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CROWDED OUT!

And Other Sketches,

By Seranus

The Story of Monsieur, Madame, and the Pea-Green Parrot. The Bishop of Saskabasquia. "As it was in the Beginning." A Christmas Sketch. The Idyl of the Island. The Story of Delle Josephine Boulanger. The Story of Etienne Chezy d'Alencourt. "Descendez a l'ombre, ma jolie blonde." The Prisoner Dubois. How the Mr. Foxleys Came, Stayed, and Never Went Away. The Gilded Hammock.

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PREFACE.

I present these "Sketches" in all proper fear and humility, to my Canadian public, hoping that the phases of colonial life they endeavor to portray will be recognized as not altogether unfamiliar. Some of them are true, others have been written through the medium of Fancy, which can find and inhabit as large a field in Canada as elsewhere; for, to my mind, there is no country, no town, no village, as there is no nation, no class of society, nor individual existence, that has not its own deep and peculiar significance, its own unique and personal characteristics that distinguish it from the rest of the world.

SERANUS.

Crowded Out.

I am nobody. I am living in a London lodging-house. My room is up three pair of stairs. I have come to London to sell or to part with in some manner an opera, a comedy, a volume of verse, songs, sketches, stories. I compose as well as write. I am ambitious. For the sake of another, one other, I am ambitious. For myself it does not matter. If nobody will discover me I must discover myself. I must demand recognition, I must wrest attention, they are my due. I look from my window over the smoky roofs of London. What will it do for me, this great cold city? It shall hear me, it shall pause for a moment, for a day, for a year. I will make it to

listen to me, to look at me. I have left a continent behind, I have crossed a great water; I have incurred dangers, trials of all kinds; I have grown pale and thin with labor and the midnight oil; I have starved, and watched the dawn break starving; I have prayed on my stubborn knees for death and I have prayed on my stubborn knees for life—all that I might reach London, London that has killed so many of my brothers, London the cold, London the blind, London the cruel! I am here at last. I am here to be tested, to be proved, to be worn proudly, as a favorite and costly jewel is worn, or to be flung aside scornfully or dropped stealthily to—the devil! And I love it so this great London! I am ready to swear no one ever loved it so before! The smokier it is, the dirtier, the dingier, the better. The oftener it rains the better. The more whimsical it is, the more fickle, the more credulous, the more self-sufficient, the more self-existent, the better. Nothing that it can do, nothing that it can be, can change my love for it, great cruel London!

But to be cruel to *me*, to be fickle to *me*, to be deaf to *me*, to be blind to *me*! Would I change then? I might. As yet it does not know me. I pass through its streets, touching here a bit of old black wall, picking there an ivy leaf, and it knows me not. It is holy ground to me. It is the mistress whose hand alone I as yet dare to kiss. Some day I shall possess the whole, and I shall walk with the firm and buoyant tread of the accepted, delighted lover. Only to-day I am nobody. I am crowded out. Yet there are moments when the mere joy of being in England, of being in London, satisfies me. I have seen the sunbeam strike the glory along the green. I know it is an English sky above me, all change, all mutability. No steady cloudless sphere of blue but ever-varying glories of white piled cloud against the gray. Listen to this. I saw a primrose—the first I had ever seen—in the hedge. They said "Pick it." But I did not. I, who had written there years ago,—

*I never pulled a primrose, I,
But could I know that there may lie
E'en now some small or hidden seed,
Within, below, an English mead,
Waiting for sun and rain to make
A flower of it for my poor sake,
I then could wait till winds should tell,
For me there swayed or swung a bell,
Or reared a banner, peered a star,
Or curved a cup in woods afar.*

I who had written that, I had found my first primrose and I could not pluck it. I found it fair be sure. I find all England fair. The shimmering mist and the tender rain, the red wallflower and the ivy green, the singing birds and the shallow streams—all the country; the blackened churches, the grass-grown churchyards, the hum of streets the crowded omnibus, the gorgeous shops,—all the town. God! do I not love it, my England? Yet not my England yet. Till she proclaim it herself, I am not hers. I will make her mine. I will write as no man has ever written about her, for very love of her. I look out to-night from my narrow window and think how the moonlight falls on Tintern, on Glastonbury, on Furness. How it falls on the primrose I would not pluck. How it would like to fall on the tall blue-bells in the wood. I see the lights of Oxford St. The omnibuses rattle by, the people are going to see Irving, Wilson Barrett, Ellen Terry. What line, of mine, what bar, what thought or phrase will turn the silence into song, the copper into gold?—I come back from the window and sit at the square centre table. It is rickety and uncomfortable, useless to write on. I kick it. I would kick anything that came in my way to-night. I am savage. Outside, a French piano is playing that infernal waltz. A fair subject for kicking if you will. But, though I would I cannot. What a room! The fire-place is filled with orange peel and brown paper, cigar stumps and matches. One blind I pulled down this morning, the other is crooked. The lamp glass is cracked, my work too. I dare not look at the wall paper nor the pictures. The carpet I have kicked into holes. I can see it though I can't feel it, it is so thin. My clothes are lying all about. The soot of London begrimes every object in the room. I would buy a pot of musk or a silken scarf if I dared, but how can I?

I must get my bread first and live for beauty after. Everything is refused though, everything sent back or else dropped as it were into some bottomless pit or gulf.

Here is my opera. This is my *magnum opus*, very dear, very clear, very well preserved. For it is three years old. I scored it nearly altogether, by *her* side, Hortense, my dear love, my northern bird! You could flush under my gaze, you could kindle at my touch, but you were not for me, you were not for me!—My head droops down, I could go to sleep. But I must not waste the time in sleep. I will write another story. No; I had four returned to-day. Ah! Cruel London! To love you so, only that I may be spurned and thrust aside, ignored, forgotten. But to-morrow I will try again. I will take the opera to the theatres, I will see the managers, I will even tell them about myself and about Hortense—but it will be hard. They do not know me, they do not know Hortense. They will laugh, they will say "You fool." And I shall be helpless, I shall let them say it. They will never listen to me, though I play my most beautiful phrase, for I am nobody. And Hortense, the child with the royal air, Hortense, with her imperial brow and her hair rolled over its cushion, Hortense, the *Châtelaine* of *Beau Séjour*, the delicate, haughty, pale and impassioned daughter of a noble house, that Hortense, my Hortense, is nobody!

Who in this great London will believe in me, who will care to know about Hortense or about *Beau Séjour*? If they ask me, I shall say—oh! proudly—not in Normandy nor in Alsace, but far away across a great water dwells such a maiden in such a *château*. There by the side of a northern river, ever rippling, ever sparkling in Summer, hard, hard frozen in winter, stretches a vast estate. I remember its impenetrable pinewood, its deep ravine; I see the *château*, long and white and straggling, with the red tiled towers and the tall French windows; I see the terrace where the hound must still sleep; I see the square side tower with the black iron shutters; I see the very window where Hortense has set her light; I see the floating cribs on the river, I hear the boatmen singing—

*Descendez à l'ombre,
Ma Jolie blonde.*

And now I am dreaming surely! This is London, not *Beau Séjour*, and Hortense is far away, and it is that cursed fellow in the street I hear! The morrow comes on quickly. If I were to draw up that crooked blind now I should see the first streaks of daylight. Who pinned those other curtains together? That was well done, for I

don't want to see the daylight; and it comes in, you know, Hortense, when you think it is shut out. Somebody calls it *fingers*, and that is just what it is, long fingers of dawn, always pale, always gray and white, stealing in and around my pillow for me. Never pink, never rosy, mind that; always faint and shadowy and gray.

It was all caste. Caste in London, caste in *Le Bos Canada*, all the same. Because she was a *St. Hilaire*. Her full name—*Hortense Angelique De Repentigny de St. Hilaire*—how it grates on me afresh with its aristocratic plentitude. She is well-born, certainly; better born than most of these girls I have seen here in London, driving, walking, riding in the Parks. They wear their hair over cushions too. Freckled skins, high cheek-bones, square foreheads, spreading eyebrows—they shouldn't wear it so. It suits Hortense—with her pale patrician outline and her dark pencilled eyebrows, and her little black ribbon and amulet around her neck. *O, Marie, priez pour nous qui avous recours a vous!* Once I walked out to *Beau Séjour*. She did not expect me and I crept through the leafy ravine to the pinewood, then on to the steps, and so up to the terrace. Through the French window I could see her seated at the long table opposite Father Couture. She lives alone with the good Père. She is the last one of the noble line, and he guards her well and guards her money too.

"I do remember that it will be all for ze Church," she has said to me. And the priest has taught her all she knows, how to sew and embroider, and cook and read, though he never lets her read anything but works on religion. Religion, always religion! He has brought her up like a nun, crushed the life out of her. Until I found her out, found my jewel out. It is Tennyson who says that. But his "Maud" was freer to woo than Hortense, freer to love and kiss and hold—my God! that night while I watched them studying and bending over those cursed works on the Martyrs and the Saints and the Mission houses—I saw him—him—that old priest—take her in his arms and caress her, drink her breath, feast on her eyes, her hair, her delicate skin, and I burst in like a young madman and told Father Couture what I thought. Oh! I was mad! I should have won her first. I should have worked quietly, cautiously, waiting, waiting, biding my time. But I could never bide my time. And now she hates me, Hortense hates me, though she so nearly learned to love me. There where we used to listen to the magical river songs, we nearly loved, did we not Hortense? But she was a *St. Hilaire*, and I—I was nobody, and I had insulted *le bon Pere*. Yet if I can go back to her rich, prosperous, independent—What if that happen? But I begin to fancy it will never happen. My resolutions, where are they, what comes of them? Nothing. I have tried everything except the opera. Everything else has been rejected. For a week I have not gone to bed at all. I wait and see those ghastly gray fingers smoothing my pillow. I am not wanted. I am crowded out. My hands tremble and I cannot write. My eyes fail and I cannot see. To the window!

The lights of Oxford St. once more; the glare and the rattle without, the fever and the ruin, the nerves and the heart within. Poor nerves, poor heart; it is food you want and wine and rest, and I cannot give them to you.

Sing, Hortense, will you? Sit by my side, by our dear river St. Maurice, the clear, the sparkling. See how the floating cribs sail by, each with its gleaming lights! It is like Venice I suppose. Shall we see Venice ever, Hortense, you and I? Sing now for me,

*Descendez à l'ombre,
Ma Jolie blonde.*

Only you are *petite brune*, there is nothing *blonde* about you, *mignonne*, my dear mademoiselle, I should say if I were with you of course as I used to do. But surely I *am* with you and those lights are the floating cribs I see, and your voice it is that sings, and presently the boatmen hear and they turn and move their hands and join in—Now all together,

Descendez à l'ombre,

It was like you, Hortense, to come all this way. How did you manage it, manage to cross that great water all alone? My poor girl did you grow tired of *Le bon Père* at last and of the Martyrs and the Saints and the Jesuit Fathers? But you have got your amulet on still I hope. That is right, for there is a chance—there is a chance of these things proving blessings after all to good girls, and you were a good girl Hortense. You will not mind my calling you Hortense, will you? When we are in *Le Bas Canada* again, in your own seigneurie, it will be "Mademoiselle," I promise you. You say it is a strange pillow, Hortense? Books, my girl, and manuscripts; hard but not so hard as London stones and London hearts. Do you know I think I am dying, or else going mad? And no one will listen even if I cry out. There is too much to listen to already in England. Think of all the growing green, Hortense, if you can, where you are, so far away from it all. Where you are it is cold and the snow is still on the ground and only the little bloodroot is up in the woods. Here where I am Hortense, where I am going to die, it is warm and green full of color—oh! Such color! Before I came here, to London you know London that is going to do so much for me, for us both, I had one day—one day in the country. There I saw—No! They will not let me tell you, I knew they would try to prevent me, those long gray fingers stealing in, stealing in! But I *will* tell you. Listen, Hortense, please. I saw the hawthorne, pink and white, the laburnum—

yellow—not fire-color, I shall correct the Laureate there, Hortense, when I am better, when I—publish!—It is dreadful to be alone in London. Don't come, Hortense. Stay where you are, even if it is cold and gray and there is no color. Keep your amulet round your neck, dear!—I count my pulse beats. It is a bad thing to do. It is broad daylight now and the fingers have gone. I can write again perhaps.—The pen—The paper—The ink—God. Hortense! There is no ink left! And my heart—My heart—Hortense!!!

*Descendez à l'ombre,
Ma Jolie blonde.*

Monsieur, Madame and the Pea-Green Parrot

CHAPTER I.

I am an Englishman by birth. Having however lived for fourteen years out in America or rather in Canada, I am only half an Englishman. All the love for the dear old land which I am now revisiting is still there, deep in my heart, but from so long a residence in another country certain differences arise of character, habit and thought, not to be easily shaken off. I was in the Civil Service in Canada and did very well until I meddled with literature. Discovering that I had a faculty for verse and story-telling, I was ambitious and at the same time foolish enough to work so hard at my new pursuit that I was compelled to “cut” the service, in other words to resign. Some other Englishman got my post and I found myself, rather unexpectedly, it is true, free to write to my heart's content.

I got off a number of things, poems, sketches, etc., but my great work turned out to be a comedy. I slaved at this all day and amused myself by rehearsing it in my lodgings all night. I incurred the odium of the landlady by coaxing the maid of all work to learn a part and act it with me. Finally I resolved to take a great step. I would go down to New York and get my comedy produced. That was exactly five years ago and though the comedy was *not* produced, I am still sanguine that it yet may be, and perhaps not in New York after all, but in a much more important creative centre.

I was at the time of my visit to New York perfectly unacquainted with the ways of a metropolis, and it was fortunate for me that I possessed one friend there who if not exactly a friend *at court* as we say, was in truth a much more useful person to me, as, having once been young and inexperienced himself, he knew the ropes well and handled them thoroughly to his own satisfaction and with an eye to my comfort and safety.

In the matter of cheap dives, for instance, he was invaluable. Left to myself I either drifted to the most expensive place, for a meal short perhaps of Delmonicos, or else to a shabby and altogether-to-be-repudiated den, where the meat would be rags as well as the pudding. But under his guidance we invariably turned up in some clean, bright, cheap and wholesome “oysterbar” or coffee room round the corner or up a lane, and were as happy as kings over our *lager beer*.

One day De Kock came to me (he is a grand-nephew or something, I believe, of the great Frenchman) and said, with his knowing air,

“You will please put on your best coat, your tall hat and a pair of gloves, for we are going to *dine* to-night.”

“Have we not dined once to-day!”

“Pish! Pshaw! You have had a soup, a mutton-chop, a triangle of pie, a lager beer, but you have not dined. You are not starving, and yet you have, from my present point of view, eaten nothing the whole of this day. *Mon cher*, it is necessary that you should dine for once in your life. *Allons!* We go to Giuseppe, Giuseppe Martinetti with the pale wife and the pea-green parrot—*allons, allons!*” To Martinetti's accordingly we went. I don't know what the dinner cost. It was dearer, certainly, than it would have been in London, but it was quite as good. We sat at a table formed for holding four at an open window, which, filled with exotics, overlooked Union Square, lighted by hundreds of incandescent lamps. The room contained about twenty of these small tables, and was, I suppose, very much like other rooms of its kind to *habitués* of such places, but it was all new to me, and I stared and wondered accordingly. The waiters seemed to be all foreigners, De Kock addressing them in a mythical but magical language of his own. The tables were all full, and the people at them were mostly foreigners as well.

“The Leicester Square of New York,” remarked De Kock, as he helped me to the delicious Chianti wine out of a basket-covered bottle into a dainty glass. The soup was excellent, I remember. So was the macaroni, served in the best Italian method. I wondered to see De Kock manipulate it in finished style, winding yards of it around his fork, and swallowing it duly without any apparent effort. I cut mine at that time, although I have learned better now. I recollect the asparagus, too: served by itself on a great flat dish, and shining pale and green through the clear golden sauce that was poured over it. I was just finishing my first luscious, liquid stalk, and indulging in anticipations of my second, when the highest, the shrillest, the most piercing, and

most unearthly voice I ever heard, shouted out—

“And for goodness sake don't say I told you!”

It was electrifying, at least to me. I dropped my half eaten asparagus stalk and fork at the same time, and looked up to see my companion quietly going on as before. One or two others had stopped eating too, but the majority appeared quite unruffled. I concluded that it was the parrot to which my friend had referred.

“The last comic song,” said the imperturbable De Kock.

“But where is the beast!” I inquired. “It seemed to be over my head.”

“Oh! Not so near as that. But take my advice and don't call it a beast, although it is a nuisance undoubtedly. Besides, its master is not very far away from your elbow.”

“What of that?” said I, still injured, though in a lower tone.

“What of that? Ah! You shall see. Look now! This short, stout person with the diamond pin and the expansive shirt front is Giuseppe. Ah, he sees me! Good evening, Giuseppe!”

“Good evening, Monsieur, good evening, good evening! De friend not like de *parrot*, eh?”

The man was smiling at me with his hands crossed behind him. An Italian Jew I dubbed him immediately.

“On the contrary, he admires it very much,” said De Kock.

Following their eyes presently I saw the cage hanging from the centre of the room, and in it a parrot as nearly pea-green in hue as it is possible for a parrot to be.

“Tell my friend her name, Giuseppe,” said De Kock, beginning on some more asparagus.

Giuseppe stood in his patronizing way—quite the *grand seigneur*—with the light falling on his solitaire, making it so brilliant that it fascinated and at the same time fatigued my eyes.

“The name of my parrot? Monsieur De Kock, he know that well. It is Félicité—you catch—Fé-li-ci-té. It was the name of my wife.”

Then his wife was dead. De Kock must have made a mistake.

“It is an unusual name for a bird, is not it?” said I.

“Monsieur is right. Not often—not often—you meet with a bird that name. My first wife—my *first* wife, gentlemen, she was English. *You* are English—ah. Yes. So was she. The English are like this.” Giuseppe took a bottle out of the cruet-stand and set it on the table in front of him. He went on, “When an Englishman an Englishwoman argue, they say”—here he took the bottle up very slowly and gingerly and altered his voice to a mincing and conventional tone—“Is it oil or is it vinegare? Did you not say that it was vinegare? I thought that it was oil Oh! Now I see that it is vinegare.”

“Bravo!” exclaimed De Kock. “And so you did not get on with the Englishwoman then I suppose, Giuseppe, and took Madame the next time?” We were both laughing heartily at the man's mimicry when once again the parrot shrieked. “But for goodness sake don't say I told you!” Giuseppe walked off to speak to it and my friend and I were left alone.

“Was Félicité the name of his first or second wife!” I asked.

“Of his second, of course. Didn't you hear him say the first was an Englishwoman? The second is a tall, rather good-looking pale Frenchwoman. You may see her to-night, and on the other hand you may not, she doesn't often appear in here. I wish she did, I am rather fond of her myself, which is more than her husband is. It's pretty well known that Mr. and Mrs. Joseph do *not* get on comfortably. In fact, he hates her, or rather ignores her, while she doats upon him and is tremendously jealous of the parrot.”

“What, that green thing?”

“Well, its a lovely parrot, you must know, and the moment it came into his possession—he has had it about three years—he seemed to transfer whatever affection he had for his wife to that creature, with a great deal beside. Why, he hugs it, and kisses it, and mows over it—look at him now!”

Sure, enough, there was Martinetti with the bird on his finger, kissing it, and otherwise making a fool of himself. He finished by actually putting it away inside his coat in a kind of breast pocket, I should imagine.

“All this is good for business, perhaps,” I said.

“What, the parrot and so on? Oh, yes I daresay, that has something to do with it. Still they are a queer couple. I come here mostly on account of this Chianti wine; you can't get it so good in many places in New York, and besides I confess Monsieur and his wife interest me somewhat. And the people one see here are immensely funny. That is your English expression, isn't it? There are three actresses over there at that table with *amis intimes*; they are 'restin' now, and can cut about and dine out as much as they please. There is a French dressmaker who lives on the floor above and is to be found here every day. She is superbly built and is hopelessly ugly, isn't she? There is young Lord Gurgoyne, an Englishman like yourself, you see—what the devil is he staring at like that?”

