I’d give the girl the go-by, Mr. Fyles, if I was you, unless I meant to marry her.” Fyles suddenly swung round. “Keep your place, blast you, Mallory, and keep your morals too. One’d think you were a missionary.” Then with a sudden burst of anger: “Damn it all, if my men don’t stand by me against a pack of treacherous Indians, I’d better get out.”

“Your men will stand by you, sir: no fear. I’ve served three traders here, and my record is pretty clean, Mr. Fyles. But I’ll say it to your face, whether you like it or not, that you’re not as good a judge of the Injin as me, or even Duc the cook: and that’s straight as I can say it, Mr. Fyles.”

Fyles paced up and down in anger—not speaking; but presently threw up the glass, and looked towards Athabasca’s lodge. “They’re gone,” he said presently; “I’ll go and see them to-morrow. The old fool must do what I want, or there’ll be ructions.”

The moon was high over Fort Pentecost when Athabasca entered the silent yard. The dogs growled, but Indian dogs growl without reason, and no one heeds them. The old chief stood a moment looking at the windows, upon which slush-lights were throwing heavy shadows. He went to Fyles’ window: no one was in the room. He went to another: Mallory and Duc were sitting at a table. Mallory had the epaulettes, looking at them and fingering the hooks by which Athabasca had fastened them on. Duc was laughing: he reached over for an epaulette, tossed it up, caught it and threw it down with a guffaw. Then the door opened, and Athabasca walked in, seized the epaulettes, and went swiftly out again. Just outside the door Mallory clapped a hand on one shoulder, and Duc caught at the epaulettes.

Athabasca struggled wildly. All at once there was a cold white flash, and Duc came huddling to Mallory’s feet. For a brief instant Mallory and the Indian fell apart, then Athabasca with a contemptuous fairness tossed

his knife away, and ran in on his man. They closed; strained, swayed, became a tangled wrenching mass; and then Mallory was lifted high into the air, and came down with a broken back.

Athabasca picked up the epaulettes, and hurried away, breathing hard, and hugging them to his bare red-stained breast. He had nearly reached the gate when he heard a cry. He did not turn, but a heavy stone caught him high in the shoulders, and he fell on his face and lay clutching the epaulettes in his outstretched hands.

Fyles' own hands were yet lifted with the effort of throwing, when he heard the soft rush of footsteps, and someone came swiftly into his embrace. A pair of arms ran round his shoulders—lips closed with his—something ice-cold and hard touched his neck—he saw a bright flash at his throat.

In the morning Konto found Mitawawa sitting with wild eyes by her father's body. She had fastened the epaulettes on its shoulders. Fyles and his men made a grim triangle of death at the door of the Fort.

THE HOUSE WITH THE BROKEN SHUTTER

"He stands in the porch of the world—
(Why should the door be shut?)
The grey wolf waits at his heel,
(Why is the window barred?)
Wild is the trail from the Kimash Hills,
The blight has fallen on bush and tree,
The choking earth has swallowed the streams,
Hungry and cold is the Red Patrol:
(Why should the door be shut?)
The Scarlet Hunter has come to bide—
(Why is the window barred?)"

Pierre stopped to listen. The voice singing was clear and soft, yet strong—a mezzo-soprano without any culture save that of practice and native taste. It had a singular charm—a sweet, fantastic sincerity. He stood still and fastened his eyes on the house, a few rods away. It stood on a knoll perching above Fort Ste. Anne. Years had passed since Pierre had visited the Fort, and he was now on his way to it again, after many wanderings. The house had stood here in the old days, and he remembered it very well, for against it John Marcey, the Company's man, was shot by Stroke Laforce, of the Riders of the Plains. Looking now, he saw that the shutter, which had been pulled off to bear the body away, was hanging there just as he had placed it, with seven of its slats broken and a dark stain in one corner. Something more of John Marcey than memory attached to that shutter. His eyes dwelt on it long he recalled the scene: a night with stars and no moon, a huge bonfire to light the Indians, at their dance, and Marcey, Laforce, and many others there, among whom was Lucille, the little daughter of Gyng the Factor. Marcey and Laforce were only boys then, neither yet twenty-three, and they were friendly rivals with the sweet little coquette, who gave her favors with a singular impartiality and justice. Once Marcey had given her a gold spoon. Laforce responded with a tiny, fretted silver basket. Laforce was delighted to see her carrying her basket, till she opened it and showed the spoon inside. There were many mock quarrels, in one of which Marcey sent her a letter by the Company's courier, covered with great seals, saying, "I return you the hairpin, the egg-shell, and the white wolf's tooth. Go to your Laforce, or whatever his ridiculous name may be."

In this way the pretty game ran on, the little goldenhaired, golden-faced, golden-voiced child dancing so gayly in their hearts, but nestling in them too, after her wilful fashion, until the serious thing came—the tragedy.

On the mad night when all ended, she was in the gayest, the most elf-like spirits. All went well until Marcey dug a hole in the ground, put a stone in it, and, burying it, said it was Laforce's heart. Then Laforce pretended to ventriloquise, and mocked Marcey's slight stutter. That was the beginning of the trouble, and Lucille, like any lady of the world, troubled at Laforce's unkindness, tried to smooth things over—tried very gravely. But the playful rivalry of many months changed its composition suddenly as through some delicate yet powerful chemical action, and the savage in both men broke out suddenly. Where motives and emotions are few they are the more vital, their action is the more violent. No one knew quite what the two young men said to each other, but presently, while the Indian dance was on, they drew to the side of the house, and had their duel out in the half-shadows, no one knowing, till the shots rang on the night, and John Marcey, without a cry, sprang into the air and fell face upwards, shot through the heart.

They tried to take the child away, but she would not go; and when they carried Marcey on the shutter she followed close by, resisting her father's wishes and commands. And just before they made a prisoner of Laforce, she said to him very quietly—so like a woman she was—"I will give you back the basket, and the riding-whip, and the other things, and I will never forgive you—never—no, never!"

Stroke Laforce had given himself up, had himself ridden to Winnipeg, a thousand miles, and told his story. Then the sergeant's stripes had been stripped from his arm, he had been tried, and on his own statement had got twelve years' imprisonment. Ten years had passed since then—since Marcey was put away in his grave, since Pierre left Fort Ste. Anne, and he had not seen it or Lucille in all that time. But he knew that Gyng was dead, and that his widow and her child had gone south or east somewhere; of Laforce after his sentence he had never heard.

He stood looking at the house from the shade of the solitary pine-tree near it, recalling every incident of that fatal night. He had the gift of looking at a thing in its true proportions, perhaps because he had little emotion and a strong brain, or perhaps because early in life his emotions were rationalised. Presently he heard the voice again:

“He waits at the threshold stone—
(Why should the key-hole rust?)
The eagle broods at his side,
(Why should the blind be drawn?)
Long has he watched, and far has he called
The lonely sentinel of the North:
“Who goes there?” to the wandering soul:
Heavy of heart is the Red Patrol
(Why should the key-hole rust?)
The Scarlet Hunter is sick for home,
(Why should the blind be drawn?)”

Now he recognised the voice. Its golden timbre brought back a young girl’s golden face and golden hair. It was summer, and the window with the broken shutter was open. He was about to go to it, when a door of the house opened, and a girl appeared. She was tall, with rich, yellow hair falling loosely about her head; she had a strong, finely cut chin and a broad brow, under which a pair of deep blue eyes shone-violet blue, rare and fine. She stood looking down at the Fort for a few moments, unaware of Pierre’s presence. But presently she saw him leaning against the tree, and she started as from a spirit.

“Monsieur!” she said—“Pierre!” and stepped forward again from the doorway.

He came to her, and “Ah, p’tite Lucille,” he said, “you remember me, eh?—and yet so many years ago!”

“But you remember me,” she answered, “and I have changed so much!”

“It is the man who should remember, the woman may forget if she will.”

Pierre did not mean to pay a compliment; he was merely thinking.

She made a little gesture of deprecation. “I was a child,” she said.

Pierre lifted a shoulder slightly. “What matter? It is sex that I mean. What difference to me—five, or forty, or ninety? It is all sex. It is only lovers, the hunters of fire-flies, that think of age—mais oui!”

She had a way of looking at you before she spoke, as though she were trying to find what she actually thought. She was one after Pierre’s own heart, and he knew it; but just here he wondered where all that ancient coquetry was gone, for there were no traces of it left; she was steady of eye, reposeful, rich in form and face, and yet not occupied with herself. He had only seen her for a minute or so, yet he was sure that what she was just now she was always, or nearly so, for the habits of a life leave their mark, and show through every phase of emotion and incident whether it be light or grave.

“I think I understand you,” she said. “I think I always did a little, from the time you stayed with Grah the idiot at Fort o’ God, and fought the Indians when the others left. Only—men said bad things of you, and my father did not like you, and you spoke so little to me ever. Yet I mind how you used to sit and watch me, and I also mind when you rode the man down who stole my pony, and brought them both back.”

Pierre smiled—he was pleased at this. “Ah, my young friend,” he said, “I do not forget that either, for though he had shaved my ear with a bullet, you would not have him handed over to the Riders of the Plains—such a tender heart!”

Her eyes suddenly grew wide. She was childlike in her amazement, indeed, childlike in all ways, for she was very sincere. It was her great advantage to live where nothing was required of her but truth, she had not suffered that sickness, social artifice.

“I never knew,” she said, “that he had shot at you—never! You did not tell that.”

“There is a time for everything—the time for that was not till now.”

“What could I have done then?”

“You might have left it to me. I am not so pious that I can’t be merciful to the sinner. But this man—this Brickney—was a vile scoundrel always, and I wanted him locked up. I would have shot him myself, but I was tired of doing the duty of the law. Yes, yes,” he added, as he saw her smile a little. “It is so. I have love for justice, even I, Pretty Pierre. Why not justice on myself? Ha! The law does not its duty. And maybe some day I shall have to do its work on myself. Some are coaxed out of life, some are kicked out, and some open the doors quietly for themselves, and go a-hunting Outside.”

“They used to talk as if one ought to fear you,” she said, “but”—she looked him straight in the eyes—“but maybe that’s because you’ve never hid any badness.”

“It is no matter, anyhow,” he answered. “I live in the open, I walk in the open road, and I stand by what I do to the open law and the gospel. It is my whim—every man to his own saddle.”

“It is ten years,” she said abruptly.

“Ten years less five days,” he answered as sententiously.

“Come inside,” she said quietly, and turned to the door.

Without a word he turned also, but instead of going direct to the door came and touched the broken shutter and the dark stain on one corner with a delicate forefinger. Out of the corner of his eye he could see her on the doorstep, looking intently.

He spoke as if to himself: “It has not been touched since then—no. It was hardly big enough for him, so his legs hung over. Ah, yes, ten years—Abroad, John Marcey!” Then, as if still musing, he turned to the girl: “He had no father or mother—no one, of course; so that it wasn’t so bad after all. If you’ve lived with the tongue in the last hole of the buckle as you’ve gone, what matter when you go! C’est egal—it is all the same.”

Her face had become pale as he spoke, but no muscle stirred; only her eyes filled with a deeper color, and her hand closed tightly on the door-jamb. “Come in, Pierre,” she said, and entered. He followed her. “My mother is at the Fort,” she added, “but she will be back soon.”

She placed two chairs not far from the open door. They sat, and Pierre slowly rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

“How long have you lived here?” he asked presently.

“It is seven years since we came first,” she replied. “After that night they said the place was haunted, and no one would live in it, but when my father died my mother and I came for three years. Then we went east, and again came back, and here we have been.”

“The shutter?” Pierre asked.

They needed few explanations—their minds were moving with the same thought.

“I would not have it changed, and of course no one cared to touch it. So it has hung there.”

“As I placed it ten years ago,” he said.

They both became silent for a time, and at last he said: “Marcey had no one,—Sergeant Laforce a mother.”

“It killed his mother,” she whispered, looking into the white sunlight. She was noting how it was flashed from the bark of the birch-trees near the Fort.

“His mother died,” she added again, quietly. “It killed her—the gaol for him!”

“An eye for an eye,” he responded.

“Do you think that evens John Marcey’s death?” she sighed.

“As far as Marcey’s concerned,” he answered. “Laforce has his own reckoning besides.”

“It was not a murder,” she urged.

“It was a fair fight,” he replied firmly, “and Laforce shot straight.” He was trying to think why she lived here, why the broken shutter still hung there, why the matter had settled so deeply on her. He remembered the song she was singing, the legend of the Scarlet Hunter, the fabled Savior of the North.

“Heavy of heart is the Red Patrol—
(Why should the key-hole rust?)
The Scarlet Hunter is sick for home,
(Why should the blind be drawn?)”

He repeated the words, lingering on them. He loved to come at the truth of things by allusive, far-off reflections, rather than by the sharp questioning of the witness-box. He had imagination, refinement in such things. A light dawned on him as he spoke the words—all became clear. She sang of the Scarlet Hunter, but she meant someone else! That was it—

“Hungry and cold is the Red Patrol—
(Why should the door be shut?)
The Scarlet Hunter has come to bide,
(Why is the window barred?)”

But why did she live here? To get used to a thought, to have it so near her, that if the man—if Laforce himself came, she would have herself schooled to endure the shadow and the misery of it all? Ah, that was it! The little girl, who had seen her big lover killed, who had said she would never forgive the other, who had sent him back the fretted-silver basket, the riding-whip, and other things, had kept the criminal in her mind all these years; had, out of her childish coquetry, grown into—what? As a child she had been wise for her years—almost too wise. What had happened? She had probably felt sorrow for Laforce at first, and afterwards had shown active sympathy, and at last—no, he felt that she had not quite forgiven him, that, whatever was, she had not hidden the criminal in her heart. But why did she sing that song? Her heart was pleading for him—for the criminal. Had she and her mother gone to Winnipeg to be near Laforce, to comfort him? Was Laforce free now, and was she unwilling? It was so strange that she should thus have carried on her childhood into her womanhood. But he guessed her—she had imagination.

“His mother died in my arms in Winnipeg,” she said abruptly at last. “I’m glad I was some comfort to her. You see, it all came through me—I was so young and spoiled and silly—John Marcey’s death, her death, and his long years in prison. Even then I knew better than to set the one against the other. Must a child not be responsible? I was—I am!”

“And so you punish yourself?”

“It was terrible for me—even as a child. I said that I could never forgive, but when his mother died, blessing me, I did. Then there came something else.”

“You saw him, there amie?”

“I saw him—so changed, so quiet, so much older—all grey at the temples. At first I lived here that I might get used to the thought of the thing—to learn to bear it; and afterwards that I might learn—” She paused, looking in half-doubt at Pierre.

“It is safe; I am silent,” he said.

“That I might learn to bear—him,” she continued.

“Is he still—” Pierre paused.

She spoke up quickly. “Oh no, he has been free two years.”

“Where is he now?”

“I don’t know.” She waited for a minute, then said again, “I don’t know. When he was free, he came to me, but I—I could not. He thought, too, that because he had been in gaol, that I wouldn’t—be his wife. He didn’t think enough of himself, he didn’t urge anything. And I wasn’t ready—no—no—no—how could I be! I didn’t care so much about the gaol, but he had killed John Marcey. The gaol—what was that to me! There was no real shame in it unless he had done a mean thing. He had been wicked—not mean. Killing is awful, but not shameful. Think—the difference—if he had been a thief!”

Pierre nodded. “Then some one should have killed him!” he said. “Well, after?”

“After—after—ah, he went away for a year. Then he came back; but no, I was always thinking of that night I walked behind John Marcey’s body to the Fort. So he went away again, and we came here, and here we have lived.”

“He has not come here?”

“No; once from the far north he sent me a letter by an Indian, saying that he was going with a half-breed to search for a hunting party, an English gentleman and two men who were lost. The name of one of the men was Brickney.”

Pierre stopped short in a long whiffing of smoke. “Holy!” he said, “that thief Brickney again. He would steal the broad road to hell if he could carry it. He once stole the quarters from a dead man’s eyes. Mon Dieu! to save Brickney’s life, the courage to do that—like sticking your face in the mire and eating!—But, pshaw!—go on, p’tite Lucille.”

“There is no more. I never heard again.”

“How long was that ago?”

“Nine months or more.”

“Nothing has been heard of any of them?”

“Nothing at all. The Englishman belonged to the Hudson’s Bay Company, but they have heard nothing down here at Fort Ste. Anne.”

“If he saves the Company’s man, that will make up the man he lost for them, eh—you think that, eh?” Pierre’s eyes had a curious ironical light.

“I do not care for the Company,” she said. “John Marcey’s life was his own.”

“Good!” he added quickly, and his eyes admired her. “That is the thing. Then, do not forget that Marcey took his life in his hands himself, that he would have killed Laforce if Laforce hadn’t killed him.”

“I know, I know,” she said, “but I should have felt the same if John Marcey had killed Stroke Laforce.”

“It is a pity to throw your life away,” he ventured. He said this for a purpose. He did not think she was throwing it away.

She was watching a little knot of horsemen coming over a swell of the prairie far off. She withdrew her eyes and fixed them on Pierre. “Do you throw your life away if you do what is the only thing you are told to do?”

She placed her hand on her heart—that had been her one guide.

Pierre got to his feet, came over, and touched her on the shoulder.

“You have the great secret,” he said quietly. “The thing may be all wrong to others, but if it’s right to yourself—that’s it—mais oui! If he comes,” he added “if he comes back, think of him as well as Marcey. Marcey is sleeping—what does it matter? If he is awake, he has better times, for he was a man to make another world sociable. Think of Laforce, for he has his life to live, and he is a man to make this world sociable.

‘The Scarlet Hunter is sick for home—
(Why should the door be shut?)’”

Her eyes had been following the group of horsemen on the plains. She again fixed them on Pierre, and stood up.

“It is a beautiful legend—that,” she said.

“But?—but?” he asked.

She would not answer him. “You will come again,” she said; “you will—help me?”

“Surely, p’tite Lucille, surely, I will come. But to help—ah, that would sound funny to the Missionary at the Fort and to others!”

“You understand life,” she said, “and I can speak to you.”

“It’s more to you to understand you than to be good, eh?”

“I guess it’s more to any woman,” she answered. They both passed out of the house. She turned towards the broken shutter. Then their eyes met. A sad little smile hovered at her lips.

“What is the use?” she said, and her eyes fastened on the horsemen.

He knew now that she would never shudder again at the sight of it, or at the remembrance of Marcey’s death.

“But he will come,” was the reply to her, and her smile almost settled and stayed.

They parted, and as he went down the hill he saw far over, coming up, a woman in black, who walked as if she carried a great weight. “Every shot that kills ricochets,” he said to himself:

“His mother dead—her mother like that!”

He passed into the Fort, renewing acquaintances in the Company’s store, and twenty minutes after he was one to greet the horsemen that Lucille had seen coming over the hills. They were five, and one had to be helped from his horse. It was Stroke Laforce, who had been found near dead at the Metal River by a party of men exploring in the north.

He had rescued the Englishman and his party, but within a day of the finding the Englishman died, leaving him his watch, a ring, and a cheque on the H. B. C. at Winnipeg. He and the two survivors, one of whom was Brickney, started south. One night Brickney robbed him and made to get away, and on his seizing the thief he was wounded. Then the other man came to his help and shot Brickney: after that weeks of wandering, and at last rescue and Fort Ste. Anne.

A half-hour after this Pierre left Laforce on the crest of the hill above the Fort, and did not turn to go down till he had seen the other pass within the house with the broken shutter. And later he saw a little bonfire on the hill. The next evening he came to the house again himself. Lucille rose to meet him.

“‘Why should the door be shut?”’ he quoted smiling.

“The door is open,” she answered quickly and with a quiet joy.

He turned to the motion of her hand, and saw Laforce asleep on a couch.

Soon afterwards, as he passed from the house, he turned towards the window. The broken shutter was gone.

He knew now the meaning of the bonfire the night before.

THE FINDING OF FINGALL

“Fingall! Fingall!—Oh, Fingall!”

A grey mist was rising from the river, the sun was drinking it delightedly, the swift blue water showed underneath it, and the top of Whitefaced Mountain peaked the mist by a hand-length. The river brushed the banks like rustling silk, and the only other sound, very sharp and clear in the liquid monotone, was the crack of a woodpecker’s beak on a hickory tree.

It was a sweet, fresh autumn morning in Lonesome Valley. Before night the deer would bellow reply to the hunters’ rifles, and the mountain-goat call to its unknown gods; but now there was only the wild duck skimming the river, and the high hilltop rising and fading into the mist, the ardent sun, and again that strange cry—

“Fingall!—Oh, Fingall! Fingall!”

Two men, lounging at a fire on a ledge of the hills, raised their eyes to the mountain-side beyond and above them, and one said presently:

“The second time. It’s a woman’s voice, Pierre.” Pierre nodded, and abstractedly stirred the coals about with a twig.

“Well, it is a pity—the poor Cynthie,” he said at last.

“It is a woman, then. You know her, Pierre—her story?”

“Fingall! Fingall!—Oh, Fingall!”

Pierre raised his head towards the sound; then after a moment, said:

“I know Fingall.”

“And the woman? Tell me.”

“And the girl. Fingall was all fire and heart, and devil-may-care. She—she was not beautiful except in the eye, but that was like a flame of red and blue. Her hair, too—then—would trip her up, if it hung loose. That was all, except that she loved him too much. But women—et puis, when a woman gets a man between her and the heaven above and the earth beneath, and there comes the great hunger, what is the good! A man cannot understand, but he can see, and he can fear. What is the good! To play with life, that is not much; but to play with a soul is more than a thousand lives. Look at Cynthie.”

He paused, and Lawless waited patiently. Presently Pierre continued:

Fingall was gentil; he would take off his hat to a squaw. It made no difference what others did; he didn’t think—it was like breathing to him. How can you tell the way things happen? Cynthie’s father kept the tavern at St. Gabriel’s Fork, over against the great saw-mill. Fingall was foreman of a gang in the lumberyard. Cynthie had a brother—Fenn. Fenn was as bad as they make, but she loved him, and Fingall knew it well, though he hated the young skunk. The girl’s eyes were like two little fire-flies when Fingall was about.

“He was a gentleman, though he had only half a name—Fingall—like that. I think he did not expect to stay; he seemed to be waiting for something—always when the mail come in he would be there; and afterwards you wouldn’t see him for a time. So it seemed to me that he made up his mind to think nothing of Cynthie, and to say nothing.”

“Fingall! Fingall!—Oh, Fingall!”

The strange, sweet, singing voice sounded nearer. “She’s coming this way, Pierre,” said Lawless.

“I hope not to see her. What is the good!”

“Well, let us have the rest of the story.”

“Her brother Fenn was in Fingall’s gang. One day there was trouble. Fenn called Fingall a liar. The gang stopped piling; the usual thing did not come. Fingall told him to leave the yard, and they would settle some other time. That night a wicked thing happened. We were sitting in the bar-room when we heard two shots and then a fall. We ran into the other room; there was Fenn on the floor, dying. He lifted himself on his elbow, pointed at Fingall—and fell back. The father of the boy stood white and still a few feet away. There was no pistol showing—none at all.

“The men closed in on Fingall. He did not stir—he seemed to be thinking of something else. He had a puzzled, sorrowful look. The men roared round him, but he waved them back for a moment, and looked first at the father, then at the son. I could not understand at first. Someone pulled a pistol out of Fingall’s pocket and showed it. At that moment Cynthie came in. She gave a cry. By the holy! I do not want to hear a cry like that often. She fell on her knees beside the boy, and caught his head to her breast. Then with a wild look she asked who did it. They had just taken Fingall out into the bar-room. They did not tell her his name, for they knew that she loved him.

“‘Father,’ she said all at once, ‘have you killed the man that killed Fenn?’

“The old man shook his head. There was a sick colour in his face.

“‘Then I will kill him,’ she said.

“She laid her brother’s head down, and stood up. Someone put in her hand the pistol, and told her it was the same that had killed Fenn. She took it, and came with us. The old man stood still where he was; he was

like stone. I looked at him for a minute and thought; then I turned round and went to the bar-room; and he followed. Just as I got inside the door, I saw the girl start back, and her hand drop, for she saw that it was Fingall; he was looking at her very strange. It was the rule to empty the gun into a man who had been sentenced; and already Fingall had heard his, 'God-have-mercy!' The girl was to do it.

"Fingall said to her in a muffled voice, 'Fire—Cynthie!'

"I guessed what she would do. In a kind of a dream she raised the pistol up—up—up, till I could see it was just out of range of his head, and she fired. One! two! three! four! five! Fingall never moved a muscle; but the bullets spotted the wall at the side of his head. She stopped after the five; but the arm was still held out, and her finger was on the trigger; she seemed to be all dazed. Only six chambers were in the gun, and of course one chamber was empty. Fenn had its bullet in his lungs, as we thought. So someone beside Cynthie touched her arm, pushing it down. But there was another shot, and this time, because of the push, the bullet lodged in Fingall's skull."

Pierre paused now, and waved with his hand towards the mist which hung high up like a canopy between the hills.

"But," said Lawless, not heeding the scene, "what about that sixth bullet?"

"Holy, it is plain! Fingall did not fire the shot. His revolver was full, every chamber, when Cynthie first took it."

"Who killed the lad?"

"Can you not guess? There had been words between the father and the boy: both had fierce blood. The father, in a mad minute, fired; the boy wanted revenge on Fingall, and, to save his father, laid it on the other. The old man? Well, I do not know whether he was a coward, or stupid, or ashamed—he let Fingall take it."

"Fingall took it to spare the girl, eh?"

"For the girl. It wasn't good for her to know her father killed his own son."

"What came after?"

"The worst. That night the girl's father killed himself, and the two were buried in the same grave. Cynthie —"

"Fingall! Fingall!—Oh, Fingall!"

"You hear? Yes, like that all the time as she sat on the floor, her hair about her like a cloud, and the dead bodies in the next room. She thought she had killed Fingall, and she knew now that he was innocent. The two were buried. Then we told her that Fingall was not dead. She used to come and sit outside the door, and listen to his breathing, and ask if he ever spoke of her. What was the good of lying? If we said he did, she'd have come in to him, and that would do no good, for he wasn't right in his mind. By and by we told her he was getting well, and then she didn't come, but stayed at home, just saying his name over to herself. Alors, things take hold of a woman—it is strange! When Fingall was strong enough to go out, I went with him the first time. He was all thin and handsome as you can think, but he had no memory, and his eyes were like a child's. She saw him, and came out to meet him. What does a woman care for the world when she loves a man? Well, he just looked at her as if he'd never seen her before, and passed by without a sign, though afterwards a trouble came in his face. Three days later he was gone, no one knew where. That is two years ago. Ever since she has been looking for him."

"Is she mad?"

"Mad? Holy Mother! it is not good to have one thing in the head all the time! What do you think? So much all at once! And then—"

"Hush, Pierre! There she is!" said Lawless, pointing to a ledge of rock not far away.

The girl stood looking out across the valley, a weird, rapt look in her face, her hair falling loose, a staff like a shepherd's crook in one hand, the other hand over her eyes as she slowly looked from point to point of the horizon.

The two watched her without speaking. Presently she saw them. She gazed at them for a minute, then descended to them. Lawless and Pierre rose, doffing their hats. She looked at both a moment, and her eyes settled on Pierre. Presently she held out her hand to him. "I knew you—yesterday," she said.

Pierre returned the intensity of her gaze with one kind and strong.

"So—so, Cynthie," he said; "sit down and eat."

He dropped on a knee and drew a scone and some fish from the ashes. She sat facing them, and, taking from a bag at her side some wild fruits, ate slowly, saying nothing. Lawless noticed that her hair had become grey at her temples, though she was but one-and-twenty years old. Her face, brown as it was, shone with a white kind of light, which may, or may not, have come from the crucible of her eyes, where the tragedy of her life was fusing. Lawless could not bear to look long, for the fire that consumes a body and sets free a soul is not for the sight of the quick. At last she rose, her body steady, but her hands having that tremulous activity of her eyes.

"Will you not stay, Cynthie?" asked Lawless very kindly.

She came close to him, and, after searching his eyes, said with a smile that almost hurt him, "When I have found him, I will bring him to your camp-fire. Last night the Voice said that he waits for me where the mist rises from the river at daybreak, close to the home of the White Swan. Do you know where is the home of the White Swan? Before the frost comes and the red wolf cries, I must find him. Winter is the time of sleep.

"I will give him honey and dried meat. I know where we shall live together. You never saw such roses! Hush! I have a place where we can hide."

Suddenly her gaze became fixed and dream-like, and she said slowly: "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment, Good Lord, deliver us!"