From behind a *portière* which fell across the end of the room came a woman, tall, pale, and with a peculiar air of distinction about her. Perhaps it was her very unusual pallor which so distinguished her for there was nothing absolutely fine or handsome about the countenance. It was a weak face I thought, with an ugly red mark over the upper lip, and had she not been so very pale and so exceptionally well-dressed I should not have looked at her twice. She wore a gown of black silk, dead-black, lustrous, and fitting her slender figure to perfection. It was cut square and low in the front and fell away in long folds upon the floor at the back. What an apparition she made in the midst of this noisy crowd, smoking, chatting, swearing, laughing! Especially so when I noticed that as she walked very slowly down between the tables, her lips were moving nervously and her hands clutching at her beautiful dress. As for her eyes, they were everywhere in an instant.

“'Tis Félicité. You are fortunate,” murmured De Kock. “And she is a little worse than usual.”

“What is it?” I demanded. “Drink?” “Hush-sh-sh! *Mon cher*, you are stupid. It is jealousy, jealousy, my friend, with perhaps an occasional over-dose of chloral. Chloral is the favorite prescription now-a-days, you must remember that. But jealousy will do, jealousy will do. It will accomplish a great deal, will jealousy; will destroy more, mark that! I hope she will be quiet to-night for your sake.”

"Is she violent?" I asked.

"Poor thing, yes. When she finds him now with that creature inside his coat; she will wring her hands and denounce him and threaten to kill it—I wonder she doesn't—then her husband will march her off behind the curtain and he will make love to the parrot again." Precisely what happened. The lady soon found her husband, raised her hands tragically and broke out into excited French that was liberally sprinkled with oaths both English and French. The mania was asserting itself, the propensity overcoming her. It was a sad and at the same time an amusing scene, for one could not help smiling at Giuseppe's fat unconcern as he kept his wife off at arms' length, while all the time the parrot inside his coat was shrieking in muffled tones "And for goodness sake don't say I told you!"

Finally Madame succumbed and was taken behind the curtain in a dishevelled and hysterical condition which increased De Kock's pity for her. We paid the waiter—or rather De Kock did—and left, not seeing Giuseppe again to speak to, though he came in and removed the parrot, cage and all.

It was a lovely night outside, and I suggested sitting for a time in Union Square. Finding an unoccupied bench, we each made ourselves happy with a good cigar and watched the exquisite shadows of the trees above as thrown by the electric light on the pavement.

"Wonderful effect!" remarked my friends. "How did you enjoy your dinner? That was a dinner, eh, and no mistake; rather have had it without the 'episode'? Oh! I don't know; you literary fellows must come in for that sort of thing as well as the rest of the world; I should think it would just suit you. Put them—the three of them—Monsieur, Madame and the Pea-Green Parrot—into a book, or better still, on the stage. There's your title ready for you too."

I was just thinking of the same thing.

"They are undoubtedly originals, both of them—all three," said I, "but as far as I have seen them, there is hardly enough to go upon."

"What do you mean by 'enough'?"

"I mean, for one thing, we do not understand the woman's mental and moral condition sufficiently to make a study of her. You say it is jealousy, and at the same time the use of chloral. That would have to be understood more clearly. Then, one would like something to—"

"Go on," said my friend. "To—"

"Happen," said I, lighting a second cigar.

Just then a couple of boys ran across the square. One of them stumbled over my feet, picked himself up quickly and ran on again. Two or three people now came, all running. De Kock jumped up.

"Something is happening," he said, "and with a vengeance too I fancy. Hark!"

The people now came fast and furious through the square, increasing in numbers every moment, but through the bustle and hurry and clatter of tongues, we could hear a woman's voice screaming in evident distress. Mingled with it was another sound which may have mystified the general crowd, but which De Kock and I could easily place.

"It is the parrot!" I exclaimed, as we started to run.

"You have your wish, *mon cher*, is it not so? But take it not so fast; we will be there in time. *Ciel!* What a row!"

The steps leading up to the restaurant were thronged with people, including two or three policemen. The dining-room was ablaze with light, and still full of visitors, most of whom, however, were moving about in a state of agitation. The upper windows were also lighted and wide open. The screaming suddenly ceased, but not the parrot.

"For goodness sake don't say I told you!" It went on, louder than ever, over and over again.

"Damn the bird!" exclaimed De Kock. "Policeman excuse me, but I am rather at home here. Let me go up, will you?"

"It looks bad, sir. I'd better keep behind."

"Oh. It isn't murder or anything of that sort. I know them, pretty couple, they are!"

The next moment we were in a kind of sitting room over the restaurant proper. Madame Martinetti lay as if exhausted on a sofa while the highly excited parrot sang and screamed and tore at its cage as if for life. Giuseppe was nowhere visible. "Now then where's the other?" demanded the policeman who had just entered behind us, "There's always two at this business. Show him up, now." But Madame at first would deign no explanation. Presently on the entry of policeman No. 2 she admitted there had been a quarrel. Yes, she had quarrelled with her dear Giuseppe, (the officers grinned) and had driven him away. Yes, he had gone—gone forever, he had said so, never to come back, never, never!

"And leave this fine business to you, eh? No fear of that. I guess Mr. Martinetti'll turn up all right in the morning, however, let us make a search, Joe." But Giuseppe was not found; there were no traces of a struggle, and the policemen having done all they could retired. My friend and I, by what right I know not were the last to leave the room. De Kock stood for some moments looking out of the window. I approached the parrot who was still screaming.

"If throwing a cloth over your head would stop you, I'd do it, my dear," said I. To my surprise, it ceased its noise directly, and became perfectly quiet. Madame Martinetti looked around with a contemptuous smile.

"You have the secret as well," said she. The bird turned to her and then returned to me. I became quite interested in it. "Pretty Poll, pretty bird; would you like a cracker?"

De Kock laughed softly at the window. "A cracker to such a bird as that! Ask it another." I actually, though with a timid air, opened the door of the cage and invited Polly to perch on my finger. She came, looking at me intensely all the while. I petted her little, which she took resignedly and with a faint show of wonder, then in answer to De Kock's summons put her back in the cage.

"I have the honour to wish madame a *bonsoir*," said he, but the lady was still sulky and vouchsafed no

answer.

We were soon out in the street.

"Do you know," said De Kock slowly, lighting a cigar and looking up at the house, "Do you know, I thought something had happened."

"And don't you now."

"I am not sure," answered my friend.

CHAPTER II.

We were pardonably curious to see the papers next morning. The affair was dismissed in three lines, and although as De Kock swore, the case was one for Gaboriau, it certainly was not our business to look into it and in fact in a week's time I was back in Canada, and he up to his eyes in commercial pursuits. The main point remained clear, however, that Martinetti did *not* come back, nor was he found, or traced or ever heard of again. Somebody took the business out of hand, as they say, and De Kock would occasionally write a P. S. to his letters like this—"Dined at poor Martinetti's, Chianti as usual. Ever yours." Or it would be—"Drank to the production of your last new comedy at Martinetti's." Once he stated that shortly after that memorable night Madame disappeared also, taking the parrot along. "I begin to think they are a pair of deep ones and up to some big game" he wrote. For myself, I never entirely forgot the circumstance, although it was but once vividly recalled to my mind and that was in a theatre in Montreal. An American company from one of the New York theatres was performing some farcical comedy or other in which occurred the comic song, admirably sung and acted by Miss Kate Castleton, "For goodness sake don't say I told you!" The reminiscences forced upon me quite spoiled my enjoyment; I could see that pale, nervous woman, hear her screams, and hear too the fearful voice of the poor parrot. Where is it now, thought I? That same winter I was much occupied in making studies of the different classes of people among the French-Canadians. The latter turn up everywhere in Montreal, and have a distinct "local color" about them which I was curious to get and hope to preserve for use some future day. I went everywhere and talked to everybody who might be of use to me; cabmen, porters, fruit dealers and tobacconists. I found much to interest me in the various Catholic institutions, and I was above all very fond of visiting the large, ugly gray building with the air of a penitentiary about it called the Grey Nunnery. Going through its corridors one day I took a wrong turning and found I was among some at least quasi-private rooms. The doors being open I saw that there were flowers, books, a warm rug on the floor of one and a mirror on the wall of another. The third I ventured to step inside of, for a really beautiful Madonna and child confronted me at the door. The next moment I saw what I had not expected to see—a parrot in a cage suspended from the window! I made quite sure that it was not *the* parrot before I went up to it. It was asleep and appeared to be all over of a dull grey color, to match the Nuns, one might have said. I stood for quite a little while regarding it. Suddenly it stirred, shook itself, awoke and seeing me, immediately broke out into frantic shrieks to the old refrain "And for goodness sake don't say I told you."

So it was the parrot after all! Of that I felt sure, despite the changed color, not only because of the same words being repeated—two birds might easily learn the same song, but because of the bird's manner. For I felt certain that the thing knew me, recognized me, as we say of human beings or of dogs and horses. I felt an extraordinary sensation coming over me and sat down for a moment. I seemed literally to be in the presence of something incomprehensible as I watched the poor excited bird beating about and singing in that way. The words of the song became painfully and awfully significant—"for goodness sake don't say I told you!" They were an appeal to my pity, to my sense of honor, to my power of secrecy, for I felt convinced that the bird had seen something—in fact that, to use De Kock's convenient if ambiguous phrase, *something had happened!* Then to think of its recognizing me too, after so long an interval! What an extraordinary thing to do! But I remembered, and hope I shall never forget, how exceeding small do the mills of the gods grind for poor humanity. I would have examined the creature at once more closely had not two of the nuns appeared with pious hands lifted in horror at the noise. They knew me slightly but affected displeasure at the present moment.

"Who owns this bird?" said I. It was still screaming.

"The good Sister Félicité. It is her room."

"Can I see her?"

"Ah! *non*. She is ill, so very ill. She will not live long, *cette pauvre soeur!*"

I reflected. "Will you give her this paper without fail when I have written upon it what I wish?"

"*Mais oui, Monsieur!*"

In the presence of the two holy women standing with their hands devoutly crossed, and of the parrot whom I silenced as well as I could, and in truth I appeared to have some influence over the creature, I wrote the following upon a leaf torn out of my scratch-book: "To the Soeur Félicité. A gentleman who, if he has not made a great mistake, saw you once when you were M^{de}. Martinetti, asks you now if in what may be your last moments, you have anything to tell, anything to declare, or anybody to pardon. He would also ask—what *was done to the parrot?* He, with his friend M. De Kock, were at your house in New York the night your husband disappeared."

"Give her that," said I to the waiting sister, "and I will come to see how she is to-morrow."

That night, however, she died, and when I reached the nunnery next day it was only to be told that she had

read my note and with infinite difficulty written an answer to it.

"I am sorry I should have perhaps hastened her end," said I. "Before you give it to me, will you permit me to see her?"

"*Mais oui, Monsieur*, if monsieur will come this way."

Until I gazed upon the dead I did not feel quite sure of the identity of this pious Sister of Charity. But I only needed to look once upon the ghastly pallor, the ugly lip mark and the long slender figure on the bed before me to recognize her who had once been Mdme. Martinetti.

"And now for the paper," I said.

"It will be in the room that was hers, if monsieur will accompany." We walked along several corridors till we reached the room in which hung the parrot, I quite expected it to fly at me again and try to get rid of its miserable secret. But no! It sat on its stick, perfectly quiet and rational.

"I cannot find dat paper, it is very strange!" muttered the good sister, turning everything over and over. A light wind playing about the room had perhaps blown it into some corner. I assisted her in the search.

"It surely was in an envelope?" I said to the innocent woman.

"Yes monsieur, yes, and with a seal, for I got the *cire*—you call it *wax*—myself and held it for her, *la bonne soeur*."

"It is not always wise to leave such letters about," I put in as meekly as I could "Where was it you saw it last?"

"On dees little table, monsieur."

Now, "dees little table" was between the two windows, and not far, consequently from the parrot's cage. My eye travelled from the table to the cage as a matter of necessity, and I saw that the bottom of it was strewn with something white—like very, very tiny scraps of paper. "I think you need not look any further," said I. "Polly, you either are very clever, or else you are a lunatic and a fool. Which is it?"

But I never found out. The parrot had got the letter by some means or other and so effectually torn, bitten and made away with it that nothing remained of it for identification except the wax, which it did not touch and left absolutely whole. The secret which had been the parrot's all along belonged to the parrot still, and after having devoured it in that fashion it became satisfied, and never—at least, as far as I am aware—reverted morbidly to the comic refrain which has but one significance for me.

I took the bird and kept it. I have it now with me. It has been examined hundreds of times; for a long time I was anxious to know the secret of its changed color, but I have never deciphered it. It is healthy, in good condition, sweet-tempered and very fond of me. It does not talk much, but its talk is innocent and rational. No morbid symptoms have ever appeared in it since I took it from the nunnery in Montreal. Its plumage is soft and thick, and perfectly, entirely gray. My own impression is that it was naturally a gray parrot and had at that time of my sojourn in New York, either been dyed or painted that peculiar pea-green which so distinguished it then. I wrote to De Kock before leaving for England and told him something of the story. I have seen the last of Madame; in all probability I shall see the last of the Pea-Green Parrot, and I cannot help wondering when I enter a café or ride on an omnibus whether I shall ever run across Giuseppe Martinetti in the flesh, or whether the last of him was seen in truth, five years ago.

The Bishop of Saskabasquia.

I have not a story, properly speaking, to tell about him. He, my Bishop, is quite unconscious that I am writing about him, and would, I daresay, be quite astonished if he knew that I could find anything that relates to him to write about. But I will tell you just how I came to do so. I went to see the "Private Secretary" some months ago. I had never been a great admirer of clergymen as a sex (vide Frenchman's classification), and I thoroughly enjoyed the capital performance of so clever a play. Here, thought I, is a genuine and perfectly fair, though doubtless exaggerated, portrait of the young and helpless curate. I quite lived on that play. I used to go about, like many another delighted playgoer, I expect, quoting the better bits in it, and they are many, and often laughing to himself at its admirable caricature. However, to go on with what I am going to tell you, about two months after I had seen the "Private Secretary," I had occasion to undertake a sea voyage. I had to go out on business to Canada, and embarked one fine Thursday at Liverpool. One of the first things you do on board an ocean steamer is to find your allotted place at table, and the names, etc, of your companions. I soon found mine, and discovered with a pang that I was six seats from the Captain at the side, between a lady and her daughter I had already met at the North-Western Hotel and did not like, and opposite to the Bishop of Saskabasquia, his wife and sister and three children. There was no help for it, I must endure the placid small talk, the clerical platitudes, the intolerable intolerance born of a deathless bigotry that would emanate from my *vis-a-vis*. What a fuss they made over him, too! Only a Colonial Bishop after all, but when we were all at the wharf, ready to get into the tender, we were kept waiting—we the more insignificant portion of the passengers, mercantile and so on—till "my lord" and his family, nine in number, were safely handed up, with boys and bundles and baggage of every description.

The Bishop himself was a tall thin man, rather priestly in aspect and careworn. Mrs. Saskabasquia as I called her all through the voyage and the seven children—seven little Saskabasquians—and Miss Saskabasquia, the aunt, were all merry enough it seemed though dressed in the most unearthly costumes I had ever seen. Where they had been procured I could not imagine, but they appeared to be made of different

kinds of canvas, flannel shirting, corduroy, knitted wool and blankets. Of course we all mustered at the lunch table that first day, people always do, and affect great brightness and hysterical intellectuality and large appetites. I took my seat with a resigned air. There was not a single pretty girl on board. There were plenty of children, but I did not care much for the society of children. The lady and her daughter between whom I sat, presumably to hand them the dishes, did not like me any better than I liked them. They were Canadians, that was easy to discover by their peculiarly flat pronunciation, a detestable accent I hold, the American is preferable. They were connected with the Civil Service in some way through "papa" who figured much in their conversation and I fancy the mother rather disliked the idea of such close contact with a member of the commercial world. So much for colonial snobbery. The lunch was good however, excellent, and we did justice to it. The Bishop did not appear nor any of his family until we had almost finished. Then he entered with his wife and the two eldest boys. The only vacant seats were those opposite me which they took. I wondered they had not placed him next the Capt., but divined that the handsome brunette and the horsey broker, Wyatt and his wife of Montreal, fabulously rich and popular, had arranged some time before to sit next the Capt. My Bishop was perhaps annoyed. But if so, he did not show it. He and his wife ate abundantly, it was good to see them. I involuntarily smiled once when the Bishop sent his plate back the second time for soup, and he caught me. To my surprise, he laughed very heartily and said to me:

"I hope you do not think I am forgetting all the other good things to come! I assure you we are very hungry, are we not, Mary?"

Mrs. Saskabasquia laughed in her turn, and I began to perceive what a very pretty girl she must have been once, and her accent was the purest, most beautiful English. We seemed to warm up generally around the table as we watched the Bishop eat. The boys behaved beautifully and enjoyed their meal as well. Presently we heard a baby crying. It was evidently the youngest of the seven young Saskabasquians. The Bishop stopped directly.

"Go on, go on with your dinner, my dear; I'll see to him, its only James. Dropped his rattle and put his finger in his eye, I expect."

He jumped up and went, I suppose, to the stateroom. Mrs. Saskabasquia laughed softly, and when she spoke she rather addressed herself to me.

"My husband is very good, you know. And James is such a little monkey, and so much better with him than with anyone else, so I just let him go, but it does certainly look very selfish, doesn't it?"

"Not at all," I responded gallantly. "I am sure you need the rest quite as much as he does, particularly if the ba—if the little boy is very young and you—that is—" I was not very clear as to what I was going to say, but she took it up for me.

"Oh, James is the baby. He is just six months' old, you know."

"That is very young to travel," said I. I began to enjoy the charming confidences of Mrs. Saskabasquia, in spite of myself.

"Oh, he was only *three* months old when we left for England, quite a young traveller as you say. But he is very good, and I have so many to help me."

Here the Bishop returned and sat down once more to his lunch. We had some further conversation, in which I learned that he and his wife had gone out to the North-West just twelve years ago for the first time. All their children had been born there, and they were returning to work again after a brief summer holiday in England. They told me all this with the most delightful frankness, and I began to be grateful for my place at table, as without free and congenial society at meal-time, life on board an ocean steamer narrows down to something vastly uncomfortable. It was a bright and beautiful afternoon on deck, and I soon found myself walking energetically up and down with the Bishop. I commenced by asking him some questions as to his work, place of residence and so on, and once started he talked for a long time about his northern home in the wilds of Canada.

"My wife and I had been only married two months when we went out," said he, with a smile at the remembrance. "We did not know what we were going to."

"Would you have gone had you known?" I enquired as we paused in our walk to take in a view of the Mersey we were leaving behind.

"Yes, I think so. Yes, I am quite sure we would. I was an Oxford man, country-bred; my father is still alive, and has a small living in Essex. I was imbued with the idea of doing something in the colonies long after I was comfortably settled in an English living myself, but I had always fancied it would be Africa. However, just at the time of our marriage I was offered this bishopric in Canada, and my wife was so anxious to go that I easily fell in with the plan."

"Anxious to go out there?" I said in much surprise.

"Ah! You don't know what a missionary in herself my wife is! Then, of course, young people never think of the coming events—children and all that you know. We found ourselves one morning at three o'clock, having gone as far as there was any train to take us, waiting in a barn that served as a station for the buckboard to take us on further to our destination. Have you been in Canada yourself? No? Then you have not seen a buckboard. It consists of two planks laid side by side, lengthwise, over four antiquated wheels—usually the remains of a once useful wagon. Upon this you sit as well as you can, and get driven and jolted and bumped about to the appointed goal. I remember that morning so well," continued the Bishop. "It was very cold, being late in November, and at that hour one feels it so much more—3 a.m., you know. There was one man in charge of the barn; we called him the station-master, though the title sat awkwardly enough upon him. He was a surly fellow. I never met such another. Usually the people out there are agreeable, if slow and stupid."