"Good Lord, deliver us!" repeated Lawless in a low voice. Without looking at them, she slowly turned away and passed up the hill-side, her eyes scanning the valley as before.

“Good Lord, deliver us!” again said Lawless. “Where did she get it?”

“From a book which Fingall left behind.”

They watched her till she rounded a cliff, and was gone; then they shouldered their kits and passed up the river on the trail of the wapiti.

One month later, when a fine white surf of frost lay on the ground, and the sky was darkened often by the flight of the wild geese southward, they came upon a hut perched on a bluff, at the edge of a clump of pines. It was morning, and Whitefaced Mountain shone clear and high, without a touch of cloud or mist from its haunches to its crown.

They knocked at the hut door, and, in answer to a voice, entered. The sunlight streamed in over a woman, lying upon a heap of dried flowers in a corner. A man was kneeling beside her. They came near, and saw that the woman was Cynthie.

“Fingall!” broke out Pierre, and caught the kneeling man by the shoulder. At the sound of his voice the woman’s eyes opened.

“Fingall!—Oh, Fingall!” she said, and reached up a hand.

Fingall stooped and caught her to his breast: “Cynthie! poor girl! Oh, my poor Cynthie!” he said. In his eyes, as in hers, was a sane light, and his voice, as hers, said indescribable things.

Her head sank upon his shoulder, her eyes closed; she slept. Fingall laid her down with a sob in his throat; then he sat up and clutched Pierre’s hand.

“In the East, where the doctors cured me, I heard all,” he said, pointing to her, “and I came to find her. I was just in time; I found her yesterday.”

“She knew you?” whispered Pierre.

“Yes, but this fever came on.” He turned and looked at her, and, kneeling, smoothed away the hair from the quiet face. “Poor girl!” he said; “poor girl!”

“She will get well?” asked Pierre.

“God grant it!” Fingall replied. “She is better—better.”

Lawless and Pierre softly turned and stole away, leaving the man alone with the woman he loved.

The two stood in silence, looking upon the river beneath. Presently a voice crept through the stillness. “Fingall! Oh, Fingall!—Fingall!”

It was the voice of a woman returning from the dead.

THREE COMMANDMENTS IN THE VULGAR TONGUE

I

“Read on, Pierre,” the sick man said, doubling the corner of the wolf-skin pillow so that it shaded his face from the candle.

Pierre smiled to himself, thinking of the unusual nature of his occupation, raised an eyebrow as if to someone sitting at the other side of the fire,—though the room was empty save for the two—and went on reading:

> *“Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!*
>
> *“The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.*
>
> *“And behold at evening-tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.”*

The sick man put up his hand, motioning for silence, and Pierre, leaving the Bible open, laid it at his side. Then he fell to studying the figure on the couch. The body, though reduced by a sudden illness, had an appearance of late youth, a firmness of mature manhood; but the hair was grey, the beard was grizzled, and the face was furrowed and seamed as though the man had lived a long, hard life. The body seemed thirty years old, the head sixty; the man’s exact age was forty-five. His most singular characteristic was a fine, almost spiritual intelligence, which showed in the dewy brightness of the eye, in the lighted face, in the cadenced definiteness of his speech. One would have said, knowing nothing of him, that he was a hermit; but again, noting the firm, graceful outlines of his body, that he was a soldier. Within the past twenty-four hours he had had a fight for life with one of the terrible “colds” which, like an unstayed plague, close up the courses of the body, and carry a man out of the hurly-burly, without pause to say how much or how little he cares to go.

Pierre, whose rude skill in medicine was got of hard experiences here and there, had helped him back into the world again, and was himself now a little astonished at acting as Scripture reader to a Protestant invalid. Still, the Bible was like his childhood itself, always with him in memory, and Old Testament history was as wine to his blood. The lofty tales sang in his veins: of primitive man, adventure, mysterious and exalted

romance. For nearly an hour, with absorbing interest, he had read aloud from these ancient chronicles to Fawdor, who held this Post of the Hudson's Bay Company in the outer wilderness.

Pierre had arrived at the Post three days before, to find a half-breed trapper and an Indian helpless before the sickness which was hurrying to close on John Fawdor's heart and clamp it in the vice of death. He had come just in time. He was now ready to learn, by what ways the future should show, why this man, of such unusual force and power, should have lived at a desolate post in Labrador for twenty-five years.

"'This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us—'" Fawdor repeated the words slowly, and then said: "It is good to be out of the restless world. Do you know the secret of life, Pierre?"

Pierre's fingers unconsciously dropped on the Bible at his side, drumming the leaves. His eyes wandered over Fawdor's face, and presently he answered, "To keep your own commandments."

"The ten?" asked the sick man, pointing to the Bible. Pierre's fingers closed the book. "Not the ten, for they do not fit all; but one by one to make your own, and never to break—comme ca!"

"The answer is well," returned Fawdor; "but what is the greatest commandment that a man can make for himself?"

"Who can tell? What is the good of saying, 'Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day,' when a man lives where he does not know the days? What is the good of saying, 'Thou shalt not steal,' when a man has no heart to rob, and there is nothing to steal? But a man should have a heart, an eye for justice. It is good for him to make his commandments against that wherein he is a fool or has a devil. Justice,—that is the thing."

"'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'?" asked Fawdor softly.

"Yes, like that. But a man must put it in his own words, and keep the law which he makes. Then life does not give a bad taste in the mouth."

"What commandments have you made for yourself, Pierre?"

The slumbering fire in Pierre's face leaped up. He felt for an instant as his father, a chevalier of France, might have felt if a peasant had presumed to finger the orders upon his breast. It touched his native pride, so little shown in anything else. But he knew the spirit behind the question, and the meaning justified the man. "Thou shalt think with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman," he said, and paused.

"Justice and mercy," murmured the voice from the bed.

"Thou shalt keep the faith of food and blanket." Again Pierre paused.

"And a man shall have no cause to fear his friend," said the voice again.

The pause was longer this time, and Pierre's cold, handsome face took on a kind of softness before he said, "Remember the sorrow of thine own wife."

"It is a good commandment," said the sick man, "to make all women safe whether they be true—or foolish."

"The strong should be ashamed to prey upon the weak. Pshaw! such a sport ends in nothing. Man only is man's game."

Suddenly Pierre added: "When you thought you were going to die, you gave me some papers and letters to take to Quebec. You will get well. Shall I give them back? Will you take them yourself?"

Fawdor understood: Pierre wished to know his story. He reached out a hand, saying, "I will take them myself. You have not read them?"

"No. I was not to read them till you died—bien?" He handed the packet over.

"I will tell you the story," Fawdor said, turning over on his side, so that his eyes rested full on Pierre.

He did not begin at once. An Esquimau dog, of the finest and yet wildest breed, which had been lying before the fire, stretched itself, opened its red eyes at the two men, and, slowly rising, went to the door and sniffed at the cracks. Then it turned, and began pacing restlessly around the room. Every little while it would stop, sniff the air, and go on again. Once or twice, also, as it passed the couch of the sick man, it paused, and at last it suddenly rose, rested two feet on the rude headboard of the couch, and pushed its nose against the invalid's head. There was something rarely savage and yet beautifully soft in the dog's face, scarred as it was by the whips of earlier owners. The sick man's hand went up and caressed the wolfish head. "Good dog, good Akim!" he said softly in French. "Thou dost know when a storm is on the way; thou dost know, too, when there is a storm in my heart."

Even as he spoke a wind came crying round the house, and the parchment windows gave forth a soft booming sound. Outside, Nature was trembling lightly in all her nerves; belated herons, disturbed from the freshly frozen pool, swept away on tardy wings into the night and to the south; a herd of wolves, trooping by the hut, passed from a short, easy trot to a low, long gallop, devouring, yet fearful. It appeared as though the dumb earth were trying to speak, and the mighty effort gave it pain, from which came awe and terror to living things.

So, inside the house, also, Pierre almost shrank from the unknown sorrow of this man beside him, who was about to disclose the story of his life. The solitary places do not make men glib of tongue; rather, spare of words. They whose tragedy lies in the capacity to suffer greatly, being given the woe of imagination, bring forth inner history as a mother gasps life into the world.

"I was only a boy of twenty-one," Fawdor said from the pillow, as he watched the dog noiselessly travelling from corner to corner, "and I had been with the Company three years. They had said that I could rise fast; I had done so. I was ambitious; yet I find solace in thinking that I saw only one way to it,—by patience, industry, and much thinking. I read a great deal, and cared for what I read; but I observed also, that in dealing with men I might serve myself and the Company wisely.

"One day the governor of the Company came from England, and with him a sweet lady, his young niece, and her brother. They arranged for a tour to the Great Lakes, and I was chosen to go with them in command of the boatmen. It appeared as if a great chance had come to me, and so said the factor at Lachine on the morning we set forth. The girl was as winsome as you can think; not of such wonderful beauty, but with a face that would be finer old than young; and a dainty trick of humour had she as well. The governor was a testy

man; he could not bear to be crossed in a matter; yet, in spite of all, I did not think he had a wilful hardness. It was a long journey, and we were set to our wits to make it always interesting; but we did it somehow, for there were fishing and shooting, and adventure of one sort and another, and the lighter things, such as singing and the telling of tales, as the boatmen rowed the long river.

"We talked of many things as we travelled, and I was glad to listen to the governor, for he had seen and read much. It was clear he liked to have us hang upon his tales and his grand speeches, which seemed a little large in the mouth; and his nephew, who had a mind for raillery, was now and again guilty of some witty impertinence; but this was hard to bring home to him, for he could assume a fine childlike look when he pleased, confusing to his accusers. Towards the last he grew bolder, and said many a biting thing to both the governor and myself, which more than once turned his sister's face pale with apprehension, for she had a nice sense of kindness. Whenever the talk was at all general, it was his delight to turn one against the other. Though I was wary, and the girl understood his game, at last he had his way.

"I knew Shakespeare and the Bible very well, and, like most bookish young men, phrase and motto were much on my tongue, though not always given forth. One evening, as we drew to the camp-fire, a deer broke from the woods and ran straight through the little circle we were making, and disappeared in the bushes by the riverside. Someone ran for a rifle; but the governor forbade, adding, with an air, a phrase with philosophical point. I, proud of the chance to show I was not a mere backwoodsman at such a sport, capped his aphorism with a line from Shakespeare's Cymbeline.

"'Tut, tut!' said the governor smartly; 'you haven't it well, Mr. Fawdor; it goes this way,' and he went on to set me right. His nephew at that stepped in, and, with a little disdainful laugh at me, made some galling gibe at my 'distinguished learning.' I might have known better than to let it pique me, but I spoke up again, though respectfully enough, that I was not wrong. It appeared to me all at once as if some principle were at stake, as if I were the champion of our Shakespeare; so will vanity delude us.

"The governor—I can see it as if it were yesterday—seemed to go like ice, for he loved to be thought infallible in all such things as well as in great business affairs, and his nephew was there to give an edge to the matter. He said, curtly, that I would probably come on better in the world if I were more exact and less cock-a-hoop with myself. That stung me, for not only was the young lady looking on with a sort of superior pity, as I thought, but her brother was murmuring to her under his breath with a provoking smile. I saw no reason why I should be treated like a schoolboy. As far as my knowledge went it was as good as another man's, were he young or old, so I came in quickly with my reply. I said that his excellency should find me more cock-a-hoop with Shakespeare than with myself. 'Well, well,' he answered, with a severe look, 'our Company has need of great men for hard tasks.' To this I made no answer, for I got a warning look from the young lady,—a look which had a sort of reproach and command too. She knew the twists and turns of her uncle's temper, and how he was imperious and jealous in little things. The matter dropped for the time; but as the governor was going to his tent for the night, the young lady said to me hurriedly, 'My uncle is a man of great reading—and power, Mr. Fawdor. I would set it right with him, if I were you.' For the moment I was ashamed. You cannot guess how fine an eye she had, and how her voice stirred one! She said no more, but stepped inside her tent; and then I heard the brother say over my shoulder, 'Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud!' Afterwards, with a little laugh and a backward wave of the hand, as one might toss a greeting to a beggar, he was gone also, and I was left alone."

Fawdor paused in his narrative. The dog had lain down by the fire again, but its red eyes were blinking at the door, and now and again it growled softly, and the long hair at its mouth seemed to shiver with feeling. Suddenly through the night there rang a loud, barking cry. The dog's mouth opened and closed in a noiseless snarl, showing its keen, long teeth, and a ridge of hair bristled on its back. But the two men made no sign or motion. The cry of wild cats was no new thing to them.

Presently the other continued: "I sat by the fire and heard beasts howl like that, I listened to the river churning over the rapids below, and I felt all at once a loneliness that turned me sick. There were three people in a tent near me; I could even hear the governor's breathing; but I appeared to have no part in the life of any human being, as if I were a kind of outlaw of God and man. I was poor; I had no friends; I was at the mercy of this great Company; if I died, there was not a human being who, so far as I knew, would shed a tear. Well, you see I was only a boy, and I suppose it was the spirit of youth hungering for the huge, active world and the companionship of ambitious men. There is no one so lonely as the young dreamer on the brink of life. I was lying by the fire. It was not a cold night, and I fell asleep at last without covering. I did not wake till morning, and then it was to find the governor's nephew building up the fire again. 'Those who are born great,' said he, 'are bound to rise.' But perhaps he saw that I had had a bad night, and felt that he had gone far enough, for he presently said, in a tone more to my liking, 'Take my advice, Mr. Fawdor; make it right with my uncle. It isn't such fast rising in the Company that you can afford to quarrel with its governor. I'd go on the other tack: don't be too honest.' I thanked him, and no more was said; but I liked him better, for I saw that he was one of those who take pleasure in dropping nettles more to see the weakness of human nature than from malice.

"But my good fortune had got a twist, and it was not to be straightened that day; and because it was not straightened then it was not to be at all; for at five o'clock we came to the Post at Lachine, and here the governor and the others were to stop. During all the day I had waited for my chance to say a word of apology to his excellency, but it was no use; nothing seemed to help me, for he was busy with his papers and notes, and I also had to finish up my reports. The hours went by, and I saw my chances drift past. I knew that the governor held the thing against me, and not the less because he saw me more than once that day in speech with his niece. For she appeared anxious to cheer me, and indeed I think we might have become excellent friends had our ways run together. She could have bestowed her friendship on me without shame to herself, for I had come of an old family in Scotland, the Sheplaws of Canfire, which she knew, as did the governor also, was a more ancient family than their own. Yet her kindness that day worked me no good, and I went far to make it worse, since, under the spell of her gentleness, I looked at her far from distantly, and at the last, as she was getting from the boat, returned the pressure of her hand with much interest. I suppose something of the pride of that moment leaped up in my eye, for I saw the governor's face harden more and more, and the

brother shrugged an ironical shoulder. I was too young to see or know that the chief thing in the girl's mind was regret that I had so hurt my chances; for she knew, as I saw only too well afterwards, that I might have been rewarded with a leaping promotion in honour of the success of the journey. But though the boatmen got a gift of money and tobacco and spirits, nothing came to me save the formal thanks of the governor, as he bowed me from his presence.

"The nephew came with his sister to bid me farewell. There was little said between her and me, and it was a long, long time before she knew the end of that day's business. But the brother said, 'You've let the chance go by, Mr. Fawdor. Better luck next time, eh? And,' he went on, 'I'd give a hundred editions the lie, but I'd read the text according to my chief officer. The words of a king are always wise while his head is on,' he declared further, and he drew from his scarf a pin of pearls and handed it to me. 'Will you wear that for me, Mr. Fawdor?' he asked; and I, who had thought him but a stripling with a saucy pride, grasped his hand and said a God-keep-you. It does me good now to think I said it. I did not see him or his sister again.

"The next day was Sunday. About two o'clock I was sent for by the governor. When I got to the Post and was admitted to him, I saw that my misadventure was not over. 'Mr. Fawdor,' said he coldly, spreading out a map on the table before him, 'you will start at once for Fort Ungava, at Ungava Bay, in Labrador.' I felt my heart stand still for a moment, and then surge up and down, like a piston-rod under a sudden rush of steam. 'You will proceed now,' he went on, in his hard voice, 'as far as the village of Pont Croix. There you will find three Indians awaiting you. You will go on with them as far as Point St. Saviour and camp for the night, for if the Indians remain in the village they may get drunk. The next morning, at sunrise, you will move on. The Indians know the trail across Labrador to Fort Ungava. When you reach there, you will take command of the Post and remain till further orders. Your clothes are already at the village. I have had them packed, and you will find there also what is necessary for the journey. The factor at Ungava was there ten years; he has gone —to heaven.'

"I cannot tell what it was held my tongue silent, that made me only bow my head in assent, and press my lips together. I knew I was pale as death, for as I turned to leave the room I caught sight of my face in a little mirror tacked on the door, and I hardly recognised myself.

"'Good-day, Mr. Fawdor,' said the governor, handing me the map. 'There is some brandy in your stores; be careful that none of your Indians get it. If they try to desert, you know what to do.' With a gesture of dismissal he turned, and began to speak with the chief trader.

"For me, I went from that room like a man condemned to die. Fort Ungava in Labrador,—a thousand miles away, over a barren, savage country, and in winter too; for it would be winter there immediately! It was an exile to Siberia, and far worse than Siberia; for there are many there to share the fellowship of misery, and I was likely to be the only white man at Fort Ungava. As I passed from the door of the Post the words of Shakespeare which had brought all this about sang in my ears." He ceased speaking, and sank back wearily among the skins of his couch. Out of the enveloping silence Pierre's voice came softly:

"Thou shalt judge with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman."

II

"The journey to the village of Pont Croix was that of a man walking over graves. Every step sent a pang to my heart,—a boy of twenty-one, grown old in a moment. It was not that I had gone a little lame from a hurt got on the expedition with the governor, but my whole life seemed suddenly lamed. Why did I go? Ah, you do not know how discipline gets into a man's bones, the pride, the indignant pride of obedience! At that hour I swore that I should myself be the governor of that Company one day,—the boast of loud-hearted youth. I had angry visions, I dreamed absurd dreams, but I did not think of disobeying. It was an unheard-of journey at such a time, but I swore that I would do it, that it should go into the records of the Company.

"I reached the village, found the Indians, and at once moved on to the settlement where we were to stay that night. Then my knee began to pain me. I feared inflammation; so in the dead of night I walked back to the village, roused a trader of the Company, got some liniment and other trifles, and arrived again at St. Saviour's before dawn. My few clothes and necessaries came in the course of the morning, and by noon we were fairly started on the path to exile.

"I remember that we came to a lofty point on the St. Lawrence just before we plunged into the woods, to see the great stream no more. I stood and looked back up the river towards the point where Lachine lay. All that went to make the life of a Company's man possible was there; and there, too, were those with whom I had tented and travelled for three long months,—eaten with them, cared for them, used for them all the woodcraft that I knew. I could not think that it would be a young man's lifetime before I set eyes on that scene again. Never from that day to this have I seen the broad, sweet river where I spent the three happiest years of my life. I can see now the tall shining heights of Quebec, the pretty wooded Island of Orleans, the winding channel, so deep, so strong. The sun was three-fourths of its way down in the west, and already the sky was taking on the deep red and purple of autumn. Somehow, the thing that struck me most in the scene was a bunch of pines, solemn and quiet, their tops burnished by the afternoon light. Tears would have been easy then. But my pride drove them back from my eyes to my angry heart. Besides, there were my Indians waiting, and the long journey lay before us. Then, perhaps because there was none nearer to make farewell to, or I know not why, I waved my hand towards the distant village of Lachine, and, with the sweet maid in my mind who had so gently parted from me yesterday, I cried, 'Good-bye, and God bless you.'"

He paused. Pierre handed him a wooden cup, from which he drank, and then continued:

"The journey went forward. You have seen the country. You know what it is: those bare ice-plains and rocky unfenced fields stretching to all points, the heaving wastes of treeless country, the harsh frozen lakes. God knows what insupportable horror would have settled on me in that pilgrimage had it not been for occasional glimpses of a gentler life—for the deer and caribou which crossed our path. Upon my soul, I was so full of gratitude and love at the sight that I could have thrown my arms round their necks and kissed them. I could not raise a gun at them. My Indians did that, and so inconstant is the human heart that I ate heartily of the meat. My Indians were almost less companionable to me than any animal would have been. Try as I would, I could not bring myself to like them, and I feared only too truly that they did not like me. Indeed, I soon saw

that they meant to desert me,—kill me, perhaps, if they could, although I trusted in the wholesome and restraining fear which the Indian has of the great Company. I was not sure that they were guiding me aright, and I had to threaten death in case they tried to mislead me or desert me. My knee at times was painful, and cold, hunger, and incessant watchfulness wore on me vastly. Yet I did not yield to my miseries, for there entered into me then not only the spirit of endurance, but something of that sacred pride in suffering which was the merit of my Covenanting forefathers.

"We were four months on that bitter travel, and I do not know how it could have been made at all, had it not been for the deer that I had heart to eat and none to kill. The days got shorter and shorter, and we were sometimes eighteen hours in absolute darkness. Thus you can imagine how slowly we went. Thank God, we could sleep, hid away in our fur bags, more often without a fire than with one,—mere mummies stretched out on a vast coverlet of white, with the peering, unfriendly sky above us; though it must be said that through all those many, many weeks no cloud perched in the zenith. When there was light there was sun, and the courage of it entered into our bones, helping to save us. You may think I have been made feeble-minded by my sufferings, but I tell you plainly that, in the closing days of our journey, I used to see a tall figure walking beside me, who, whenever I would have spoken to him, laid a warning finger on his lips; but when I would have fallen, he spoke to me, always in the same words. You have heard of him, the Scarlet Hunter of the Kimash Hills. It was he, the Sentinel of the North, the Lover of the Lost. So deep did his words go into my heart that they have remained with me to this hour."

"I saw him once in the White Valley," Pierre said in a low voice. "What was it he said to you?"

The other drew a long breath, and a smile rested on his lips. Then, slowly, as though liking to linger over them, he repeated the words of the Scarlet Hunter:

"'O son of man, behold!
If thou shouldest stumble on the nameless trail,
The trail that no man rides,
Lift up thy heart,
Behold, O son of man, thou hast a helper near!

"'O son of man, take heed!
If thou shouldst fall upon the vacant plain,
The plain that no man loves,
Reach out thy hand,
Take heed, O son of man, strength shall be given thee!

"'O son of man, rejoice!
If thou art blinded even at the door,
The door of the Safe Tent,
Sing in thy heart,
Rejoice, O son of man, thy pilot leads thee home?'

"I never seemed to be alone after that—call it what you will, fancy or delirium. My head was so light that it appeared to spin like a star, and my feet were so heavy that I dragged the whole earth after me. My Indians seldom spoke. I never let them drop behind me, for I did not trust their treacherous natures. But in the end, as it would seem, they also had but one thought, and that to reach Fort Ungava; for there was no food left, none at all. We saw no tribes of Indians and no Esquimaux, for we had not passed in their line of travel or settlement.

"At last I used to dream that birds were singing near me,—a soft, delicate whirlwind of sound; and then bells all like muffled silver rang through the aching, sweet air. Bits of prayer and poetry I learned when a boy flashed through my mind; equations in algebra; the tingling scream of a great buzz-saw; the breath of a racer as he nears the post under the crying whip; my own voice dropping loud profanity, heard as a lad from a blind ferryman; the boom! boom! of a mass of logs as they struck a house on a flooding river and carried it away....

"One day we reached the end. It was near evening, and we came to the top of a wooded knoll. My eyes were dancing in my head with fatigue and weakness, but I could see below us, on the edge of the great bay, a large hut, Esquimau lodges and Indian tepees near it. It was the Fort, my cheerless prison-house."

He paused. The dog had been watching him with its flaming eyes; now it gave a low growl, as though it understood, and pitied. In the interval of silence the storm without broke. The trees began to quake and cry, the light snow to beat upon the parchment windows, and the chimney to splutter and moan. Presently, out on the bay they could hear the young ice break and come scraping up the shore. Fawdor listened a while, and then went on, waving his hand to the door as he began: "Think! this, and like that always: the ungodly strife of nature, and my sick, disconsolate life."

"Ever since?" asked Pierre. "All the time."

"Why did you not go back?"

"I was to wait for orders, and they never came."

"You were a free man, not a slave."

"The human heart has pride. At first, as when I left the governor at Lachine, I said, 'I will never speak, I will never ask nor bend the knee. He has the power to oppress; I can obey without whining, as fine a man as he.'"

"Did you not hate?"

"At first, as only a banished man can hate. I knew that if all had gone well I should be a man high up in the Company, and here I was, living like a dog in the porch of the world, sometimes without other food for months than frozen fish; and for two years I was in a place where we had no fire,—lived in a snow-house, with only blubber to eat. And so year after year, no word!"

"The mail came once every year from the world?" "Yes, once a year the door of the outer life was opened. A ship came into the bay, and by that ship I sent out my reports. But no word came from the governor, and no request went from me. Once the captain of that ship took me by the shoulders, and said, 'Fawdor, man, this will drive you mad. Come away to England,—leave your half-breed in charge,—and ask the governor for a big promotion.' He did not understand. Of course I said I could not go. Then he turned on me, he was a good

man,—and said, ‘This will either make you madman or saint, Fawdor.’ He drew a Bible from his pocket and handed it to me. ‘I’ve used it twenty years,’ he said, ‘in evil and out of evil, and I’ve spiked it here and there; it’s a chart for heavy seas, and may you find it so, my lad.’

“I said little then; but when I saw the sails of his ship round a cape and vanish, all my pride and strength were broken up, and I came in a heap to the ground, weeping like a child. But the change did not come all at once. There were two things that kept me hard.”

“The girl?”

“The girl, and another. But of the young lady after. I had a half-breed whose life I had saved. I was kind to him always; gave him as good to eat and drink as I had myself; divided my tobacco with him; loved him as only an exile can love a comrade. He conspired with the Indians to seize the Fort and stores, and kill me if I resisted. I found it out.”

“Thou shalt keep the faith of food and blanket,” said Pierre. “What did you do with him?”

“The fault was not his so much as of his race and his miserable past. I had loved him. I sent him away; and he never came back.”

“Thou shalt judge with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman.”

“For the girl. There was the thing that clamped my heart. Never a message from her or her brother. Surely they knew, and yet never, thought I, a good word for me to the governor. They had forgotten the faith of food and blanket. And she—she must have seen that I could have worshipped her, had we been in the same way of life. Before the better days came to me I was hard against her, hard and rough at heart.”

“Remember the sorrow of thine own wife.” Pierre’s voice was gentle.

“Truly, to think hardly of no woman should be always in a man’s heart. But I have known only one woman of my race in twenty-five years!”

“And as time went on?”

“As time went on, and no word came, I ceased to look for it. But I followed that chart spiked with the captain’s pencil, as he had done it in season and out of season, and by and by I ceased to look for any word. I even became reconciled to my life. The ambitious and aching cares of the world dropped from me, and I stood above all—alone in my suffering, yet not yielding. Loneliness is a terrible thing. Under it a man—”

“Goes mad or becomes a saint—a saint!” Pierre’s voice became reverent.

Fawdor shook his head, smiling gently. “Ah no, no. But I began to understand the world, and I loved the north, the beautiful hard north.”

“But there is more?”

“Yes, the end of it all. Three days before you came I got a packet of letters, not by the usual yearly mail. One announced that the governor was dead. Another—”

“Another?” urged Pierre—“was from Her. She said that her brother, on the day she wrote, had by chance come across my name in the Company’s records, and found that I had been here a quarter of a century. It was the letter of a good woman. She said she thought the governor had forgotten that he had sent me here—as now I hope he had, for that would be one thing less for him to think of, when he set out on the journey where the only weight man carries is the packload of his sins. She also said that she had written to me twice after we parted at Lachine, but had never heard a word, and three years afterwards she had gone to India. The letters were lost, I suppose, on the way to me, somehow—who can tell? Then came another thing, so strange, that it seemed like the laughter of the angels at us. These were her words: ‘And, dear Mr. Fawdor, you were both wrong in that quotation, as you no doubt discovered long ago.’ Then she gave me the sentence as it is in Cymbeline. She was right, quite right. We were both wrong. Never till her letter came had I looked to see. How vain, how uncertain, and fallible, is man!”

Pierre dropped his cigarette, and stared at Fawdor. “The knowledge of books is foolery,” he said slowly. “Man is the only book of life. Go on.”

“There was another letter, from the brother, who was now high up in the Company, asking me to come to England, and saying that they wished to promote me far, and that he and his sister, with their families, would be glad to see me.”