"Slow, are they?" said I in surprise.

"Oh, frightfully slow. A Canadian laborer is the slowest person in existence, I really believe. However, this man would not give us any information, except to barely tell us that this buckboard was coming for us shortly. It was pitch dark of course and the barn was lighted by one oil lamp and warmed by a coal stove. The lamp would not burn well, so my wife unstrapped her travelling bag and with a pair of tiny curved nail scissors did

her best, with the wick, the man remaining perfectly unmoveable and taciturn all the while. At four o'clock our conveyance arrived, and would you believe it—both the driver and the station master allowed me to lift my own luggage into it as well as I could? What it would not take I told the man in charge I would send for as soon as possible. There was no sleighing yet, and that drive was the most excruciating thing I ever endured over corduroy roads through wild and dark forests, along interminable country roads of yellow clay mixed with mud till finally we reached the house of the chief member of society in my district where we were to stay until our own house was ready."

"How long did that take you?" I was quite interested. This was unlike the other clergymen's conversation I remembered.

"O, a matter of eight hours or so. We had the eggs and bacon—the *piece de resistance* in every Canadian farmhouse—at about half-past 12, for which we were thankful and—hungry. But now you must excuse me for here come two of the boys. Now, then, Alick, where's your mother? Isn't she coming on deck with James? Run and fetch her and you, George, get one of the chairs ready for her. And get the rugs at the same time Alick, do you hear?"

I excused myself in turn and watched the family preparations with much amusement. Mrs. Saskabasquia came up from her state room with a baby in her arms, and a big fellow he was, followed by the other six and their aunt. The Bishop placed chairs for the two ladies and walked up and down the deck I should think the entire afternoon, first with two children and then with two more and finally with the baby in his arms. This was a funny sight but still not one to be ridiculed, far from it. Well, every day showed my new friend in an improved light. Who was it took all the children, not only his own but actually the entire troop on board up to the bow and down to the stern in a laughing crowd to see this or that or the other? Now a shoal of porpoises, now a distant sail or an iceberg, now the beautiful phosphorescence or the red light of a passing ship—the Bishop. Who divined the innate cliquism of life on board ship and cunningly got together in intercourse the very people who wanted to know each other, and even brought into good temper those unfortunate souls who thought only of their own dignity and station in life? The Bishop. Who organized the Grand Concert and Readings in the saloon, writing the programmes himself, pinning them on the doors, discovering the clever and encouraging the timid and reading from the "Cricket on the Hearth," and the "Wreck of the Grosvenor," as I had never imagined a divine could read? The Bishop again. Who might be seen in the mid-day hours when the cabin passengers were asleep, quietly and without ostentation reading or talking to the steerage, ay, and Mrs. Saskabasquia too with her baby on her arm, going about amongst those poor tired folk, many of them with their own babies, not too well fed and not too well washed nor clothed? Still the Bishop, always the Bishop. They appeared as if they could not rest without helping on somebody or something, and yet there was in Mrs. Saskabasquia at least, a delightful sense of calm which affected all who came near her. I used often to sit down by her, she with the inevitable baby on her lap and two or three of the others at her feet on rugs, and she would talk most frankly and unaffectedly of their strange life in Canada. I learnt that she was the daughter of a clergyman in Essex, and had, of course, been brought up in a refined and charming country home like an English gentlewoman. What she had had to do in the new world seemed like a dream.

"What servants do I keep?" she said one day in answer to a question of mine "Why, sometimes I am without any. Then Kathleen and I do the best we can and the children they do the same and my husband takes what we give him! Indeed, my house is a sort of dispensary you know. The most extraordinary people come to me for the most extraordinary things. Now for a bottle of medicine, now for some cast off clothing, now for writing paper and old newspapers or a few tacks. So we have many wants to relieve besides our own and really, that is good for us you know. One Xmas dinner was an amusing one. Roast beef was out of the question, we couldn't get any, and the old woman who usually brought us a turkey came eight miles in the snow to bitterly lament the failure of her turkey crop. The one she had intended for me had been killed and trussed and then the rats which abound out there, got at it in the night and left not a bone of it! So I got the poor old thing a warm cup of tea and gave her some thick socks and sent her away relieved, resolved to spread myself on the pudding. Do you remember Kathleen!"

And Miss Saskabasquia did and smiled at the remembrance.

"What was it like?"

"The pudding? Oh! It was the funniest pudding! George—no—Ethel, was the baby then and very troublesome. Yes, you were my dear and cutting teeth. I was far from strong and in the act of stirring the pudding was taken quite ill and had to give it up. Kathleen was naturally forced to attend to me and the three children, and only for Henry, we should have had no Xmas dinner at all! He went to work with a will, stirred it well, put it into the cloth and was just I believe dropping it into the water when the string broke and the poor pudding tumbled into the water! Of course it was useless, and my husband scarcely knew what to do with himself. Fancy what he did do, though! He went to work and made another out of what he could find without telling us. He'll tell you about it if you ask him, how puzzled he was at first. There was some suet over, only not minced, you know. So he took that just as it was in a lump and buried it in bread-crumbs, luckily we had plenty of bread. Then he broke in the eggs, but when he came to look for the fruit, that was all in the pot of hot water, not a raisin left. He just ladled them out and put them in the second time. I think that was delicious of him don't you? But he forgot the flour and there was so little sugar seemingly in the bag (he didn't know where my Xmas stores were kept) that he took fright and wouldn't use it but broke up some maple sugar instead, then tied it up and got it safely launched the second time. And it was not at all bad, though *very* shapeless and unlike a trim plum pudding, with the holly at the top."

And many another tale did she tell me of "Henry's" ceaseless activity, and courage and patience. He had learnt three Indian dialects, the *patois* of the *habitant*, and the Gaelic of two Scotch settlements, in order to converse freely with his people and understand their wants properly. He could doctor the body as well as the soul, set a fractured limb, bind a wound, apply ice for sunstroke and snow for chilblains. He could harness a horse and milk a cow; paddle a canoe and shoot and fish like an Indian, cook and garden and hew and build—indeed there seemed nothing he could not do and had not done, and all this along with the care of his office, as much a missionary one as any could be. Peril of shipwreck and peril of fire, peril of frost and peril of heat, peril of sickness, pain and death, peril of men, ignorant and wicked, of wild beasts and wilder storms—all

these he had braved with his wife and little ones for the sake of his convictions added to a genuine love of his fellow-man. I began to consider, and rightly I think, the unknown, obscure Bishop of Saskabasquia one of the most interesting men of the day.

Our journey, however, could not always last. Our pleasant chats, our lively table-talk, Mrs. Saskabasquia's pretty womanly confidences and her husband's deep-voiced readings from Dickens which he told me were of the utmost moral value to his people, all came to an end. We all felt sorry to part, yet greatly relieved at seeing the mighty cliff of Quebec draw nearer and nearer with each succeeding hour. I had been quite ill for the last two days like nearly all the other passengers. Coming up the Gulf of St. Lawrence that is sometimes the case, and we were a miserable party that Friday, hardly anyone on deck except the irrepressible Bishop and his family and myself. I was wretched, sick and cold and trembling in every limb, undoubted *mal de mer* had fastened upon me. We were standing close by the railing of the promenade deck when a something swept by on the water. "Child overboard!" I sang out as loudly as I could. Instantly the steerage was in a state of commotion—the child was missed. There didn't appear to be a sailor on the spot. The Bishop looked at me, and I looked at the Bishop. Like lightning he tore off his coat. I put my hand on his arm.

"Dear sir, you will not do such a thing!"

"What is it, Henry?" cried his wife. "Somebody must."

"I wish to God I could, sir!" In another moment he was over.

How he ever recovered from that awful plunge I don't know, but a boat was immediately lowered for him and the child—he had it safe, miraculously enough. How I cursed my weakness which prevented my going in his place. But when I saw the two lives saved I was glad I had not gone, for in my weak state I could not even have saved the child.

I am invited to a Christmas dinner, *whenever I like*, with the Bishop of Saskabasquia, whom I count as perhaps the finest specimen of healthy Christian manhood I have ever met, and although I can still laugh at the fun of "The Private Secretary" I can say that even among her clergy England can boast of heroes in these latter days as noble and disinterested as in years gone by.

"As it was in the Beginning."

A CHRISTMAS SKETCH.

CHAPTER I.

It is Christmas day in the morning. There is no doubt about it. The shine of the sun, the frost on the trees, the voice of the birds, and the unusual crow, and cackle and clatter and confusion outside the house can leave no doubts upon the subject, to say nothing of the inside of the house. Here it is Christmas day and no mistake. On what other day is the larder so full?—Full is not expressive enough; crammed, rammed, jammed full is more like the actual condition of things, so tightly wedged are pheasants and partridges, grouse and quail, great roasts of beef and haunches of venison, pork and pasty, mutton and fowl. On what other day is the still-room so alluring, where cordials are at their liveliest of brown and amber, and the white fingers of the lady of the house gleam in and out of the piling of herbs and the stirring of compounds—both innocent and inebriating? On what other day is the kitchen so important? Why, the cook is actually thinner than she was the yesterday! Christmas day in the morning is taking it out of her. "No men cooks about me", growls Sir Humphrey Desart, "we'll keep Sarah." So Sarah is kept, and though she be fat, aye, and getting on to three score, yet her strength faileth not, as you may observe. Somewhat of a martinet, yet kindly withal and leading the hubbub in the kitchen with all the gusto of twenty years ago. My lady will descend presently to see if all goes on properly, and Sarah must lose no time. Heavens, how many eggs is she going to break? What are they all for? Will not the resources of the farmyard fail her? This, then, explains all the crow and cackle outside. Now what is she at? Lemons this time, and anon giving a fine stimulus with her master-hand to the lumpy yellow contents of a smooth yellow bowl. Ah! No lumps now; one turn and all resolved into a perfect cadence. Anyone is an artist and a great one who can so resolve a discordant measure. And now she is busy with the brandy! Ah! Sarah, will no temptation accrue from the pouring of the warming draught? "Out upon thee!" says Sarah. "Am I not already as warm over my work as I want to be, and shall I not have my good glass of beer at my dinner? Leave the quality upstairs their brandy," says Sarah, "and let me get to my work."

Well, and the upshot of all this is, that, despite all one may affirm to the contrary, the one grand essential, the peculiar and individualizing attribute of Christmas is—the dinner. The parson may think of his preaching (and if he ever does so, surely most of all on this day) and the virtuous may think of the poor; the old may remember the young, and the young be pardoned for only remembering each other, but the chief thought, the most blissful remembrance is still—The Dinner.

If the parson preach a little better sermon than usual, it is because his nine children have not been forgotten by Lady Bountiful, and are actually going to have—A Dinner.

My Lady Bountiful in her turn may go to church, and appear devoutly removed from the *mundus edibilis*, yet if you could look into her reflections, you would perceive that she has but one thought—The Dinner. Do you suppose, much as the youths from Oxford and their friend the captain, from London, are devoted to mamma and her daughters, they are not at the same time being eaten up, as it were, devoured, by the intense wish for the hour to come when they may partake of—That Dinner!

Sir Humphrey has asked a particularly large party down this Christmas, and seems to have forgotten nobody he ever knew. Not a poor relation but has been remembered, and things are on a grander scale than usual. The candles build famously, set in the chimney candelabra; the logs are all of the biggest, and as for the Yule himself, he is a veritable Brobdignag; the staircases drop flowers, and holly and mistletoe hang all about. Everything shines, and gleams, and glows. There is to be a boar's head, with, no lack of mustard and minstrelsy, and nothing eatable or drinkable that pertains to Christmas will be wanting. Carols, and waits, and contended tenants; merry chimes and clinking glasses; twanging fiddles and the rush down the middle—nothing is spared and nobody is forgotten. So the hour draws on, the guests pull through the dreary day (for as I have said before, everything on Christmas day gives place to the dinner), and at last the dinner becomes an absolute fact, something to be apprehended, sat down to, and finally eaten. It *is* eaten, and everyone has come into the long hall, at one end of which the Yule burns. There is merry talk, and it is easier now for the captain to devote himself to the girls, having left the dinner behind; there is talk, too, of a little wonder at the gorgeousness of the dinner, for Sir Humphrey has not been so gay for years, yes, just twenty years, when it is evident that Sir Humphrey is going to make a speech. He stands alone in front of the fire, and this is what he says. If you want to know what he looks like, you may think of an old man who is a gentleman, white-haired, noble and resolute, but with a sense of broken fortunes and deferred hopes upon him.

"I have been young and now am old," says Sir Humphrey, "and I have never yet seen the house, known the family, or penetrated the life where there did not exist some trouble or some secret. Therefore, if I refer to-night to the skeleton in my own house," he continues, with a slight shudder, "I only do what perhaps each individual before me might also do were there the like necessity. The necessity of such reference, in my own case, does not make it less hard for me." Here, Sir Humphrey pauses. When he speaks again he is something straighter and firmer than before. "But as at this season the Church and our good friend the parson would teach us all to remember each other and to help those we can help, I am about to speak. You have heard, all of you, how twenty years ago I sent my two eldest sons out of the house. You have heard, all of you, that they were foolish, and that I was hard, something about a girl and cut off with a shilling, I suppose. Well, to-night you shall hear the true story. I do not think even Lady Desart knows it. She was not their mother, but, as you know, my adored and adoring second wife. I do not know if many of you remember my boys. I can see Humphrey now—a man does not easily forget his first-born, and Hugh was no less dear. My dear friends, if I drove the lads from my house twenty years ago to-night, I did it in obedience to the rules of my own conscience and with regard to the laws of nature, which I should have put before my conscience, as I have far greater respect for them. I did it, as we so often futilely say, for the best. But how often, oh, my dear friends, how often since I have thought that I may have made a terrible mistake."

"They were, Hugh and Humphrey, both madly in love with the same girl. She was no pauper, as you may have been led to believe, but the Lady Barbara Hastings. Her name is familiar to you. She was beautiful and talented, never married, and you may remember that about a month ago she died at the house of friends in London. I knew her, fortunately or unfortunately, however, moving in society as the adopted daughter of a refined gentlewoman, to be the child of a lunatic mother and a father who drank his life away in a Continental retreat. Knowing this I would not for a moment consent even to the thought of either of my sons marrying her, although I knew her to be all that was gracious in womankind. I could not tell them the reason: the secret was hers, poor girl, and I did not betray it. I said 'No,' and each knew what that meant. So we separated, but the worst of it was, my friends, that each lad thought I had refused my consent to save the other the pain of seeing his brother happy; so that greater than their anger with me was their jealousy of one another. With murder in their hearts they fled to America, I believe, pursuing in self-torture that phantom of revenge which we have all seen sometime or another, and whose hot breath we must have felt."

Sir Humphrey pauses oftener now.

"I tell you all this because I want you to see how possible it may be for a man to think he is doing the very best, the only right thing, and then for perhaps an infinitely worse one to crop up. I read not long ago in a wild Western paper a story of two Englishmen who fought a lonely duel on some slope of those great mountains out there, and I think I have not slept since I read it. To have exiled my boys only that they might kill one another in foreign lands and sleep so far away from our English ground!"

Sir Humphrey's voice is failing now and his eyes grow moist. A man, you see, does not easily forget his first-born.

"I tell you all this," he continues, "that it may help you to be kind and to think twice. I only thought once, and perhaps the worst may have come of it. Then I tell it to you, too, because I am an old man now, and my voice is not as strong as it was, and I can't get out to church as regularly as I used to do, and I want you all to help me to remember these absent ones and with them any of your own. There is virtue in the holding up of many hands and the lifting up of many hearts. Whether I see them again or not, that does not matter; but for the assurance that they have not harmed each other, let us pray Almighty God this night."

Ah! Sir Humphrey, there are those who would give their life for yours, but they cannot bring you that assurance to-night. Can you wait?

"I can wait," says Sir Humphrey.

CHAPTER II.

It is Christmas day in the morning. At least, so Almanack says, and Almanack ought to know, though he is given in those days to such ornate and emblazoned titivation of himself outwardly, putting himself in the hands of fair Mistress Kate Greenaway at the head of a mischievous throng, that he causes one to seriously consider whether his old head be turned or no. A scholar and statistician buried in heaps of flowers, with a rope of daisies round his neck, and a belt of primroses round his waist; a sunflower in his buttonhole, and a singing bird upon his shoulder; and, worst of all, the picture of a pink-frocked, pink-faced girl next his heart—can he be relied upon? But he persists in his claim to be listened to, and we must take his word for it that this is Christmas day in the morning, although it just looks like any other day. On any other day the sun is just as bright, and the air just as keen. On other days the snow is just as white, just as deep—two feet where the constant tramping has levelled its crystalline beauty, ten, twelve, fifteen there where a great soft cloud of drift reaches halfway up the side of a small wooden house. On other days there is just as much blue in the sky, in the smoke, in the shadows of the pines, and the shadows of the icicles. On other days the house looks just as neat, just as silent, just as poor. The clearing is small, the house is small, a small terrier suns himself on a pile of wood, and the only large object apparently in existence is the tall, broad-shouldered, well-proportioned man who presently emerges from the wooden house. His ear has just caught the sound of a bell. It is not a bad bell for Muskoka, and it has a most curious effect on this white, cold silent world of snow and blue shadows. The owner of the house, who is also the builder of it, stands a few moments listening. There is only the twitter of the snowbirds to listen to, then the bell; more snowbirds, and then the bell again.

"It has quite a churchy sound," he remarks; "I never noticed how churchy before, but it reminds me of some other bell. Ten years I have read for them here, and I never noticed it before." More twitter from the snowbirds and the bell again. Time for church, although the functions of the lay-reader will be this day laid aside, giving place to the more exacting ones of the *rector chori*. This being Christmas day in the morning, it devolves upon one clergyman to preach in four different places, if not literally at once, at least on the same day.

"It isn't possible," thinks the tall man swinging along at a tremendous pace, "that this bell—there it is again, confound it; yet no, not confound it—can resemble that other bell I used to know. No, quite impossible. Is it likely that anything here," and the thinker spreads both long arms out to take in the entire landscape, "can resemble or remotely suggest the Old Country, or, as people call it, home? Home? Why this is home. That four-roomed and convenient, if not commodious, mansion I have just quitted is my home. Talking of commodiousness, it's quite large enough, too. I have no wife, no children, no partner, not even a sleeping one, no one ever comes to see me. So I do not need a drawing-room, a nursery, a guest chamber, or a smoking-room. I have no books, therefore I need no library; I indulge in no chemical pursuits, therefore I need no laboratory; my music-room is the forest in summer and the chimney in winter, while my studio, according to the latest aesthetic fad—I think that is the word—opens off the music-room.