“She was married then?”

The rashness of the suggestion made Fawdor wave his hand impatiently. He would not reply to it. “I was struck down with all the news,” he said. “I wandered like a child out into a mad storm. Illness came; then you, who have nursed me back to life.... And now I have told all.”

“Not all, bien sur. What will you do?”

“I am out of the world; why tempt it all again? See how those twenty-five years were twisted by a boy’s vanity and a man’s tyranny!”

“But what will you do?” persisted Pierre. “You should see the faces of women and children again. No man can live without that sight, even as a saint.”

Suddenly Fawdor’s face was shot over with a storm of feeling. He lay very still, his thoughts busy with a new world which had been disclosed to him. “Youth hungers for the vanities,” he said, “and the middle-aged for home.” He took Pierre’s hand. “I will go,” he added. “A door will open somewhere for me.”

Then he turned his face to the wall. The storm had ceased, the wild dog huddled quietly on the hearth, and for hours the only sound was the crackling of the logs as Pierre stirred the fire.

LITTLE BABICHE

“No, no, m’sieu’ the governor, they did not tell you right. I was with him, and I have known Little Babiche fifteen years—as long as I’ve known you.... It was against the time when down in your world there they have feastings, and in the churches the grand songs and many candles on the altars. Yes, Noel, that is the word—the day of the Great Birth. You shall hear how strange it all was—the thing, the time, the end of it.”

The governor of the great Company settled back in a chair, his powerful face seamed by years, his hair grey and thick still, his keen, steady eyes burning under shaggy brows. He had himself spent long solitary years in the wild fastnesses of the north. He fastened his dark eyes on Pierre, and said: “Monsieur Pierre, I shall be glad to hear. It was at the time of Noel—yes?”

Pierre began: “You have seen it beautiful and cold in the north, but never so cold and beautiful as it was last year. The world was white with sun and ice, the frost never melting, the sun never warming—just a glitter, so lovely, so deadly. If only you could keep the heart warm, you were not afraid. But if once—just for a moment—the blood ran out from the heart and did not come in again, the frost clamped the doors shut, and there was an end of all. Ah, m’sieu’, when the north clinches a man’s heart in anger there is no pain like it—for a moment.”

“Yes, yes; and Little Babiche?”

“For ten years he carried the mails along the route of Fort St. Mary, Fort O’Glory, Fort St. Saviour, and Fort Perseverance within the circle-just one mail once a year, but that was enough. There he was with his Esquimaux dogs on the trail, going and coming, with a laugh and a word for anyone that crossed his track. ‘Good-day, Babiche’ ‘Good-day, m’sieu’.’ ‘How do you, Babiche?’ ‘Well, thank the Lord, m’sieu’.’ ‘Where to and where from, Babiche?’ ‘To the Great Fort by the old trail, from the Far-off River, m’sieu’.’ ‘Come safe along, Babiche.’ ‘Merci, m’sieu’; the good God travels north, m’sieu’.’ ‘Adieu, Babiche.’ ‘Adieu, m’sieu’.’ That is about the way of the thing, year after year. Sometimes a night at a hut or a post, but mostly alone—alone, except for the dogs. He slept with them, and they slept on the mails—to guard: as though there should be highwaymen on the Prairie of the Ten Stars! But no, it was his way, m’sieu’. Now and again I crossed him on the trail, for have I not travelled to every corner of the north? We were not so great friends, for—well, Babiche is a man who says his aves, and never was a loafer, and there was no reason why he should have love for me; but we were good company when we met. I knew him when he was a boy down on the Chaudiere, and he always had a heart like a lion-and a woman. I had seen him fight, I had seen him suffer cold, and I had heard him sing.

“Well, I was up last fall to Fort St. Saviour. Ho, how dull was it! Macgregor, the trader there, has brains like rubber. So I said, I will go down to Fort O’Glory. I knew someone would be there—it is nearer the world. So I started away with four dogs and plenty of jerked buffalo, and so much brown brandy as Macgregor could squeeze out of his eye! Never, never were there such days—the frost shaking like steel and silver as it powdered the sunlight, the white level of snow lifting and falling, and falling and lifting, the sky so great a travel away, the air which made you cry out with pain one minute and gave you joy the next. And all so wild, so lonely! Yet I have seen hanging in those plains cities all blue and red with millions of lights showing, and voices, voices everywhere, like the singing of soft masses. After a time in that cold up there you are no longer yourself—no. You move in a dream. Eh bien, m’sieu’, there came, I thought, a dream to me one evening—well, perhaps one afternoon, for the days are short—so short, the sun just coming over a little bend of sky, and sinking down like a big orange ball. I come out of a tumble of little hills, and there over on the plains I saw a sight! Ragged hills of ice were thrown up, as if they’d been heaved out by the breaking earth, jutting here and there like wedges—like the teeth of a world. Alors, on one crag, shaped as an anvil, I saw what struck me like a blow, and I felt the blood shoot out of my heart and leave it dry. I was for a minute like a pump with no water in its throat to work the piston and fetch the stream up. I got sick and numb. There on that anvil of snow and ice I saw a big white bear, one such as you shall see within the Arctic Circle, his long nose fetching out towards that bleeding sun in the sky, his white coat shining. But that was not the thing—there was another. At the feet of the bear was a body, and one clawed foot was on that body—of a man. So clear was the air, the red sun shining on the face as it was turned towards me, that I wonder I did not at once know whose it was. You cannot think, m’sieu’, what that was like—no. But all at once I remembered the Chant of the Scarlet Hunter. I spoke it quick, and the blood came creeping back in here.” He tapped his chest with his slight forefinger.

“What was the chant?” asked the governor, who had scarce stirred a muscle since the tale began. Pierre made a little gesture of deprecation. “Ah, it is perhaps a thing of foolishness, as you may think—”

“No, no. I have heard and seen in my day,” urged the governor.

“So? Good. Yes, I remember, you told me years ago, m’sieu’....

> *“The blinding Trail and Night and Cold are man’s: mine is the trail that finds the Ancient Lodge. Morning and Night they travel with me; my camp is set by the pines, its fires are burning—are burning. The lost, they shall sit by my fires, and the fearful ones shall seek, and the sick shall abide. I am the Hunter, the Son of the North; I am thy lover where no man may love thee. With me thou shalt journey, and thine the Safe Tent.*

“As I said, the blood came back to my heart. I turned to my dogs, and gave them a cut with the whip to see if I dreamed. They sat back and snarled, and their wild red eyes, the same as mine, kept looking at the bear and the quiet man on the anvil of ice and snow. Tell me, can you think of anything like it?—the strange light, the white bear of the Pole, that has no friends at all except the shooting stars, the great ice plains, the quick night hurrying on, the silence—such silence as no man can think! I have seen trouble flying at me in a hundred ways, but this was different—yes. We come to the foot of the little hill. Still the bear not stir. As I went up, feeling for my knives and my gun, the dogs began to snarl with anger, and for one little step I shivered, for the thing seem not natural. I was about two hundred feet away from the bear when it turned slow round at me, lifting its foot from the body. The dogs all at once come huddling about me, and I dropped on my knee to take aim, but the bear stole away from the man and come moving down past us at an angle, making for the plain. I could see his deep shining eyes, and the steam roll from his nose in long puffs. Very

slow and heavy, like as if he see no one and care for no one, he shambled down, and in a minute was gone behind a boulder. I ran on to the man—”

The governor was leaning forward, looking intently, and said now: “It’s like a wild dream—but the north—the north is near to the Strangest of All!”

“I knelt down and lifted him up in my arms, all a great bundle of furs and wool, and I got my hand at last to his wrist. He was alive. It was Little Babiche! Part of his face was frozen stiff. I rubbed out the frost with snow, and then I forced some brandy into his mouth, good old H.B.C. brandy,—and began to call to him: ‘Babiche! Babiche! Come back, Babiche! The wolf’s at the pot, Babiche!’ That’s the way to call a hunter to his share of meat. I was afraid, for the sleep of cold is the sleep of death, and it is hard to call the soul back to this world. But I called, and kept calling, and got him on his feet, with my arm round him. I gave him more brandy; and at last I almost shrieked in his ear. Little by little I saw his face take on the look of waking life. It was like the dawn creeping over white hills and spreading into day. I said to myself: What a thing it will be if I can fetch him back! For I never knew one to come back after the sleep had settled on them. It is too comfortable—all pain gone, all trouble, the world forgot, just a kind weight in all the body, as you go sinking down, down to the valley, where the long hands of old comrades beckon to you, and their soft, high voices cry, ‘Hello! hello-o!’” Pierre nodded his head towards the distance, and a musing smile divided his lips on his white teeth. Presently he folded a cigarette, and went on:

“I had saved something to the last, as the great test, as the one thing to open his eyes wide, if they could be opened at all. Alors, there was no time to lose, for the wolf of Night was driving the red glow-worm down behind the world, and I knew that when darkness came altogether—darkness and night—there would be no help for him. Mon Dieu! how one sleeps in the night of the north, in the beautiful wide silence!... So, m’sieu’, just when I thought it was the time, I called, ‘Corinne! Corinne!’ Then once again I said, ‘P’tite Corinne! P’tite Corinne! Come home! come home! P’tite Corinne!’ I could see the fight in the jail of sleep. But at last he killed his jailer; the doors in his brain flew open, and his mind came out through his wide eyes. But he was blind a little and dazed, though it was getting dark quick. I struck his back hard, and spoke loud from a song that we used to sing on the Chaudiere—Babiche and all of us, years ago. Mon Dieu! how I remember those days—

“‘Which is the way that the sun goes?
The way that my little one come.
Which is the good path over the hills?
The path that leads to my little one’s home—
To my little one’s home, m’sieu’, m’sieu’!’

“That did it. ‘Corinne, ma p’tite Corinne!’ he said; but he did not look at me—only stretch out his hands. I caught them, and shook them, and shook him, and made him take a step forward; then I slap him on the back again, and said loud: ‘Come, come, Babiche, don’t you know me? See Babiche, the snow’s no sleeping-bunk, and a polar bear’s no good friend.’ ‘Corinne!’ he went on, soft and slow. ‘Ma p’tite Corinne!’ He smiled to himself; and I said, ‘Where’ve you been, Babiche? Lucky I found you, or you’d have been sleeping till the Great Mass.’ Then he looked at me straight in the eyes, and something wild shot out of his. His hand stretched over and caught me by the shoulder, perhaps to steady himself, perhaps because he wanted to feel something human. Then he looked round slow-all round the plain, as if to find something. At that moment a little of the sun crept back, and looked up over the wall of ice, making a glow of yellow and red for a moment; and never, north or south, have I seen such beauty—so delicate, so awful. It was like a world that its Maker had built in a fit of joy, and then got tired of, and broke in pieces, and blew out all its fires, and left—ah yes—like that! And out in the distance I—I only saw a bear travelling eastwards.”

The governor said slowly:

And I took My staff Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break
My covenant which I had made with all the people.

“Yes—like that.” Pierre continued: “Babiche turned to me with a little laugh, which was a sob too. ‘Where is it, Pierre?’ said he. I knew he meant the bear. ‘Gone to look for another man,’ I said, with a gay look, for I saw that he was troubled. ‘Come,’ said he at once. As we went, he saw my dogs. He stopped short and shook a little, and tears came into his eyes. ‘What is it, Babiche?’ said I. He looked back towards the south. ‘My dogs—Brandy-wine, Come-along, ‘Poleon, and the rest—died one night all of an hour. One by one they crawl over to where I lay in my fur bag, and die there, huddling by me—and such cries—such cries! There was poison or something in the frozen fish I’d given them. I loved them every one; and then there was the mails, the year’s mails—how should they be brought on? That was a bad thought, for I had never missed—never in ten years. There was one bunch of letters which the governor said to me was worth more than all the rest of the mails put together, and I was to bring it to Fort St. Saviour, or not show my face to him again. I leave the dogs there in the snow, and come on with the sled, carrying all the mails. Ah, the blessed saints, how heavy the sled got, and how lonely it was! Nothing to speak to—no one, no thing, day after day. At last I go to cry to the dogs, “Come-along! ‘Poleon! Brandy-wine!”—like that! I think I see them there, but they never bark and they never snarl, and they never spring to the snap of the whip.... I was alone. Oh, my head! my head! If there was only something alive to look at, besides the wide white plain, and the bare hills of ice, and the sun-dogs in the sky! Now I was wild, next hour I was like a child, then I gnash my teeth like a wolf at the sun, and at last I got on my knees. The tears froze my eyelids shut, but I kept saying, “Ah, my great Friend, my Jesu, just something, something with the breath of life! Leave me not all alone!” and I got sleepier all the time.

“‘I was sinking, sinking, so quiet and easy, when all at once I felt something beside me; I could hear it breathing, but I could not open my eyes at first, for, as I say, the lashes were froze. Something touch me, smell me, and a nose was push against my chest. I put out my hand ver’ soft and touch it. I had no fear, I was so glad I could have hug it, but I did not—I drew back my hand quiet and rub my eyes. In a little I can see. There stand the thing—a polar bear—not ten feet away, its red eyes shining. On my knees I spoke to it, talk to it, as I would to a man. It was like a great wild dog, fierce, yet kind, and I fed it with the fish which had been for Brandy-wine and the rest—but not to kill it! and it did not die. That night I lie down in my bag—no, I was not afraid! The bear lie beside me, between me and the sled. Ah, it was warm! Day after day we travel

together, and camp together at night—ah, sweet Sainte Anne, how good it was, myself and the wild beast such friends, alone in the north! But to-day—a little while ago—something went wrong with me, and I got sick in the head, a swimming like a tide wash in and out. I fall down-asleep. When I wake I find you here beside me—that is all. The bear must have drag me here.’”

Pierre stuck a splinter into the fire to light another cigarette, and paused as if expecting the governor to speak, but no word coming, he continued: “I had my arm around him while we talked and come slowly down the hill. Soon he stopped and said, ‘This is the place.’ It was a cave of ice, and we went in. Nothing was there to see except the sled. Babiche stopped short. It come to him now that his good comrade was gone. He turned, and looked out, and called, but there was only the empty night, the ice, and the stars. Then he come back, sat down on the sled, and the tears fall.... I lit my spirit-lamp, boiled coffee, got pemmican from my bag, and I tried to make him eat. No. He would only drink the coffee. At last he said to me, ‘What day is this, Pierre?’ ‘It is the day of the Great Birth, Babiche,’ I said. He made the sign of the cross, and was quiet, so quiet! but he smile to himself, and kept saying in a whisper: ‘Ma p’tite Corinne! Ma p’tite Corinne!’ The next day we come on safe, and in a week I was back at Fort St. Saviour with Babiche and all the mails, and that most wonderful letter of the governor’s.”

“The letter was to tell a factor that his sick child in the hospital at Quebec was well,” the governor responded quietly. “Who was ‘Ma p’tite Corinne,’ Pierre?”

“His wife—in heaven; and his child—on the Chaudiere, m’sieu’. The child came and the mother went on the same day of the Great Birth. He has a soft heart—that Babiche!”

“And the white bear—so strange a thing!”

“M’sieu’, who can tell? The world is young up here. When it was all young, man and beast were good comrades, maybe.”

“Ah, maybe. What shall be done with Little Babiche, Pierre?”

“He will never be the same again on the old trail, m’sieu’!”

There was silence for a long time, but at last the governor said, musing, almost tenderly, for he never had a child: “Ma p’tite Corinne!—Little Babiche shall live near his child, Pierre. I will see to that.”

Pierre said no word, but got up, took off his hat to the governor, and sat down again.

AT POINT O’ BUGLES

“John York, John York, where art thou gone, John York?”

“What’s that, Pierre?” said Sir Duke Lawless, starting to his feet and peering round.

“Hush!” was Pierre’s reply. “Wait for the rest.... There!”

“King of my heart, king of my heart, I am out on the trail of thy bugles.”

Sir Duke was about to speak, but Pierre lifted a hand in warning, and then through the still night there came the long cry of a bugle, rising, falling, strangely clear, echoing and echoing again, and dying away. A moment, and the call was repeated, with the same effect, and again a third time; then all was still, save for the flight of birds roused from the desire of night, and the long breath of some animal in the woods sinking back to sleep.

Their camp was pitched on the south shore of Hudson’s Bay, many leagues to the west of Rupert House, not far from the Moose River. Looking north was the wide expanse of the bay, dotted with sterile islands here and there; to the east were the barren steppes of Labrador, and all round them the calm, incisive air of a late September, when winter begins to shake out his frosty curtains and hang them on the cornice of the north, despite the high protests of the sun. The two adventurers had come together after years of separation, and Sir Duke had urged Pierre to fare away with him to Hudson’s Bay, which he had never seen, although he had shares in the great Company, left him by his uncle the admiral.

They were camped in a hollow, to the right a clump of hardy trees, with no great deal of foliage, but some stoutness; to the left a long finger of land running out into the water like a wedge, the most eastern point of the western shore of Hudson’s Bay. It was high and bold, and, somehow, had a fine dignity and beauty. From it a path led away north to a great log-fort called King’s House.

Lawless saw Pierre half rise and turn his head, listening. Presently he, too, heard the sound-the soft crash of crisp grass under the feet. He raised himself to a sitting posture and waited.

Presently a tall figure came out of the dusk into the light of their fire, and a long arm waved a greeting at them. Both Lawless and Pierre rose to their feet. The stranger was dressed in buckskin, he carried a rifle, and around his shoulder was a strong yellow cord, from which hung a bugle.

“How!” he said, with a nod, and drew near the fire, stretching out his hands to the blaze.

“How!” said Lawless and Pierre.

After a moment Lawless drew from his blanket a flask of brandy, and without a word handed it over the fire. The fingers of the two men met in the flicker of flames, a sort of bond by fire, and the stranger raised the flask.

“Chin-chin,” he said, and drank, breathing a long sigh of satisfaction afterwards as he handed it back; but it was Pierre that took it, and again fingers touched in the bond of fire. Pierre passed the flask to Lawless, who lifted it.

“Chin-chin,” he said, drank, and gave the flask to Pierre again, who did as did the others, and said “Chin-chin” also.

By that salutation of the east, given in the far north, Lawless knew that he had met one who had lighted fires where men are many and close to the mile as holes in a sieve.

They all sat down, and tobacco went round, the stranger offering his, while the two others, with true hospitality, accepted.

“We heard you over there—it was you?” said Lawless, nodding towards Point o’ Bugles, and glancing at the bugle the other carried.

“Yes, it was I,” was the reply. “Someone always does it twice a year: on the 25th September and the 25th March. I’ve done it now without a break for ten years, until it has got to be a sort of religion with me, and the whole thing’s as real as if King George and John York were talking. As I tramp to the point or swing away back, in summer barefooted, in winter on my snowshoes, to myself I seem to be John York on the trail of the king’s bugles. I’ve thought so much about the whole thing, I’ve read so many of John York’s letters—and how many times one of the King’s!—that now I scarcely know which is the bare story, and which the bit’s I’ve dreamed as I’ve tramped over the plains or sat in the quiet at King’s House, spelling out little by little the man’s life, from the cues I found in his journal, in the Company’s papers, and in that one letter of the King’s.”

Pierre’s eyes were now more keen than those of Lawless: for years he had known vaguely of this legend of Point o’ Bugles.

“You know it all,” he said—“begin at the beginning: how and when you first heard, how you got the real story, and never mind which is taken from the papers and which from your own mind—if it all fits in it is all true, for the lie never fits in right with the square truth. If you have the footprints and the handprints you can tell the whole man; if you have the horns of a deer you know it as if you had killed it, skinned it, and potted it.”

The stranger stretched himself before the fire, nodding at his hosts as he did so, and then began:

“Well, a word about myself first,” he said, “so you’ll know just where you are. I was full up of life in London town and India, and that’s a fact. I’d plenty of friends and little money, and my will wasn’t equal to the task of keeping out of the hands of the Jews. I didn’t know what to do, but I had to go somewhere, that was clear. Where? An accident decided it. I came across an old journal of my great-grandfather, John York,—my name’s Dick Adderley,—and just as if a chain had been put round my leg and I’d been jerked over by the tipping of the world, I had to come to Hudson’s Bay. John York’s journal was a thing to sit up nights to read. It came back to England after he’d had his fill of Hudson’s Bay and the earth beneath, and had gone, as he himself said on the last page of the journal, to follow the king’s buglers in ‘the land that is far off.’ God and the devil were strong in old John York. I didn’t lose much time after I’d read the journal. I went to Hudson’s Bay house in London, got a place in the Company, by the help of the governor himself, and came out. I’ve learned the rest of the history of old John York—the part that never got to England; for here at King’s House there’s a holy tradition that the real John York belongs to it and to it alone.”

Adderley laughed a little. “King’s House guards John York’s memory, and it’s as fresh and real here now as though he’d died yesterday; though it’s forgotten in England, and by most who bear his name, and the present Prince of Wales maybe never heard of the roan who was a close friend of the Prince Regent, the First Gentleman of Europe.”

“That sounds sweet gossip,” said Lawless, with a smile; “we’re waiting.”

Adderley continued: “John York was an honest man, of wholesome sport, jovial, and never shirking with the wine, commendable in his appetite, of rollicking soul and proud temper, and a gay dog altogether—gay, but to be trusted, too, for he had a royal heart. In the coltish days of the Prince Regent he was a boon comrade, but never did he stoop to flattery, nor would he hedge when truth should be spoken, as ofttimes it was needed with the royal blade, for at times he would forget that a prince was yet a man, topped with the accident of a crown. Never prince had truer friend, and so in his best hours he thought, himself, and if he ever was just and showed his better part, it was to the bold country gentleman who never minced praise or blame, but said his say and devil take the end of it. In truth, the Prince was wilful, and once he did a thing which might have given a twist to the fate of England. Hot for the love of women, and with some dash of real romance in him too, else even as a prince he might have had shallower love and service,—he called John York one day and said:

“‘To-night at seven, Squire John, you’ll stand with me while I put the seal on the Gates of Eden;’ and, when the other did not guess his import, added: ‘Sir Mark Selby is your neighbour—his daughter’s for my arms to-night. You know her, handsome Sally Selby—she’s for your prince, for good or ill.’

“John York did not understand at first, for he could not think the Prince had anything in mind but some hot escapade of love. When Mistress Selby’s name was mentioned his heart stood still, for she had been his choice, the dear apple of his eye, since she had bloomed towards womanhood. He had set all his hopes upon her, tarrying till she should have seen some little life before he asked her for his wife. He had her father’s Godspeed to his wooing, for he was a man whom all men knew honest and generous as the sun, and only choleric with the mean thing. She, also, had given him good cause to think that he should one day take her to his home, a loved and honoured wife. His impulse, when her name passed the Prince’s lips, was to draw his sword, for he would have called an emperor to account; but presently he saw the real meaning of the speech: that the Prince would marry her that night.”

Here the story-teller paused again, and Pierre said softly, inquiringly:

“You began to speak in your own way, and you’ve come to another way—like going from an almanac to the Mass.”

The other smiled. “That’s so. I’ve heard it told by old Shearton at King’s House, who speaks as if he’d stepped out of Shakespeare, and somehow I seem to hear him talking, and I tell it as he told it last year to the governor of the Company. Besides, I’ve listened these seven years to his style.”

“It’s a strange beginning—unwritten history of England,” said Sir Duke musingly.

“You shall hear stranger things yet,” answered Adderley. “John York could hardly believe it at first, for the thought of such a thing never had place in his mind. Besides, the Prince knew how he had looked upon the

lady, and he could not have thought his comrade would come in between him and his happiness. Perhaps it was the difficulty, adding spice to the affair, that sent the Prince to the appeal of private marriage to win the lady, and John York always held that he loved her truly then, the first and only real affection of his life. The lady—who can tell what won her over from the honest gentleman to the faithless prince? That soul of vanity which wraps about the real soul of every woman fell down at last before the highest office in the land, and the gifted bearer of the office. But the noble spirit in her brought him to offer marriage, when he might otherwise have offered, say, a barony. There is a record of that and more in John York's Memoirs which I will tell you, for they have settled in my mind like an old song, and I learned them long ago. I give you John York's words written by his own hands:

"'I did not think when I beheld thee last, dearest flower of the world's garden, that I should see thee bloom in that wide field, rank with the sorrows of royal favour. How did my foolish eyes fill with tears when I watched thee, all rose and gold in thy cheeks and hair, the light falling on thee through the chapel window, putting thy pure palm into my prince's, swearing thy life away, selling the very blossoms of earth's orchards for the brier beauty of a hidden vineyard! I saw the flying glories of thy cheeks, the halcyon weather of thy smile, the delicate lifting of thy bosom, the dear gaiety of thy step, and, at that moment, I mourned for thy sake that thou wert not the dullest wench in the land, for then thou hadst been spared thy miseries, thou hadst been saved the torture-boot of a lost love and a disacknowledged wifedom. Yet I could not hide from me that thou wert happy at that great moment, when he swore to love and cherish thee, till death you parted.

"Ah, George, my prince, my king, how wickedly thou didst break thy vows with both of us who loved thee well, through good and ill report—for they spake evil of thee, George; ay, the meanest of thy subjects spake lightly of their king—when with that sweet soul secretly hid away in the farthest corner of thy kingdom, thou soughtst divorce from thy later Caroline, whom thou, unfaithful, didst charge with infidelity. When, at last, thou didst turn again to the partner of thy youth, thy true wife in the eyes of God, it was too late. Thou didst promise me that thou wouldst never take another wife, never put our dear heart away, though she could not—after our miserable laws—bear thee princes. Thou didst break thy promise, yet she forgave thee, and I forgave thee, for well we knew that thou wouldst pay a heavy reckoning, and that in the hour when thou shouldst cry to us we might not come to thee; that in the days when age and sorrow and vast troubles should oppress thee, thou wouldst long for the true hearts who loved thee for thyself and not for aught thou wudst give, or aught that thou wert, save as a man.

"'When thou didst proclaim thy purpose to take Caroline to wife, I pleaded with thee, I was wroth with thee. Thy one plea was succession. Succession! Succession! What were a hundred dynasties beside that precious life, eaten by shame and sorrow? It were easy for others, not thy children, to come after thee, to rule as well as thee, as must even now be the case, for thou hast no lawful child save that one in the loneliest corner of thy English vineyard—alack! alack! I warned thee George, I pleaded, and thou didst drive me out with words ill-suited to thy friend who loved thee.

"'I did not fear thee, I would have forced thee to thy knees or made thee fight me, had not some good spirit cried to my heart that thou wert her husband, and that we both had loved thee. I dared not listen to the brutal thing thou hintedst at—that now I might fatten where I had hungered. Thou hadst to answer for the baseness of that thought to the King of kings, when thou wentest forth alone, no subject, courtier, friend, wife, or child to do thee service, journeying—not en prince, George; no, not en prince! but as a naked soul to God.

"'Thou saidst to me: "Get thee gone, John York, where I shall no more see thee." And when I returned, "Wouldst thou have me leave thy country, sir?" thou answeredst: "Blow thy quarrelsome soul to the stars where my farthest bugle cries." Then I said: "I go, sir, till thou callest me again—and after; but not till thou hast honoured the child of thy honest wedlock; till thou hast secured thy wife to the end of her life against all manner of trouble save the shame of thy disloyalty." There was no more for me to do, for my deep love itself forbade my staying longer within reach of the noble deserted soul. And so I saw the chastened glory of her face no more, nor evermore beheld her perfectness.'"

Adderley paused once more, and, after refilling his pipe in silence, continued:

"That was the heart of the thing. His soul sickened of the rank world, as he called it, and he came out to the Hudson's Bay country, leaving his estates in care of his nephew, but taking many stores and great chests of clothes and a shipload of furniture, instruments of music, more than a thousand books, some good pictures, and great stores of wine. Here he came and stayed, an officer of the Company, building King's House, and filling it with all the fine things he had brought with him, making in this far north a little palace in the wilderness. Here he lived, his great heart growing greater in this wide sinewy world, King's House a place of pilgrimage for all the Company's men in the north; a noble gentleman in a sweet exile, loving what he could no more, what he did no more, see.

"Twice a year he went to that point yonder and blew this bugle, no man knew why or wherefore, year in, year out, till 1817. Then there came a letter to him with great seals, which began: 'John York, John York, where art thou gone, John York?' There followed a score of sorrowful sentences, full of petulance, too, for it was as John York foretold, his prince longed for the 'true souls' whom he had cast off. But he called too late, for the neglected wife died from the shock of her prince's longing message to her, and when, by the same mail, John York knew that, he would not go back to England to the King. But twice every year he went to yonder point and spoke out the King's words to him: 'John York, John York, where art thou gone, John York?' and gave the words of his own letter in reply: 'King of my heart, king of my heart, I am out on the trail of thy bugles.' To this he added three calls of the bugle, as you have heard."