"Now, if you take away art, science, literature, and society from the daily life of a man, what do you leave? Simply the three radical necessities of sleeping, eating, working. My work I do mostly in the open air, so that, practically, I need but two rooms, one to cook in and the other to sleep in. I have always felt convinced that to be happy I only require two rooms, except on extra cold nights, when I find that one suffices. That is when Tim and I lie near the kitchen fire to keep warm. Home! Why of course it is home. Didn't I build the house myself? What association is dearer than that? To come into a pile of half-ruined towers, all gables and gargoyles, built somewhere about the fourteenth century, and added to by every fool who liked, without the slightest pretence to knowledge of architecture and civilization may be very gratifying, but, strange as it may seem, I prefer the work of my own hands. I am quite a Canadian, of course, though I once was an Englishman. I array myself in strange raiment, thick and woollen, of many colours; my linen is coarse and sometimes superseded by flannel; I wear a cast-off fur cap on my head and moccasins on my feet. I have grown a beard and a fierce moustache. I have made no money and won no friends except the simple settlers around me here. And I shall grow old and grey in your service, my Muskoka. I shall be forty-one on my next birthday. Then will come fifty-one, another ten years and sixty-one. All to be lived here? Yes, I have sworn it. Not Arcady, not Utopia, only Muskoka, but very dear to me. There is the forest primeval! I know everything in it from the Indian pipe—clammy white thing, but how pretty!—to that great birch there with the bark peeling off in pieces a yard wide. There is the lovely Shadow river. Masses of cardinal flowers grow there in the summer, and when I take my boat up its dark waters I feel that no human being has felt its beauty so before. I think, for a small river it is the loveliest in the world. And as to my larder now, why I am going to make my Christmas dinner off a piece or pork and ask for nothing better! I shall have a glorious appetite, which is the main point. The bell again!"

Yes, and the snow birds, too, flying round the porch of the little church. It is a very small and plain edifice and not over warm, and the officiating clergyman, who has just driven eighteen miles with the prospect of eighteen back after service, hurries the proceedings somewhat. There is a harmonium played by the tall man, and there is a choir consisting of himself and a small boy. In place of the usual Anglican hymns two carols are sung by the choir, which have the quaintest effect in such a place, and which appear to interest and even excite one of the congregation. This is a man of middle age, most richly dressed with a certain foreign air about him and evidently in a very delicate state of health. He is accompanied by a lady whose dress is also a marvel of beauty and costliness though hardly of fitness. The broad bands of gold which adorn her wrists and neck would alone procure for her the entire attention of the congregation were she seated in a more conspicuous place. As it is they are seated near the stove for increased comfort. "Good King Wenceslas" sings the choir, the small boy finding the long word very trying, and coming utterly to grief in the last two verses, for his companion appears to have lost his place. With the last verse of the carol comes the close of the service, the straggling congregation disperse and the jolly clergyman drives off again. Then an important thing happens, and happens very quietly. So quietly that the richly dressed lady who is a bright, shallow and

unsentimental Californian does not mind it at all. "Humphrey!" says the tall man, "Hugh!" says the other, and all is said. There is not much sentiment in the meeting, how can there be? Their ways have gone too far apart. The years—nearly twenty, since they parted in Los Angeles—have brought gold and kith and kin to the one, with an enfeebled constitution and an uncertain temper. To the other, they have brought the glory of health for his manhood's crown, content and peace unutterable. To learn to subdue the ground is to learn one great lesson. So the strange meeting is soon over. The Christmas spell may not always last and the brothers separate once more.

FINIS.

The bright little lady who is taking her husband for a winter's Canadian tour gets restive in this silent snowy world. But before they part a letter is written to a white-haired old gentleman in England, who has only a month to wait.

"Whether I see them again or not does not matter," says Sir Humphrey, "but for the assurance that they have not harmed each other, I thank Almighty God this night!"

THE IDYL OF THE ISLAND.

Here lies mid-way between parallels 48 and 49 of latitude, and degrees 89 and 90 of longitude, in the northern hemisphere of the New World, serenely anchored on an ever-rippling and excited surface, an exquisitely lovely island. No tropical wonder of palm-treed stateliness, or hot tangle of gaudy bird and glowing creeper, can compare with it; no other northern isle, cool and green and refreshing to the eye like itself, can surpass it. It is not a large island. It is about half-a-mile long and quarter of a mile broad. It is an irregular oval in shape, and has two distinct and different sides. On the west side its grey limestone rises to the height of twenty feet straight out of the water. On the east side there occurs a gradual shelving of a sumac-fringed shore, that mingles finally with the ever-rippling water. For the waters in this northern country are never still. They are perpetually bubbling up and boiling over; seething and fuming and frothing and foaming and yet remaining so cool and clear that a quick fancy would discover thousands of banished fountains under that agitated and impatient surface. Both ends of the island are as much alike as its sides are dissimilar. They taper off almost to a distinct blade-point of rock, in which a mere doll's flagstaff of a pine-tree grows; then comes a small detached rock, with a small evergreen on it, then a still smaller rock, with a tuft of grass, then a line of partially submerged stones, and so out to the deep yet ever-bubbling water. This island might seem, just the size for two, and there were two on it on a certain July morning at five o'clock. One of these was a lady who lay at full length and fast asleep upon a most unique couch. These northern islands are in many places completely covered with a variety of yellowish-green moss, varying from a couple of inches to a foot and a half in thickness; and yielding to the pressure of the foot or the body as comfortably as a feather bed, if not more so, being elastic in nature. A large square of this had been cut up from some other part of the island and placed on the already moss-grown and cushioned ground, serving as a mattress, while two smaller pieces served as pillows. A sumac tree at the head of the improvised couch gave the necessary shade to the face of the sleeper, while a wild grapevine, after having run over and encircled with its moist green every stone and stem on the island, fulfilled its longing at length in a tumultuous possession of the sumac, making a massive yet aerial patched green curtain or canopy to the fantastic bed, and ending seemingly in two tiny transparent spirals curling up to the sky.

If there were a fault in the structure it was that it was too clever, too well thought out, too rectangular, too much in fact like a bed. But it told certainly of a skillful pair of hands and of a beautiful mind and the union of art with nature perfectly suited the charms—contradictory yet consistent—of the occupant. For being anything but a beautiful woman she was still far from a plain one, which though no original mode of putting it does convey the actual impression she made upon a gentleman in a small boat who rowing past this island at the hour of five o'clock in the morning was so much struck with this curious sight, quite visible from the water below, that he was rude enough to stand up that he might see better. The lady was dressed in some

dark blue stuff that evidently covered her all over and fitted tightly where it could be seen. A small linen collar, worn all night and therefore shorn of its usual freshness was round her neck, and she was tucked up from the waist under a Scotch woollen rug. Her hair, of a peculiar red-brown, was allowed to hang about her and was lovely; her mouth sad; her nose, rather too prominent; her complexion natural and healthy, but marred by freckles and moles, not many of either but undeniably scattered over the countenance. All told but her eyes which, if they proved to match with her hair, would atone for these other shortcomings. The gentleman sat down again and reflected.

"How still it is!" he said under his breath. "Absolutely not a thing stirring. This is the time when the fish bite. I ought to be fishing I suppose. Going to be warm by-and-bye."

It was indeed almost absolutely silent. The sun climbed higher but the lady slept on, and the gentleman gazed as if fascinated. The only sound that broke the beautiful early morning silence was the occasional weird laugh of the loon. It came twice and then a third time. The sleeper stirred.

"If that thing out there cries again she will wake," said the gentleman to himself. "I must be off before that happens. But I *should* like to see her eyes. What a pretty picture it is!" Once more the loon gave its maniacal laugh and the lady started, sat bolt upright and wide awake. Her admirer had not time to retreat but he took his oars up and confronted her manfully. It was an awkward moment. He apologized. The lady listened very politely. Then she smiled.

"Most of the islands in this lake are owned by private people," she said, "who use them during the summer months for the purpose of camping out upon them. I should advise you, if you row about much here, to keep to the open water, unless you wish to be seriously handled by the fathers and mothers of families."

"Thank you very much," returned the gentleman, standing up in his boat, "I assure you I intended no rudeness, but I have never seen so charming a summer couch before, and I was really fascinated by the—ah, —the picture you made. May I ask what you mean by 'camping out'? Is it always done in this fashion?"

The lady stared "Have *you* never camped out?"

"Never in my life," said the gentleman. "I am an Englishman, staying at the hotel near the point for a day or two. I came out to see something of the country."

"Then you should at least have camped out for a week or so. That is a genuine Canadian experience," said the lady with a frankness which completely restored the equanimity of the Englishman.

"But how do you live?" he went on in a puzzled manner that caused the lady with the red-brown hair, still all hanging about her, much amusement.

"O, capitally! Upon fish and eggs, and gooseberry tarts, and home-made bread and French coffee. Just what you would get in town, and much better than you get at the hotel."

"O, that would be easy!" the gentleman groaned. "I eat my meals in a pitch-dark room, in deadly fear and horror of the regiments of flies that swarm in and settle on everything the minute one raises the green paper blinds."

The lady nodded. "I know. We tried it for two or three seasons, but we could not endure it; the whole thing, whitewash and all, is so trying, isn't it? So we bought this lovely island and bring our tent here and live so comfortably." The gentleman did not reply at once. He was thinking that it was his place to say "Good morning," and go, although he would much have liked to remain a little longer. He hazarded the remark:

"Now, for instance, what are you going to breakfast on presently?"

The lady laughed lightly and shook her red brown hair.

"First of all I have to make a fire."

"Oh!"

"But that is not so very difficult"

"How do you do it?"

"Would you like to know?"

"Very much indeed. I should like to see, if I may."

The lady reflected a moment. "I suppose you may, but if you do, you ought to help me, don't you think?" The gentleman much amused and greatly interested.

"Ah but you see, it is you I want to see make it. I am very useless you know at that sort of thing, still, if you will allow me, I will try my best. Am I to come ashore?"

"Certainly, if you are to be of any use."

The lady jumped lightly off the pretty couch of moss and wound her plentiful hair round her head with one turn of her arm. Her dress was creased but well-fitting, her figure not plump enough for beauty but decidedly youthful. She watched her new friend moor his boat and ascend with one or two strides of his long legs up the side of the cliff that was not so steep. He took off his hat.

"I am at your service," he said with a profound bow. The lady made him another, during which all her long hair fell about her again, at which they both laughed.

"What do we do first?" said he.

"O we find a lot of sticks and pieces of bark, mostly birch bark, and anything else that will burn—you may have to fell a tree while you are about it—and I'll show you how to place them properly between two walls of stones, put a match to them and there is our fire. Will you come with me?"

He assented of course, and they were soon busy in the interior of the little wood that grew up towards the centre of the island. I must digress here to say that the gentleman's name was Amherst. He was known to the world in latter life as Admiral Amherst, and he was a great friend of mine. When he related this story to me, he was very particular in describing the island as I have done—indeed he carried a little chart about with him of it which he had made from memory, and he told me besides that he never forgot the peculiar beauty of that same little tract of wood. The early hour, the delicious morning air, the great moss-grown and brown decaying tree trunks, the white, clammy, ghostly, flower or fungus of the Indian Pipe at his feet, the masses

of ferns, the elastic ground he trod upon, and the singular circumstance that he was alone in this exquisite spot with a woman he had never seen until five minutes previously, all combined to make an ineffaceable impression upon his mind. The lady showed herself proficient in the art of building a fire and attended by Amherst soon had a fine flame rising up from between the fortifications evidently piled by stronger hands than her own.

"What do we do now?" asked Amherst "I should suggest—a kettle."

"Of course, that is the next step. If I give it to you, you might run and fill it, eh?"

"Delighted!" and away went Amherst. When he returned the lady was not to be seen. The place was shorn of its beauty, but he waited discreetly and patiently, putting the kettle on to boil in the meanwhile.

"It's very singular," said he, "how I come to be here. I wonder who are with her in her party; no one else appears to be up or about. That striped red and white thing is the tent, I see, over there. Ah! That's where she has gone, and now she beckons me! Oh! I'll go, but I don't want to meet the rest of them!"

But when he reached the tent, it was quite empty, save for rugs and wraps, boxes, etc., and the lady was laughingly holding out a loaf of bread in one hand and a paper package in the other.

"You will stay and breakfast with me?"

"What will you give me?" said Amherst, smiling.

"I can only give you eggs, boiled in the kettle, coffee and bread and butter. The fish haven't come in yet."

"What can be nicer than eggs—especially when boiled in the kettle, that is, if you make the coffee first."

"Certainly I do."

"And it is really French coffee?"

"Really. Café des Gourmets, you know; we—I always use it—do not like any other."

Amherst was fast falling in love. He told me that at this point his mind was quite made up that if it were possible he would remain in the neighborhood a few days at least, in order to see more of this charming girl. She seemed to him to be about twenty-six or seven, and so frank, simple and graceful, one could not have resisted liking her. Her hair and eyes were identical in colour and both were beautiful; her expression was arch and some of her gestures almost childish, but a certain dignity appeared at times and sat well upon her. Her hands were destitute of any rings as Amherst soon discovered, and were fine and small though brown. While she made the coffee, Amherst threw himself down on the wonderful moss, the like of which he had never seen before and looked out over the water. An unmistakable constraint had taken the place of the unaffected hilarity of the first ten minutes. A reaction had set in. Amherst could of course only answer to me in telling this for himself, but he divined at the time a change in his companion's manner as well.

"I hope you like your eggs," she said presently.

"They are very nice, indeed, thank you," rejoined Amherst.

"And I have made your coffee as you like it?"

"Perfectly, thank you. But you—you are not eating anything! Why is that?"

As he asked the question he turned quickly around, in order to rise that he might help her with the ponderous kettle that she was about lifting off the camp-fire, when a long strand of her hair again escaping from its coil blew directly across his face. Amherst uttered a radiant "Oh!", and taking it to his lips forgot himself so far as to press kiss after kiss upon it. The lady stood as if transfixed and did not move, even when Amherst actually swept all her hair down over one arm and turning her face to his, pressed one long long kiss on her forehead.

The moment he had done this his senses returned and he stepped back in indignation with himself. But his companion was still apparently transfixed. Amherst looked at her in dismay. She did not seem to see him and had grown very pale. He touched her gently on the arm but she did not show that she felt the touch. He retreated a few paces and stood by himself, overcome with shame and contrition. What had he done? How should he ever atone for such an unwarrantable action? Had it been the outcome of any ordinary flirtation, he would have felt no such scruples, but the encounter, though short, had been one of singular idyllic charm until he had by his own rash act spoilt it. A few minutes passed thus in self contemplation appeared like an eternity. He must speak.

"If you would allow me—"

But the lady put out her left hand in deprecation as it were and he got no further. The silence was unendurable. Amherst took a step or two forward and perceived great tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Oh!" he began desperately, "won't you allow me to say a word to tell you how very, very sorry I am, how grieved I am and always shall be? I never—I give you my word of honor—I never do those sort of things, have never done such a thing before! But I can't tell what it was, the place is so beautiful, and when all that lovely hair came sweeping past my face, I could not help doing as I did, it was so electrical! Any man would have done the same. I know that sounds like a miserable, cowardly excuse, but it is true, perfectly true." The lady seemed to struggle to appear calm and with a great effort she turned her face towards Amherst.

"I know one man," she said, in a voice choked with sobs, "who would not have done it?"

Amherst started. "I am sorrier than ever, believe me. I might have known you were engaged, or had a lover—one so Charming"—

"It is not that," said the lady. "I am married." She was still struggling with her emotion.

Amherst recoiled. He was torn with conflicting thoughts. What if he had been seen giving that involuntary salute? He might have ruined her peace for ever. Who would believe in the truth of any possible explanation?

"I will leave you at once;" he said stiffly, "there is nothing more to be said."

"Oh! You will reproach me now!" said his companion, wiping her eyes as the tears came afresh.

"I will try not to;" said Amherst, "but you could so easily have told me; I do not think it was—quite—fair." Yet he could not be altogether angry with the partner of his thoughtlessness, nor could he be entirely cold.

Her beautiful eyes, her despairing attitude would haunt him he knew for many a day. She had ceased weeping and stood quietly awaiting his departure. Amherst felt all the force of a strong and novel passion sweep along his frame as he looked at her. Was she happy, was she a loved and loving wife? Somehow the conviction forced itself upon him that she was not. Yet he could not ask her, it must remain her secret.

Amherst looked at his watch. It aroused her.

"What is the time?" she said lifting her head for the first time since he had kissed her.

"Ten minutes past six," Amherst replied.

"You must go," she said, with an effort at self-control. "I shall have much to do presently."

He cast one look about and approached her.

"Will you forgive me"—he began in a tone of repression, then with another mighty and involuntary movement he caught her hands and pressed them to his breast. "My God," he exclaimed, "how I should have loved you!"

A moment after he flung her hands away and strode down the cliff, unfastened his boat and rowed away in the direction of the hotel as fast as he could. Rounding a sharp rock that hid what lay beyond it, he nearly succeeded in overturning another boat like his own, in which sat a gentleman of middle age, stout and pleasant and mild of countenance. The bottom of the boat was full of fish. Amherst made an incoherent apology, to which the gentleman answered with a good-natured laugh, insisting that the fault was his own. He would have liked to enter into conversation with Amherst, but my friend was only anxious to escape from the place altogether and forget his recent adventure in the hurry of departure from the hotel. Three days after he embarked at Quebec for England, and never revisited Canada. But he never married and never forgot the woman whom he always asserted he might have truly and passionately loved. He was about twenty-eight when that happened and perfectly heart-whole. Why—I used to say to him, why did you not learn her name and that of her husband? Perhaps she is a widow now, perhaps you made as great an impression upon her mind and affections as she did upon yours.

But my friend Admiral Amherst, as the world knew him, was a strange, irrational creature in many ways, and none of these ideas would he ever entertain. That the comfortable gentleman in the boat was her husband he never doubted; more it was impossible to divine. But the cool northern isle, with its dark fringe of pines; its wonderful moss, its fragrant and dewy ferns, its graceful sumacs, just putting on their scarlet-lipped leaves, the morning stillness broken only by the faint unearthly cry of the melancholy loon, the spar-dyked cliffs of limestone, and the fantastic couch, with its too lovely occupant, never faded from his memory and remained to the last as realities which indeed they have become likewise to me, through the intensity with which they were described to me.

The Story of Delle Josephine Boulanger

CHAPTER I.

Delle Josephine Boulanger, Miss Josephine Baker, Miss Josephine Baker, Delle Josephine Boulanger. What a difference it makes, the language! What a transformation! I thought this to myself as I stood on the opposite side of the street looking at the sign. To be sure, it, was only printed in French and sad little letters they were that composed the name, but my mind quickly translated them into the more prosaic English as I stood and gazed. Delle Josephine was a milliner and I had been recommended to try and get a little room "*sous les toits*" that she sometimes had to let, during my stay in the dismal Canadian village with the grand and inappropriate name of *Bonheur du Roi*. Bonneroi, or Bonneroy, it was usually called. Such a dismal place it seemed to be; one long street of whitewashed or dirty wooden houses, two raw red brick "stores," and the inevitable Roman Catholic Church, Convent and offices, still and orderly and gray, with the quiet priests walking about and the occasional sound of the unmistakable convent bell. I arrived on a sleety winter's day early in December. Everything was gray, or colorless or white; the people's faces were pinched and pale, the sky was a leaden gray in hue, and I thought as I stood opposite to my future abode under Delle Josephine's roof that the only bit of "local color" so far was to be found in her window. I could distinctly see from where I stood the most extraordinary *hat* I had ever seen. I immediately crossed the road to examine it. It was a triumph in lobster-color. In shape like a very large Gainsborough, it was made of shirred scarlet satin with large bows of satin ribbon of the same intense color and adorned with a bird of paradise. I can see it now and can recall the images it suggested to my mind at the time. These were of cardinals and kings, of sealing-wax and wafers, of tropic noons and tangled marshes, of hell and judgment and the conventional Zamiel. It looked fit to be worn by a Mrs. Zamiel, if there be such a person. I looked so long and earnestly that I evidently attracted the notice of the mistress of the shop, for I saw a hand push back the faded red curtain that veiled the interior and a queer little visage appeared regarding me with something I thought of distrust. Did I look

as if I might break the glass and run off with the hat? Perhaps I did, so I entered the shop immediately and said in a reasoning tone,

"I am looking for rooms in the village, Mademoiselle, and hear you have one to let. Can I see it now, if not too much trouble?"

"You come from Morr  all?"

This I learnt was meant for Montreal.

"Yes," I returned.

"You are by yourself, Monsieur, you are sure? No ladees, eh?"