Adderley handed the bugle to Lawless, who looked at it with deep interest and passed it on to Pierre. "When he died," Adderley continued, "he left the house, the fittings, and the stores to the officers of the Company who should be stationed there, with a sum of money yearly, provided that twice in twelve months the bugle should be blown as you have heard it, and those words called out."

"Why did he do that?" asked Lawless, nodding towards the point.

"Why do they swing the censers at the Mass?" interjected Pierre. "Man has signs for memories, and one

man seeing another's sign will remember his own."

"You stay because you like it—at King's House?" asked Lawless of Adderley.

The other stretched himself lazily to the fire and, "I am at home," he said. "I have no cares. I had all there was of that other world; I've not had enough of this. You'll come with me to King's House to-morrow?" he added.

To their quick assent he rejoined: "You'll never want to leave. You'll stay on."

To this Lawless replied, shaking his head: "I have a wife and child in England."

But Pierre did not reply. He lifted the bugle, mutely asking a question of Adderley, who as mutely replied, and then, with it in his hand, left the other two beside the fire.

A few minutes later they heard, with three calls of the bugle from the point afterwards, Pierre's voice: "John York, John York, where art thou gone, John York?"

Then came the reply:

"King of my heart, king of my heart, I am out on the trail of thy bugles."

THE SPOIL OF THE PUMA

Just at the point where the Peace River first hugs the vast outpost hills of the Rockies, before it hurries timorously on, through an unexplored region, to Fort St. John, there stood a hut. It faced the west, and was built half-way up Clear Mountain. In winter it had snows above it and below it; in summer it had snow above it and a very fair stretch of trees and grass, while the river flowed on the same, winter and summer. It was a lonely country. Travelling north, you would have come to the Turnagain River; west, to the Frying Pan Mountains; south, to a goodly land. But from the hut you had no outlook towards the south; your eye came plump against a hard lofty hill, like a wall between heaven and earth. It is strange, too, that, when you are in the far north, you do not look towards the south until the north turns an iron hand upon you and refuses the hospitality of food and fire; your eyes are drawn towards the Pole by that charm—deadly and beautiful—for which men have given up three points of the compass, with their pleasures and ease, to seek a grave solitude, broken only by the beat of a musk-ox's hoofs, the long breath of the caribou, or the wild cry of the puma.

Sir Duke Lawless had felt this charm, and had sworn that one day he would again leave his home in Devon and his house in Pont Street, and, finding Pierre, Shon M'Gann, and others of his old comrades, together they would travel into those austere yet pleasant wilds. He kept his word, found Shon M'Gann, and on an autumn day of a year not so long ago lounged in this hut on Clear Mountain. They had had three months of travel and sport, and were filled, but not sated, with the joy of the hunter. They were very comfortable, for their host, Pourcette, the French Canadian, had fire and meat in plenty, and, if silent, was attentive to their comfort—a little, black-bearded, grey-headed man, with heavy brows over small vigilant eyes, deft with his fingers, and an excellent sportsman, as could be told from the skins heaped in all the corners of the large hut.

The skins were not those of mere foxes or martens or deer, but of mountain lions and grizzlies. There were besides many soft, tiger-like skins, which Sir Duke did not recognise. He kept looking at them, and at last went over and examined one.

"What's this, Monsieur Pourcette?" he said, feeling it as it lay on the top of the pile.

The little man pushed the log on the fireplace with his moccasined foot before he replied: "Of a puma, m'sieu'."

Sir Duke smoothed it with his hand. "I didn't know there were pumas here."

"Faith, Sir Duke—"

Sir Duke Lawless turned on Shon quickly. "You're forgetting again, Shon. There's no 'Sir Dukes' between us. What you were to me years ago on the wally-by-track and the buffalo-trail, you are now, and I'm the same also: M'Gann and Lawless, and no other."

"Well, then, Lawless, it's true enough as he says it, for I've seen more than wan skin brought in, though I niver clapped eye on the beast alive. There's few men go huntin' them av their own free will, not more than they do grizzlies; but, bedad, this French gintleman has either the luck o' the world, or the gift o' that man ye tould me of, that slew the wild boars in anciency. Look at that, now: there's thirty or forty puma-skins, and I'd take my oath there isn't another man in the country that's shot half that in his lifetime."

Pourcette's eyes were on the skins, not on the men, and he did not appear to listen. He sat leaning forward, with a strange look on his face. Presently he got up, came over, and stroked the skins softly. A queer chuckling noise came from his throat.

"It was good sport?" asked Lawless, feeling a new interest in him.

"The grandest sport—but it is not so easy," answered the old man. "The grizzly comes on you bold and strong; you know your danger right away, and have it out. So. But the puma comes—God, how the puma comes!" He broke off, his eyes burning bright under his bushy brows and his body arranging itself into an attitude of expectation and alertness.

"You have travelled far. The sun goes down. You build a fire and cook your meat, and then good tea and the tabac. It is ver' fine. You hear the loon crying on the water, or the last whistle of the heron up the pass. The lights in the sky come out and shine through a thin mist—there is nothing like that mist, it is so fine and soft. Allons. You are sleepy. You bless the good God. You stretch pine branches, wrap in your blanket, and lie down to sleep. If it is winter and you have a friend, you lie close. It is all quiet. As you sleep, something comes. It slides along the ground on its belly, like a snake. It is a pity if you have not ears that feel—the whole body as ears. For there is a swift lunge, a snarl—ah, you should hear it! the thing has you by the throat, and there is

an end!”

The old man had acted all the scenes: a sidelong glance, a little gesture, a movement of the body, a quick, harsh breath—without emphatic excitement, yet with a reality and force that fascinated his two listeners. When he paused, Shon let go a long breath, and Lawless looked with keen inquiry at their entertainer. This almost unnatural, yet quiet, intensity had behind it something besides the mere spirit of the sportsman. Such exhibitions of feeling generally have an unusual personal interest to give them point and meaning.

“Yes, that’s wonderful, Pourcette,” he said; “but that’s when the puma has things its own way. How is it when these come off?” He stroked the soft furs under his hand.

The man laughed, yet without a sound—the inward, stealthy laugh, as from a knowledge wicked in its very suggestiveness. His eyes ran from Lawless to Shon, and back again. He put his hand on his mouth, as though for silence, stole noiselessly over to the wall, took down his gun quietly, and turned round. Then he spoke softly:

“To kill the puma, you must watch—always watch. You will see his yellow eyes sometimes in a tree: you must be ready before he springs. You will hear his breath at night as you pretend to sleep, and you wait till you see his foot steal out of the shadow—then you have him. From a mountain wall you watch in the morning, and, when you see him, you follow, and follow, and do not rest till you have found him. You must never miss fire, for he has great strength and a mad tooth. But when you have got him, he is worth all. You cannot eat the grizzly—he is too thick and coarse; but the puma—well, you had him from the pot to-night. Was he not good?”

Lawless’s brows ran up in surprise. Shon spoke quickly:

“Heaven above!” he burst out. “Was it puma we had betune the teeth? And what’s puma but an almighty cat? Sure, though, it wint as tinder as pullets, for all that—but I wish you hadn’t tould us.”

The old man stood leaning on his gun, his chin on his hands, as they covered the muzzle, his eyes fixed on something in his memory, the vision of incidents he had lived or seen.

Lawless went over to the fire and relit his pipe. Shon followed him. They both watched Pourcette. “D’ye think he’s mad?” asked Shon in a whisper. Lawless shook his head: “Mad? No. But there’s more in this puma-hunting than appears. How long has he lived here, did he say?”

“Four years; and, durin’ that time, yours and mine are the only white faces he has seen, except one.”

“Except one. Well, whose was the one? That might be interesting. Maybe there’s a story in that.”

“Faith, Lawless, there’s a story worth the hearin’, I’m thinkin’, to every white man in this country. For the three years I was in the mounted police, I could count a story for all the days o’ the calendar—and not all o’ them would make you happy to hear.”

Pourcette turned round to them. He seemed to be listening to Shon’s words. Going to the wall, he hung up the rifle; then he came to the fire and stood holding out his hands to the blaze. He did not look in the least mad, but like a man who was dominated by some one thought, more or less weird. Short and slight, and a little bent, but more from habit—the habit of listening and watching—than from age, his face had a stern kind of earnestness and loneliness, and nothing at all of insanity.

Presently Lawless went to a corner and from his kit drew forth a flask. The old man saw, and immediately brought out a wooden cup. There were two on the shelf, and Shon pointed to the other. Pourcette took no notice. Shon went over to get it, but Pourcette laid a hand on his arm: “Not that.”

“For ornamint!” said Shon, laughing, and then his eyes were arrested by a suit of buckskin and a cap of beaver, hanging on the wall. He turned them over, and then suddenly drew back his hand, for he saw in the back of the jacket a knife-slit. There was blood also on the buckskin.

“Holy Mary!” he said, and retreated. Lawless had not noticed; he was pouring out the liquor. He had handed the cup first to Pourcette, who raised it towards a gun hung above the fireplace, and said something under his breath.

“A dramatic little fellow,” thought Lawless; “the spirit of his forefathers—a good deal of heart, a little of the poseur.”

Then hearing Shon’s exclamation, he turned.

“It’s an ugly sight,” said Shon, pointing to the jacket. They both looked at Pourcette, expecting him to speak. The old man reached to the coat, and, turning it so that the cut and the blood were hid, ran his hand down it caressingly. “Ah, poor Jo! poor Jo Gordineer!” he said; then he came over once more to the fire, sat down, and held out his hands to the fire, shaking his head.

“For God’s sake, Lawless, give me a drink!” said Shon. Their eyes met, and there was the same look in the faces of both. When Shon had drunk, he said: “So, that’s what’s come to our old friend, Jo: dead—killed or murdered—”

“Don’t speak so loud,” said Lawless. “Let us get the story from him first.”

Years before, when Shon M’Gann and Pierre and Lawless had sojourned in the Pipi Valley, Jo Gordineer had been with them, as stupid and true a man as ever drew in his buckle in a hungry land, or let it out to munch corn and oil. When Lawless returned to find Shon and others of his companions, he had asked for Gordineer. But not Shon nor anyone else could tell aught of him; he had wandered north to outlying goldfields, and then had disappeared completely. But there, as it would seem, his coat and cap hung, and his rifle, dust-covered, kept guard over the fire.

Shon went over to the coat, did as Pourcette had done, and said: “Is it gone y’are, Jo, wid your slow tongue and your big heart? Wan by wan the lads are off.”

Pourcette, without any warning, began speaking, but in a very quiet tone at first, as if unconscious of the others:

“Poor Jo Gordineer! Yes, he is gone. He was my friend—so tall, and such a hunter! We were at the Ding Dong goldfields together. When luck went bad, I said to him: ‘Come, we will go where there is plenty of wild meat, and a summer more beautiful than in the south.’ I did not want to part from him, for once, when some

miner stole my claim, and I fought, he stood by me. But in some things he was a little child. That was from his big heart. Well, he would go, he said; and we came away."

He suddenly became silent; and shook his head, and spoke under his breath.

"Yes," said Lawless quietly, "you went away. What then?"

He looked up quickly, as though just aware of their presence, and continued:

"Well, the other followed, as I said, and—"

"No, Pourcette," interposed Lawless, "you didn't say. Who was the other that followed?"

The old man looked at him gravely, and a little severely, and continued:

"As I said, Gawdor followed—he and an Indian. Gawdor thought we were going for gold, because I had said I knew a place in the north where there was gold in a river—I know the place, but that is no matter. We did not go for gold just then. Gawdor hated Jo Gordineer. There was a half-breed girl. She was fine to look at. She would have gone to Gordineer if he had beckoned, any time; but he waited—he was very slow, except with his finger on a gun; he waited too long.

"Gawdor was mad for the girl. He knew why her feet came slow to the door when he knocked. He would have quarrelled with Jo, if he had dared; Gordineer was too quick a shot. He would have killed him from behind; but it was known in the camp that he was no friend of Gordineer, and it was not safe."

Again Pourcette was silent. Lawless put on his knee a new pipe, filled with tobacco. The little man took it, lighted it, and smoked on in silence for a time undisturbed. Shon broke the silence, by a whisper to Lawless:

"Jo was a quiet man, as patient as a priest; but when his blood came up, there was trouble in the land. Do you remimber whin—"

Lawless interrupted him and motioned towards Pourcette. The old man, after a few puffs, held the pipe on his knee, disregarding it. Lawless silently offered him some more whisky, but he shook his head. Presently, he again took up the thread:

"Bien, we travelled slow up through the smoky river country, and beyond into a wild land. We had bully sport as we went. Sometimes I heard shots far away behind us; but Gordineer said it was my guess, for we saw nobody. But I had a feeling. Never mind. At last we come to the Peace River. It was in the early autumn like this, when the land is full of comfort. What is there like it? Nothing. The mountains have colours like a girl's eyes; the smell of the trees is sweet like a child's breath, and the grass feels for the foot and lifts it with a little soft spring. We said we could live here for ever. We built this house high up, as you see, first, because it is good to live high—it puts life in the blood; and, as Gordineer said, it is noble to look far over the world, every time your house-door is open, or the parchment is down from the window. We killed wapiti and caribou without number, and cached them for our food. We caught fish in the river, and made tea out of the brown berry—it is very good. We had flour, a little, which we had brought with us, and I went to Fort St. John and got more. Since then, down in the valley, I have wheat every summer; for the Chinook winds blow across the mountains and soften the bitter cold.

"Well, for that journey to Fort St. John. When I got back I found Gawdor with Gordineer. He said he had come north to hunt. His Indian had left, and he had lost his way. Gordineer believed him. He never lied himself. I said nothing, but watched. After a time he asked where the gold-field was. I told him, and he started away—it was about fifty miles to the north. He went, and on his way back he come here. He say he could not find the place, and was going south. I know he lied. At this time I saw that Gordineer was changed. He was slow in the head, and so, when he began thinking up here, it made him lonely. It is always in a fine land like this, where game is plenty, and the heart dances for joy in your throat, and you sit by the fire—that you think of some woman who would be glad to draw in and tie the strings of the tent-curtain, or fasten the latch of the door upon you two alone."

Perhaps some memory stirred within the old man, other than that of his dead comrade, for he sighed, muffled his mouth in his beard, and then smiled in a distant way at the fire. The pure truth of what he said came home to Shon M'Gann and Sir Duke Lawless; for both, in days gone by, had sat at camp-fires in silent plains, and thought upon women from whom they believed they were parted for ever, yet who were only kept from them for a time, to give them happier days. They were thinking of these two women now. They scarcely knew how long they sat there thinking. Time passes swiftly when thoughts are cheerful, or are only tinged with the soft melancholy of a brief separation. Memory is man's greatest friend and worst enemy.

At last the old man continued: "I saw the thing grew on him. He was not sulky, but he stare much in the fire at night. In the daytime he was differen'. A hunter thinks only of his sport. Gawdor watched him. Gordineer's hand was steady; his nerve was all right. I have seen him stand still till a grizzly come within twice the length of his gun. Then he would twist his mouth, and fire into the mortal spot. Once we were out in the Wide Wing pass. We had never had such a day. Gordineer make grand shots, better than my own; and men have said I can shoot like the devil—ha! ha!" He chuckled to himself noiselessly, and said in a whisper "Twenty grizzlies, and fifty pumas!"

Then he rubbed his hands softly on his knees, and spoke aloud again: "Ici, I was proud of him. We were standing together on a ledge of rock. Gawdor was not far away. Gawdor was a poor hunter, and I knew he was wild at Gordineer's great luck.... A splendid bull-wapiti come out on a rock across the gully. It was a long shot. I did not think Gordineer could make it; I was not sure that I could—the wind was blowing and the range was long. But he draw up his gun like lightning, and fire all at once. The bull dropped clean over the cliff, and tumbled dead upon the rocks below. It was fine. But, then, Gordineer slung his gun under his arm, and say: 'That is enough. I am going to the hut.'

"He went away. That night he did not talk. The next morning, when I say, 'We will be off again to the pass,' he shake his head. He would not go. He would shoot no more, he said. I understood: it was the girl. He was wide awake at last. Gawdor understanded also. He know that Gordineer would go to the south—to her.

"I was sorry; but it was no use. Gawdor went with me to the pass. When we come back, Jo was gone. On a bit of birch-bark he had put where he was going, and the way he would take. He said he would come back to me—ah, the brave comrade! Gawdor say nothing, but his looks were black. I had a feeling. I sat up all night,

smoking. I was not afraid, but I know Gawdor had found the valley of gold, and he might put a knife in me, because to know of such a thing alone is fine. Just at dawn, he got up and go out. He did not come back.

"I waited, and at last went to the pass. In the afternoon, just as I was rounding the corner of a cliff, there was a shot—then another. The first went by my head; the second caught me along the ribs, but not to great hurt. Still, I fell from the shock, and lost some blood. It was Gawdor; he thought he had killed me.

"When I come to myself I bound up the little furrow in the flesh, and start away. I know that Gawdor would follow Gordineer. I follow him, knowing the way he must take. I have never forget the next night. I had to travel hard, and I track him by his fires and other things. When sunset come, I do not stop. I was in a valley, and I push on. There was a little moon. At last I saw a light ahead-a camp-fire, I know. I was weak, and could have dropped; but a dread was on me.

"I come to the fire. I saw a man lying near it. Just as I saw him, he was trying to rise. But, as he did so, something sprang out of the shadow upon him, at his throat. I saw him raise his hand, and strike it with a knife. The thing let go, and then I fire—but only scratched, I think. It was a puma. It sprang away again, into the darkness. I ran to the man, and raised him. It was my friend. He looked up at me and shake his head. He was torn at the throat.... But there was something else—a wound in the back. He was stooping over the fire when he was stabbed, and he fell. He saw that it was Gawdor. He had been left for dead, as I was. Nom de Dieu! just when I come and could have save him, the puma come also. It is the best men who have such luck. I have seen it often. I used to wonder they did not curse God."

He crossed himself and mumbled something. Lawless rose, and walked up and down the room once or twice, pulling at his beard and frowning. His eyes were wet. Shon kept blowing into his closed hand and blinking at the fire. Pourcette got up and took down the gun from the chimney. He brushed off the dust with his coat-sleeve, and fondled it, shaking his head at it a little. As he began to speak again, Lawless sat down.

"Now I know why they do not curse. Something curses for them. Jo give me a word for her, and say 'Well, it is all right; but I wish I had killed the puma.' There was nothing more.... I followed Gawdor for days. I know that he would go and get someone, and go back to the gold. I thought at last I had missed him; but no. I had made up my mind what to do when I found him. One night, just as the moon was showing over the hills, I come upon him. I was quiet as a puma. I have a stout cord in my pocket, and another about my body. Just as he was stooping over the fire, as Gordineer did, I sprang upon him, clasping him about the neck, and bringing him to the ground. He could not get me off. I am small, but I have a grip. Then, too, I had one hand at his throat. It was no use to struggle. The cord and a knife were in my teeth. It was a great trick, but his breath was well gone, and I fastened his hands. It was no use to struggle. I tied his feet and legs. Then I carried him to a tree and bound him tight. I unfastened his hands again and tied them round the tree. Then I built a great fire not far away. He begged at first and cried. But I was hard. He got wild, and at last when I leave him he cursed! It was like nothing I ever heard. He was a devil... I come back after I have carry the message to the poor girl—it is a sad thing to see the first great grief of the young! Gawdor was not there. The pumas and others had been with him.

"There was more to do. I wanted to kill that puma which set its teeth in the throat of my friend. I hunted the woods where it had happened, beating everywhere, thinking that, perhaps, it was dead. There was not much blood on the leaves, so I guessed that it had not died. I hunted from that spot, and killed many—many. I saw that they began to move north. At last I got back here. From here I have hunted and killed them slow; but never that one with a wound in the shoulder from Jo's knife. Still, I can wait. There is nothing like patience for the hunter and for the man who would have blood for blood."

He paused, and Lawless spoke. "And when you have killed that puma, Pourcette—if you ever do-what then?"

Pourcette fondled the gun, then rose and hung it up again before he replied.

"Then I will go to Fort St. John, to the girl—she is there with her father—and sell all the skins to the factor, and give her the money." He waved his hand round the room. "There are many skins here, but I have more cached not far away. Once a year I go to the Fort for flour and bullets. A dog-team and a bois-brule bring them, and then I am alone as before. When all that is done I will come back."

"And then, Pourcette?" said Shon.

"Then I will hang that one skin over the chimney where his gun is—and go out and kill more pumas. What else can one do? When I stop killing I shall be killed. A million pumas and their skins are not worth the life of my friend."

Lawless looked round the room, at the wooden cup, the gun, the bloodstained clothes on the wall, and the skins. He got up, came over, and touched Pourcette on the shoulder.

"Little man," he said, "give it up, and come with me. Come to Fort St. John, sell the skins, give the money to the girl, and then let us travel to the Barren Grounds together, and from there to the south country again. You will go mad up here. You have killed enough—Gawdor and many pumas. If Jo could speak, he would say, Give it up. I knew Jo. He was my good friend before he was yours—mine and M'Gann's here—and we searched for him to travel with us. He would have done so, I think, for we had sport and trouble of one kind and another together. And he would have asked you to come also. Well, do so, little man. We haven't told you our names. I am Sir Duke Lawless, and this is Shon M'Gann."

Pourcette nodded: "I do not know how it come to me, but I was sure from the first you are his friends. He speak often of you and of two others—where are they?"

Lawless replied, and, at the name of Pretty Pierre, Shon hid his forehead in his hand, in a troubled way. "And you will come with us," said Lawless, "away from this loneliness?"

"It is not lonely," was the reply. "To hear the thrum of the pigeon, the whistle of the hawk, the chatter of the black squirrel, and the long cry of the eagle, is not lonely. Then, there is the river and the pines—all music; and for what the eye sees, God has been good; and to kill pumas is my joy.... So, I cannot go. These hills are mine. Few strangers come, and none stop but me. Still, to-morrow or any day, I will show you the way to the valley where the gold is. Perhaps riches is there, perhaps not, you shall find."

Lawless saw that it was no use to press the matter. The old man had but one idea, and nothing could ever change it. Solitude fixes our hearts immovably on things—call it madness, what you will. In busy life we have no real or lasting dreams, no ideals. We have to go to the primeval hills and the wild plains for them. When we leave the hills and the plains, we lose them again. Shon was, however, for the valley of gold. He was a poor man, and it would be a joyful thing for him if one day he could empty ample gold into his wife's lap. Lawless was not greedy, but he and good gold were not at variance.

"See," said Shon, "the valley's the thing. We can hunt as we go, and if there's gold for the scrapin', why, there y'are—fill up and come again. If not, divil the harm done. So here's thumbs up to go, say I. But I wish, Lawless, I wish that I'd niver known how Jo wint off, an' I wish we were all t'gither agin, as down in the Pipi Valley."

"There's nothing stands in this world, Shon, but the faith of comrades and the truth of good women. The rest hangs by a hair. I'll go to the valley with you. It's many a day since I washed my luck in a gold-pan."

"I will take you there," said Pourcette, suddenly rising, and, with shy abrupt motions grasping their hands and immediately letting them go again. "I will take you to-morrow." Then he spread skins upon the floor, put wood upon the fire, and the three were soon asleep.

The next morning, just as the sun came laboriously over the white peak of a mountain, and looked down into the great gulch beneath the hut, the three started. For many hours they crept along the side of the mountain, then came slowly down upon pine-crested hills, and over to where a small plain stretched out. It was Pourcette's little farm. Its position was such that it caught the sun always, and was protected from the north and east winds. Tall shafts of Indian corn with their yellow tassels were still standing, and the stubble of the field where the sickle had been showed in the distance like a carpet of gold. It seemed strange to Lawless that this old man beside him should be thus peaceful in his habits, the most primitive and arcadian of farmers, and yet one whose trade was blood—whose one purpose in life was destruction and vengeance.

They pushed on. Towards the end of the day they came upon a little herd of caribou, and had excellent sport. Lawless noticed that Pourcette seemed scarcely to take any aim at all, so swift and decisive was his handling of the gun. They skinned the deer and cached them, and took up the journey again. For four days they travelled and hunted alternately. Pourcette had shot two mountain lions, but they had seen no pumas.

On the morning of the fifth day they came upon the valley where the gold was. There was no doubt about it. A beautiful little stream ran through it, and its bed was sprinkled with gold—a goodly sight to a poor man like Shon, interesting enough to Lawless. For days, while Lawless and Pourcette hunted, Shon laboured like a galley-slave, making the little specks into piles, and now and again crowning a pile with a nugget. The fever of the hunter had passed from him, and another fever was on him. The others urged him to come away. The winter would soon be hard on them; he must go, and he and Lawless would return in the spring.

Prevailing on him at last, they started back to Clear Mountain. The first day Shon was abstracted. He carried the gold he had gathered in a bag wound about his body. It was heavy, and he could not travel fast. One morning, Pourcette, who had been off in the hills, came to say that he had sighted a little herd of wapiti. Shon had fallen and sprained his arm the evening before (gold is heavy to carry), and he did not go with the others. He stayed and dreamed of his good fortune, and of his home. In the late afternoon he lay down in the sun beside the camp-fire and fell asleep from much thinking. Lawless and Pourcette had little success. The herd had gone before they arrived. They beat the hills, and turned back to camp at last, without fret, like good sportsmen. At a point they separated, to come down upon the camp at different angles, in the hope of still getting a shot. The camp lay exposed upon a platform of the mountain.

Lawless came out upon a ledge of rock opposite the camp, a gulch lying between. He looked across. He was in the shadow, the other wall of the gulch was in the sun. The air was incomparably clear and fresh, with an autumnal freshness. Everything stood out distinct and sharply outlined, nothing flat or blurred. He saw the camp, and the fire, with the smoke quivering up in a diffusing blue column, Shon lying beside it. He leaned upon his rifle musingly. The shadows of the pines were blue and cold, but the tops of them were burnished with the cordial sun, and a glacier-field, somehow, took on a rose and violet light, reflected, maybe, from the soft-complexioned sky. He drew in a long breath of delight, and widened his line of vision.

Suddenly, something he saw made him lurch backward. At an angle in almost equal distance from him and Shon, upon a small peninsula of rock, a strange thing was happening. Old Pourcette was kneeling, engaged with his moccasin. Behind him was the sun, against which he was abruptly defined, looking larger than usual. Clear space and air soft with colour were about him. Across this space, on a little sloping plateau near him, there crept an animal. It seemed to Lawless that he could see the lithe stealthiness of its muscles and the ripple of its skin. But that was imagination, because he was too far away. He cried out, and swung his gun shoulderwards in desperation. But, at the moment, Pourcette turned sharply round, saw his danger, caught his gun, and fired as the puma sprang. There had been no chance for aim, and the beast was only wounded. It dropped upon the man. He let the gun fall; it rolled and fell over the cliff. Then came a scene, wicked in its peril to Pourcette, for whom no aid could come, though two men stood watching the great fight—Shon M'Gann, awake now, and Lawless—with their guns silent in their hands. They dare not fire, for fear of injuring the man, and they could not reach him in time to be of help.

There against the weird solitary sky the man and the puma fought. When the animal dropped on him, Pourcette caught it by the throat with both hands, and held back its fangs; but its claws were furrowing the flesh of his breast and legs. His long arms were of immense strength, and though the pain of his torn flesh was great he struggled grandly with the beast, and bore it away, from his body. As he did so he slightly changed the position of one hand. It came upon a welt-a scar. When he felt that, new courage and strength seemed given him. He gave a low growl like an animal, and then, letting go one hand, caught at the knife in his belt. As he did so the puma sprang away from him, and crouched upon the rock, making ready for another leap. Lawless and Shon could see its tail curving and beating. But now, to their astonishment, the man was the aggressor. He was filled with a fury which knows nothing of fear. The welt his fingers had felt burned them.

He came slowly upon the puma. Lawless could see the hard glitter of his knife. The puma's teeth sawed

together, its claws picked at the rocks, its body curved for a spring. The man sprang first, and ran the knife in; but not into a mortal corner. Once more they locked. The man's fingers were again at the puma's throat, and they swayed together, the claws of the beast making surface havoc. But now as they stood up, to the eyes of the fearful watchers inextricably mixed, the man lunged again with his knife, and this time straight into the heart of the murderer. The puma loosened, quivered, fell back dead. The man rose to his feet with a cry, and his hands stretched above his head, as it were in a kind of ecstasy. Shon forgot his gold and ran; Lawless hurried also.

When the two men got to the spot they found Pourcette binding up his wounds. He came to his feet, heedless of his hurts, and grasped their hands. "Come, come, my friends, and see," he cried.

He pulled forward the loose skin on the puma's breast and showed them the scar of a knife-wound above the one his own knife had made.

"I've got the other murderer," he said; "Gordineer's knife went in here. Sacre, but it is good!"

Pourcette's flesh needed little medicine; he did not feel his pain and stiffness. When they reached Clear Mountain, bringing with them the skin which was to hang above the fireplace, Pourcette prepared to go to Fort St. John, as he had said he would, to sell all the skins and give the proceeds to the girl.

"When that's done," said Lawless, "you will have no reason for staying here. If you will come with us after, we will go to the Fort with you. We three will then come back in the spring to the valley of gold for sport and riches."

He spoke lightly, yet seriously too. The old man shook his head. "I have thought," he said. "I cannot go to the south. I am a hunter now, nothing more. I have been long alone; I do not wish for change. I shall remain at Clear Mountain when these skins have gone to Fort St. John, and if you come to me in the spring or at any time, my door will open to you, and I will share all with you. Gordineer was a good man. You are good men. I'll remember you, but I can't go with you—no.

"Some day you would leave me to go to the women who wait for you, and then I should be alone again. I will not change—vraiment!"

On the morning they left, he took Jo Gordineer's cup from the shelf, and from a hidden place brought out a flask half filled with liquor. He poured out a little in the cup gravely, and handed it to Lawless, but Lawless gave it back to him.

"You must drink from it," he said, "not me."

He held out the cup of his own flask. When each of the three had a share, the old man raised his long arm solemnly, and said in a tone so gentle that the others hardly recognised his voice: "To a lost comrade!" They drank in silence.

"A little gentleman!" said Lawless, under his breath. When they were ready to start, Lawless said to him at the last: "What will you do here, comrade, as the days go on?"

"There are pumas in the mountains," he replied. They parted from him upon the ledge where the great fight had occurred, and travelled into the east. Turning many times, they saw him still standing there. At a point where they must lose sight of him, they looked for the last time. He was alone with his solitary hills, leaning on his rifle. They fired two shots into the air. They saw him raise his rifle, and two faint reports came in reply. He became again immovable: as much a part of those hills as the shining glacier; never to leave them.

In silence the two rounded the cliff, and saw him no more.

THE TRAIL OF THE SUN DOGS

"Swell, you see," said Jacques Parfaite, as he gave Whiskey Wine, the leading dog, a cut with the whip and twisted his patois to the uses of narrative, "he has been alone there at the old Fort for a long time. I remember when I first see him. It was in the summer. The world smell sweet if you looked this way or that. If you drew in your breath quick from the top of a hill you felt a great man. Ridley, the chief trader, and myself have come to the Fort on our way to the Mackenzie River. In the yard of the Fort the grass have grown tall, and sprung in the cracks under the doors and windows; the Fort have not been use for a long time. Once there was plenty of buffalo near, and the caribou sometimes; but they were all gone—only a few. The Indians never went that way, only when the seasons were the best. The Company have close the Post; it did not pay. Still, it was pleasant after a long tramp to come to even an empty fort. We know dam' well there is food buried in the yard or under the floor, and it would be droll to open the place for a day—Lost Man's Tavern, we called it. Well—"

"Well, what?" said Sir Duke Lawless, who had travelled up to the Barren Grounds for the sake of adventure and game; and, with his old friend, Shon M'Gann, had trusted himself to the excellent care of Jacques Parfaite, the half-breed.

Jacques cocked his head on one side and shook it wisely and mysteriously. "Tres bien, we trailed through the long grass, pried open the shutters and door, and went in. It is cool in the north of an evening, as you know. We build a fire, and soon there is very fine times. Ridley pried up the floor, and we found good things. Holy! but it was a feast. We had a little rum also. As we talk and a great laugh swim round, there come a noise behind us like shuffling feet. We got to our legs quick. Mon Dieu, a strange sight! A man stand looking at us with something in his face that make my fingers cold all at once—a look—well you would think it was carved in stone—it never change. Once I was at Fort Garry; the Church of St. Mary is there. They have a picture in it of the great scoundrel Judas as he went to hang himself. Judas was a fool—what was thirty dollars!—you give me hunder' to take you to the Barren Grounds. Pah!"

The half-breed chuckled, shook his head sagely, swore half-way through his vocabulary at Whiskey Wine,

gratefully received a pipe of tobacco from Shon M'Gann, and continued: "He come in on us slow and still, and push out long thin hands, the fingers bent like claws, towards the pot. He was starving. Yes, it was so; but I nearly laugh. It was spring—a man is a fool to starve in the spring. But he was differen'. There was a cause. The factor give him soup from the pot and a little rum. He was mad for meat, but that would have kill him—yes. He did not look at you like a man.

"When you are starving, you are an animal. But there was something more with this.—He made the flesh creep, he was so thin, and strange, and sulky—eh, is that a word when the face looks dark and never smiles? So. He would not talk. When we ask him where he come from, he points to the north; when we ask him where he is going, he shake his head as he not know. A man is mad not to know where he travel to up here; something comes quick to him unless, and it is not good to die too soon. The trader said, 'Come with us.' He shake his head, No. 'P'r'aps you want to stay here,' said Ridley loud, showing his teeth all in a minute. He nod. Then the trader laugh thick in his throat and give him more soup. After, he try to make the man talk; but he was stubborn like that dirty Whiskey Wine—ah, sacre bleu!"

Whiskey Wine had his usual portion of whip and anathema before Jacques again took up the thread. "It was no use. He would not talk. When the trader get angry once more, he turned to me, and the look in his face make me sorry. I swore—Ridley did not mind that, I was thick friends with him. I say, 'Keep still. It is no good. He has had bad times. He has been lost, and seen mad things. He will never be again like when God make him.' Very well, I spoke true. He was like a sun dog."

"What's that ye say, Parfaite?" said Shon—"a sun dog?"

Sir Duke Lawless, puzzled, listened eagerly for the reply.

The half-breed in delight ran before them, cracking his whip and jingling the bells at his knees. "Ah, that's it! It is a name we have for some. You do not know? It is easy. In the high-up country"—pointing north"—you see sometimes many suns. But it is not many after all; it is only one; and the rest are the same as your face in looking-glasses—one, two, three, plenty. You see?"

"Yes," said Sir Duke, "reflections of the real sun." Parfaite tapped him on the arm. "So: you have the thing. Well, this man is not himself—he have left himself where he seen his bad times. It makes your flesh creep sometimes when you see the sun dogs in the sky—this man did the same. You shall see him tonight."

Sir Duke looked at the little half-breed, and wondered that the product of so crude a civilisation should be so little crude in his imagination. "What happened?" he asked.

"Nothing happened. But the man could not sleep. He sit before the fire, his eyes moving here and there, and sometimes he shiver. Well, I watch him. In the morning we leave him there, and he has been there ever since—the only man at the Fort. The Indians do not go; they fear him; but there is no harm in him. He is old now. In an hour we'll be there."

The sun was hanging, with one shoulder up like a great red peering dwarf, on the far side of a long hillock of stunted pines, when the three arrived at the Fort. The yard was still as Parfaite had described it—full of rank grass, through which one path trailed to the open door. On the stockade walls grass grew, as though where men will not live like men Nature labours to smother. The shutters of the window were not open; light only entered through narrow openings in them, made for the needs of possible attacks by Indians in the far past. One would have sworn that anyone dwelling there was more like the dead than the living. Yet it had, too, something of the peace of the lonely graveyard. There was no one in the Fort; but there were signs of life—skins piled here and there, a few utensils, a bench, a hammock for food swung from the rafters, a low fire burning in the chimney, and a rude spear stretched on the wall.

"Sure, the place gives you shivers!" said Shon. "Open go these windows. Put wood on the fire, Parfaite; cook the meat that we've brought, and no other, me boy; and whin we're filled wid a meal and the love o' God, bring in your Lost Man, or Sun Dog, or whativer's he by name or nature."

While Parfaite and Shon busied themselves, Lawless wandered out with his gun, and, drawn on by the clear joyous air of the evening, walked along a path made by the same feet that had travelled the yard of the Fort. He followed it almost unconsciously at first, thinking of the strange histories that the far north hoards in its fastnesses, wondering what singular fate had driven the host of this secluded tavern—farthest from the pleasant south country, nearest to the Pole—to stand, as it were, a sentinel at the raw outposts of the world. He looked down at the trail where he was walking with a kind of awe, which even his cheerful common sense could not dismiss.

He came to the top of a ridge on which were a handful of meagre trees. Leaning on his gun, he looked straight away into the farthest distance. On the left was a blurred edge of pines, with tops like ungainly tendrils feeling for the sky. On the right was a long bare stretch of hills veiled in the thin smoke of the evening, and between, straight before him, was a wide lane of unknown country, billowing away to where it froze into the vast archipelago that closes with the summit of the world. He experienced now that weird charm which has drawn so many into Arctic wilds and gathered the eyes of millions longingly. Wife, child, London, civilisation, were forgotten for the moment. He was under a spell which, once felt, lingers in your veins always.

At length his look drew away from the glimmering distance, and he suddenly became conscious of human presence. Here, almost at his feet, was a man, also looking out along that slumbering waste. He was dressed in skins, his arms were folded across his breast, his chin bent low, and he gazed up and out from deep eyes shadowed by strong brows. Lawless saw the shoulders of the watcher heave and shake once or twice, and then a voice with a deep aching trouble in it spoke; but at first he could catch no words. Presently, however, he heard distinctly, for the man raised his hands high above his head, and the words fell painfully: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Then a low harsh laugh came from him, and he was silent again. Lawless did not move. At last the man turned round, and, seeing him standing motionless, his gun in his hands, he gave a hoarse cry. Then he stood still. "If you have come to kill, do not wait," he said; "I am ready."

At the sound of Lawless's reassuring voice he recovered, and began, in stumbling words, to excuse himself.

His face was as Jacques Parfaite had described it: trouble of some terrible kind was furrowed in it, and, though his body was stalwart, he looked as if he had lived a century. His eyes dwelt on Sir Duke Lawless for a moment, and then, coming nearer, he said, “You are an Englishman?”

Lawless held out his hand in greeting, yet he was not sorry when the other replied: “The hand of no man in greeting. Are you alone?”

When he had been told, he turned towards the Fort, and silently they made their way to it. At the door he turned and said to Lawless, “My name—to you—is Detmold.”

The greeting between Jacques and his sombre host was notable for its extreme brevity; with Shon McGann for its hesitation—Shon’s impressionable Irish nature was awed by the look of the man, though he had seen some strange things in the north. Darkness was on them by this time, and the host lighted bowls of fat with wicks of deer’s tendons, and by the light of these and the fire they ate their supper. Parfaite beguiled the evening with tales of the north, always interesting to Lawless; to which Shon added many a shrewd word of humour—for he had recovered quickly from his first timidity in the presence of the stranger.

As time went on Jacques saw that their host’s eyes were frequently fixed on Sir Duke in a half-eager, musing way, and he got Shon away to bed and left the two together.

“You are a singular man. Why do you live here?” said Lawless. Then he went straight to the heart of the thing. “What trouble have you had, of what crime are you guilty?”

The man rose to his feet, shaking, and walked to and fro in the room for a time, more than once trying to speak, but failing. He beckoned to Lawless, and opened the door. Lawless took his hat and followed him along the trail they had travelled before supper until they came to the ridge where they had met. The man faced the north, the moon glistening coldly on his grey hair. He spoke with incredible weight and slowness:

“I tell you—for you are one who understands men, and you come from a life that I once knew well. I know of your people. I was of good family—”

“I know the name,” said Sir Duke quietly, at the same time fumbling in his memory for flying bits of gossip and history which he could not instantly find.

“There were two brothers of us. I was the younger. A ship was going to the Arctic Sea.” He pointed into the north. “We were both young and ambitious. He was in the army, I the navy. We went with the expedition. At first it was all beautiful and grand, and it seemed noble to search for those others who had gone into that land and never come back. But our ship got locked in the ice, and then came great trouble. A year went by and we did not get free; then another year began.... Four of us set out for the south. Two died. My brother and I were left—”

Lawless exclaimed. He now remembered how general sympathy went out to a well-known county family when it was announced that two of its members were lost in the Arctic regions.

Detmold continued: “I was the stronger. He grew weaker and weaker. It was awful to live those days: the endless snow and cold, the long nights when you could only hear the whirring of meteors, the bright sun which did not warm you, nor even when many suns, the reflections of itself, followed it—the mocking sun dogs, no more the sun than I am what my mother brought into the world.... We walked like dumb men, for the dreadful cold fills the heart with bitterness. I think I grew to hate him because he could not travel faster, that days were lost, and death crept on so pitilessly. Sometimes I had a mad wish to kill him. May you never know suffering that begets such things! I laughed as I sat beside him, and saw him sink to sleep and die.... I think I could have saved him. When he was gone I—what do men do sometimes when starvation is on them, and they have a hunger of hell to live? I did that shameless thing—and he was my brother!... I lived, and was saved.”

Lawless shrank away from the man, but words of horror got no farther than his throat. And he was glad afterwards that it was so; for when he looked again at this woful relic of humanity before him he felt a strange pity.

“God’s hand is on me to punish,” said the man. “It will never be lifted. Death were easy: I bear the infamy of living.”

Lawless reached out and caught him gently by the shoulders. “Poor fellow! poor Detmold!” he said. For an instant the sorrowful face lighted, the square chin trembled, and the hands thrust out towards Lawless, but suddenly dropped.

“Go,” he said humbly, “and leave me here. We must not meet again... I have had one moment of respite.... Go.”

Without a word, Lawless turned and made his way to the Fort. In the morning the three comrades started on their journey again; but no one sped them on their way or watched them as they went.

THE PILOT OF BELLE AMOUR

He lived in a hut on a jutting crag of the Cliff of the King. You could get to it by a hard climb up a precipitous pathway, or by a ladder of ropes which swung from his cottage door down the cliff-side to the sands. The bay that washed the sands was called Belle Amour. The cliff was huge, sombre; it had a terrible granite moroseness. If you travelled back from its edge until you stood within the very heart of Labrador, you would add step upon step of barrenness and austerity.

Only at seasons did the bay share the gloom of the cliff. When out of its shadow it was, in summer, very bright and playful, sometimes boisterous, often idle, coquetting with the sands. There was a great difference between the cliff and the bay: the cliff was only as it appeared, but the bay was a shameless hypocrite. For under one shoulder it hid a range of reefs, and, at a spot where the shadows of the cliff never reached it, and the sun played with a grim kind of joy, a long needle of rock ran up at an angle under the water, waiting to

pierce irresistibly the adventurous ship that, in some mad moment, should creep to its shores.

The man was more like the cliff than the bay: stern, powerful, brooding. His only companions were the Indians, who in summer-time came and went, getting stores of him, which he in turn got from a post of the Hudson's Bay Company, seventy miles up the coast. At one time the Company, impressed by the number of skins brought to them by the pilot, and the stores he bought of them, had thought of establishing a post at Belle Amour; but they saw that his dealings with them were fair and that he had small gain, and they decided to use him as an unofficial agent, and reap what profit was to be had as things stood. Kenyon, the Company's agent, who had the Post, was keen to know why Gaspard the pilot lived at Belle Amour. No white man sojourned near him, and he saw no one save now and then a priest who travelled silently among the Indians, or some fisherman, hunter, or woodsman, who, for pleasure or from pure adventure, ran into the bay and tasted the hospitality tucked away on a ledge of the Cliff of the King.

To Kenyon, Gaspard was unresponsive, however adroit the catechism. Father Corraine also, who sometimes stepped across the dark threshold of Gaspard's hut, would have, for the man's soul's sake, dug out the heart of his secret; but Gaspard, open with food, fire, blanket, and tireless attendance, closed like the doors of a dungeon when the priest would have read him. At the name of good Ste. Anne he would make the sacred gesture, and would take a blessing when the priest passed from his hut to go again into the wilds; but when pressed to disclose his mind and history, he would always say: "M'sieu', I have nothing to confess." After a number of years the priest ceased to ask him, and he remained with the secret of his life, inscrutable and silent.

Being vigilant, one would have seen, however, that he lived in some land of memory or anticipation, beyond his life of daily toil and usual dealing. The hut seemed to have been built at a point where east and west and south the great gulf could be seen and watched. It seemed almost ludicrous that a man should call himself a pilot on a coast and at a bay where a pilot was scarce needed once a year. But he was known as Gaspard the pilot, and on those rare occasions when a vessel did anchor in the bay, he performed his duties with such a certainty as to leave unguessed how many deathtraps crouched near that shore. At such times, however, Gaspard seemed to look twenty years younger. A light would come into his face, a stalwart kind of pride sit on him, though beneath there lurked a strange, sardonic look in his deep eyes—such a grim furtiveness as though he should say: "If I but twist my finger we are all for the fishes." But he kept his secret and waited. He never seemed to tire of looking down the gulf, as though expecting some ship. If one appeared and passed on, he merely nodded his head, hung up his glass, returned to his work, or, sitting by the door, talked to himself in low, strange tones. If one came near, making as if it would enter the bay, a hungry joy possessed him. If a storm was on, the joy was the greater. No pilot ever ventured to a ship on such rough seas as Gaspard ventured for small profit or glory.

Behind it all lay his secret. There came one day a man who discovered it.

It was Pierre, the half-breed adventurer. There was no point in all the wild northland which Pierre had not touched. He loved it as he loved the game of life. He never said so of it, but he never said so of the game of life, and he played it with a deep subterranean joy. He had had his way with the musk-ox in the Arctic Circle; with the white bear at the foot of Alaskan Hills; with the seal in Baffin's Bay; with the puma on the slope of the Pacific; and now at last he had come upon the trail of Labrador. Its sternness, its moodiness pleased him. He smiled at it the comprehending smile of the man who has fingered the nerves and the heart of men and things. As a traveller, wandering through a prison, looks upon its grim cells and dungeons with the eye of unembarrassed freedom, finding no direful significance in the clank of its iron, so Pierre travelled down with a handful of Indians through the hard fastnesses of that country, and, at last, alone, came upon the bay of Belle Amour.

There was in him some antique touch of refinement and temperament which, in all his evil days and deeds and moments of shy nobility, could find its way into the souls of men with whom the world had had an awkward hour. He was a man of little speech, but he had that rare persuasive penetration which unlocked the doors of trouble, despair, and tragedy. Men who would never have confessed to a priest confessed to him. In his every fibre was the granite of the Indian nature, which looked upon punishment with stoic satisfaction.

In the heart of Labrador he had heard of Gaspard, and had travelled to that point in the compass where he could find him. One day when the sun was fighting hard to make a pathway of light in front of Gaspard's hut, Pierre rounded a corner of the cliff and fronted Gaspard as he sat there, his eyes idling gloomily with the sea. They said little to each other—in new lands hospitality has not need of speech. When Gaspard and Pierre looked each other in the eyes they knew that one word between them was as a hundred with other men. The heart knows its confessor, and the confessor knows the shadowed eye that broods upon some ghostly secret; and when these are face to face there comes a merciless concision of understanding.

"From where away?" said Gaspard, as he handed some tobacco to Pierre.

"From Hudson's Bay, down the Red Wolf Plains, along the hills, across the coast country, here."

"Why?" Gaspard eyed Pierre's small kit with curiosity; then flung up a piercing, furtive look. Pierre shrugged his shoulders.

"Adventure, adventure," he answered. "The land"—he pointed north, west, and east—"is all mine. I am the citizen of every village and every camp of the great north."

The old man turned his head towards a spot up the shore of Belle Amour, before he turned to Pierre again, with a strange look, and said: "Where do you go?"

Pierre followed his gaze to that point in the shore, felt the undercurrent of vague meaning in his voice, guessed what was his cue, and said: "Somewhere, sometime; but now only Belle Amour. I have had a long travel. I have found an open door. I will stay—if you please—hein? If you please?"

Gaspard brooded. "It is lonely," he replied. "This day it is all bright; the sun shines and the little gay waves crinkle to the shore. But, mon Dieu! sometimes it is all black and ugly with storm. The waves come grinding, booming in along the gridiron rocks"—he smiled a grim smile—"break through the teeth of the reefs, and split with a roar of hell upon the cliff. And all the time, and all the time,"—his voice got low with a kind of devilish joy,—"there is a finger—Jesu! you should see that finger of the devil stretch up from the bowels of the

earth, waiting, waiting for something to come out of the storm. And then—and then you can hear a wild laugh come out of the land, come up from the sea, come down from the sky—all waiting, waiting for something! No, no, you would not stay here."

Pierre looked again to that point in the shore towards which Gaspard's eyes had been cast. The sun was shining hard just then, and the stern, sharp rocks, tumbling awkwardly back into the waste behind, had an insolent harshness. Day perched garishly there. Yet now and then the staring light was broken by sudden and deep shadows—great fissures in the rocks and lanes between. These gave Pierre a suggestion, though why, he could not say. He knew that when men live lives of patient, gloomy vigilance, they generally have something to watch and guard. Why should Gaspard remain here year after year? His occupation was nominally a pilot in a bay rarely touched by vessels, and then only for shelter. A pilot need not take his daily life with such brooding seriousness. In body he was like flexible metal, all cord and muscle. He gave the impression of bigness, though he was small in stature. Yet, as Pierre studied him, he saw something that made him guess the man had had about him one day a woman, perhaps a child; no man could carry that look unless. If a woman has looked at you from day to day, something of her, some reflection of her face, passes to yours and stays there; and if a child has held your hand long, or hung about your knees, it gives you a kind of gentle wariness as you step about your home.

Pierre knew that a man will cherish with a deep, eternal purpose a memory of a woman or a child, when, no matter how compelling his cue to remember where a man is concerned, he will yield it up in the end to time. Certain speculations arranged themselves definitely in Pierre's mind: there was a woman, maybe a child once; there was some sorrowful mystery about them; there was a point in the shore that had held the old man's eyes strangely; there was the bay with that fantastic "finger of the devil" stretching up from the bowels of the world. Behind the symbol lay the Thing what was it?

Long time he looked out upon the gulf, then his eyes drew into the bay and stayed there, seeing mechanically, as a hundred fancies went through his mind. There were reefs of which the old man had spoken. He could guess from the colour and movement of the water where they were. The finger of the devil—was it not real? A finger of rock, waiting as the old man said—for what?

Gaspard touched his shoulder. He rose and went with him into the gloomy cabin. They ate and drank in silence. When the meal was finished they sat smoking till night fell. Then the pilot lit a fire, and drew his rough chair to the door. Though it was only late summer, it was cold in the shade of the cliff. Long time they sat. Now and again Pierre intercepted the quick, elusive glance of his silent host. Once the pilot took the pipe from his mouth, and leaned his hands on his knees as if about to speak. But he did not.

Pierre saw that the time was ripe for speech. So he said, as though he knew something: "It is a long time since it happened?"

Gaspard, brooding, answered: "Yes, a long time—too long." Then, as if suddenly awakened to the strangeness of the question, he added, in a startled way: "What do you know? Tell me quick what you know."

"I know nothing except what comes to me here, pilot,"—Pierre touched his forehead, "but there is a thing—I am not sure what. There was a woman—perhaps a child; there is something on the shore; there is a hidden point of rock in the bay; and you are waiting for a ship—for the ship, and it does not come—isn't that so?"

Gaspard got to his feet, and peered into Pierre's immobile face. Their eyes met.

"Mon Dieu!" said the pilot, his hand catching the smoke away from between them, "you are a droll man; you have a wonderful mind. You are cold like ice, and still there is in you a look of fire."

"Sit down," answered Pierre quietly, "and tell me all. Perhaps I could think it out little by little; but it might take too long—and what is the good?"

Slowly Gaspard obeyed. Both hands rested on his knees, and he stared abstractedly into the fire. Pierre thrust forward the tobacco-bag. His hand lifted, took the tobacco, and then his eyes came keenly to Pierre's. He was about to speak.... "Fill your pipe first," said the half-breed coolly. The old man did so abstractedly. When the pipe was lighted, Pierre said: "Now!"

"I have never told the story, never—not even to Pere Corraine. But I know, I have it here"—he put his hand to his forehead, as did Pierre—"that you will be silent." Pierre nodded.

"She was fine to see. Her eyes were black as beads; and when she laugh it was all music. I was so happy! We lived on the island of the Aux Coudres, far up there at Quebec. It was a wild place. There were smugglers and others there—maybe pirates. But she was like a saint of God among all. I was lucky man. I was pilot, and took ships out to sea, and brought them in safe up the gulf. It is not all easy, for there are mad places. Once or twice when a wild storm was on I could not land at Cap Martin, and was carried out to sea and over to France.... Well, that was not so bad; there was plenty to eat and drink, nothing to do. But when I marry it was differen'. I was afraid of being carried away and leave my wife—the belle Mamette—alone long time. You see, I was young, and she was ver' beautiful."

He paused and caught his hand over his mouth as though to stop a sound: the lines of his face deepened. Presently he puffed his pipe so hard that the smoke and the sparks hid him in a cloud through which he spoke. "When the child was born—Holy Mother! have you ever felt the hand of your own child in yours, and looked at the mother, as she lies there all pale and shining between the quilts?"

He paused. Pierre's eyes dropped to the floor. Gaspard continued: "Well, it is a great thing, and the babe was born quick one day when we were all alone. A thing like that gives you wonder. Then I could not bear to go away with the ships, and at last I said: 'One month, and then the ice fills the gulf, and there will be no more ships for the winter. That will be the last for me. I will be pilot no more-no.' She was ver' happy, and a laugh ran over her little white teeth. Mon Dieu, I stop that laugh pretty quick—in fine way!"

He seemed for an instant to forget his great trouble, and his face went to warm sunshine like a boy's; but it was as sun playing on a scarred fortress. Presently the light faded out of his face and left it like iron smouldering from the bellows.

"Well," he said, "you see there was a ship to go almost the last of the season, and I said to my wife, 'Mamette, it is the last time I shall be pilot. You must come with me and bring the child, and they will put us

off at Father Point, and then we will come back slow to the village on the good Ste. Anne and live there ver' quiet.' When I say that to her she laugh back at me and say, 'Beau! beau!' and she laugh in the child's eyes, and speak—nom de Dieu! she speak so gentle and light—and say to the child: 'Would you like go with your father a pretty journey down the gulf?' And the little child laugh back at her, and shake its soft brown hair over its head. They were both so glad to go. I went to the captain of the ship. I say to him, 'I will take my wife and my little child, and when we come to Father Point we will go ashore.' Bien, the captain laugh big, and it was all right. That was long time ago—long time."

He paused again, threw his head back with a despairing toss, his chin dropped on his breast, his hands clasped between his knees, and his pipe, laid beside him on the bench, was forgotten.

Pierre quietly put some wood upon the fire, opened his kit, drew out from it a little flask of rum and laid it upon the bench beside the pipe. A long time passed. At last Gaspard roused himself with a long sigh, turned and picked up the pipe, but, seeing the flask of rum, lifted it, and took one long swallow before he began to fill and light his pipe. There came into his voice something of iron hardness as he continued his story.

"Alors, we went into the boat. As we travelled down the gulf a great storm came out of the north. We thought it would pass, but it stayed on. When we got to the last place where the pilot could land, the waves were running like hills to the shore, and no boat could live between the ship and the point. For myself, it was nothing—I am a strong man and a great swimmer. But when a man has a wife and a child, it is differen'. So the ship went on out into the ocean with us. Well, we laugh a little, and think what a great brain I had when I say to my wife: 'Come and bring the child for the last voyage of Gaspard the pilot.' You see, there we were on board the ship, everything ver' good, plenty to eat, much to drink, to smoke, all the time. The sailors, they were ver' funny, and to see them take my child, my little Babette, and play with her as she roll on the deck—merci, it was gran'! So I say to my wife:

"'This will be bon voyage for all.' But a woman, she has not the mind like a man. When a man laugh in the sun and think nothing of evil, a woman laugh too, but there come a little quick sob to her lips. You ask her why, and she cannot tell. She know that something will happen. A man has great idee, a woman great sight. So my wife, she turn her face away all sad from me then, and she was right—she was right!

"One day in the ocean we pass a ship—only two days out. The ship signal us. I say to my wife: 'Ha, ha! now we can go back, maybe, to the good Ste. Anne.' Well, the ships come close together, and the captain of the other ship he have something importan' with ours. He ask if there will be chance of pilot into the gulf, because it is the first time that he visit Quebec. The captain swing round and call to me. I go up. I bring my wife and my little Babette; and that was how we sail back to the great gulf.