"O dear! No" said I laughing. "I am making some studies—sketches—in this locality and am entirely alone. Do you find ladies a trouble?"

"Oh, perhaps not always. But there was one Mees I had. I did not like her, and so I said—we will have no more Mees, but again and always Messieurs." She was frank enough but not unpleasant in her manner. A little bit of a woman, thin and shrivelled, with one shoulder slightly higher than the other, black beads for eyes, and the ugliest mouthful of teeth that I had ever seen on any one. Had it not been that her expression was honest and good natured and her manner bright and intelligent, I should have recoiled before the yellow tusks of eye-teeth, and the blackened stumps and shrunken gums revealed to me every time she spoke. She wore a print dress made neatly enough which was very clean, and a black crape ruff round her sallow neck. The shop was small but clean and at the back I saw, a kind of little sitting room. Into this I went while she ran up-stairs to prepare the room for my inspection. The carpet was the usual horribly ingenious affair of red squares inside green octagons, and green squares inside red octagons, varied by lengthwise stripes of bright purple. The walls were plain white, covered with many prints in vivid colors of the Crucifixion, the Annunciation and the Holy Family; also three pictures of three wonderful white kittens which adorn so many nurseries and kitchens. There were no ornaments, but there was a large looking glass framed in walnut, and over it a dismal wreath of roses and their leaves done in human gray hair. The glass was opposite the door and I saw Delle Josephine descending to meet me just as I was turning away from this suggestive "in memoriam." A crooked little stairway brought me to a small landing, and three more steps to my room. I may call it that, for I took it on the spot. It was large enough for my wants and seemed clean and when the paper blinds, yellow, with a black landscape on them, were raised, rather cheerful. We were opposite the chief "epicerie," the only "marchandise s  ches" and a blacksmith, whose jolly red fire I could sometimes catch a glimpse of.

Now, this is a really a true story of French Canadian life, or rather let me say, a true story of one of my own French Canadian experiences, and so I must confess that once installed in my little room *chez* Delle Josephine Boulanger, nothing whatever of any interest took place until I had been there quite a week. I lived most regularly and monotonously; rising at eight I partook of coffee made by my landlady, accompanied by tinned fruit for which I formed a great taste. Then I went out, getting my mid-day meal where I could, eggs and bacon at a farmhouse, or tough steak at the hotel, and sometimes not getting anything at all until I returned ravenously hungry to my lodging. On these occasions the little Frenchwoman showed herself equal to the extent of cooking a chicken or liver and bacon very creditably and then I would write and read in my own room till eleven. I must not forget to say that I never failed to look at the wonderful scarlet hat in the window every time I went out or came in. Purchasers for it would be rare I thought; I half formed the idea of buying it myself when I went away as a "Souvenir."

One day I came home very tired. After walking about, vainly waiting for a terrific snowstorm to pass over that I might go on with my work—the frozen fall of Montmorenci, framed in the dark pines and somber rocks that made such a back ground for its glittering thread of ice, I gave it up, chilled in every limb, and began to consider whether I was not a fool for pains. Although I started quite early in the afternoon on my homeward walk, the snow, piled in great masses everywhere along the route, impeded my progress to such an extent that it was nearly seven o'clock and pitch-dark when I got into the village. Bonneroy was very quiet. Shutters were up to every shop, nobody was out except a dog or two and the snow kept falling, falling, still in as persistent a fashion as if it had not been doing the same thing for six hours already. I found the shop shut up and the door locked. I looked everywhere for a bell or knocker of some description. There was neither, so I began to thump as hard as I could with my feet against the door. In a minute or two I heard Delle Josephine coming. Perhaps I had alarmed the poor soul. She did look troubled on opening the door and admitted me hurriedly, even suspiciously, I thought. The door of the little sitting-room was closed, so fancying that perhaps she had a visitor I refrained from much talking and asking her to cook me some eggs presently and bring them up, I went to my room.

These cold days I had to keep a fire in the small open "Franklin" stove going almost constantly. She had not forgotten to supply it with coals during my absence, and lighting my two lamps I was soon fairly comfortable. How it did snow! Lifting the blind I could actually look down on an ever-increasing drift below my window and dimly wonder if I should get out at all on the morrow. If not, I proposed to return to Montreal at once. I should gain nothing by being confined in the house at Bonneroy. Delle Josephine appeared with eggs and tea—green tea, alas for that village shortcoming—there was no black tea to be found in it, and I looked narrowly at her as she set it down, wondering if anything was amiss with her. But she seemed all right again and I conjectured that I had simply interrupted a *t  te-a-t  te* with some visitor in the sitting-room at the time of my return. When I had finished my tea I sat back and watched my fire. Those little open "Franklin" stoves are almost equal to a fireplace; they show a great deal of fire and you can fancy your flame on an English hearth very easily—if you have any imagination. As I sat there, it suddenly came home to me what a curious life this was for me; living quite alone over a tiny village shop in *Le Bos Canada*, with a queer little spinster like Delle Josephine. Snowed up, with her too! To-morrow I would certainly have to go and shovel that snow away from the front door and take down the shutters and discover again to the world the contents of the one window, particularly that frightful hat! I would—here I started it must be confessed almost out of my seat, as turning my head suddenly I saw on a chair behind the door the identical hat I was thinking about! I sat up and looked at it. It must have been there all the time I was eating my tea. I still sat and looked. I felt vaguely

uncomfortable for a moment, then my common sense asserted itself and told me that Delle Josephine must have been altering it or something of that kind and had forgotten to take it away. I wondered if she sat in my room when I was away. I had rather she did not. Just as I was about to rise and look at it more closely, a tap came at my door. I rose and admitted Delle Josephine. She took the tea-things away in her usual placid manner, but came back the next moment as if she had forgotten something, clearly the hat. With a slight deprecatory laugh she removed it and went hurriedly down the stair. Whatever had she been doing with it, I thought, and settled with a sigh of satisfaction once more to my work, now that the nightmare in red, a kind of mute scarlet "Raven," was gone from my room. How very quiet it was. Not a single sleigh passed, no sounds came from the houses opposite or from next door, the whole world seemed smothered in the soft thick pillows of snow quietly gathering upon it. After a while, however, I could distinctly hear the sound of voices downstairs. Delle Josephine had a visitor, undoubtedly. Was it a man or a woman? Not a large company I gathered; it seemed like one person besides herself. I opened my door, it sounded so comfortably in my lonely bachelor ear to catch in that strange little house anything so cheerful as the murmur of voices. My curiosity once aroused, did not stop here. I went outside the door, not exactly to listen, but as one does sometimes in a lazy yet inquisitive mood, when anything is going on at all unusual. This was an unusual occurrence. If Delle Josephine had visitors often, I was not aware of it. Never before had I noticed the slightest sound proceed from her sitting-room after dusk. So I waited a bit listening. Yes there was talking going on, but in French. As I did not understand her *patois* very clearly, I thought there would be no harm in overhearing, and further I thought I should like to have a peep at her and her companion. I could see that the door was partly open. Taking off my slippers, I ran softly down and found it wide enough open to admit of my seeing the entire room and occupants in the looking-glass, that being opposite. It was quite dark in the little hall and I should be unobserved. So I crept—most rudely I am willing to say—into the furthest shadow of this hall and looked straight before me.

I saw none but Delle Josephine herself. But she was a sight for the gods. Seated on a kind of ottoman, directly in front of the looking-glass, she was holding an animated conversation with *herself*, wearing a large white antimacassar—one of those crocheted things all in wheels—pinned under her chin and falling away at the back like a cloak, and upon her head—the wonderful scarlet hat! I was amazed, startled, dismayed. To see that shrivelled little old woman so travestying her hideous charms, smiling at and bowing to herself, her yellow skin forming a frightful contrast to the intense red of her immense hat and her bright black eyes, was a pitiful and unique spectacle. I had intended but to take a peep at the supposed visitor and then go back to my room, but the present sight was one which fascinated me to such an extent that I could only look and wonder. She spoke softly to herself in French, appearing to be carrying on a conversation with her image in the glass. The feathers of the bird of paradise swept her shoulder—the one that was higher than the other—and mingled with the wheels of the white antimacassar. I looked as long as I dared and then, fearing from her movements that the strange scene would soon be over I went softly up again to my room. But I thought about it all evening, all night in fact. The natural inquiry was—was the poor girl a maniac? Even if only a harmless one, it would be well to know. As I sat down again by my fire I considered the matter in every light. It was a queer prospect. Outside the snow still fell. Inside, the fire languished and the time wore on till at half-past ten I really was compelled to call on my landlady for more coal. I could hear the muttered French still going on, but I did not know where the coal was and could not fetch it myself. I must break in upon her rhapsodizing.

"Delle Boulanger!" I called from my open door. "Delle Boulanger!"

The talking stopped. In a few moments Delle Josephine appeared, calm and smiling, *minus* the hat and the antimacassar. "Coming, *monsieur*"

"I shall want some more coal," said I, "It is getting colder, I think, every minute!"

"*Mais oui, monsieur; il fait fret, il fait bien fret ce soir*, and de snow—oh! It is *comme*—de old winter years ago, dat I remember, *monsieur*, but not you. *Eh! bien*, the coal!"

I discovered nothing morbid about her manner; she was amiable and respectful as usual, if a little more garrulous. The French will talk at all times about anything, but our conversation always came to a sudden stop the moment one of us relapsed into the mother tongue. As long as a sort of common maccaronic was kept to we managed to understand one another. After I made up my fire I sat up till long past twelve. I heard no more talking downstairs but I could fancy her still arrayed in those festive yet ghastly things, seated opposite her own reflection, intent as a mummy and not unlike one restored in modern costume. Pulling the blind aside before going to bed, I could see with awe the arching snowdrifts outside my window. If it went on snowing, I should not be able to open it on the morrow.

CHAPTER II

My prediction was verified in the morning. The snow had ceased falling, but lay piled up against the lower half of my window. On the level there appeared to be about three feet, while the drifts showed from six to twenty feet I had never seen anything like it, and was for sometime lost in admiration. Across the road the children of the *epider* and the good man himself were already busy trying to shovel some of it away from the door. It seemed at first sight a hopeless task and I, looking down at Delle Josephine's door, wondered how on earth we were ever to get out of it when not a particle of it was to be seen. Not all that day did I get out of the house, and but for the absorbing interest I suddenly found centred in Delle Josephine I would have chafed terribly at being so shut up. Trains, were blockaded of course, it was the great fall of '81, and interrupted travel for half of a week. All that day I waited so to speak for the evening. Snow-boys there were many;

customers none. The little Frenchwoman brought me some dinner at one o'clock, pork, tinned tomatoes, and a cup of coffee. About five o'clock I strolled down into the shop, it was lighted very meagrely with three oil lamps. Delle Josephine was seated on a high chair behind the one counter at work on some ribbon—white ribbon. She was quilling it, and looked up with some astonishment as I walked up to her.

"Do you object to a visitor Miss Josephine?" said I with the most amiable manner I could muster. Poor soul! I should have thought she would have welcomed one.

"*Mais non Monsieur* but I speak so little English."

"And I so little French. But we can manage to understand each other a little, I think. What do you say to the weather? When shall I be able to go out?"

Delle Josephine laughed. She went on quilling the ribbon that looked so white against her yellow hands.

"O *Monsieur* could go out dis day if he like, but de snow ver bad, very thick."

"Do you ever go out, Miss Josephine?"

"*Non Monsieur*. I have not been out for what you call a walk—it will be five years that I have not been."

"But you go to church, I suppose?"

"*Mais oui Monsieur*, but that is so near. And the good *Père Le Jeune*—he come to see me. He is all the friend Delle Josephine has, ah! *oui Monsieur*."

"Ah! Bonneroi isn't much of a place, is it? Have you ever been to Quebec or Montreal?"

"Ah! *Quebec—oui*, I live there once, many years ago. I was taken when I was ver young by *Madame de la Corne de la Colombière pour une bonne; vous comprenez?*"

"Oh! *bonne*, yes, we use that word too. It means a nursemaid, eh! Were there children in the family?"

Delle Josephine dropped her ribbon and threw up her hands.

"*Mon Dieu! les enfants! Mais oui, Monsieur*, they were nine children! There was *Maamselle Louise* and *Maamselle Angelique* with the tempaire of the *diable* himself *oui Monsieur*, and François and René and *l'petite Catherine*, and the rest I forget *Monsieur*. And dey live in a fine *château*, with horse and carriage and everything as it would be if they were in their own France. *Monsieur* has been in France?"

Only in Paris, I told her; a spasmodic run across the Channel—Paris in eight hours. Two days there then return—

"That does not give one much idea of France."

"*Nou, non, Monsieur*. But there is no countrie like France dey say dat familiee—and that is true, eh, *Monsieur?*"

"I am afraid I cannot agree with you, Delle Josephine," said I. "To me there is no country like England, but that may be because I am an Englishman. Tell me how long did you live in Quebec with this family?"

"I was there ten year *Monsieur*. Then one day, I had a great accident—oh! a ver sad ting, ver sad!" The Frenchwoman laid down the ribbon and went on. "A ver sad ting happen to me and the *bébé Catherine*. We were out *l'ptite* and me, for a walk, and we come to a part of the town ver slant, ver hilly. *L'ptite Catherine* was in her carriage and I let go, and she go all down, *Monsieur*; and I too over the hill—the cleef, you call it—but the *bébé* was killed and I *Monsieur*, I was alive, but like this!" showing her shoulder. "And what did they do?"

"At the *château*? Ah, *figure-toi, monsieur*, the agony of dat *pauvre dame*! I was sent away, she would not see me, and I left *Québec* at once. I was no more *bonne*, monsieur; Delle Josephine was enough dat. I could make de hats and de bonnets for de ladees, so I come away out to Bonneroi, and I haf made de hats and de bonnets for the ladees of Bonneroi for twenty year."

"Is it possible?" I said, much touched by the little story. "And the ladies of Bonneroi, are they hard to please?"

Delle Josephine, who had spoken with the customary vim and gesture of the French while—telling her tale, resumed her quilling and said, with a shrug of one shoulder,

"They do not know much, and dat is true." I laughed at the ironical tone.

"And you—you provide the *modes?*"

"I haf been to Québec" she said quietly.

"Twenty years ago," I thought, but had too much respect for the queer little soul to say it aloud.

"I see amongst other things," I went on, "a most—remarkable—a very pretty, I should say—hat in your window. The red one, you know, with the bird of paradise."

Delle Josephine looked up quickly. "Dat is not for sale, *monsieur*."

"No? Why, I had some idea of perhaps purchasing it for a friend of mine. Did you make that hat yourself?"

She nodded with a sort of conscious pride. Yet it was not for sale! I wondered why. The strange scene of the foregoing evening came into my mind, and I began to understand this singular—case of monomania. It must be that having lived so many years in almost solitary confinement, one might say, her mind had slightly given away, and she found her only excitement and relaxation in posing before the glass in that extraordinary manner. I hardly knew whether it would be an act of kindness to remove the hat; she talked quite rationally and cheerfully, and remembering the innate vanity of the French as a nation, I concluded to let the matter rest. That night I heard no talking in the sitting-room. I slept profoundly, and woke up later than usual. We were not dug out yet, though two snow-boys with their shovels were doing their best to unearth us. I waited some time for Delle Josephine to appear with the tray; but she too was late, evidently, for at ten o'clock she had not come. I dressed and went down stairs. As I passed the sitting-room I saw her tricked out as before in the hat and the antimacassar seated on the ottoman in front of the looking-glass. Heavens, she looked more frightful than ever! I made up my mind to speak to her at, once, and see if I could not stop such hideous mummery. But when I advanced I perceived that indeed I had come too late. The figure on the ottoman was rigid in death. How it ever held itself up at all I could never think, for I gave a loud cry, and rushing from the

room knocked against the open door and fell down senseless.

Outside, I suppose, the snow-boys shovelled away as hard as ever. When I came to myself I did not need to look around; I knew in a flash where I was, and remembered what had happened. I ran to the shop door and hammered with all my might.

"Let me out!" I cried. "Open the door! open the door! for Heaven's sake!" Then I ran upstairs, and did the same at my window. It seemed years upon years of time till they were enabled to open the door and let me out. I rushed out bareheaded, forgetful of the intense cold, thinking first of all of the priest *Père Le Jeune*, so strong is habit, so potent are traditions. I knew where he lived, up the first turning in a small red brick house next the church of St. Jean Baptiste. I told him the facts of the case as well as I could and he came back at once with me. There was nothing to be done. Visitation of God or whatever the cause of death Delle Josephine Boulanger was dead. The priest lifted his hands in horror when he saw the ghostly hat. I asked him what he knew about her, but he seemed ignorant of everything concerning the poor thing, except the *aves* she repeated and the number of times she came to confession. But when we came to look over her personal effects in the drawers and boxes of the shop, there could be no doubt but that she had been thoroughly though harmlessly insane. We found I should think about one hundred and fifty boxes: from tiny little ones of pasteboard to large square ones of deal, full of rows and rows of white quilled ribbon, similar to the piece I had seen her working at on that last night of her life on earth. Some of the ribbon was yellow with age, others fresher looking, but in each box was a folded bit of paper with these words written inside,

Pour l'ptite Catherine.

"What money there was, *Père Le Jeune* must have appropriated for I saw nothing of any. After the dismal funeral, to which I went, I gathered my effects together and went to the hotel. The first day I could proceed, I returned to Montreal and have not visited Bonneroy since. The family of *de la Corne de La Colombière* still reside somewhere near Quebec, I believe. The *château* is called by the charming name of Port Joli, and perhaps some day I may feel called upon to tell them of the strange fate which befell their poor Josephine. Whether the melancholy accident which partly bereft her of her reason was the result of carelessness I cannot say but I shall be able, I think, to prove to them that she never forgot the circumstance, and was to the day of her death occupied in making ready for the little coffin and shroud of her '*p'tite Catherine*.' My sketch of the frost bound Montmorenci was never finished, and indeed my winter sketching fell through altogether after that unhappy visit to Bonneroy. I was for weeks haunted by that terrible sight, half ludicrous, half awful, and I have, now that I am married, a strong dislike to scarlet in the gowns or head-gear of my wife and daughter."

The Story of Etienne Chezy D'Alencourt

CHAPTER I.

As my friends know, I was born an Englishman, spending the first twenty-four years of my life in England. On my twenty-fifth birthday I set foot on the shore of the great North American Continent, destined for a time to be my home. Two days afterwards I entered the office set apart for me in the handsome Government Buildings at Ottawa, and began my duties. A transfer had recently been effected between the Home and Canadian Civil Service, and I had been chosen to fill the vacant colonial post. Having no ties or obligations of any kind I had nothing to lose by the transaction except the pleasure and advantage of living in England, which, however, had ceased for one or two reasons to be dear to me.

I did not, however, remain very long in the Service. I found it pleasant work but monotonous, and receiving shortly after I went out a legacy bequeathed by a widowed aunt I had almost forgotten, determined to leave it and devote myself to study and travel. Like many Englishmen, I had taken no trouble to ascertain the real points of interest about me. I had been content with mastering and getting through my work, and with mingling out of hours with the small but thoroughly charming set I had found ready to welcome me on my arrival as the "new Englishman." On the whole, I was popular, though one great flaw—*i.e.*—lack of high birth and desirable home connections, weighed to an alarming extent with the dowagers of the Capital.

I had, on leaving the Service, made up my mind to study the people of the Dominion. The English Canadians were easily disposed of in this way; most of them were Scotch, and the rest appeared to be Irish. I then began on the Indian population. But this was not so easy. It seemed impossible to find even a single Indian without going some distance.

At last I unearthed one descendant of the Red man who kept a small tavern in the lower part of the town; a dirty frame tenement almost entirely hidden by an immense sign hanging outside, having the figure, heroic size of an Iroquois in full evening dress, feathers, bare legs and tomahawk.

This place was known as "Tommy's." But Tommy himself was only half an Indian, and swore such bad swears in excellent English, that I was forced to leave after a minute's inspection.

Then I began on the French-Canadians. There were plenty of them. In the Buildings, on the streets, in the markets, in shops, they were all over. Some of the most charming people I know were French-Canadians. My landlady and her husband, quiet, sober devout people, were French-Canadians.

What I wanted to find, though, was a genuine unadulterated French-Canadian of the class known as the *habitans*. I could recollect many dark-eyed, fierce-mustached men whom I had seen since my residence in Canada, and whom I conjectured must have been *habitans*. Up the Gatineau and down the St. Lawrence, it would be easy to find whom I wanted, but I preferred to wait on in town. I had many a disappointment. One day it would be a cabman, another day a clerk. Though they all *looked* French, they invariably turned out to be English or Scotch. My notions of hair and skin and eyes were being all turned upside down; my favorite predispositions annulled, my convictions changed to fallacies—in short I was thoroughly bewildered. I could not find my *habitant*. At the same time, when I did find him, he would have to know how to speak some English, for I could only speak very little French. I read it well of course, wrote it quite easily, but on essaying conversation was always seized with that instinctive horror of making a fool of myself, which besets most Englishmen when they would attempt a foreign language. Besides, the *patois* these people spoke was vastly different from ordinary French, as taught in schools and colleges, and what it might be like I had not in those days the faintest idea, not having read Rabelais.

The worst *désillusionnement* I suffered I will recount. One day I noticed an elderly man clad in corduroy trousers, shabby brown velveteen coat, conical straw hat and dirty blue shirt, lounging about a wharf I sometimes frequented where, at one time, would lay from thirty to fifty barges laden with lumber. Bargetown it might have been called; it was a veritable floating colony of French and Swede, Irish and Scotch, jabbering and smoking by day and lying quietly at night under the stars, save for the occasional jig and scrape of the fiddle of some active Milesian. Here, had I fully known it, was my chance for observation, but I was ignorant at that time of the ways of these people and did not venture among them. But the man in the velvet coat interested me. He gesticulated the whole time most violently, waved his arms about and made great use of his pipe, which he used to point with. I could not hear what he was saying for his back was turned to me and the wind carried all he said to the bargemen, as he wished it to do I suppose.

How splendidly that coat becomes him, thought I. The descendant of some fine old French settler, how superbly he carries himself!

The conical becomes on him a cocked hat and in place of ragged fringe and buttons hanging by a single string, I see the buckles and bows, the sword and cane of a by-gone age!

I made up my mind to address him, when to my disgust he got into one of the barges, which moved off slowly, transporting him, as I supposed, to his northern home.

The next morning the bell of my front door attracted my attention by ringing three or four times. Evidently my landlady was out. I sauntered to the door and found my *habitant* of the velveteen coat and duty blue shirt!

Gracious heaven! I was overcome! By what occult power had he been driven here to deliver himself into my hands? Before I could speak, he said:

"Av ye plaze, sorr, will yez be having any carrpets to bate? I'm taking orders against the sphring claning, sorr."

"Oh! are you?" said I. I began to feel very sorry for myself, very sorry, indeed, at this supreme instant. "Do you live near here?" I further inquired.

"Shure and I do, sorr. Jist beyant yez. I pass yez every day in the week. Me number's 415"—He was about handing me a greasy bit of paper, when I slammed the door in his face and retired to my own room to meditate on the strange accent and peculiar calling of this descendant of the "fine old French settler."

My next choice, however, proved a fortunate one. I got into a street-car one evening late in the month of March. It was the winter street-car, a great dark caravan, with a long narrow bench down either side and a mass of hay all along the middle, with a melancholy lamp at the conductor's end. Although fairly light outside, it was quite dark inside the caravan, so the conductor set about lighting the lamp. This is the way he did it. Opening the door he put his head in, looked all around, shut the door and stopped his horses. Then he opened the door again and put his head in again, keeping the door open this time that we might inhale the fresh March night air. I say we, because when I grew accustomed to the dark, I saw there was another occupant of the car, a man seated on the opposite seat a little way down. The conductor felt under the seat for something which I suppose was the can which, taken presently by him to the corner grocery before which we had stopped, came back replenished with coal oil. After he had filled the lamp, he lit in succession three matches, persistently holding them up so that they all went out one after the other. He felt in his pockets but he had no more. Then he asked me. I had none. Then he asked the other man. The other man laughed and replied in French. I did not understand what he said but saw him supply the conductor with a couple of matches. When the lamp was finally lighted I looked more closely at him. He was a working man from his attire: colored shirt, coat of a curious bronze colour much affected by the Canadian labourer, old fur cap with ears, and moccasins. At his feet stood a small tin pail with a cover. His face was pale and singularly well-cut. His hair was black and very smooth and shiny; a very slight moustache gave character to an otherwise effeminate countenance and his eyes were blue, very light blue indeed and mild in their expression. We smiled involuntarily as the conductor departed. The man was the first to speak:

"De conductor not smoke, surely," he said, showing me his pipe in one hand. "I always have the matches."

"So do I, as a general thing," I rejoined. "One never knows when a match may be wanted in this country." I spoke rather surlily, for I had been getting dreadfully chilled while the conductor was opening and shutting the door. The man bent forward eagerly, though without a trace of rudeness in his manner.

"You do not live here, eh?"

"Oh! yes, I do now, but I was thinking of England when I spoke."

"That is far away from here, surely."

"Ah! yes," I sighed. So did the man opposite me. We were silent then for a few moments when he spoke again.

"There is a countree I should like to see and dat is France. I hear, sir, I hear my mother talk of dat countree, and I tink—I should like to go there. But that is far away from here, too far away, sure."

My heart leapt up. Here, if ever, must be the man I was in search of.

"You are a French-Canadian, I suppose?"

"Yes, Sir, I am dat."

"And where do you live?" said I.

"I work in de mill; de largess mill in the Chaudière. You know dat great water, the fall under the bridge, dat we call the Chaudière."

"I know it well," said I, "but I have never gone properly over any of the mills. I should like to go some day very much. Should I see you anywhere if I went down?"

He stared, but gave me the name of his mill. It belonged to one of the wealthiest lumber kings of the district. I resolved to go down the next day.

"What is your name," I asked. The man hesitated a minute before he replied,

"Netty."

"Netty!" I repeated "What a curious name! You have another name, I expect. That must only be a nickname."

"*Mais oui Monsieur.* My name is much longaire than dat. My whole name is Etienne Guy Chèzy D'Alencourt, but no man call me dat, specially in de mill. 'Netty'—dey all know 'Netty.'"

It was a long name, truly, and a high-sounding one,—but I preferred thinking of him by it than by the meaningless soubriquet of "Netty." At the next corner he got out, touching his cap to me quite politely as he passed.

I was in high spirits that evening, for I believed I had found my *habitant*. I went down to the Chaudière the following day, and got permission to go over Mr. —'s mill I found it very interesting, but my mind was not sufficiently centered on planks and logs and booms to adequately appreciate them. I wanted "Netty." After I had made the complete round of the mill I came upon him hard at work in his place turning off planks in unflinching order as they whizzed along. The noise was deafening, of bolts and bars, and saws and chains, with the roar of the great cascade outside. He saw me and recognized me on my approach, but he could not speak for some time. It was most monotonous work, I thought. No conversation allowed, not even possible; the truly demoniacal noise, yet just outside on the other side of a small window, the open country, the mighty waters of the ever-boiling "Kettle," or Chaudron, and the steep spray-washed cliff. Standing on my toes I could, looking out of Netty's small window, discover all this. The ice was still in the river, half the fall itself was frozen stiff, and reared in gabled arches to the sky. I watched the two scenes alternately until at 6 o'clock the wheels ran down, the belts slackened and the men knocked off.

Netty walked out with me at my request, and learning that he had to return in an hour I proposed we should have a meal together somewhere and a talk at the same time. He must have been greatly astonished at a complete stranger in another walk of life fastening upon him in this manner, but he gave no hint of either surprise or fear, and maintained the same mild demeanour I had noticed in him the day before.

It was darkening rapidly and I did not know where to go for a meal. Netty told me he ought to go to St. Patrick St. I knew the locality and did not think it necessary to go all that way, "unless anybody will be waiting for you, expecting you."

"Oh! not dat I live in a boarding house, my mother—she in the countree, far from here."

"Then, 'I said,' you can go where you like. Do you know any place near here where we can get a cup of tea and some eggs? What will do for you, I daresay, and I hardly want as much."

But he knew of no reliable place and after walking about for a quarter of an hour we finally went to the refreshment room at the station and ordered beer and tea and sandwiches.

"I daresay you wonder at my bringing you out here with me. You'd get a better meal perhaps at your boarding-house. But do you know I've taken a fancy to you and, I want to see a little more of you and learn how you live, if you will kindly tell me. I am interested in your people, the French-Canadians."

This sounds very clumsily put and so it did then, but I was obliged to explain my actions in some way and what is better than the truth? Lies, I have no doubt to some people, but I was compelled to be truthful to this man who carried a gentle and open countenance with him. No gentleman could have answered me more politely than he did now.

"Sir I am astonish—*oui un peu*, but if there is anyting I can tell you, anyting I can show you I shall be ver glad. The mill—how do you find dat, Sir?"

"I like to watch you work very much, but the noise"—

Netty laughed, showing his radiant white teeth.

"*Mais oui*, de noise is bad, but one soon custom to dat. I am in de mill for four year. I come from up in de north—from the Grand Calumet—do you know there, Sir?"

"That is an island is it not? Yes, I know where it is, near Allumette, but I have never been so far up on the Ottawa. And the Gatineau, that is a river, is it not? What pretty names these French ones are! Gatineau!" I repeated thinking. "That comes, I fancy having heard somewhere, from Demoiselle Marie Josephe Gatineau Duplessis, wife of one of the first French settlers. By the way your name is a curious one. Say it again."

Netty very gravely repeated, "Etienne Guy Chèzy D'Alencourt."

"Was your father a native Canadian?"

"*Oui Monsieur.*"

"The name seems familiar to me," I remarked. "I daresay if you cared to look the matter up, you might find

that your great grandfather was something or other under the Intendant Bigot or Vaudreuil, or earlier still under Maisonneuve the gallant founder of Montreal. Ah! how everybody seems to have forgotten those old days. Even in Canada, you see, there is something to look back upon."

My companion seemed rather puzzled as I talked in this strain. Very probably it was over his head. I found he could neither read nor write, had been reared in the pine-clad and icy fastnesses of Grand Calumet Island all alone by his mother—an old dame now about seventy. He himself was about thirty he judged, though he was far from sure. He was a good Catholic in intention, though very ignorant of all ritual. From his youth he had been employed on the rafts and lumber-slides of the Ottawa river until his four years' session at the mill, where he had picked up the English he knew. He had made no friends he told me. The more I conversed with him the more I was impressed with his simple and polite manners, his innate good breeding, and his faith and confidence in the importance of daily toil and all honest labour. He smoked a little, drank a little, but never lost his head became obtrusively familiar, noisy or inquisitive. I felt ashamed to think how deliberately I had sought him out, to pry into the secrets and facts of his daily life, but solaced myself into the assurance that it could not at least bode him harm and it might possibly do him some service.

When we returned to the mill, I was astonished at the weirdness of the scene. The entire premises were flooded with the electric light and the men were working away, and the saws, belts and bars all in motion as if it were the middle of the day. What a pandemonium of sound and colour and motion it was! The strong resinous odor of the pine-wood mingled with the fresh air blown in from the river, and I inhaled both eagerly.

It was almost powerful enough to affect the head, and I fancied I caught myself reeling a little as I walked out on to the bridge, swaying just the least bit as the torrent of angry water swept under it I had said "*Bonsoir*" to my friend the Frenchman and was free to go home. But I lingered long on the heaving bridge, though it was cold and starless, and I got quite wet with the dashed-up spray.

Up the river gleamed the icy masses of the frozen fall, beyond that the northern country of the northern waters stretched away up to the North Pole with little, if any, human interruption.

Down the river on the three superb cliffs, rising high out of the water, sparkled the many lights in the Gothic windows of the buildings. On either side were the illuminated mills with their rushing logs and their myriad busy hands piling, smoothing and sawing the monsters of the forest helpless under the fetters of leather and steel.

CHAPTER II.

For the events which followed, I hold myself alone and altogether responsible. Nearly every evening I spent at the Chaudière, either watching my new friend at his work or lounging on the bridge, and always finishing the day by walking home with him to his boarding house. Thus I got to know him very well, and I soon discovered one thing that he was far from strong. Even a life-long residence among the purifying and strengthening airs of the keen fresh North had not protected him from the insidious ravages of that dread complaint—consumption. I fancied the hereditary taint must be on his father's side, for he always alluded to his mother as being exceptionally healthy. On Sundays I accompanied him to Church in the morning at the Basilica; in the afternoons we used to walk all over the town in various directions. Of course, on all these excursions, I did most of the talking. He was a good listener, and readily improved in understanding and appreciation. Noticing that he was particularly fond of any story connected with the life of the early French in Canada, I read up all the works I could find on the subject, going often to the Parliamentary Library for that purpose, and retailing the more interesting and intelligible facts to him afterwards. Crusoe did not watch over and educate Friday any more carefully than I my mild and gentlemanly "Shantyman" in his blue shirt and canvas trowsers.

I grew at last, after three months' intimacy with him, quite to love him, and I am sure my affection was reciprocated for he ever welcomed me with a strong, clinging pressure of my hand and a smile which was a brighter one than that which his face had worn when I met him first. A strange friendship, but one which I felt to be so absorbing that I could not have endured other friends. April passed, and May, and with the hot weather Etienne, whose health gave way all at once, would have to return for a short visit to the old mother all by herself on the island of Grand Calumet.

I feared to let him go, he looked more delicate in my eyes every day, but I knew it would be good for him in many ways. So a day came that saw my friend D'Alencourt go back to his northern home. He would not ask me to go and visit him, he had too much natural pride for that, but I made up my mind to find him out, for all that. As may be supposed I was like the traditional fish out of the traditional water for some time after his departure.

I read and amused myself in any way that offered, but cared not to experiment on any more French-Canadians.

In my reading I read for two, and made notes of anything I thought would interest Etienne. One day I came across the same name as his own, borne by a certain young soldier, a sprig of the French *noblesse* who had followed in the train of Bigot, the dissolute and rapacious Governor of New France. I meditated long over this. The name was identical—Guy Chézy D'Alencourt. In the case of my friend the mill-hand there was simply the addition of Etienne, the first Christian name. Could he possibly be the descendant of this daring and gallant officer, of whose marriage and subsequent settling in Canada I could find no mention? The thing seemed unlikely, yet perfectly possible. I had predicted it myself. As if to fasten my thoughts even more securely on the absent Etienne that very day arrived a letter from Grand Calumet. It was addressed to me in a

laboured but most distinct hand. I thought that Etienne had commissioned the priest doubtless to write for him or some other friend, but when I opened it I found to my great surprise that it was from Etienne himself and in his own handwriting, the result he told me of work at home in his Lower Town boarding-house.

I dropped the letter. He had taught himself to, write! This was the first fruit of my intimacy with him, and I hardly knew whether I was pleased or not. But I clearly saw that this night-work added to the arduous toil and late hours imposed upon him by his place in the mill had probably been the cause of undermining his bodily strength. The letter itself ran:

"Dear Sir,—The friend of Etienne D'Alencourt, he can write you—he can send you a lettre from the Grand Calumet, his island that is green, Monsieur, and full of sweet berries. If you would come, Mossier, you would find Etienne and his mother reddey to do all they can. Still, Monsieur shall in this please always himself, the friend and benefactor of Etienne Chézy D'Alencourt."

GRAND CALUMET ISLAND.

"It was at night, when Monsieur had gone home, that I learnt myself to write and thank him for all teaching from the books beside."

"E."

Of course, I would accept the invitation. I decided to go in a week's time and wrote to that effect. I wished to reprimand him for having overtaxed his strength as I was sure he had done in sitting up teaching himself how to write, but respect for the dear fellow's perseverance and ability restrained me.

Only when I got him again, I said to myself, I would stop that. I took with me a gun, fishing rods and tackle, a mosquito net, plenty of cigars and a hamper of tinned meats, tea, coffee and biscuits.

My journey was nearly altogether by water and I enjoyed every inch of the beautiful river. After I reached the landing stage, a place called Lichfield, I had to wait an hour before proceeding in the direction which I had found out it would be necessary to follow in order to find Etienne and his mother.

I shall never forget the delight of that one hour passed in rambling through the lonely green wood that covered the island down to the shore. The ferns were young and freshly unfurled, the moss was everywhere, green and close and soft like velvet and star-clustering, gray and yellow. The surviving flowers were the large white blossoms of the woodland lily, and the incoming *Linnæa* began to show the faint pink of its twin bells, afterwards to be so sweet and fragrant.

I thought of that passage in the letter which told of "the island that was green and full of sweet berries." Not a bad description for a person whom the world must perforce term an illiterate man.

When my conveyance arrived, it proved to be a stage of antiquated type and I suffered horribly during the journey of three hours. At the end of that time, I was set down with my luggage at the gate of a small log hut, with a little garden in front, bordered with beautiful pink and green stones, the like of which I had never seen before. A snake fence ran in front of this and on two sides, at the back was a thick wood.

Etienne was ready for me at which I rejoiced, fearing to make myself known to the dame his mother.

Once more I felt that honest and affectionate hand grasp, once more I met those clear and steady blue eyes, and I noted the flush of pride which overspread his face when I told him that I had received his letter and marvelled at it.

"Mossieu know so much and Etienne so ver little." But when the flush had died away, I was pained exceedingly to see the pallor of his cheeks and the prominence of his high cheekbones. His walk was unsteady too, he put his feet down, I noticed, as if they were light instead of solid supports for his body, a sure sign of great physical weakness. My worst fears were realized when I saw on the deal table in the front room, furnished with home-made rugs drawn from woolen rags dyed all colors and some plain deal furniture stained brown, a little pile of books. There were two copy-books, two dictionaries, a small "Histoire de Canada" and some illustrated magazines. I saw that he could read, too, pretty well, for he presently drew my attention to a very old book indeed, that lay on a shelf, a little Roman Catholic missal with tarnished gold clasps and scarlet edges.

"Dat was belong to my fader," he said, "for many a year; and it was from his fader he get it."

I looked at it eagerly all over. The fly-leaf bore no inscription, but up in one corner, in faded red ink, was something that looked like a monogram with a device underneath. I would have examined it at once but that Etienne was anxious to read me a little of the Latin which he had picked out with infinite patience, I should think. I promised to help him a little occasionally, but told him that he was not looking well and had better be content with ignorance in this lovely summer weather.

"When the winter comes and you are back at the mill, you can study as much as you like."

The old dame was sallow and sunken from a life of incessant hard work. The climate itself, so changeable as well as inclement in these northern wilds, is enough to pinch the face and freeze the blood, although at the time of my visit it was hot, intensely hot for so early in the summer. Moreover, the old dame was not given to talking. So taciturn a Frenchwoman I never met elsewhere. They are usually characterized by a vivacious loquacity which is the seal of their nationality. But this one was silent in the extreme and had, as her son told me, never once held a conversation with him on any subject whatever. Of his father he knew literally only this fact—that he had been a "shantyman" in his time too, and was killed by a strained rope striking him across the middle. Etienne did not remember him. The time sped on. They made me as comfortable as they could in the front or "best" room, but, when I thought it would not offend them, I slept outside—"couchant à la belle étoile" as Rousseau has it—and beautiful nights those were I spent in this manner. We had plenty of fruit—wild strawberries and raspberries—pork and beans and potatoes forming the staple articles of diet. There was no cow, no horse, no dog belonging to the house. Fish we could get ourselves in plenty, and eggs made their appearance in a farmer's wagon about twice a week. Etienne and I spent entire days out-of-doors,

shooting, fishing, walking, reading. I tried to take his mind off his books, but it was of no use. He had got so attached to his studies and new pursuits in life that one day he startled me by asserting that he did not intend to go back to the mill in future. I remonstrated gently with him, reminding him that as yet his education was very incomplete, that few situations of the kind he probably aspired to would be open to him for some time to come, and that in the meantime he must suffer from want of money, and thus be the cause of seeing his mother suffer as well. But he startled me further in reply by stating that he knew himself to be slowly dying of consumption and that he would shortly be of little use to anyone. His wish was to leave Canada altogether and die in—France! France, the country of his dreams, the goal of his dying ambition, the land of the golden *fleur de lis*, of the chivalrous soldiers, the holy women and the pious fathers who colonized the land of his birth!