"When my wife step on board that ship I see her face get pale, and something strange in her eyes. I ask her why; she do not know, but she hug Babette close to her breast with a kind of fear. A long, low, black ship, it could run through every sea. Soon the captain come to me and say: 'You know the coast, the north coast of the gulf, from Labrador to Quebec?' I tell him yes. 'Well,' he say, 'do you know of a bay where few ships enter safe?' I think a moment and I tell him of Belle Amour. Then he say, ver' quick: 'That is the place; we will go to the bay of Belle Amour.' He was ver' kind to my face; he give my wife and child good berth, plenty to eat and drink, and once more I laugh; but my wife—there was in her face something I not understan'. It is not easy to understan' a woman. We got to the bay. I had pride: I was young. I was the best pilot in the St. Lawrence, and I took in the ship between the reefs of the bay, where they run like a gridiron, and I laugh when I swing the ship all ver' quick to the right, after we pass the reefs, and make a curve round—something. The captain pull me up and ask why. But I never tell him that. I not know why I never tell him. But the good God put the thought into my head, and I keep it to this hour, and it never leave me, never—never!"

He slowly rubbed his hands up and down his knees, took another sip of rum, and went on:

"I brought the ship close up to the shore, and we go to anchor. All that night I see the light of a fire on the shore. So I slide down and swim to the shore. Under a little arch of rocks something was going on. I could not tell, but I know from the sound that they are to bury something. Then, all at once, it come to me—this is a pirate ship! I come closer and closer to the light, and then I see a dreadful thing. There was the captain and the mate, and another. They turn quick upon two other men—two sailors—and kill them. Then they take the bodies and wound them round some casks in a great hole, and cover it all up. I understan'. It is the old legend that a dead body will keep gold all to itself, so that no one shall find it. Mon Dieu!"—his voice dropped low and shook in his throat—"I give one little cry at the sight, and then they see me. There were three. They were armed; they sprang upon me and tied me. Then they fling me beside the fire, and they cover up the hole with the gold and the bodies.

"When that was done they take me back to the ship, then with pistols at my head they make me pilot the ship out into the bay again. As we went they make a chart of the place. We travel along the coast for one day; and then a great storm of snow come, and the captain say to me: 'Steer us into harbour.' When we are at anchor, they take me and my wife, and little child and put us ashore alone, with a storm and the bare rocks and the dreadful night, and leave us there, that we shall never tell the secret of the gold. That night my wife and my child die in the snow."

Here his voice became strained and slow. "After a long time I work my way to an Injin camp. For months I was a child in strength, all my flesh gone. When the spring come I went and dug a deeper grave for my wife, and p'tite Babette, and leave them there, where they had died. But I come to the bay of Belle Amour, because I knew some day the man with the devil's heart would come back for his gold, and then would arrive my time—the hour of God!"

He paused. "The hour of God," he repeated slowly. "I have waited twenty years, but he has not come; yet I know that he will come. I feel it here"—he touched his forehead; "I know it here"—he tapped his heart. "Once where my heart was, there is only one thing, and it is hate, and I know—I know—that he will come. And when he comes—" He raised his arm high above his head, laughed wildly, paused, let the hand drop, and then fell to staring into the fire.

Pierre again placed the flask of rum between his fingers. But Gaspard put it down, caught his arms together across his breast, and never turned his face from the fire. Midnight came, and still they sat there silent. No

man had a greater gift in waiting than Pierre. Many a time his life had been a swivel, upon which the comedies and tragedies of others had turned. He neither loved nor feared men: sometimes he pitied them. He pitied Gaspard. He knew what it is to have the heartstrings stretched out, one by one, by the hand of a Gorgon, while the feet are chained to the rocking world.

Not till the darkest hour of the morning did the two leave their silent watch and go to bed. The sun had crept stealthily to the door of the but before they rose again. Pierre laid his hand upon Gaspard's shoulder as they travelled out into the morning, and said: "My friend, I understand. Your secret is safe with me; you shall take me to the place where the gold is buried, but it shall wait there until the time is ripe. What is gold to me? Nothing. To find gold—that is the trick of any fool. To win it or to earn it is the only game. Let the bodies rot about the gold. You and I will wait. I have many friends in the northland, but there is no face in any tent door looking for me. You are alone: well, I will stay with you. Who can tell—perhaps it is near at hand—the hour of God!"

The huge hard hand of Gaspard swallowed the small hand of Pierre, and, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, he answered: "You shall be my comrade. I have told you all, as I have never told it to my God. I do not fear you about the gold—it is all cursed. You are not like other men; I will trust you. Some time you also have had the throat of a man in your fingers, and watched the life spring out of his eyes, and leave them all empty. When men feel like that, what is gold—what is anything! There is food in the bay and on the hills.

"We will live together, you and I. Come and I will show you the place of hell."

Together they journeyed down the crag and along the beach to the place where the gold, the grim god of this world, was fortressed and bastioned by its victims.

The days went on; the weeks and months ambled by. Still the two lived together. Little speech passed between them, save that speech of comrades, who use more the sign than the tongue. It seemed to Pierre after a time that Gaspard's wrongs were almost his own. Yet with this difference: he must stand by and let the avenger be the executioner; he must be the spectator merely.

Sometimes he went inland and brought back moose, caribou, and the skins of other animals, thus assisting Gaspard in his dealings with the great Company. But again there were days when he did nothing but lie on the skins at the hut's door, or saunter in the shadows and the sunlight. Not since he had come to Gaspard had a ship passed the bay or sought to anchor in it.

But there came a day. It was the early summer. The snow had shrunk from the ardent sun, and had swilled away to the gulf, leaving the tender grass showing. The moss on the rocks had changed from brown to green, and the vagrant birds had fluttered back from the south. The winter's furs had been carried away in the early spring to the Company's post, by a detachment of coureurs de bois. There was little left to do. This morning they sat in the sun looking out upon the gulf. Presently Gaspard rose and went into the hut. Pierre's eyes still lazily scanned the water. As he looked he saw a vessel rounding a point in the distance. Suppose this was the ship of the pirate and murderer? The fancy diverted him. His eyes drew away from the indistinct craft—first to the reefs, and then to that spot where the colossal needle stretched up under the water. It was as Pierre speculated. Brigond, the French pirate, who had hidden his gold at such shameless cost, was, after twenty years in the galleys at Toulon, come back to find his treasure. He had doubted little that he would find it. The lonely spot, the superstition concerning dead bodies, the supposed doom of Gaspard, all ran in his favour. His little craft came on, manned by as vile a mob as ever mutinied or built a wrecker's fire.

When the ship got within a short distance of the bay, Pierre rose and called. Gaspard came to the door. "There's work to do, pilot," he said. Gaspard felt the thrill of his voice, and flashed a look out to the gulf. He raised his hands with a gasp. "I feel it," he said: "it is the hour of God!"

He started to the rope ladder of the cliff, then wheeled suddenly and came back to Pierre. "You must not come," he said. "Stay here and watch; you shall see great things." His voice had a round, deep tone. He caught both Pierre's hands in his and added: "It is for my wife and child; I have no fear. Adieu, my friend! When you see the good Pere Corraine say to him—but no, it is no matter—there is One greater!"

Once again he caught Pierre hard by the shoulder, then ran to the cliff and swung down the ladder. All at once there shot through Pierre's body an impulse, and his eyes lighted with excitement. He sprang towards the cliff. "Gaspard, come back!" he called; then paused, and, with an enigmatical smile, shrugged his shoulders, drew back, and waited.

The vessel was hove to outside the bay, as if hesitating. Brigond was considering whether it were better, with his scant chart, to attempt the bay, or to take small boats and make for the shore. He remembered the reefs, but he did not know of the needle of rock. Presently he saw Gaspard's boat coming. "Someone who knows the bay," he said; "I see a hut on the cliff."

"Hello, who are you?" Brigond called down as Gaspard drew alongside.

"A Hudson's Bay Company's man," answered Gaspard.

"How many are there of you?"

"Myself alone."

"Can you pilot us in?"

"I know the way."

"Come up."

Gaspard remembered Brigond, and he veiled his eyes lest the hate he felt should reveal him. No one could have recognised him as the young pilot of twenty years before. Then his face was cheerful and bright, and in his eye was the fire of youth. Now a thick beard and furrowing lines hid all the look of the past. His voice, too, was desolate and distant.

Brigond clapped him on the shoulder. "How long have you lived off there?" he asked, as he jerked his finger towards the shore.

"A good many years."

"Did anything strange ever happen there?" Gaspard felt his heart contract again, as it did when Brigond's

hand touched his shoulder.

"Nothing strange is known."

A vicious joy came into Brigond's face. His fingers opened and shut. "Safe, by the holy heaven!" he grunted.

"'By the holy heaven!'" repeated Gaspard, under his breath.

They walked forward. Almost as they did so there came a big puff of wind across the bay: one of those sudden currents that run in from the ocean and the gulf stream. Gaspard saw, and smiled. In a moment the vessel's nose was towards the bay, and she sailed in, dipping a shoulder to the sudden foam. On she came past reef and bar, a pretty tumbril to the slaughter. The spray feathered up to her sails, the sun caught her on deck and beam; she was running dead for the needle of rock.

Brigond stood at Gaspard's side. All at once Gaspard made the sacred gesture and said, in a low tone, as if only to himself: "Pardon, mon capitaine, mon Jesu!" Then he turned triumphantly, fiercely, upon Brigond. The pirate was startled. "What's the matter?" he said.

Not Gaspard, but the needle rock replied. There was a sudden shock; the vessel stood still and shivered; lurched, swung shoulder downwards, reeled and struggled. Instantly she began to sink.

"The boats! lower the boats!" cried Brigond. "This cursed fool has run us on a rock!"

The waves, running high, now swept over the deck. Brigond started aft, but Gaspard sprang before him. "Stand back!" he called. "Where you are you die!"

Brigond, wild with terror and rage, ran at him. Gaspard caught him as he came. With vast strength he lifted him and dashed him to the deck. "Die there, murderer!" he cried.

Brigond crouched upon the deck, looking at him with fearful eyes. "Who-are you?" he asked.

"I am Gaspard the pilot. I have waited for you twenty years. Up there, in the snow, my wife and child died. Here, in this bay, you die."

There was noise and racketing behind them, but they two heard nothing. The one was alone with his terror, the other with his soul. Once, twice, thrice, the vessel heaved, then went suddenly still.

Gaspard understood. One look at his victim, then he made the sacred gesture again, and folded his arms. Pierre, from the height of the cliff, looking down, saw the vessel dip at the bow, and then the waters divided and swallowed it up.

"Gaspard should have lived," he said. "But—who can tell! Perhaps Mamette was waiting for him."

THE CRUISE OF THE "NINETY-NINE"

I. THE SEARCH

She was only a big gulf yawl, which a man and a boy could manage at a pinch, with old-fashioned high bulwarks, but lying clean in the water. She had a tolerable record for speed, and for other things so important that they were now and again considered by the Government at Quebec. She was called the Ninety-Nine. With a sense of humour the cure had called her so, after an interview with her owner and captain, Tarboe the smuggler. When he said to Tarboe at Angel Point that he had come to seek the one sheep that was lost, leaving behind him the other ninety-and-nine within the fold at Isle of Days, Tarboe had replied that it was a mistake—he was the ninety-nine, for he needed no repentance, and immediately offered the cure some old brown brandy of fine flavour. They both had a whimsical turn, and the cure did not ask Tarboe how he came by such perfect liquor. Many high in authority, it was said, had been soothed even to the winking of an eye when they ought to have sent a Nordenfeldt against the Ninety-Nine.

The day after the cure left Angel Point he spoke of Tarboe and his craft as the Ninety-and-Nine; and Tarboe hearing of this—for somehow he heard everything—immediately painted out the old name, and called her the Ninety-Nine, saying that she had been so blessed by the cure. Afterwards the Ninety-Nine had an increasing reputation for exploit and daring. In brief, Tarboe and his craft were smugglers, and to have trusted gossip would have been to say that the boat was as guilty as the man.

Their names were much more notorious than sweet; and yet in Quebec men laughed as they shrugged their shoulders at them; for as many jovial things as evil were told of Tarboe. When it became known that a dignitary of the Church had been given a case of splendid wine, which had come in a roundabout way to him, men waked in the night and laughed, to the annoyance of their wives; for the same dignitary had preached a powerful sermon against smugglers and the receivers of stolen goods. It was a sad thing for monsignor to be called a Ninety-Niner, as were all good friends of Tarboe, high and low. But when he came to know, after the wine had been leisurely drunk and becomingly praised, he brought his influence to bear in civic places, so that there was nothing left to do but to corner Tarboe at last.

It was in the height of summer, when there was little to think of in the old fortressed city, and a dart after a brigand appealed to the romantic natures of the idle French folk, common and gentle.

Through clouds of rank tobacco smoke, and in the wash of their bean soup, the habitants discussed the fate of "Black Tarboe," and officers of the garrison and idle ladies gossiped at the Citadel and at Murray Bay of the freebooting gentlemen, whose Ninety-Nine had furnished forth many a table in the great walled city. But Black Tarboe himself was down at Anticosti, waiting for a certain merchantman. Passing vessels saw the Ninety-Nine anchored in an open bay, flying its flag flippantly before the world—a rag of black sheepskin, with the wool on, in profane keeping with its name.

There was no attempt at hiding, no skulking behind a point, or scurrying from observation, but an indolent and insolent waiting—for something. "Black Tarboe's getting reckless," said one captain coming in, and

another, going out, grinned as he remembered the talk at Quebec, and thought of the sport provided for the Ninety-Nine when she should come up stream; as she must in due time, for Tarboe's home was on the Isle of Days, and was he not fond and proud of his daughter Joan to a point of folly? He was not alone in his admiration of Joan, for the cure at Isle of Days said high things of her.

Perhaps this was because she was unlike most other girls, and women too, in that she had a sense of humour, got from having mixed with choice spirits who visited her father and carried out at Angel Point a kind of freemasonry, which had few rites and many charges and countercharges. She had that almost impossible gift in a woman—the power of telling a tale whimsically. It was said that once, when Orvay Lafarge, a new Inspector of Customs, came to spy out the land, she kept him so amused by her quaint wit, that he sat in the doorway gossiping with her, while Tarboe and two others unloaded and safely hid away a cargo of liquors from the Ninety-Nine. And one of the men, as cheerful as Joan herself, undertook to carry a little keg of brandy into the house, under the very nose of the young inspector, who had sought to mark his appointment by the detection and arrest of Tarboe single-handed. He had never met Tarboe or Tarboe's daughter when he made his boast. If his superiors had known that Loco Bissonnette, Tarboe's jovial lieutenant, had carried the keg of brandy into the house in a water-pail, not fifteen feet from where Lafarge sat with Joan, they might have asked for his resignation. True, the thing was cleverly done, for Bissonnette made the water spill quite naturally against his leg, and when he turned to Joan and said in a crusty way that he didn't care if he spilled all the water in the pail, he looked so like an unwilling water-carrier that Joan for one little moment did not guess. When she understood, she laughed till the tears came to her eyes, and presently, because Lafarge seemed hurt, gave him to understand that he was upon his honour if she told him what it was. He consenting, she, still laughing, asked him into the house, and then drew the keg from the pail, before his eyes, and, tapping it, gave him some liquor, which he accepted without churlishness. He found nothing in this to lessen her in his eyes, for he knew that women have no civic virtues. He drank to their better acquaintance with few compunctions; a matter not scandalous, for there is nothing like a witty woman to turn a man's head, and there was not so much at stake after all. Tarboe had gone on for many a year till his trade seemed like the romance of law rather than its breach. It is safe to say that Lafarge was a less sincere if not a less blameless customs officer from this time forth. For humour on a woman's lips is a potent thing, as any man knows that has kissed it off in laughter.

As we said, Tarboe lay rocking in a bight at Anticosti, with an empty hold and a scanty larder. Still, he was in no ill-humour, for he smoked much and talked more than common. Perhaps that was because Joan was with him—an unusual thing. She was as good a sailor as her father, but she did not care, nor did he, to have her mixed up with him in his smuggling. So far as she knew, she had never been on board the Ninety-Nine when it carried a smuggled cargo. She had not broken the letter of the law. Her father, on asking her to come on this cruise, had said that it was a pleasure trip to meet a vessel in the gulf.

The pleasure had not been remarkable, though there had been no bad weather. The coast of Anticosti is cheerless, and it is possible even to tire of sun and water. True, Bissonnette played the concertina with passing sweetness, and sang as little like a wicked smuggler as one might think. But there were boundaries even to that, as there were to his love-making, which was, however, so interwoven with laughter that it was impossible to think the matter serious. Sometimes of an evening Joan danced on deck to the music of the concertina—dances which had their origin largely with herself fantastic, touched off with some unexpected sleight of foot—almost uncanny at times to Bissonnette, whose temperament could hardly go her distance when her mood was as this.

Tarboe looked on with a keener eye and understanding, for was she not bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh? Who was he that he should fail to know her? He saw the moonlight play on her face and hair, and he waved his head with the swaying of her body, and smacked his lips in thought of the fortune which, smuggling days over, would carry them up to St. Louis Street, Quebec, there to dwell as in a garden of good things.

After many days had passed, Joan tired of the concertina, of her own dancing, of her father's tales, and became inquisitive. So at last she said:

"Father, what's all this for?"

Tarboe did not answer her at once, but, turning to Bissonnette, asked him to play "The Demoiselle with the Scarlet Hose." It was a gay little demoiselle according to Bissonnette, and through the creaking, windy gaiety Tarboe and his daughter could talk without being heard by the musician. Tarboe lit another cigar—that badge of greatness in the eyes of his fellow-habitants, and said:

"What's all this for, Joan? Why, we're here for our health." His teeth bit on the cigar with enjoyable emphasis.

"If you don't tell me what's in the wind, you'll be sorry. Come, where's the good? I've got as much head as you have, father, and—"

"Mon Dieu! Much more. That's not the question. It was to be a surprise to you."

"Pshaw! You can only have one minute of surprise, and you can have months of fun looking out for a thing. I don't want surprises; I want what you've got—the thing that's kept you good-tempered while we lie here like snails on the rocks."

"Well, my cricket, if that's the way you feel, here you are. It is a long story, but I will make it short. Once there was a pirate called Brigond, and he brought into a bay on the coast of Labrador a fortune in some kegs —gold, gold! He hid it in a cave, wrapping around it the dead bodies of two men. It is thought that one can never find it so. He hid it, and sailed away. He was captured, and sent to prison in France for twenty years. Then he come back with a crew and another ship, and sailed into the bay, but his ship went down within sight of the place. And so the end of him and all. But wait. There was one man, the mate on the first voyage. He had been put in prison also. He did not get away as soon as Brigond. When he was free, he come to the captain of a ship that I know, the Free-and-Easy, that sails to Havre, and told him the story, asking for passage to Quebec. The captain—Gobal—did not believe it, but said he would bring him over on the next voyage. Gobal come to me and told me all there was to tell. I said that it was a true story, for Pretty Pierre

told me once he saw Brigond's ship go down in the bay; but he would not say how, or why, or where. Pierre would not lie in a thing like that, and—"

"Why didn't he get the gold himself?"

"What is money to him? He is as a gipsy. To him the money is cursed. He said so. Eh bien! some wise men are fools, one way or another. Well, I told Gobal I would give the man the Ninety-Nine for the cruise and search, and that we should divide the gold between us, if it was found, taking out first enough to make a dot for you and a fine handful for Bissonnette. But no, shake not your head like that. It shall be so. Away went Gobal four months ago, and I get a letter from him weeks past, just after Pentecost, to say he would be here some time in the first of July, with the man.

"Well, it is a great game. The man is a pirate, but it does not matter—he has paid for that. I thought you would be glad of a fine adventure like that, so I said to you, Come."

"But, father—"

"If you do not like you can go on with Gobal in the Free-and-Easy, and you shall be landed at the Isle of Days. That's all. We're waiting here for Gobal. He promised to stop just outside this bay and land our man on us. Then, blood of my heart, away we go after the treasure!"

Joan's eyes flashed. Adventure was in her as deep as life itself. She had been cradled in it, reared in it, lived with it, and here was no law-breaking. Whose money was it? No one's: for who should say what ship it was, or what people were robbed by Brigond and those others? Gold—that was a better game than wine and brandy, and for once her father would be on a cruise which would not be, as it were, sailing in forbidden waters.

"When do you expect Gobal?" she asked eagerly. "He ought to have been here a week ago. Maybe he has had a bad voyage, or something."

"He's sure to come?"

"Of course. I found out about that. She's got a big consignment to people in Quebec. Something has gone wrong, but she'll be here—yes."

"What will you do if you get the money?" she asked. Tarboe laughed heartily. "My faith! Come play up those scarlet hose, Bissonnette! My faith, I'll go into Parliament at Quebec. Thunder! I will have sport with them. I'll reform the customs. There shan't be any more smuggling. The people of Quebec shall drink no more good wine—no one except Black Tarboe, the member for Isle of Days."

Again he laughed, and his eyes spilt fire like revolving wheels. For a moment Joan was quiet; her face was shining like the sun on a river. She saw more than her father, for she saw release. A woman may stand by a man who breaks the law, but in her heart she always has bitterness, for that the world shall speak well of herself and what she loves is the secret desire of every woman. In her heart she never can defy the world as does a man.

She had carried off the situation as became the daughter of a daring adventurer, who in more stirring times might have been a Du Lhut or a Rob Roy, but she was sometimes tired of the fighting, sometimes wishful that she could hold her position easier. Suppose the present good cure should die and another less considerate arrive, how hard might her position become! Then, she had a spirit above her station, as have most people who know the world and have seen something of its forbidden side; for it is notable that wisdom comes not alone from loving good things, but from having seen evil as well as good. Besides Joan was not a woman to go singly to her life's end.

There was scarcely a man on Isle of Days and in the parish of Ste. Eunice, on the mainland, but would gladly have taken to wife the daughter of Tarboe the smuggler, and it is likely that the cure of either parish would not have advised against it.

Joan had had the taste of the lawless, and now she knew, as she sat and listened to Bissonnette's music, that she also could dance for joy, in the hope of a taste of the lawful. With this money, if it were got, there could be another life—in Quebec. She could not forbear laughing now as she remembered that first day she had seen Orvay Lafarge, and she said to Bissonnette: "Loce, do you mind the keg in the water-pail?" Bissonnette paused on an out-pull, and threw back his head with a soundless laugh, then played the concertina into contortions.

"That Lafarge! H'm! He is very polite; but pshaw, it is no use that, in whisky-running! To beat a great man, a man must be great. Tarboe Noir can lead M'sieu' Lafarge all like that!"

It seemed as if he were pulling the nose of the concertina. Tarboe began tracing a kind of maze with his fingers on the deck, his eyes rolling outward like an endless puzzle. But presently he turned sharp on Joan.

"How many times have you met him?" he asked. "Oh, six or seven—eight or nine, perhaps."

Her father stared. "Eight or nine? By the holy! Is it like that? Where have you seen him?"

"Twice at our home, as you know; two or three times at dances at the Belle Chatelaine, and the rest when we were at Quebec in May. He is amusing, M'sieu' Lafarge."

"Yes, two of a kind," remarked Tarboe drily; and then he told his schemes to Joan, letting Bissonnette hang up the "The Demoiselle with the Scarlet Hose," and begin "The Coming of the Gay Cavalier." She entered into his plans with spirit, and together they speculated what bay it might be, of the many on the coast of Labrador.

They spent two days longer waiting, and then at dawn a merchantman came sauntering up to anchor. She signalled to the Ninety-Nine. In five minutes Tarboe was climbing up the side of the Free-and-Easy, and presently was in Gobal's cabin, with a glass of wine in his hand.

"What kept you, Gobal?" he asked. "You're ten days late, at least."

"Storm and sickness—broken mainmast and smallpox." Gobal was not cheerful.

Tarboe caught at something. "You've got our man?" Gobal drank off his wine slowly. "Yes," he said. "Well?—Why don't you fetch him?"

"You can see him below."

"The man has legs, let him walk here. Hello, my Gobal, what's the matter? If he's here bring him up. We've

no time to lose."

"Tarboe, the fool got smallpox, and died three hours ago—the tenth man since we started. We're going to give him to the fishes. They're putting him in his linen now."

Tarboe's face hardened. Disaster did not dismay him, it either made him ugly or humourous, and one phase was as dangerous as the other.

"D'ye mean to say," he groaned, "that the game is up? Is it all finished? Sweat o' my soul, my skin crawls like hot glass! Is it the end, eh? The beast, to die!"

Gobal's eyes glistened. He had sent up the mercury, he would now bring it down.

"Not such a beast as you think. Alive pirate, a convict, as comrade in adventure, is not sugar in the teeth. This one was no better than the worst. Well, he died. That was awkward. But he gave me the chart of the bay before he died—and that was damn square."

Tarboe held out his hand eagerly, the big fingers bending claw-like.

"Give it me, Gobal," he said.

"Wait. There's no hurry. Come along, there's the bell: they're going to drop him."

He coolly motioned, and passed out from the cabin to the ship's side. Tarboe kept his tongue from blasphemy, and his hand from the captain's shoulder, for he knew only too well that Gobal held the game in his hands. They leaned over and saw two sailors with something on a plank.

"We therefore commit his body to the deep, in the knowledge of the Judgment Day—let her go!" grunted Gobal; and a long straight canvas bundle shot with a swishing sound beneath the water. "It was rough on him too," he continued. "He waited twenty years to have his chance again. Damn me, if I didn't feel as if I'd hit him in the eye, somehow, when he begged me to keep him alive long enough to have a look at the rhino. But it wasn't no use. He had to go, and I told him so.

"Then he did the fine thing: he give me the chart. But he made me swear on a book of the Mass that if we got the gold we'd send one-half his share to a woman in Paris, and the rest to his brother, a priest at Nancy. I'll keep my word—but yes! Eh, Tarboe?"

"You can keep your word for me! What, you think, Gobal, there is no honour in Black Tarboe, and you've known me ten years! Haven't I always kept my word like a clock?"

Gobal stretched out his hand. "Like the sun-sure. That's enough. We'll stand by my oath. You shall see the chart."

Going again inside the cabin, Gobal took out a map grimed with ceaseless fingering, and showed it to Tarboe, putting his finger on the spot where the treasure lay.

"The Bay of Belle Amour!" cried Tarboe, his eyes flashing. "Ah, I know it! That's where Gaspard the pilot lived. It's only forty leagues or so from here." His fingers ran here and there on the map. "Yes, yes," he continued, "it's so, but he hasn't placed the reef right. Ah, here is how Brigond's ship went down! There's a needle of rock in the bay. It isn't here."

Gobal handed the chart over. "I can't go with you, but I take your word; I can say no more. If you cheat me I'll kill you; that's all."

"Let me give a bond," said Tarboe quickly. "If I saw much gold perhaps I couldn't trust myself, but there's someone to be trusted, who'll swear for me. If my daughter Joan give her word—"

"Is she with you?"

"Yes, in the Ninety-Nine, now. I'll send Bissonnette for her. Yes, yes, I'll send, for gold is worse than bad whisky when it gets into a man's head. Joan will speak for me."

Ten minutes later Joan was in Gobal's cabin, guaranteeing for her father the fulfilment of his bond. An hour afterwards the Free-and-Easy was moving up stream with her splintered mast and ragged sails, and the Ninety-Nine was looking up and over towards the Bay of Belle Amour. She reached it in the late afternoon of the next day. Bissonnette did not know the object of the expedition, but he had caught the spirit of the affair, and his eyes were like spots of steel as he held the sheet or took his turn at the tiller. Joan's eyes were now on the sky, now on the sail, and now on the land, weighing as wisely as her father the advantage of the wind, yet dwelling on that cave where skeletons kept ward over the spoils of a pirate ship.

They arrived, and Tarboe took the Ninety-Nine warily in on a little wind off the land. He came near sharing the fate of Brigond, for the yawl grazed the needle of the rock that, hiding away in the water, with a nose out for destruction, awaits its victims. They reached safe anchorage, but by the time they landed it was night, with, however, a good moon showing.

All night they searched, three silent, eager figures, drawing step by step nearer the place where the ancient enemy of man was barracked about by men's bodies. It was Joan who, at last, as dawn drew up, discovered the hollow between two great rocks where the treasure lay. A few minutes' fierce digging, and the kegs of gold were disclosed, showing through the ribs of two skeletons. Joan shrank back, but the two men tossed aside the rattling bones, and presently the kegs were standing between them on the open shore. Bissonnette's eyes were hungry—he knew now the wherefore of the quest. He laughed outright, a silly, loud, hysterical laugh. Tarboe's eyes shifted from the sky to the river, from the river to the kegs, from the kegs to Bissonnette. On him they stayed a moment. Bissonnette shrank back. Tarboe was feeling for the first time in his life the deadly suspicion which comes with ill-gotten wealth. This passed as his eyes and Joan's met, for she had caught the melodrama, the overstrain; Bissonnette's laugh had pointed the situation; and her sense of humour had prevailed. "La, la," she said, with a whimsical quirk of the head, and no apparent relevancy:

"Lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home,
Your house is on fire, and your children all gone."

The remedy was good. Tarboe's eyes came again to their natural liveliness, and Bissonnette said:

"My throat's like a piece of sand-paper."

Tarboe handed over a brandy flask, after taking a pull himself, and then sitting down on one of the kegs, he said: “It is as you see, and now Angel Point very quick. To get it there safe, that’s the thing!” Then, scanning the sky closely: “It’s for a handsome day, and the wind goes to bear us up fine. Good! Well, for you, Bissonnette, there shall be a thousand dollars, you shall have the Belle Chatelaine Inn and the little lady at Point Pierrot. For the rest, you shall keep a quiet tongue, eh? If not, my Bissonnette, we shall be the best of strangers, and you shall not be happy. Hein?”

Bissonnette’s eyes flashed. “The Belle Chatelaine? Good! That is enough. My tongue is tied; I cannot speak; it is fastened with a thousand pegs.”

“Very good, a thousand gold pegs, and you shall never pull them. The little lady will have you with them, not without; and unless you stand by me, no one shall have you at any price—by God!”

He stood up, but Joan put out her hand. “You have been speaking, now it is my turn. Don’t cry cook till you have the venison home. What is more, I gave my word to Gobal, and I will keep it. I will be captain. No talking! When you’ve got the kegs in the cellar at Angel Point, good! But now—come, my comrades, I am your captain!”

She was making the thing a cheerful adventure, and the men now swung the kegs on their shoulders and carried them to the boat. In another half-hour they were under way in the gaudy light of an orange sunrise, a simmering wind from the sea lifting them up the river, and the grey-red coast of Labrador shrinking sullenly back.

About this time, also, a Government cutter was putting out from under the mountain-wall at Quebec, its officer in command having got renewed orders from the Minister to bring in Tarboe the smuggler. And when Mr. Martin, the inspector in command of the expedition, was ordered to take with him Mr. Orvay Lafarge and five men, “effectively armed,” it was supposed by the romantic Minister that the matter was as good as done.

What Mr. Orvay Lafarge did when he got the word, was to go straight to his hat-peg, then leave the office, walk to the little club where he spent leisure hours, called office hours by people who wished to be precise as well as suggestive,—sit down, and raise a glass to his lips. After which he threw himself back in his chair and said: “Well, I’m particularly damned!” A few hours later they were away on their doubtful exploit.

II. THE DEFENCE

On the afternoon of the second day after she left Labrador, the Ninety-Nine came rippling near Isle of Fires, not sixty miles from her destination, catching a fair wind on her quarter off the land. Tarboe was in fine spirits, Joan was as full of songs as a canary, and Bissonnette was as busy watching her as in keeping the nose of the Ninety-Nine pointing for Cap de Gloire. Tarboe was giving the sail full to the wind, and thinking how he would just be able to reach Angel Point and get his treasure housed before mass in the morning.

Mass! How many times had he laughed as he sat in church and heard the cure have his gentle fling at smuggling! To think that the hiding-place for his liquor was the unused, almost unknown, cellar of that very church, built a hundred years before as a refuge from the Indians, which he had reached by digging a tunnel from the shore to its secret passage! That was why the customs officers never found anything at Angel Point, and that was why Tarboe much loved going to mass. He sometimes thought he could catch the flavour of the brands as he leaned his forehead on the seat before him. But this time he would go to mass with a fine handful of those gold pieces in his pocket, just to keep him in a commendable mood. He laughed out loud at the thought of doing so within a stone’s throw of a fortune and nose-shot of fifty kegs of brandy.

As he did so, Bissonnette gave a little cry. They were coming on to Cap de Gloire at the moment, and Tarboe and Joan, looking, saw a boat standing off towards the mainland, as if waiting for them. Tarboe gave a roar, and called to Joan to take the tiller. He snatched a glass and levelled it.

“A Government tug!” he said, “and tete de Diable! there’s your tall Lafarge among ‘em, Joan! I’d know him by his height miles off.”

Joan lost colour a trifle and then got courage. “Pshaw,” she said, “what does he want?”

“Want? Want? He wants the Ninety-Nine and her cargo; but by the sun of my soul, he’ll get her across the devil’s gridiron! See here, my girl, this ain’t any sport with you aboard. Bissonnette and I could make a stand for it alone, but what’s to become of you? I don’t want you mixed up in the mess.”

The girl was eyeing the Government boat. “But I’m in it, and I can’t be out of it, and I don’t want to be out now that I am in. Let me see the glass.” She took it in one hand. “Yes, it must be M’sieu’ Lafarge,” she said, frowning. “He might have stayed out of this.”

“When he’s got orders, he has to go,” answered her father; “but he must look out, for a gun is a gun, and I don’t pick and choose. Besides, I’ve no contraband this cruise, and I’ll let no one stick me up.”

“There are six or seven of them,” said Joan debatingly.

“Bring her up to the wind,” shouted Tarboe to Bissonnette. The mainsail closed up several points, the Ninety-Nine slackened her pace and edged in closer to the land. “Now, my girl,” said Tarboe, “this is how it stands. If we fight, there’s someone sure to be hurt, and if I’m hurt, where’ll you be?”

Bissonnette interposed. “We’ve got nothing contraband. The gold is ours.”

“Trust that crew—but no!” cried Tarboe, with an oath. “The Government would hold the rhino for possible owners, and then give it to a convent or something. They shan’t put foot here. They’ve said war, and they’ll get it. They’re signalling us to stop, and they’re bearing down. There goes a shot!”

The girl had been watching the Government boat coolly. Now that it began to bear on, she answered her father’s question.

“Captain,” she said, like a trusted mate, “we’ll bluff them.” Her eyes flashed with the intelligence of war. “Here, quick, I’ll take the tiller. They haven’t seen Bissonnette yet; he sits low. Call all hands on deck—shout! Then, see: Loce will go down the middle hatch, get a gun, come up with it on his shoulder, and move on to the fo’castle. Then he’ll drop down the fo’castle hatch, get along to the middle hatch, and come up again with the gun, now with his cap, now without it, now with his coat, now without it. He’ll do that till we’ve got twenty or thirty men on deck! They’ll think we’ve been laying for them, and they’ll not come on—you see!”

Tarboe ripped out an oath. “It’s a great game,” he said, and a moment afterwards, in response to his roars, Bissonnette came up the hatch with his gun showing bravely; then again and again, now with his cap, now without, now with his coat, now with none, anon with a tarpaulin over his shoulders grotesquely. Meanwhile Tarboe trained his one solitary little cannon on the enemy, roaring his men into place.

From the tug it seemed that a large and well-armed crew were ranging behind the bulwarks of the Ninety-Nine. Mr. Martin, the inspector, saw with alarm Bissonnette’s constantly appearing rifle.

“They’ve arranged a plant for us, Mr. Lafarge. What do you think we’d better do?” he asked.

“Fight!” answered Lafarge laconically. He wished to put himself on record, for he was the only one on board who saw through the ruse.

“But I’ve counted at least twenty men, all armed, and we’ve only five.”

“As you please, sir,” said Lafarge bluntly, angry at being tricked, but inwardly glad to be free of the business, for he pictured to himself that girl at the tiller—he had seen her as she went aft—in a police court at Quebec. Yet his instinct for war and his sense of duty impelled him to say: “Still, sir, fight!”

“No, no, Mr. Lafarge,” excitedly rejoined his chief. “I cannot risk it. We must go back for more men and bring along a Gatling. Slow down!” he called. Lafarge turned on his heel with an oath, and stood watching the Ninety-Nine.

“She’ll laugh at me till I die!” he said to himself presently, as the tug turned up stream and pointed for Quebec. “Well, I’m jiggered!” he added, as a cannon shot came ringing over the water after them. He was certain also that he heard loud laughter. No doubt he was right; for as the tug hurried on, Tarboe ran to Joan, hugged her like a bear, and roared till he ached. Then she paid out the sheet, they clapped on all sail, and travelled in the track of the enemy.

Tarboe’s spirit was roused. He was not disposed to let his enemy off on even such terms, so he now turned to Joan and said: “What say you to a chase of the gentleman?”

Joan was in a mood for such a dare-devil adventure. For three people, one of whom was a girl, to give chase to a well-manned, well-armed Government boat was too good a relish to be missed. Then, too, it had just occurred to her that a parley would be amusing, particularly if she and Lafarge were the truce-bearers. So she said: “That is very good.”

“Suppose they should turn and fight?” suggested Bissonnette.

“That’s true—here’s m’am’selle,” agreed Tarboe. “But, see,” said Joan. “If we chase them and call upon them to surrender—and after all, we can prove that we had nothing contraband—what a splendid game it’ll be!” Mischief flicked in her eyes.

“Good!” said Tarboe. “To-morrow I shall be a rich man, and then they’ll not dare to come again.”

So saying, he gave the sail to the wind, and away the Ninety-Nine went after the one ewe lamb of the Government.

Mr. Martin saw her coming, and gave word for all steam. It would be a pretty game, for the wind was in Tarboe’s favour, and the general advantage was not greatly with the tug. Mr. Martin was now anxious indeed to get out of the way of the smuggler. Lafarge made one restraining effort, then settled into an ironical mood. Yet a half-dozen times he was inclined to blurt out to Martin what he believed was the truth. A man, a boy, and a girl to bluff them that way! In his bones he felt that it was the girl who was behind this thing. Of one matter he was sure—they had no contraband stuff on board, or Tarboe would not have brought his daughter along. He could not understand the attitude, for Tarboe would scarcely have risked the thing out of mere bravado. Why not call a truce? Perhaps he could solve the problem. They were keeping a tolerably safe distance apart, and there was no great danger of the Ninety-Nine overhauling them even if it so willed; but Mr. Martin did not know that.

What he said to his chief had its effect, and soon there was a white flag flying on the tug. It was at once answered with a white handkerchief of Joan’s. Then the tug slowed up, the Ninety-Nine came on gaily, and at a good distance came up to the wind, and stood off.

“What do you want?” asked Tarboe through his speaking-tube.

“A parley,” called Mr. Martin.

“Good; send an officer,” answered Tarboe.

A moment after, Lafarge was in a boat rowing over to meet another boat rowed by Joan alone, who, dressed in a suit of Bissonnette’s, had prevailed on her father to let her go.

The two boats nearing each other, Joan stood up, saluting, and Lafarge did the same.

“Good-day, m’sieu’,” said Joan, with assumed brusqueness, mischief lurking about her mouth. “What do you want?”

“Good-day, monsieur; I did not expect to confer with you.”

“M’sieu’,” said Joan, with well-acted dignity, “if you prefer to confer with the captain or Mr. Bissonnette, whom I believe you know in the matter of a pail, and—”

“No, no; pardon me, monsieur,” said Lafarge more eagerly than was good for the play, “I am glad to confer with you, you will understand—you will understand—” He paused.

“What will I understand?”

“You will understand that I understand!” Lafarge waved meaningly towards the Ninety-Nine, but it had no effect at all. Joan would not give the game over into his hands.

“That sounds like a charade or a puzzle game. We are gentlemen on a serious errand, aren’t we?”

“Yes,” answered Lafarge, “perfect gentlemen on a perfectly serious errand!”

“Very well, m’sieu’. Have you come to surrender?” The splendid impudence of the thing stunned Lafarge, but he said: “I suppose one or the other ought to surrender; and naturally,” he added with slow point, “it should be the weaker.”

“Very well. Our captain is willing to consider conditions. You came down on us to take us—a quiet craft sailing in free waters. You attack us without cause. We summon all hands, and you run. We follow, you ask for truce. It is granted. We are not hard—no. We only want our rights. Admit them; we’ll make surrender easy, and the matter is over.”

Lafarge gasped. She was forcing his hand. She would not understand his oblique suggestions. He saw only one way now, and that was to meet her, boast for boast.

“I haven’t come to surrender,” he said, “but to demand.”

“M’sieu’,” Joan said grandly, “there’s nothing more to say. Carry word to your captain that we’ll overhaul him by sundown, and sink him before supper.”

Lafarge burst out laughing.

“Well, by the Lord, but you’re a swashbuckler, Joan—”

“M’sieu’—”

“Oh, nonsense! I tell you, nonsense! Let’s have over with this, my girl. You’re the cleverest woman on the continent, but there’s a limit to everything. Here, tell me now, and if you answer me straight I’ll say no more.”

“M’sieu’, I am here to consider conditions, not to—” “Oh, for God’s sake, Joan! Tell me now, have you got anything contraband on board? There’ll be a nasty mess about the thing, for me and all of us, and why can’t we compromise? I tell you honestly we’d have come on, if I hadn’t seen you aboard.”

Joan turned her head back with a laugh. “My poor m’sieu’! You have such bad luck. Contraband? Let me see? Liquors and wines and tobacco are contraband. Is it not so?” Lafarge nodded.

“Is money—gold—contraband?”

“Money? No; of course not, and you know it. Why won’t you be sensible? You’re getting me into a bad hole, and—”

“I want to see how you’ll come out. If you come out well—” She paused quaintly.

“Yes, if I come out well—”

“If you come out very well, and we do not sink you before supper, I may ask you to come and see me.”

“H’m! Is that all? After spoiling my reputation, I’m to be let come and see you.”

“Isn’t that enough to start with? What has spoiled your reputation?”

“A man, a boy, and a slip of a girl.” He looked meaningly enough at her now. She laughed. “See,” he added; “give me a chance. Let me search the Ninety-Nine for contraband,—that’s all I’ve got to do with,—and then I can keep quiet about the rest. If there’s no contraband, whatever else there is, I’ll hold my tongue.”

“I’ve told you what there is.”

He did not understand. “Will you let me search?” Joan’s eyes flashed. “Once and for all, no, Orvay Lafarge. I am the daughter of a man whom you and your men would have killed or put in the dock. He’s been a smuggler, and I know it. Who has he robbed? Not the poor, not the needy; but a rich Government that robs also. Well, in the hour when he ceases to be a smuggler for ever, armed men come to take him. Why didn’t they do so before? Why so pious all at once? No; I am first the daughter of my father, and afterwards—”

“And afterwards?”

“What to-morrow may bring forth.”

Lafarge became very serious. “I must go back. Mr. Martin is signalling, and your father is calling. I do not understand, but you’re the one woman in the world for my money, and I’m ready to stand by that and leave the customs to-morrow if need be.”

Joan’s eyes blazed, her cheek was afire. “Leave it to-day. Leave it now. Yes; that’s my one condition. If you want me, and you say you do, come aboard the Ninety-Nine, and for to-day be one of us-to-morrow what you will.”

“What I will? What I will, Joan? Do you mean it?”

“Yes. Pshaw! Your duty? Don’t I know how the Ministers and the officers have done their duty at Quebec? It’s all nonsense. You must make your choice once for all now.”

Lafarge stood a moment thinking. “Joan, I’ll do it. I’d go hunting in hell at your bidding. But see. Everything’s changed. I couldn’t fight against you, but I can fight for you. All must be open now. You’ve said there’s no contraband. Well, I’ll tell Mr. Martin so, but I’ll tell him also that you’ve only a crew of two—”

“Of three, now!”

“Of three! I will do my duty in that, then resign and come over to you, if I can.”

“If you can? You mean that they may fire on you?”

“I can’t tell what they may do. But I must deal fair.”

Joan’s face was grave. “Very well, I will wait for you here.”

“They might hit you.”

“But no. They can’t hit a wall. Go on, my dear.” They saluted, and, as Lafarge turned away, Joan said, with a little mocking laugh, “Tell him that he must surrender, or we’ll sink him before supper.”

Lafarge nodded, and drew away quickly towards the tug. His interview with Mr. Martin was brief, and he had tendered his resignation, though it was disgracefully informal, and was over the side of the boat again and rowing quickly away before his chief recovered his breath. Then Mr. Martin got a large courage. He called on his men to fire when Lafarge was about two hundred and fifty feet from the tug. The shots rattled about him. He turned round coolly and called out, “Coward-we’ll sink you before supper!”

A minute afterwards there came another shot, and an oar dropped from his hand. But now Joan was rowing rapidly towards him, and presently was alongside.

“Quick, jump inhere,” she said. He did so, and she rowed on quickly. Tarboe did not understand, but now

his blood was up, and as another volley sent bullets dropping around the two he gave the Ninety-Nine to the wind, and she came bearing down smartly to them. In a few moments they were safely on board, and Joan explained. Tarboe grasped Lafarge's unmaimed hand,—the other Joan was caring for,—and swore that fighting was the only thing left now.

Mr. Martin had said the same, but when he saw the Ninety-Nine determined, menacing, and coming on, he became again uncertain, and presently gave orders to make for the lighthouse on the opposite side of the river. He could get over first, for the Ninety-Nine would not have the wind so much in her favour, and there entrench himself; for even yet Bissonnette amply multiplied was in his mind—Lafarge had not explained that away. He was in the neighbourhood of some sunken rocks of which he and his man at the wheel did not know accurately, and in making what he thought was a clear channel he took a rock with great force, for they were going full steam ahead. Then came confusion, and in getting out the one boat it was swamped and a man nearly drowned. Meanwhile the tug was fast sinking.

While they were throwing off their clothes, the Ninety-Nine came down, and stood off. On one hand was the enemy, on the other the water, with the shore half a mile distant.

"Do you surrender?" called out Tarboe.

"Can't we come aboard without that?" feebly urged Mr. Martin.

"I'll see you damned first, Mr. Martin. Come quick, or I'll give you what for."

"We surrender," answered the officer gently.

A few minutes later he and his men were on board, with their rifles stacked in a corner at Bissonnette's hand.

Then Tarboe brought the Ninety-Nine close to the wreck, and with his little cannon put a ball into her. This was the finish. She shook her nose, shivered, shot down like a duck, and was gone.

Mr. Martin was sad even to tears.

"Now, my beauties," said Tarboe, "now that I've got you safe, I'll show you the kind of cargo I've got." A moment afterwards he hoisted a keg on deck. "Think that's whisky?" he asked. "Lift it, Mr. Martin." Mr. Martin obeyed. "Shake it," he added.

Mr. Martin did so. "Open it, Mr. Martin." He held out a hatchet-hammer. The next moment a mass of gold pieces yellowed to their eyes. Mr. Martin fell back, breathing hard.

"Is that contraband, Mr. Martin?"

"Treasure-trove," humbly answered the stricken officer.

"That's it, and in a month, Mr. Martin, I'll be asking the chief of your department to dinner."

Meanwhile Lafarge saw how near he had been to losing a wife and a fortune. Arrived off Isle of Day; Tarboe told Mr. Martin and his men that if they said "treasure-trove" till they left the island their live would not be worth "a tinker's damn." When they had sworn, he took them to Angel Point, fed then royally, gave them excellent liquor to drink, and sent them in a fishing-smack with Bissonnette to Quebec where, arriving, they told strange tales.

Bissonnette bore a letter to a certain banker in Quebec, who already had done business with Tarboe, and next midnight Tarboe himself, with Gobal, Lafarge, Bissonnette, and another, came knocking at the banker's door, each carrying a keg on his shoulder and armed to the teeth. And, what was singular two stalwart police-officers walked behind with comfortable and approving looks.

A month afterwards Lafarge and Joan were married in the parish church at Isle of Days, and it was said that Mr. Martin, who, for some strange reason, was allowed to retain his position in the customs, sent a present. The wedding ended with a sensation, for just as the benediction was pronounced a loud report was heard beneath the floor of the church. There was great commotion, but Tarboe whispered in the curb's ear, and he blushing, announced that it was the bursting of a barrel. A few minutes afterwards the people of the parish knew the old hiding-place of Tarboe's contraband, and, though the cure rebuked them, they roared with laughter at the knowledge.

"So droll, so droll, our Tarboe there!" they shouted, for already they began to look upon him as their Seigneur.

In time the cure forgave him also.

Tarboe seldom left Isle of Days, save when he went to visit his daughter, in St. Louis Street, Quebec, not far from the Parliament House, where Orvay Lafarge is a member of the Ministry. The ex-smuggler was a member of the Assembly for three months, but after defeating his own party on a question of tariff, he gave a portrait of himself to the Chamber, and threw his seat into the hands of his son-in-law. At the Belle Chatelaine, where he often goes, he sometimes asks Bissonnette to play "The Demoiselle with the Scarlet Hose."

ROMANY OF THE SNOWS

I

When old Throng the trader, trembling with sickness and misery, got on his knees to Captain Halby and groaned, "She didn't want to go; they dragged her off; you'll fetch her back, won't ye?—she always had a fancy for you, cap'n," Pierre shrugged a shoulder and said:

"But you stole her when she was in her rock-a-by, my Throng—you and your Manette."

"Like a match she was—no bigger," continued the old man. "Lord, how that stepmother bully-ragged her,

and her father didn't care a darn. He'd half a dozen others—Manette and me hadn't none. We took her and used her like as if she was an angel, and we brought her off up here. Haven't we set store by her? Wasn't it 'cause we was lonely an' loved her we took her? Hasn't everybody stood up and said there wasn't anyone like her in the North? Ain't I done fair by her always—ain't I? An' now, when this cough 's eatin' my life out, and Manette 's gone, and there ain't a soul but Duc the trapper to put a blister on to me, them brutes ride up from over the border, call theirselves her brothers, an' drag her off!"

He was still on his knees. Pierre reached over and lightly kicked a moccasined foot.

"Get up, Jim Throng," he said. "Holy! do you think the law moves because an old man cries? Is it in the statutes?—that's what the law says. Does it come within the act? Is it a trespass—an assault and battery?—a breach of the peace?—a misdemeanour? Victoria—So and So: that's how the law talks. Get on your knees to Father Corraine, not to Captain Halby, Jimmy Throng."

Pierre spoke in a half-sinister, ironical way, for between him and Captain Halby's Riders of the Plains there was no good feeling. More than once he had come into conflict with them, more than once had they laid their hands on him—and taken them off again in due time. He had foiled them as to men they wanted; he had defied them—but he had helped them too, when it seemed right to him; he had sided with them once or twice when to do so was perilous to himself. He had sneered at them, he did not like them, nor they him. The sum of it was, he thought them brave—and stupid; and he knew that the law erred as often as it set things right.

The Trader got up and stood between the two men, coughing much, his face straining, his eyes bloodshot, as he looked anxiously from Pierre to Halby. He was the sad wreck of a strong man. Nothing looked strong about him now save his head, which, with its long grey hair, seemed badly balanced by the thin neck, through which the terrible cough was hacking.

"Only half a lung left," he stammered, as soon as he could speak, "an' Duc can't fix the boneset, camomile, and whisky, as she could. An' he waters the whisky—curse-his-soul!" The last three words were spoken through another spasm of coughing. "An' the blister—how he mucks the blister!"

Pierre sat back on the table, laughing noiselessly, his white teeth shining. Halby, with one foot on a bench, was picking at the fur on his sleeve thoughtfully. His face was a little drawn, his lips were tight-pressed, and his eyes had a light of excitement. Presently he straightened himself, and, after a half-malicious look at Pierre, he said to Throng:

"Where are they, do you say?"

"They're at"—the old man coughed hard—"at Fort O'Battle."

"What are they doing there?"

"Waitin' till spring, when they'll fetch their cattle up an' settle there."

"They want—Lydia—to keep house for them?" The old man writhed.

"Yes, God's sake, that's it! An' they want Liddy to marry a devil called Borotte, with a thousand cattle or so—Pito the courier told me yesterday. Pito saw her, an' he said she was white like a sheet, an' called out to him as he went by. Only half a lung I got, an' her boneset and camomile 'd save it for a bit, mebbe—mebbe!"

"It's clear," said Halby, "that they trespassed, and they haven't proved their right to her."

"Tonnerre, what a thinker!" said Pierre, mocking. Halby did not notice. His was a solid sense of responsibility.

"She is of age?" he half asked, half mused.

"She's twenty-one," answered the old man, with difficulty.

"Old enough to set the world right," suggested Pierre, still mocking.

"She was forced away, she regarded you as her natural protector, she believed you her father: they broke the law," said the soldier.

"There was Moses, and Solomon, and Caesar, and Socrates, and now...!" murmured Pierre in assumed abstraction.

A red spot burned on Halby's high cheekbone for a minute, but he persistently kept his temper.

"I'm expected elsewhere," he said at last. "I'm only one man, yet I wish I could go to-day—even alone. But—"

"But you have a heart," said Pierre. "How wonderful—a heart! And there's the half a lung, and the boneset and camomile tea, and the blister, and the girl with an eye like a spot of rainbow, and the sacred law in a Remington rifle! Well, well! And to do it in the early morning—to wait in the shelter of the trees till some go to look after the horses, then enter the house, arrest those inside, and lay low for the rest."

Halby looked over at Pierre astonished. Here was raillery and good advice all in a piece.

"It isn't wise to go alone, for if there's trouble and I should go down, who's to tell the truth? Two could do it; but one—no, it isn't wise, though it would look smart enough."

"Who said to go alone?" asked Pierre, scrawling on the table with a burnt match.

"I have no men."

Pierre looked up at the wall.

"Throng has a good Snider there," he said. "Bosh! Throng can't go."

The old man coughed and strained.

"If it wasn't—only-half a lung, and I could carry the boneset 'long with us."

Pierre slid off the table, came to the old man, and, taking him by the arms, pushed him gently into a chair. "Sit down; don't be a fool, Throng," he said. Then he turned to Halby: "You're a magistrate—make me a special constable; I'll go, monsieur le capitaine—of no company."

Halby stared. He knew Pierre's bravery, his ingenuity and daring. But this was the last thing he expected: that the malicious, railing little half-breed would work with him and the law. Pierre seemed to understand his thoughts, for he said: "It is not for you. I am sick for adventure, and then there is mademoiselle—such a

finger she has for a ven'son pudding."

Without a word Halby wrote on a leaf in his notebook, and presently handed the slip to Pierre. "That's your commission as a special constable," he said, "and here's the seal on it." He handed over a pistol.

Pierre raised his eyebrows at it, but Halby continued: "It has the Government mark. But you'd better bring Throng's rifle too."

Throng sat staring at the two men, his hands nervously shifting on his knees. "Tell Liddy," he said, "that the last batch of bread was sour—Duc ain't no good-an' that I ain't had no relish sence she left. Tell her the cough gits lower down all the time. 'Member when she tended that felon o' yourn, Pierre?"

Pierre looked at a sear on his finger and nodded. "She cut it too young; but she had the nerve! When do you start, captain? It's an eighty-mile ride."

"At once," was the reply. "We can sleep to-night in the Jim-a-long-Jo" (a hut which the Company had built between two distant posts), "and get there at dawn day after to-morrow. The snow is light and we can travel quick. I have a good horse, and you—"

"I have my black Tophet. He'll travel with your roan as on one snaffle-bar. That roan—you know where he come from?"

"From the Dolright stud, over the Border."

"That's wrong. He come from Greystop's paddock, where my Tophet was foaled; they are brothers. Yours was stole and sold to the Gover'ment; mine was bought by good hard money. The law the keeper of stolen goods, eh? But these two will go cinch to cinch all the way, like two brothers—like you and me."

He could not help the touch of irony in his last words: he saw the amusing side of things, and all humour in him had a strain of the sardonic.

"Brothers-in-law for a day or two," answered Halby drily.