I remonstrated with him as I have said. I expostulated in every key; I took his mother into my confidence as well as I could since she knew not a word of English; I laughed at him, I wept over him, I endeavoured by every argument in my power to make him change my mind, but—

I failed. Then when I understood how firmly his mind was set upon this extraordinary idea, I made up my mind to accompany him, in fact, not to leave him at all until he either grew wiser and stronger, or else died the death he predicted for himself. I found that the old dame had quite a store of money saved by her little by little every year from Etienne's earnings, and from what she made by selling the rugs I mentioned. These sold for a dollar and upwards according to the size. Putting some of my own to this fund of hers, I calculated she had enough to go upon for at least a year. Wants are few in that district. Then I turned my attention to Etienne. He was growing worse; he would lie for hours reading or attempting to read with great beads of perspiration mounting on his brow. The heat was excessive and proved very bad for him. I judged he would be better in town and after I had been on the island for about two months, I begged him to return with me. I promised him that once there, I would not leave him for a day, and would even consider the possibility of taking him across the ocean. He still maintained his calm and perfect manners and insisted upon paying his fare down the river which I let him do, knowing that soon his stock of money would be exhausted and he would then be at my mercy. No sign of cupidity was apparent in his demeanor, yet I wondered how he ever thought to reach France unless I paid his way. Like all consumptives, he had a trick of rallying now and then and appearing better than he really was. This occurred on our arrival in town. He took long walks with me again daily and seemed so much stronger that I again dared to suggest the propriety of his returning to the mill, but to no purpose. He drooped at the very thought, and I perceived that his apparent recovery was but a delusion, I soon saw he was weaker than ever. But whenever he was at all able, he persisted in reading what he could understand and really his progress was a marvel to me. So it came about that one evening, towards the close of September where we had sometimes to light the lamp as early as half-past six, I returned to my rooms about that hour of the day (we shared rooms together, so fond had I grown of him, and I trust, he of me) to find him poring over the little Catholic Missal.

"In this light? This will never do. And you could not light the lamp yourself, my poor Etienne!"

When it was lighted, I saw indeed from his weak and excited appearance that he was unable to do anything for himself. Lying on my sofa, he had in one hand the scarlet-edged missal, and in the other the book I have referred to, which contained a short sketch of Guy Chézy D'Alencourt the handsome and reckless lieutenant of *La Nouvelle France*.

He could hardly speak but through his gasping I could gather that he wished me to examine the words in the corner of fly-leaf I had once noticed before and believed to be a monogram. I quieted him a little, then bringing the lamp-light to bear upon the faded ink, I was able to decipher the device, which comprised a crown, three *fleurs-de-lis* under, and a lamb bearing a banner, with the letters I.H.S. upon it.

"The arms of Rouen!" I exclaimed "and above them, some initials, yes, a monogram!"

My companion sat up in his excitement.

"Ah! dat is what I cannot make quite out! Tree letter—*oui, vite, cher mosdieu, vite!*"

I had to look very closely indeed to decipher these, but with the aid of a small lens I found them to be "G. C. D'A."

There could be little doubt but that Etienne was the lineal descendant of Guy Chézy D'Alencourt, native of Rouen, who came to Canada in the same year as Bigot. I told him so and wondered what his thoughts could be, for clasping my hands with as much force as he possessed—and that is at times a wonderful force in the clasp of the dying—he said with a great effort:

"If dat is so, *mossieu*, if dat is so, I have *O le bon Dieu*—I have—*mossieu*, I have—O if dat is true"—

He fell back and I caught no more. The excitement proved too much for my poor friend. When I spoke to him, he was unconscious and he never fully recovered his senses. Alas! he lay in a few weeks, beneath the sod of Grand Calumet Island, and France is ignorant of the fact that a true aristocrat and simple-hearted gentleman existed in the humble person of my friend the *habitant*, Etienne Guy Chézy D'Alencourt, *alias* "Netty."

Descendez a L'Ombre, ma Jolie Blonde.

The Honourable Boyne Vaxine Vyrus refused to be vaccinated. Stoutly, firmly and persistently refused to be vaccinated. Not even the temptation of exposing to the admiring gaze of a medical man the superb muscles and colossal proportions of an arm which had beaten Grace and thrashed (literally) Villiers of the

Guards, weighed with him.

"It's deuced cool!" he said, to his cousin Clarges, of Clarges St. Mayfair, a fair, slight fellow, with a tiny yellow moustache. "Haven't I been six times to India, and twice to Africa; that filthy Algiers, you remember, and Turkey, and New Orleans, and Lisbon, and Naples? and now, when I was done only eight years ago at home, here I am to be done again, where, I am sure, it all looks clean enough and healthy! It makes me ill, and I *won't* be done; laid up for a week and lose all the fun I came for!"

"Bovey, though you *are* the strongest fellow in England, you're no less a coward!"

Young Clarges looked up as he spoke, seriously: "*I shall be done!*"

"You? Well, so I should expect from a baby like you, Arthur! You will never grow up, never learn to think for yourself! Now let me alone on the subject, and let us look up this country place we were told about!" But Clarges was not easily silenced.

"Think of Lady Violet, Bovey! If anything were to happen to you out here, and the children, Bovey,—Rex and Florence, you know!"

"Oh! cut it, now, Arthur; I tell you it's of no use!"

Young Clarges looked out across the river, and bit the tiny yellow moustache. "Then I won't be done, either!" said he to himself. "It's borne in upon me that one of us has got to get this accursed thing, and if I can prevent it, it shan't be Bovey!" What a strange scene it was beneath, around, above and opposite them! Beneath flowed the river, solid with sawdust, the yellow accumulation of which sent up a strong resinous smell that almost made them giddy; to the left the tumultuous foam of the Chaudière cast a delicate veil of spray over the sharp outlines of the bridge traced against a yellow sky; to the right, the water stretched away in a dull gray expanse, bordered by grim pines and flat sterile country. Around them the three mighty cliffs on which the Capital is built, above them the cold gray of an autumnal sky, and opposite them the long undulations of purplish brown hills that break the monotony of the view, and beyond which stretch away to an untrodden north the wastes and forests of an uncleared continent.

"Are we looking due north, now, Arthur, do you know?"

"I suppose so," returned Clarges. He was astride a cannon and still biting the tiny moustache. "Yes, by the direction of the sunset we must be, I suppose. I say, if we are, you know, I should like to be able to tell between what two trees—it would have to be between two of those trees there—we should have to walk to get to the North Pole."

The Hon. Bovyne looked around suddenly and laughed. He was fishing apparently in his pockets for a paper or something of the kind, as he had a number of letters in his hand, looking them over.

"What two trees? Where? Arthur, you *are* a donkey. What are you talking about?"

"I say," returned Clarges, "that it is perfectly true that as we sit here, facing due north, all we have to do is to walk straight over this river—"

"On the sawdust?"

"Certainly, over those hills and between two of those trees in order to get to the North Pole. Curious, isn't it? If you look awfully close, real hard, you know, you can almost count their branches as they stand up against the sky. Like little feathers—huff-f-f-f—one could almost blow them away!"

The Honorable Bovyne laughed again. Clarges was a mystery to him, as to many others. Half-witted he sometimes called him, though on other occasions he stood in awe of his bright, candid, fearless nature, and his truthful and reckless tongue.

"I say," went on Clarges excitedly, shading his eyes with his hand. "There are two trees out there in a straight line from this very cannon that—that I should know again, Bovey! Do look where I point now like a good fellow. Don't you see there, following the chimney of that big red place, factory or other, right in a line with that at the very top of the hill at its highest point, two trees that stand a little apart from the others and have such funny branches—Oh! you must be able to see them by those queer branches! One crooks out on one side just as the other does on the other tree. That isn't very lucid, but you see what I mean can't you? They make a sort of—of—lyre shape."

The Hon. Bovyne shaded his eyes with his hand and looked out over the river and distant hills. "I see a line of trees, feathery trees, you aptly call them my dear Arthur, but I can't make out your particular two. How is it possible, at such a distance, to see anything like a *lyre* of all things? Come along, I've found the address I wanted. It reads most peculiarly. It seems there are still a great number of French people around here, in fact, all over this Province which they sometimes call Lower Canada. Do you remember much of your French?" I spoke a lot in Algiers of course but I fancy it isn't much like this jargon. Our destination is or appears to be, *c/o Veuve Peter Ross, Les Chats*, pronounced *Lachatte*, so Simpson told me.

"Who told you about the place?" enquired young Clarges getting off the cannon? "Simpson? What sort of a fellow is he?"

"Who? Simpson?" said his cousin in turn. "Um—not bad. Been out here too long, though. Awfully quiet, goes in for steady work and takes hardly any exercise. I wonder why it is the fellows here don't walk more! New country and all that; I should have thought they would all go in for country walks and shooting and sports of all kinds. They don't, you know, from some reason or other. It can't be the fault of the country."

"You forget the roads, Bovey, and the fences, and the interminable distances and the immense rivers, and the long winter. I say, it looks like snow to-night, doesn't it?"

"What do you know about snow!" rejoined the Hon. Bovyne. "Let us get on, there's a good fellow—confound you! don't stare at those imaginary trees any longer, but come along."

Certainly young Clarges was possessed with the queerest fancy about those trees. "I say, Bovey, they were funny, though, to strike me like that, out of all the others! I am sure I should know them again. Perhaps some day we'll take a fly and go out there—I wonder if there's an inn? Does what's her name, your old Scotch lady, keep an inn, or is it a farm we're going to?"

"Scotch? Why do you say Scotch? She's French, I tell you. Simpson says she can't speak a word of English."

"But 'Peter Ross' is Scotch, isn't it? At least you can't make it French, however you twist it."

"I'm not anxious to twist it. Don't you see, Arthur, she is evidently a Frenchwoman who married a man called Peter Ross; she is the *veuve*, widow, you know! of the lamented Scotchman. Now do you understand? But it *is* peculiar."

"Very," said Clarges. "When do we start?"

"There's a train to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, but I thought we had better hire a trap, and a man to bring the trap back, and put all our things, tents and so on, into it, and go out comfortably so as to see the country."

"All right!" said Clarges. "By Jove, what a splendid night it's going to be, stars out already, Bovey! Don't you hope it'll be like this tomorrow? Shall we camp out the first night and think of—of—Lady Violet by our camp fire, and Rex and Florence—how they'd like to see us, wouldn't they? And they can't, you know, they're three thousand miles away, trying to make out each other's faces in the November fog, eh! Bovey? I say, what shall we get to eat out there, at Lachatte, you know, the country always makes me desperately hungry."

"Oh! we shall do well enough. Simpson says she is a capital old woman, lives entirely alone; will cook for us, wait on us, make us pancakes, I expect, and give us plenty of that stuff we had this morning at the hotel."

"Sweet stuff?" asked Clarges. "I know. Syrup, maple syrup, that'll do."

Simpson, the authority, thrice quoted by the elder of the two Englishmen, appeared at dinner with them that evening. He was a hard-working, stodgy son of person who had come out to the Canadian Civil Service fifteen years ago, lived much by himself until he took a wife out of a Canadian village, a phlegmatic, stolid, unimaginative sort of a girl, who was nevertheless a good wife and an excellent housekeeper. Simpson sniffed at the dinner. It wasn't as good as his own. He felt ill at ease in the presence of the two men, whose airy talk and loud laughter struck him with a keen sense of its novelty. They joked about everything. Clarges particularly was in high feather. The wine, which came partly from the hotel and partly from the Hon. Bovyne's hamper, flowed often and freely, and Simpson, who was a very moderate fellow, wondered at the quantity his friends seemed to be able to imbibe. "Without showing any traces of it, either," he said to himself. "All this vivacity is natural; I remember the type; in fact, I was something like it myself ten or twelve years ago."

After dinner, Clarges rushed up stairs and down again with a small silk plush packet of photographs tied with ribbons. The men were in the smoking room.

"I say, I want Simpson to see Lady Violet, Bovey."

"All right, and the children too? You sentimental ass, Arthur!" Clarges laughed. It was a funny laugh, a kind of inane ripple that nevertheless tickled everybody who heard it. "But it's too smoky here. Come up stairs to the drawing room. There's a jolly big drawing room with a piano, and we can say what we want to, everyone stares here so!"

"I should think they would," said Simpson quietly. "Why do you get yourself up like that, simply because you're in Canada? A knitted waistcoat, three sizes too large for you—"

"That's to admit of heavy underclothing," said Clarges, not in the least perturbed. "Knickerbockers," continued Simpson, "that are certainly one size too small; a cap that looks like a hangman's, and a coat that must have come off Praed St."

The Hon. Bovyne laughed long and loud. "Oh, Arthur, Arthur!" he said. But young Clarges did not mind in the least. Indeed, had he but known it, and be it remembered to his merit that he did not know it, he made a fair and manly picture as he stood under the light of the chandelier. His slim, well-knit figure was more prepossessing than the herculean proportions of his cousin, "the strongest man in England;" his crisp fair hair brushed boyishly up on one side and his well-trimmed moustache of silky yellow, his keen gray eyes and delicate features, all went far in point of attractiveness, especially when added to these mere physical details, rang the infectious laugh, clear, hearty and youthful, and spoke the natural, honest, unrestrained tongue.

In the drawing room Clarges established himself on a sofa between the other two. "Now, Simpson," he said, "you must excuse me calling you Simpson so freely, by the way, but you know, Bovey always calls you Simpson—you don't mind, do you? You bang away at my clothing all you like, and in return I'll call you Simpson. Now I'm going to show you Lady Violet. You know who she is, she is Bovey's wife, *and* the loveliest woman in England. Loveliest woman in England, look at that!" Clarges held up very carefully, out at arm's length, a very fine photograph of an undeniably beautiful woman. "Bovey's wife," he ejaculated again. "You never saw her, so you don't know what beauty is, do you? But here's the next best thing, her photograph, and such a photograph! Now, you be good, as we say to the children, and I'll show you that again after all the others." Next he showed him in a sort of ecstasy, Bovey's children.

"Rex and Florence," he said, in an awe-struck tone. Bovey laughed, so did Simpson. So would anybody have done.

"What are you laughing at," said young Clarges, solemnly. "Oh, at me! that's all right, everybody laughs at me. I knew it couldn't be the children. Now here's another lovely girl," and then there was another and still another, and then a group in hunting attire just after the breakfast; then pretty interiors with dainty rooms and women and children and dogs, a capital likeness of Fred Burnaby, Vyrus' fellow-officer, autographs of Gordon and Wolseley, a garden party at Clarges Mount, a water-party at Richmond, photograph's and sketches taken in Algiers, Cairo, Damascus, Bombay and Edinburgh. Simpson sat through all this slightly bored and confused. What had he to do with this kind of life? Once he had had some gleams of it, it is true, but that was years ago, before his modest little establishment was in existence, presided over by the plain, but virtuous Matilda of his later days.

"Well, now," said he, preparing to take his leave, "is there anything further you want to know about your plans, for I suppose I shall scarcely see you again before you leave if you get off tomorrow morning as you intend. One thing—of course you've been vaccinated?"

The Hon. Bovyne muttered, "bah!" Clarges began putting the photographs away, all but Lady Violet.

"Then you haven't been done, eh?" said Simpson, interrogatively. "I would if I were you. You can't tell

where you're going or whom you'll meet. Why, you can't do yourself if you object to a medical man fussing around."

"Can you?" said Clarges.

"I don't object," said Bovey, loftily; "but I must say I think it is making a ridiculous and most unnecessary fuss about the matter. Why, there are half a dozen diseases as virulent as the small-pox stalking about in every large town, and we don't take those! Why should we take the small-pox when we don't take the cholera, or the—the—"

"Yes," observed Simpson, in his quiet manner, "I thought you would stick for want of details. The fact is, that you can inoculate for small-pox, and you can't as yet, for cholera or leprosy, and so wise people accept the fact, the revelation if you will, and get vaccinated. However, as far as your immediate surroundings go, you're safe enough. Old Mrs. Ross will do all she can for you, and it isn't far, only twenty two miles from town after all. You'll be walking in in a day or two for another tent or a barrel of whiskey. Nothing like whiskey, Canadian whiskey, out in camp on cold nights." Simpson got up.

"I wonder," said he, suddenly, "how you escaped being done on the train. You came up from Quebec *via* St. Martin's Junction, didn't you?"

"Oh! your importunate Inspector did make an effort on my behalf, but I was firm. Nearly had a lodging in the Police Station though, but I told him who we were and swore to having marks the size of flat-irons on both arms, so he let me go."

"And you," said Simpson, turning to Clarges. "Me! oh! I shall be done. I say, couldn't I walk out with you now and see a doctor about it? I believe I will, Bovey, if you can spare me. For look you, Simpson, I am the plaything of his leisure hours, a kind of Yorick, you know, and he might be dull."

The Hon. Bovyne looked grave for a second, "I believe I *should* be dull without you, dear boy, though you are a crank. Let me see, how old are you, Arthur?"

"Twenty-two," answered Clarges. "Good heaven!" exclaimed the Hon. Bovine, "and I am getting perilously near to forty. We'll change the subject. I'm very sleepy. Don't expect to find me up when you come in, Arthur; to-morrow night, remember, we may be sleeping on the cold ground, I shall get all the rest I can to-night." Clarges and the other man took their leave.

"Once more, Bovey," said the former, "won't you be done? Simpson, make him! See here, look once more at Lady Violet, speak with *her* lips, look with *her* eyes—the loveliest woman in England!"

"Go and get 'done,' as you call it, for heaven's sake, and let me alone!" was all he got in reply.

But Clarges did not get done. He had an idea and this was his idea: To walk to some doctor recommended by Simpson and procure an instrument suitable for the purpose, and the necessary material, and to vaccinate his cousin himself. The first part was easy enough. Simpson vaguely wondering at his light-hearted talk, left him at a doctor's surgery door, and Clarges, who could always get what he wanted from anybody in any part of the world, soon persuaded the doctor to give him a "point" and all necessary instructions.

"A small lancet is really a better thing," said that gentleman, "but you will manage all right, I daresay. We must really take every precaution we can. Good evening."

All this was easy; now arose the difficulty, how best to tackle Bovey.

"He's such a giant of a fellow," thought Clarges. "But if he is only asleep as he hinted he would be, there'll not be much difficulty. What will he do when he finds it out in the morning, supposing I am successful in operating upon him to-night? What a suggestive word! I am quite the surgeon. But I'll do it—Arthur Clarges, see that you *do* do it, by all you hold dear and sacred in old England!"

On his return, however, to the hotel, he found that his cousin was clearly wide-awake again.

"Hang it all!" he said to himself, "why isn't he asleep?" But the Hon. Bovyne was not in the least sleepy. He rallied Arthur on his poor arm but fortunately did not ask to look at it. He ordered up a sherry cobbler apiece and brought out some of his rarest weeds. "I say, what do you think of Simpson, Bovey?" said Clarges, suddenly.

"Think? why, that there's nothing in him to think about."

"Did you know he was married?"