Within two hours they were ready to start. Pierre had charged Duc the incompetent upon matters for the old man's comfort, and had himself, with a curious sort of kindness, steeped the boneset and camomile in whisky, and set a cup of it near his chair. Then he had gone up to Throng's bedroom and straightened out and shook and "made" the corn-husk bed, which had gathered into lumps and rolls. Before he came down he opened a door near by and entered another room, shutting the door, and sitting down on a chair. A stovepipe ran through the room, and it was warm, though the window was frosted and the world seemed shut out. He looked round slowly, keenly interested. There was a dressing-table made of an old box; it was covered with pink calico, with muslin over this. A cheap looking-glass on it was draped with muslin and tied at the top with a bit of pink ribbon. A common bone comb lay near the glass, and beside it a beautiful brush with an ivory back and handle. This was the only expensive thing in the room. He wondered, but did not go near it yet. There was a little eight-day clock on a bracket which had been made by hand—pasteboard darkened with umber and varnished; a tiny little set of shelves made of the wood of cigar-boxes; and—alas, the shifts of poverty to be gay!—an easy-chair made of the staves of a barrel and covered with poor chintz. Then there was a photograph or two, in little frames made from the red cedar of cigar-boxes, with decorations of putty, varnished, and a long panel screen of birch-bark of Indian workmanship. Some dresses hung behind the door. The bedstead was small, the frame was of hickory, with no footboard, ropes making the support for the husk tick. Across the foot lay a bedgown and a pair of stockings.

Pierre looked long, at first curiously; but after a little his forehead gathered and his lips drew in a little, as if he had a twinge of pain. He got up, went over near the bed, and picked up a hairpin. Then he came back to the chair and sat down, turning it about in his fingers, still looking abstractedly at the floor.

"Poor Lucy!" he said presently; "the poor child! Ah, what a devil I was then—so long ago!"

This solitary room—Lydia's—had brought back the time he went to the room of his own wife, dead by her own hand after an attempt to readjust the broken pieces of life, and sat and looked at the place which had been hers, remembering how he had left her with her wet face turned to the wall, and never saw her again till she was set free for ever. Since that time he had never sat in a room sacred to a woman alone.

"What a fool, what a fool, to think!" he said at last, standing up; "but this girl must be saved. She must have her home here again."

Unconsciously he put the hairpin in his pocket, walked over to the dressing-table and picked up the hair-brush. On its back was the legend, "L. T. from C. H." He gave a whistle.

"So-so?" he said, "'C. H.' M'sieu' le capitaine, is it like that?"

A year before, Lydia had given Captain Halby a dollar to buy her a hair-brush at Winnipeg, and he had brought her one worth ten dollars. She had beautiful hair, and what pride she had in using this brush! Every Sunday morning she spent a long time in washing, curling, and brushing her hair, and every night she tended it lovingly, so that it was a splendid rich brown like her eye, coiling nobly above her plain, strong face with its good colour.

Pierre, glancing in the glass, saw Captain Halby's face looking over his shoulder. It startled him, and he turned round. There was the face looking out from a photograph that hung on the wall in the recess where the bed was. He noted now that the likeness hung where the girl could see it the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning.

"So far as that, eh!" he said. "And m'sieu' is a gentleman, too. We shall see what he will do: he has his chance now, once for all."

He turned, came to the door, softly opened it, passed out, and shut it, then descended the stairs, and in half an hour was at the door with Captain Halby, ready to start. It was an exquisite winter day, even in its bitter coldness. The sun was shining clear and strong, all the plains glistened and shook like quicksilver, and the vast blue cup of sky seemed deeper than it had ever been. But the frost ate the skin like an acid, and when Throng came to the door Pierre drove him back instantly from the air.

"I only-wanted—to say—to Liddy," hacked the old man, "that I'm thinkin'—a little m'lasses 'd kinder help—the boneset an' camomile. Tell her that the cattle 'll all be hers—an'—the house, an' I ain't got no one but—"

But Pierre pushed him back and shut the door, saying: “I’ll tell her what a fool you are, Jimmy Throng.” The old man, as he sat down awkwardly in his chair, with Duc stolidly lighting his pipe and watching him, said to himself: “Yes, I be a durn fool; I be, I be!” over and over again. And when the dog got up from near the stove and came near to him, he added: “I be, Touser; I be a durn fool, for I ought to ha’ stole two or three, an’ then I’d not be alone, an’ nothin’ but sour bread an’ pork to eat. I ought to ha’ stole three.”

“Ah, Manette ought to have given you some of your own, it’s true, that!” said Duc stolidly. “You never was a real father, Jim.”

“Liddy got to look like me; she got to look like Manette and me, I tell ye!” said the old man hoarsely. Duc laughed in his stupid way. “Look like you? Look like you, Jim, with a face to turn milk sour? Ho, ho!”

Throng rose, his face purple with anger, and made as if to catch Duc by the throat, but a fit of coughing seized him, and presently blood showed on his lips. Duc, with a rough gentleness, wiped off the blood and put the whisky-and-herbs to the sick man’s lips, saying, in a fatherly way:

“For why you do like that? You’re a fool, Jimmy!”

“I be, I be,” said the old man in a whisper, and let his hand rest on Duc’s shoulder.

“I’ll fix the bread sweet next time, Jimmy.”

“No, no,” said the husky voice peevishly. “She’ll do it—Liddy’ll do it. Liddy’s comin’.”

“All right, Jimmy. All right.”

After a moment Throng shook his head feebly and said, scarcely above a whisper:

“But I be a durn fool—when she’s not here.”

Duc nodded and gave him more whisky and herbs. “My feet’s cold,” said the old man, and Duc wrapped a bearskin round his legs.

II

For miles Pierre and Halby rode without a word. Then they got down and walked for a couple of miles, to bring the blood into their legs again.

“The old man goes to By-by bientot,” said Pierre at last.

“You don’t think he’ll last long?”

“Maybe ten days; maybe one. If we don’t get the girl, out goes his torchlight straight.”

“She’s been very good to him.”

“He’s been on his knees to her all her life.”

“There’ll be trouble out of this, though.”

“Pshaw! The girl is her own master.”

“I mean, someone will probably get hurt over there.” He nodded in the direction of Fort O’Battle.

“That’s in the game. The girl is worth fighting for, hein?”

“Of course, and the law must protect her. It’s a free country.”

“So true, my captain,” murmured Pierre drily. “It is wonderful what a man will do for the law.”

The tone struck Halby. Pierre was scanning the horizon abstractedly.

“You are always hitting at the law,” he said. “Why do you stand by it now?”

“For the same reason as yourself.”

“What is that?”

“She has your picture in her room, she has my lucky dollar in her pocket.”

Halby’s face flushed, and then he turned and looked steadily into Pierre’s eyes.

“We’d better settle this thing at once. If you’re going to Fort O’Battle because you’ve set your fancy there, you’d better go back now. That’s straight. You and I can’t sail in the same boat. I’ll go alone, so give me the pistol.”

Pierre laughed softly, and waved the hand back. “T’sh! What a high-cock-a-lorum! You want to do it all yourself—to fill the eye of the girl alone, and be tucked away to By-by for your pains—mais, quelle folie! See: you go for law and love; I go for fun and Jimmy Throng. The girl? Pshaw! she would come out right in the end, without you or me. But the old man with half a lung—that’s different. He must have sweet bread in his belly when he dies, and the girl must make it for him. She shall brush her hair with the ivory brush by Sunday morning.”

Halby turned sharply.

“You’ve been spying,” he said. “You’ve been in her room—you—”

Pierre put out his hand and stopped the word on Halby’s lips.

“Slow, slow,” he said; “we are both—police to-day. Voila! we must not fight. There is Throng and the girl to think of.” Suddenly, with a soft fierceness, he added: “If I looked in her room, what of that? In all the North is there a woman to say I wrong her? No. Well, what if I carry her room in my eye; does that hurt her or you?”

Perhaps something of the loneliness of the outlaw crept into Pierre’s voice for an instant, for Halby suddenly put a hand on his shoulder and said: “Let’s drop the thing, Pierre.”

Pierre looked at him musingly.

“When Throng is put to By-by what will you do?” he asked.

“I will marry her, if she’ll have me.”

“But she is prairie-born, and you!”

“I’m a prairie-rider.”

After a moment Pierre said, as if to himself: “So quiet and clean, and the print calico and muslin, and the ivory brush!”

It is hard to say whether he was merely working on Halby that he be true to the girl, or was himself softhearted for the moment. He had a curious store of legend and chanson, and he had the Frenchman's power of applying them, though he did it seldom. But now he said in a half monotone:

"Have you seen the way I have built my nest?
(O brave and tall is the Grand Seigneur!)
I have trailed the East, I have searched the West,
(O clear of eye is the Grand Seigneur!)
From South and North I have brought the best:
The feathers fine from an eagle's crest,
The silken threads from a prince's vest,
The warm rose-leaf from a maiden's breast
(O long he bideth, the Grand Seigneur!)."

They had gone scarce a mile farther when Pierre, chancing to turn round, saw a horseman riding hard after them. They drew up, and soon the man—a Rider of the Plains—was beside them. He had stopped at Throng's to find Halby, and had followed them. Murder had been committed near the border, and Halby was needed at once. Halby stood still, numb with distress, for there was Lydia. He turned to Pierre in dismay. Pierre's face lighted up with the spirit of fresh adventure. Desperate enterprises roused him; the impossible had a charm for him.

"I will go to Fort O'Battle," he said. "Give me another pistol."

"You cannot do it alone," said Halby, hope, however, in his voice.

"I will do it, or it will do me, voila!" Pierre replied. Halby passed over a pistol.

"I'll never forget it, on my honour, if you do it," he said.

Pierre mounted his horse and said, as if a thought had struck him: "If I stand for the law in this, will you stand against it some time for me?"

Halby hesitated, then said, holding out his hand, "Yes, if it's nothing dirty."

Pierre smiled. "Clean tit for clean tat," he said, touching Halby's fingers, and then, with a gesture and an au revoir, put his horse to the canter, and soon a surf of snow was rising at two points on the prairie, as the Law trailed south and east.

That night Pierre camped in the Jim-a-long-Jo, finding there firewood in plenty, and Tophet was made comfortable in the lean-to. Within another thirty hours he was hid in the woods behind Fort O'Battle, having travelled nearly all night. He saw the dawn break and the beginning of sunrise as he watched the Fort, growing every moment colder, while his horse trembled and whinnied softly, suffering also. At last he gave a little grunt of satisfaction, for he saw two men come out of the Fort and go to the corral. He hesitated a minute longer, then said: "I'll not wait," patted his horse's neck, pulled the blanket closer round him, and started for the Fort. He entered the yard—it was empty. He went to the door of the Fort, opened it, entered, shut it, locked it softly, and put the key in his pocket. Then he passed through into a room at the end of the small hallway. Three men rose from seats by the fire as he did so, and one said: "Hullo, who're you?" Another added: "It's Pretty Pierre."

Pierre looked at the table laid for breakfast, and said: "Where's Lydia Throng?"

The elder of the three brothers replied: "There's no Lydia Throng here. There's Lydia Bontoff, though, and in another week she'll be Lydia something else."

"What does she say about it herself?"

"You've no call to know."

"You stole her, forced her from Throng's-her father's house."

"She wasn't Throng's; she was a Bontoff—sister of us.

"Well, she says Throng, and Throng it's got to be."

"What have you got to say about it?"

At that moment Lydia appeared at the door leading from the kitchen.

"Whatever she has to say," answered Pierre.

"Who're you talking for?"

"For her, for Throng, for the law."

"The law—by gosh, that's good! You, you darned gambler; you scum!" said Caleb, the brother who knew him.

Pierre showed all the intelligent, resolute coolness of a trained officer of the law. He heard a little cry behind him, and stepping sideways, and yet not turning his back on the men, he saw Lydia.

"Pierre! Pierre!" she said in a half-frightened way, yet with a sort of pleasure lighting up her face; and she stepped forward to him. One of the brothers was about to pull her away, but Pierre whipped out his commission. "Wait," he said. "That's enough. I'm for the law; I belong to the mounted police. I have come for the girl you stole."

The elder brother snatched the paper and read. Then he laughed loud and long. "So you've come to fetch her away," he said, "and this is how you do it!"—he shook the paper. "Well, by—" Suddenly he stopped. "Come," he said, "have a drink, and don't be a dam' fool. She's our sister,—old Throng stole her, and she's goin' to marry our partner. Here, Caleb, fish out the brandy-wine," he added to his younger brother, who went to a cupboard and brought the bottle.

Pierre, waving the liquor away, said quietly to the girl: "You wish to go back to your father, to Jimmy Throng?" He then gave her Throng's message, and added: "He sits there rocking in the big chair and coughing—coughing! And then there's the picture on the wall upstairs and the little ivory brush—"

She put out her hands towards him. "I hate them all here," she said. "I never knew them. They forced me away. I have no father but Jimmy Throng. I will not stay," she flashed out in sudden anger to the others; "I'll

kill myself and all of you before I marry that Borotte."

Pierre could hear a man tramping about upstairs. Caleb knocked on the stove-pipe, and called to him to come down. Pierre guessed it was Borotte. This would add one more factor to the game. He must move at once. He suddenly slipped a pistol into the girl's hand, and with a quick word to her, stepped towards the door. The elder brother sprang between—which was what he looked for. By this time every man had a weapon showing, snatched from wall and shelf.

Pierre was cool. He said: "Remember, I am for the law. I am not one man. You are thieves now; if you fight and kill, you will get the rope, every one. Move from the door, or I'll fire. The girl comes with me." He had heard a door open behind him, now there was an oath and a report, and a bullet grazed his cheek and lodged in the wall beyond. He dared not turn round, for the other men were facing him. He did not move, but the girl did. "Coward!" she said, and raised her pistol at Borotte, standing with her back against Pierre's.

There was a pause, in which no one stirred, and then the girl, slowly walking up to Borotte, her pistol levelled, said: "You low coward—to shoot a man from behind; and you want to be a decent girl's husband! These men that say they're my brothers are brutes, but you're a sneak. If you stir a step I'll fire."

The cowardice of Borotte was almost ridiculous. He dared not harm the girl, and her brothers could not prevent her harming him. Here there came a knocking at the front door. The other brothers had come, and found it locked. Pierre saw the crisis, and acted instantly. "The girl and I—we will fight you to the end," he said, "and then what's left of you the law will fight to the end. Come," he added, "the old man can't live a week. When he's gone then you can try again. She will have what he owns. Quick, or I arrest you all, and then —"

"Let her go," said Borotte; "it ain't no use." Presently the elder brother broke out laughing. "Damned if I thought the girl had the pluck, an' damned if I thought Borotte was a crawler. Put an eye out of him, Liddy, an' come to your brother's arms. Here," he added to the others, "up with your popguns; this shindy's off; and the girl goes back till the old man tucks up. Have a drink," he added to Pierre, as he stood his rifle in a corner and came to the table.

In half an hour Pierre and the girl were on their way, leaving Borotte quarrelling with the brothers, and all drinking heavily. The two arrived at Throng's late the next afternoon. There had been a slight thaw during the day, and the air was almost soft, water dripping from the eaves down the long icicles.

When Lydia entered, the old man was dozing in his chair. The sound of an axe out behind the house told where Duc was. The whisky-and-herbs was beside the sick man's chair, and his feet were wrapped about with bearskins. The girl made a little gesture of pain, and then stepped softly over and, kneeling, looked into Throng's face. The lips were moving.

"Dad," she said, "are you asleep?"

"I be a durn fool, I be," he said in a whisper, and then he began to cough. She took his' hands. They were cold, and she rubbed them softly. "I feel so a'mighty holler," he said, gasping, "an' that bread's sour agin." He shook his head pitifully.

His eyes at last settled on her, and he recognised her. He broke into a giggling laugh; the surprise was almost too much for his feeble mind and body. His hands reached and clutched hers. "Liddy! Liddy!" he whispered, then added peevishly, "the bread's sour, an' the boneset and camomile's no good.... Ain't tomorrow bakin'-day?" he added.

"Yes, dad," she said, smoothing his hands.

"What damned—liars—they be—Liddy! You're my gel, ain't ye?"

"Yes, dad. I'll make some boneset liquor now."

"Yes, yes," he said, with childish eagerness and a weak, wild smile.

"That's it—that's it."

She was about to rise, but he caught her shoulder. "I bin a good dad to ye, hain't I, Liddy?" he whispered.

"Always."

"Never had no ma but Manette, did ye?"

"Never, dad."

"What danged liars they be!" he said, chuckling. She kissed him, and moved away to the fire to pour hot water and whisky on the herbs.

His eyes followed her proudly, shining like wet glass in the sun. He laughed—such a wheezing, soundless laugh!

"He! he! he! I ain't no—durn—fool—bless—the Lord!" he said.

Then the shining look in his eyes became a grey film, and the girl turned round suddenly, for the long, wheezy breathing had stopped. She ran to him, and, lifting up his head, saw the look that makes even the fool seem wise in his cold stillness. Then she sat down on the floor, laid her head against the arm of his chair, and wept.

It was very quiet inside. From without there came the twang of an axe, and a man's voice talking to his horse. When the man came in, he lifted the girl up, and, to comfort her, bade her go look at a picture hanging in her little room. After she was gone he lifted the body, put it on a couch, and cared for it.

THE PLUNDERER

It was no use: men might come and go before her, but Kitty Cline had eyes for only one man. Pierre made

no show of liking her, and thought, at first, that hers was a passing fancy. He soon saw differently. There was that look in her eyes which burns conviction as deep as the furnace from which it comes: the hot, shy, hungering look of desire; most childlike, painfully infinite. He would rather have faced the cold mouth of a pistol; for he felt how it would end. He might be beyond wish to play the lover, but he knew that every man can endure being loved. He also knew that some are possessed—a dream, a spell, what you will—for their life long. Kitty Cline was one of these.

He thought he must go away, but he did not. From the hour he decided to stay misfortune began. Willie Haslam, the clerk at the Company's Post, had learned a trick or two at cards in the east, and imagined that he could, as he said himself, "roast the cock o' the roost"—meaning Pierre. He did so for one or two evenings, and then Pierre had a sudden increase of luck (or design), and the lad, seeing no chance of redeeming the I O U, representing two years' salary, went down to the house where Kitty Cline lived, and shot himself on the door-step.

He had had the misfortune to prefer Kitty to the other girls at Guidon Hill—though Nellie Sanger would have been as much to him, if Kitty had been easier to win. The two things together told hard against Pierre. Before, he might have gone; in the face of difficulty he certainly would not go. Willie Haslam's funeral was a public function: he was young, innocent-looking, handsome, and the people did not know what Pierre would not tell now—that he had cheated grossly at cards. Pierre was sure, before Liddall, the surveyor, told him, that a movement was apace to give him trouble—possibly fatal.

"You had better go," said Liddall. "There's no use tempting Providence."

"They are tempting the devil," was the cool reply; "and that is not all joy, as you shall see."

He stayed. For a time there was no demonstration on either side. He came and went through the streets, and was found at his usual haunts, to observers as cool and nonchalant as ever. He was a changed man, however. He never got away from the look in Kitty Cline's eyes. He felt the thing wearing on him, and he hesitated to speculate on the result; but he knew vaguely that it would end in disaster. There is a kind of corrosion which eats the granite out of the blood, and leaves fever.

"What is the worst thing that can happen a man, eh?" he said to Liddall one day, after having spent a few minutes with Kitty Cline.

Liddall was an honest man. He knew the world tolerably well. In writing once to his partner in Montreal he had spoken of Pierre as "an admirable, interesting scoundrel." Once when Pierre called him "mon ami," and asked him to come and spend an evening in his cottage, he said:

"Yes, I will go. But—pardon me—not as your friend. Let us be plain with each other. I never met a man of your stamp before—"

"A professional gambler—yes? Bien?"

"You interest me; I like you; you have great cleverness—"

"A priest once told me I had a great brain-there is a difference. Well?"

"You are like no man I ever met before. Yours is a life like none I ever knew. I would rather talk with you than with any other man in the country, and yet—"

"And yet you would not take me to your home? That is all right. I expect nothing. I accept the terms. I know what I am and what you are. I like men who are square. You would go out of your way to do me a good turn."

It was on his tongue to speak of Katy Cline, but he hesitated: it was not fair to the girl, he thought, though what he had intended was for her good. He felt he had no right to assume that Liddall knew how things were. The occasion slipped by.

But the same matter had been in his mind when, later, he asked, "What is the worst thing that can happen to a man?"

Liddall looked at him long, and then said: "To stand between two fires."

Pierre smiled: it was an answer after his own heart. Liddall remembered it very well in the future.

"What is the thing to do in such a case?" Pierre asked.

"It is not good to stand still."

"But what if you are stunned, or do not care?"

"You should care. It is not wise to strain a situation."

Pierre rose, walked up and down the room once or twice, then stood still, his arms folded, and spoke in a low tone. "Once in the Rockies I was lost. I crept into a cave at night. I knew it was the nest of some wild animal; but I was nearly dead with hunger and fatigue. I fell asleep. When I woke—it was towards morning—I saw two yellow stars glaring where the mouth of the cave had been. They were all hate: like nothing you could imagine: passion as it is first made—yes. There was also a rumbling sound. It was terrible, and yet I was not scared. Hate need not disturb you.—I am a quick shot. I killed that mountain lion, and I ate the haunch of deer I dragged from under her...."

He turned now, and, facing the doorway, looked out upon the village, to the roof of a house which they both knew. "Hate," he said, "is not the most wonderful thing. I saw a woman look once as though she could lose the whole world—and her own soul. She was a good woman. The man was bad—most: he never could be anything else. A look like that breaks the nerve. It is not amusing. In time the man goes to pieces. But before that comes he is apt to do strange things. Eh-so!"

He sat down, and, with his finger, wrote musingly in the dust upon the table.

Liddall looked keenly at him, and replied more brusquely than he felt: "Do you think it fair to stay—fair to her?"

"What if I should take her with me?" Pierre flashed a keen, searching look after the words.

"It would be useless devilry."

"Let us drink," said Pierre, as he came to his feet quickly: "then for the House of Lords" (the new and fashionable tavern).

They separated in the street, and Pierre went to the House of Lords alone. He found a number of men gathered before a paper pasted on a pillar of the veranda. Hearing his own name, he came nearer. A ranch man was reading aloud an article from a newspaper printed two hundred miles away. The article was headed, “A Villainous Plunderer.” It had been written by someone at Guidon Hill. All that was discreditable in Pierre’s life it set forth with rude clearness; he was credited with nothing pardonable. In the crowd there were mutterings unmistakable to Pierre. He suddenly came among them, caught a revolver from his pocket, and shot over the reader’s shoulder six times into the pasted strip of newspaper.

The men dropped back. They were not prepared for warlike measures at the moment. Pierre leaned his back against the pillar and waited. His silence and coolness, together with an iron fierceness in his face, held them from instant demonstration against him; but he knew that he must face active peril soon. He pocketed his revolver and went up the hill to the house of Kitty Cline’s mother. It was the first time he had ever been there. At the door he hesitated, but knocked presently, and was admitted by Kitty, who, at sight of him, turned faint with sudden joy, and grasped the lintel to steady herself.

Pierre quietly caught her about the waist, and shut the door. She recovered, and gently disengaged herself. He made no further advance, and they stood looking at each other for a minute: he, as one who had come to look at something good he was never to see again; she, as at something she hoped to see for ever. They had never before been where no eyes could observe them. He ruled his voice to calmness.

“I am going away,” he said, “and I have come to say good-bye.”

Her eyes never wavered from his. Her voice was scarce above a whisper.

“Why do you go? Where are you going?”

“I have been here too long. I am what they call a villain and a plunderer. I am going to-mon Dieu, I do not know!” He shrugged his shoulders, and smiled with a sort of helpless disdain.

She leaned her hands on the table before her. Her voice was still that low, clear murmur.

“What people say doesn’t matter.” She staked her all upon her words. She must speak them, though she might hate herself afterwards. “Are you going—alone?”

“Where I may have to go I must travel alone.”

He could not meet her eyes now; he turned his head away. He almost hoped she would not understand. “Sit down,” he added; “I want to tell you of my life.”

He believed that telling it as he should, she would be horror-stricken, and that the deep flame would die out of her eyes. Neither he nor she knew how long they sat there, he telling with grim precision of the life he had led. Her hands were clasped before her, and she shuddered once or twice, so that he paused; but she asked him firmly to go on.

When all was told he stood up. He could not see her face, but he heard her say:

“You have forgotten many things that were not bad. Let me say them.” She named things that would have done honour to a better man. He was standing in the moonlight that came through the window. She stepped forward, her hands quivering out to him. “Oh, Pierre,” she said, “I know why you tell me this: but it makes no difference-none! I will go with you wherever you go.”

He caught her hands in his. She was stronger than he was now. Her eyes mastered him. A low cry broke from him, and he drew her almost fiercely into his arms.

“Pierre! Pierre!” was all she could say.

He kissed her again and again upon the mouth. As he did so, he heard footsteps and muffled voices without. Putting her quickly from him, he sprang towards the door, threw it open, closed it behind him, and drew his revolvers. A half-dozen men faced him. Two bullets whistled by his head, and lodged in the door. Then he fired swiftly, shot after shot, and three men fell. His revolvers were empty. There were three men left. The case seemed all against him now, but just here a shot, and then another, came from the window, and a fourth man fell. Pierre sprang upon one, the other turned and ran. There was a short sharp struggle: then Pierre rose up—alone.

The girl stood in the doorway. “Come, my dear,” he said, “you must go with me now.”

“Yes, Pierre,” she cried, a mad light in her face, “I have killed men too—for you.”

Together they ran down the hillside, and made for the stables of the Fort. People were hurrying through the long street of the town, and torches were burning, but they came by a roundabout to the stables safely. Pierre was about to enter, when a man came out. It was Liddall. He kept his horses there, and he had saddled one, thinking that Pierre might need it.

There were quick words of explanation, and then, “Must the girl go too?” he asked. “It will increase the danger—besides—”

“I am going wherever he goes,” she interrupted hoarsely. “I have killed men; he and I are the same now.”

Without a word Liddall turned back, threw a saddle on another horse, and led it out quickly. “Which way?” he asked; “and where shall I find the horses?”

“West to the mountains. The horses you will find at Tete Blanche Hill, if we get there. If not, there is money under the white pine at my cottage. Goodbye!”

They galloped away. But there were mounted men in the main street, and one, well ahead of the others, was making towards the bridge over which they must pass. He reached it before they did, and set his horse crosswise in its narrow entrance. Pierre urged his mare in front of the girl’s, and drove straight at the head and shoulders of the obstructing horse. His was the heavier animal, and it bore the other down. The rider fired as he fell, but missed, and, in an instant, Pierre and the girl were over. The fallen man fired the second time, but again missed. They had a fair start, but the open prairie was ahead of them, and there was no chance to hide. Riding must do all, for their pursuers were in full cry. For an hour they rode hard. They could see their hunters not very far in the rear. Suddenly Pierre started and sniffed the air.

“The prairie’s on fire,” he said exultingly, defiantly. Almost as he spoke, clouds ran down the horizon, and

then the sky lighted up. The fire travelled with incredible swiftness: they were hastening to meet it. It came on wave-like, hurrying down at the right and the left as if to close in on them. The girl spoke no word; she had no fear: what Pierre did she would do. He turned round to see his pursuers: they had wheeled and were galloping back the way they came. His horse and hers were travelling neck and neck. He looked at her with an intense, eager gaze.

“Will you ride on?” he asked eagerly. “We are between two fires.” He smiled, remembering his words to Liddall.

“Ride on,” she urged in a strong, clear voice, a kind of wild triumph in it. “You shall not go alone.”

There ran into his eyes now the same infinite look that had been in hers—that had conquered him. The flame rolling towards them was not brighter or hotter.

“For heaven or hell, my girl!” he cried, and they drove their horses on—on.

Far behind upon a Divide the flying hunters from Guidon Hill paused for a moment. They saw with hushed wonder and awe a man and woman, dark and weird against the red light, ride madly into the flickering surf of fire.

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

A human life he held to be a trifle in the big sum of time
Advantage to live where nothing was required of her but truth
All humour in him had a strain of the sardonic
Bad turns good sometimes, when you know the how
Don’t be too honest
Every shot that kills ricochets
Fear of one’s own wife is the worst fear in the world
Have you ever felt the hand of your own child in yours
He never saw an insult unless he intended to avenge it
How can you judge the facts if you don’t know the feeling?
In her heart she never can defy the world as does a man
Liars all men may be, but that’s wid wimmin or landlords
Memory is man’s greatest friend and worst enemy
Men are like dogs—they worship him who beats them
Not good to have one thing in the head all the time
Put the matter on your own hearthstone
Remember the sorrow of thine own wife
Secret of life: to keep your own commandments
She valued what others found useless
She had not suffered that sickness, social artifice
Solitude fixes our hearts immovably on things
Some people are rough with the poor—and proud
Some wise men are fools, one way or another
They whose tragedy lies in the capacity to suffer greatly
Think with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman
When a man laugh in the sun and think nothing of evil
Women are half saints, half fools
Youth hungers for the vanities

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