"No; is he?" Bovey was always laconic.

"Yes, and he has four children. Just think, four! Two boys and two girls."

"How interesting!" The two men smoked silently for a few minutes, then Clarges said, "It must be a beautiful thing to be married, you know."

"Well, I *ought* to know," returned his cousin.

Clarges put his cigar down and went on. "To have somebody that belongs to you, and to know that you belong to somebody; that's marriage, and I think it must be very beautiful. Of course, you belong to other people too, just the same, and they belong to you, but not so much, not in the same way. You don't go to church all in a tremble with your father and your mother, or your sister or your brother. You don't wear a ring—a beautiful, great broad band of gold, you know, always shining there on your finger—or you don't put one on for anybody else save just the person that belongs to you in that way, in the way of marriage, you know. And to be able to think wherever you are, 'Well, there is that person, anyway, thinking of me, waiting for me; the whole world doesn't matter if that person is really there, anywhere, thinking of me, waiting for me.' Now, you know, *I'll* never feel that, never, in this world. What good is there in me? I may be Arthur Clarges, of Clarges, of course, but without money, that means nothing. I say, Bovey, it's rather ghastly, but it's perfectly true. I haven't a single soul in the world but you and Lady Violet to think of me at all, or for me to think of."

"I don't suppose you have," said the Hon. Bovyne, thoughtfully. "You are a lone beggar, Arthur, but a cheery one nevertheless."

"So you see," Clarges went on, "if in accompanying you around the world in search of new pleasures and exciting experiences, anything happens to me, you know, Arthur Clarges, of Clarges, nobody need mind."

There isn't anybody to mind."

"All this because Simpson has got four children! Well, I hope you'll get married yet, Arthur, you queer fish, and have six, two more than Simpson. I know what you are driving at, however. You think me a selfish brute. You can't understand how I can leave Lady Vi., and the two kids, and go off annually on tours of exploration and so forth. I tell you, I am the better for it, and she is the better for it, and nobody is any the worst for it, unless it be yourself. Men who have knocked about as I have done, will continue to knock about as long as they live. In the army, out of the army, all the same. Lady Vi. understands me, and I her, and you forget, Arthur, that you are very—young."

"Then may I never get any older," said Charles, almost rudely.

Not long afterwards his cousin, slightly heavy with wine, went to bed. Clarges, abnormally wakeful, tried to read *Bell's Life* which lay before him and waited until Bovey was fast asleep. They occupied the same room, a large double-bedded one, which opened into a bathroom and parlour *en suite*. When he was perfectly certain that his cousin was sound asleep, so sound that "a good yelp from the county pack, and a stirring chorus of 'John Peel' by forty in pink could not wake him," thought Clarges, the latter undertook his delicate task and accomplished it. He did it quickly and skilfully with a tiny lancet he found in his cousin's well-appointed travelling bag. Bovey never stirred. Clarges next undertook to "do" himself. Then a strange thing happened. He had gone to the glass and bared his left arm when a sudden faintness overcame him. He tried to shake it off and sat down. Presently it left him and he felt quite as usual. Then he made a second attempt. The same thing occurred again. This time it was worse, and sight and strength failing, he sank on his own bed, fainting. By a tremendous effort he prevented entire unconsciousness from taking place and lay there half dressed and tremulous.

"Well, I *am a fool!* I can't help it. I can't try any more to-night, for I am as weak and sleepy—if I can get up and undress it's as much as I am capable of. But Bovey's all right. There's Lady Violet"—turning his eyes to the photograph he had stuck in the looking glass frame—"she'd thank me if she knew." Sweet Lady Vi—so good to all around her—so good to me—dear Lady Vi, the loveliest woman in England!

When Clarges awoke he was chilled and dazed, couldn't remember where he was and what he had done. When he did recollect, he rose quietly, extinguished the gas and made the room as dark as possible, in hopes that Bovey might outsleep himself in the morning. Then he went to bed properly, putting as a final precaution, his watch an hour in advance. It thus happened that by Clarges' watch it was a quarter past ten when he awoke. He rose first and bullied his cousin to that extent that the latter tumbled out of bed and flung on his clothes without indulging in his usual bath. At eleven the trap was due and Bovey was all on fire, bundled his things around recklessly and swore a little at Clarges for keeping him up the night before. Clarges was nervous, but up to the present time was master of the situation. At breakfast, Bovey discovered the mistake, but attributed it to Clarges' carelessness in such matters aggravated by a probable bad arm.

"Why I took your watch for an authority instead of my own, I don't know," said he. "But last night I thought you were the clearer of the two, in fact, I don't recollect winding mine at all, and it seems now that *you* were the delinquent."

"Yes, I must have been," said Clarges, self-reproachfully.

At eleven the trap came, and by noon they were half-way to their destination. The road winding higher and higher as it followed the magnificent curves of the Gatineau was very beautiful, and revealed at each turn a superb panorama of water, and wood and sky. For a long time the Buildings were visible, towering over trees and valleys. Once the sun came out and lit up the cold, gray scene.

"Pull up, Johnny," said the Hon. Bovyne, "I want to see this. Why, its immense, this is! Arthur, how's your arm?"

But Clarges was evidently struck with something. "I say, over there, is where we were yesterday, Bovey, I can imagine I see the very spot, cannon and all."

"Just as then you imagined you saw a couple of trees here, eh? Now go along, Johnny, and sit down, Arthur. It doesn't agree with you to be vaccinated. I'm afraid you're too imaginative already my boy. By the way, how *is* your arm?"

"Its a novel situation," thought Clarges. "*He's* the one, not me. Its *his* arm, not mine. But my turn will come to-night; pretty soon he'll find it out for himself."

Arrived at the house of *Veuve* Peter Ross, they found it clean and inviting; warmed by a wood stove and carpeted with home-made rugs. The old woman took a great interest in their arrival and belongings and jabbered away incessantly, in French. Did they but request her to "*cherchez un autre blankette!*" or fry an additional egg, up went her hands, her eyes and her shoulders, and such a tirade of excited French was visited upon them that they soon forebore asking her for anything but went about helping themselves. At first they thought she was angry when these outbreaks took place, but Bovey, who could partially understand her, gathered that she was far from offended, but given over to the national habit of delivering eloquent and theatrical monologues on the slightest provocation. She had no lodgers at the present moment; a Frenchman had left the day before, and the prospect was in every way favorable, to the comfort of the two friends.

When the dusk fell, Bovey made a camp-fire.

"It's what we came for," he said, "and we can't begin too early or have enough of it, and I feel chilly, queer, quite unlike myself to-night. It's a depressing country just about here."

"It is," said Clarges, anxious to keep his friend a little longer in the dark. "We'll be all right when it's really night, you know, and the fire blazes up. What a jolly tent and what glorious blankets? We ought to go to bed early, for it was awfully late the last night There! now its getting better. Hoop-la! more sticks Bovey! Throw them on, make it blaze up. Here we are in the primeval forest at last, Bovey, pines and moss, and shadows and sounds—What's that now? Is that on the river?"

For suddenly they heard the most wonderful strain coming from that direction. The river was about three or four hundred yards away across the road, in front of them, and upon a raft slowly passing by were a couple of *habitans* singing. What strain was this, so weird, so solemn, so earnest, yet so pathetic, so sweet, so

melodious!

*"Descendez à l'ombre
Ma jolie blonde."*

Those were the words they caught, no more, but the tune eluded them.

"It's the queerest tune I ever heard!" ejaculated Clarges. He had a smattering of music, and not a bad ear.

"Can't get it for the life of me. It's like—I tell you what it's like Bovey, its got the same—you know—the same intervals—that's the word—that the priests chant in! And then, just when you're thinking it has, off it goes into something like opera bouffe or those French rounds our nurse used to sing. But isn't it pretty? I say—where's Lady Violet now, Bovey, eh? Don't you wish she could see us, see you there, quite the pioneer, looking like Queen Elizabeth's giant porter in this queer light? and how she would catch up that tune and bring it out on the piano, and make ever so much more of it with her clever fingers, first like a battle-cry, men marching and marching you know, and then put in a wonderful chord that would make us all creep and sigh as she would glide into the loveliest nocturne, you know—I say, what a nocturne we're having, eh! Do you think it's any livelier now?"

"My boy," said the Hon. Bovyne, solemnly, "You are right, it is a nocturne and a wonderful one. I'm not given to expressing myself poetically as you know, so I shall content myself with saying that its immense, and now will you pass the whiskey? I certainly feel shaky to-night, but I shall sleep out here all the same. What are you going to do?"

"I prefer to try the house, I think," answered Clarges, and so he did. When he was going to bed, heartily grateful that his cousin was as yet ignorant of his interference, he looked long and earnestly from his one window in the roof at the scene outside before he attempted again the process of self-vaccination. He could see the mighty flames of Bovey's camp-fire, a first-class fire, well planned and well plied. He could see the pale outline of the tent and the dark figure of his cousin wrapped in rugs and blankets by the side of the fire. He could see the tall pines and the little firs, the glistening line of river and the circles of gleaming white stones that marked the garden beds in front. The first snow of the year was just beginning to fall in tiny flakelets that melted as soon as they touched the ground.

"When they're all covered with snow, it must be pretty," thought Clarges. "Like all the Christmas trees in the world put together! The winter is beginning, the long cold, constant Canadian winter we have heard so much about. Good-bye, dear Lady Violet, good-bye, dear old England!" Clarges sat on the side of the bed with his arm ready. But the faintness came again, this time with a sickening thrill of frightful pain and apprehension, and he rolled over in a deathly swoon with his own words ringing in his ears.

When the morning broke, it broke in bright sunshine and with an inch or so of snow on the ground. The Hon. Bovyne, though feeling unaccountably ill and irritable, was delighted.

"Still I fear we are too late in the season for much camping," he said, "I must see Arthur about it."

He waited till ten, eleven, half-past eleven. No Arthur, not even the old woman about. He wondered very much. He approached the house, and finding nobody coming at his knock, opened the door and went in. Something wrong. He knew that at once. The air was stifling, horrible, with an unknown quantity in it, it seemed to him. He threw open the front room door. *Veuve* Peter Ross was in her bed, ill, and of small-pox. He could tell her that, for certain. He rushed up-stairs and found Clarges on his bed, raving, delirious.

What was it he heard?

"Bovey's all right! Bovey's all right?" This was all, repeated over and over.

The Hon. Bovyne was neither a fool nor a coward. He tore off his coat and looked at his arm, then he dragged his cousin out of the room, down the stairs and out of the fatal house. Propping him up against a sturdy pine and covering him with all available warm clothing, he sped like wind to the nearest house. But neither the swift, keen self-reproaches of Bovey, nor the skill of the best physician to be found in the town, nor the pure, fresh pine-scented air, nor the yearning perchance of a dead yet present mother could prevail. The young life went out in delirium and in agony, but "thank God," thought Bovey, "in complete unconsciousness."

When he set about removing his tent and other camping apparatus some time later, he was suddenly struck with the appearance of the tree against which poor Clarges had been propped. He looked again and again. "I must be dreaming," said the Hon. Bovyne. "That tree—oh! its impossible—nevertheless, that tree has its counterpart in the one opposite it, and both have extraordinary branches! They bend upward, making a kind of—of—what was it Arthur saw in those imaginary trees of his only—*yesterday*—my God—it is true—a kind of lyre shape! There it is, and the more I look at it the clearer it grows, and to think he has *died* there—!! And beneath there he is buried, and the raftsmen will pass within a few hundred yards of him where he lies, and will sing the same strain that so fascinated him, but he will not hear it, and learn it and bring it back for Lady Violet, the loveliest woman in England! For he has gone down into the eternal shadow that no man ever penetrates."

The Prisoner Dubois.

Miss Cecilia Maxwell was the only child of Sir Robert Maxwell, K. C. M. G., member of the Cabinet, chief orator of the Liberal party, and understudy for the part of Premier, who, although a Scotchman by birth, was

a typical Canadian—free, unaffected, honest and sincere. His bushy iron-gray hair, his keen gray eyes, his healthy florid color, and the well-trimmed black moustache, which gave his face an unusually youthful appearance for a man of his age, went with a fine stalwart physique and a general bodily conformation apparently in keeping with the ideas of early rising, cold ablutions and breakfasts of oatmeal porridge that the ingenuous mind is apt to associate with Scotch descent and bringing-up. His daughter was a very beautiful girl. Born in the shadow of the pines, she had been educated successively in Edinburgh, Brussels and Munich, had been presented at Court, been through two London seasons, spent half of one winter in South America, another in Bermuda, had been ogled by lords, worshipped by artists, and loved by everybody.

Once more in Canada, she took her place in the limited yet exacting political circles of the Capital, of Toronto, and of distant Winnipeg. Life was full of duties, and she shirked none, though on days when they were put away earlier than usual she would fall to musing of the country place down the river she had not seen for years, with the beautiful woods, and the simple, contented French, and the evenings on the water.

"That great, lonely river," she thought on one occasion, looking idly out of her window. "What other river in the world is like it?—and the tiny French villages with the red roofs and doors, and the sparkling spires and the queer people. Delle Lisbeth, and *veuve* Macleod, and Pierre—poor Pierre. I have never forgotten Pierre, with his solemn eyes and beautiful brown hair. And how he knew the flowers in the wood, and what were those songs he used to sing?" And Cecilia sang a couple of verses of:

*"Un Canadian errant,
Banni de ses foyers."*

When Sir Robert entered later he found her listless and preoccupied. "You mustn't look like that to-night," he said. "Don't forget that this is your first important dinner-party: three French members and their wives, and La Colombière, the new Minister of Finance, to whom you must be as charming as possible. This North-West business is quickening as fast as it can. The Métis are really up, there's no doubt about it."

"In rebellion?" asked Cecilia breathlessly. There was an added interest in life directly to the imaginative girl.

"Ay," said her father, "there's a rascal at the bottom of it we've been after for a long time; but now, run away and look bright at dinner, like a good girl."

The small clique of Frenchmen and their wives could not but have been charmed with their reception that evening. The dinner was good, and not too heavy nor long, the wines excellent (for Sir Robert did not as yet favor the "Scott" Act), and the suavity of his manner combined with the appearance and grace of his daughter, in a delicate dress of primrose and brown, with amber in her beautiful golden plaits and round her whitest neck, left nothing to be desired. And yet on that very first night in her capacity as hostess, Cecilia found she had to learn to play a part, the part of woman, which all women who have just left off being girls find so hard to play at first. For naturally the report of the Métis revolt had spread. Sir Robert did a brave thing. He referred to it directly they were seated, and then everybody felt at ease. Now it could be talked about if anybody chose—and Cecilia did so choose.

"Who is this young Frenchman," she asked of La Colombière, "that is identified with this new rising? I have been away, and am ignorant of it all."

"His name is Dubois—Pierre Dubois," returned La Colombière with a gleaming smile. "He calls himself the representative of the French-Canadian party. Bah! such men!" But Cecilia's heart had given a mighty leap and then stopped, she almost thought, for ever.

"Pierre—Pierre Dubois?" she reiterated in her surprise. Her fan of yellow feathers dropped from her lap, and her face showed extraordinary interest for a moment.

"You know him M'lle.?" said La Colombière, returning her the fan. For an instant she was the centre of attention. Then with a flutter of the yellow feathers that subjugated the four impressionable Frenchmen completely, she resumed her usual manner.

"I know the name, certainly. There was somebody of that name living at Port Joli where we go in the Summer you know."

"Oh!" said Laflamme carelessly, a little man with a bald head and a diplomatist's white moustache, "Dubois is not a new offender. He has been recognized as an agitator for three or four years. He has the eyes of the ox and the wavy hair of the sculptor. He is to be admired—*vraiment*—and has the gift of speech."

When the dinner was over Cecilia played for them in the drawing-room. Somehow or other, she wandered into the tender yet buoyant melody of the *chanson* she had hummed earlier in the day.

*"Un Canadien errant,
Banni de ses foyers."*

"Hum-hum," trolled little Laflamme. "So you know our songs? *Ca va bien!*"

"That was taught me" said Cecilia, "once down the river at Port Joli." But she did not say who had taught her. Later on when the guests were gone and Sir Robert was preparing to go back to the office, his daughter said very quietly.

"Papa do you remember that young man at Port Joli who was staying with the curé for his health, the one who was so kind and showed me so many things, the woods, you know and the water, and who talked so beautifully?"

"I remember the one you mean, I think, but not his name. Why, dear child?"

"His name was Dubois," returned Cecilia. "Pierre Dubois!"

"Dubois? Are you sure? That is very singular" said her father. "And he talked beautifully you say? It must be *this* one."

"That is what I think" said Cecilia, seeing her father to the door.

Then ensued a period of hard work for Cecilia. She read the papers assiduously, going up every day to the Parliamentary reading-rooms for that purpose that she might lose no aspect of the affair. She followed every detail of the rebellion, even possessing herself of many of her father's papers bearing on the matter. Those details are well known; how the whisper ran through our peaceful land, breathing of war and battle and blood-shed; how our gallant men marched to the front in as superb a faith and as perfect a manhood as ever troops have shown in this country or the Old; how some fell by the way, and how others were reserved to be clasped again to the bosoms of wife and mother and how some met with the finest fate of all, or at least the most fitting fate for a true soldier—death on the battle-field. For a month the country was in a delirium. Then joy-bells rang, and bonfires blazed, and hands were struck in other hands for very delight that the cause of all the mischief, the rebel chief, the traitor Dubois was taken. Cecilia alone sat in her room in horror.

"What will they do with the prisoner Dubois?" she said with a vehemence that dismayed Sir Robert.

"The prisoner Dubois? Why, they will hang him of course. He has caused too much blood to be shed not to have to give some of his own." Cecilia writhed as if in extreme pain. Her beauty, her grace, her youth all seemed to leave her in a moment, and she stood faded and old before her father.

"Oh, they will not do that! Imprison him or send him away—anything, anything save that! See, they do not know him—poor Pierre, so kind, so good—they do not know him as I knew him. Father, he could not hurt a thing—he would step aside from the smallest living thing in the path when we walked together that summer, and he helped everybody that wanted help, there was nothing he could not do. And he loves his country—at least he did so then. There is that song, '*O mon cher Canada*,' he used to sing, and he told me of the future of his country, and how he had prayed to be allowed to aid it and push it forward. And he does not hate the English, only how can he help loving the French more when he is one of them, and has good French blood in his veins—better than many of the so-called English! And he was born to be a leader and to bring men away from their home into battle and make war for them, and where in that does he differ from other heroes we are taught to love and admire? If you had ever heard him talk, and had seen the people all gathered round him when he spoke of all these things—as for his church and the Virgin, and the priests, it would be well if you and all of us thought as much about our religion, and loved and revered it as he did his!"

Cecilia broke down into incoherent sobs. Sir Robert sat aghast at this startling confession. No need to tell him that it was prompted by love.

"But what if he be insane, my dear?" he asked very quietly.

"Then it is still bad—it is worse," said Cecilia. "Will hanging an insane man bring back the others that are slain? Will it make foul fair and clean still cleaner? Will it bring peace and friendliness, and right feeling, or will it bring a fiercer fire and a sharper sword than our country has yet seen—a hand-to-hand fight between rival races, a civil war based on national distinction!"

"What would you do?" said her father, walking up and down the room. "What can I or anybody do? It is common law and common justice; if he be found guilty he must swing for it. Personal intercession—"

"Might save him!" said the girl.

"Must not be thought of!" said her father.

"You mean, *you* may not think of it. But others may—I may. I am a woman, free and untrammelled by either party or personal considerations of any kind. Father, let *me* try!"

"Cecilia, it is madness to take such a thing upon yourself. How is it possible? What are your plans?"

"I do not know. I have not thought. All is in a haze through which I see that vision of the hangman and the rope Father, let me try!"

Sir Robert thought for a moment, then he said: "Very well, my dear, you shall try, on one condition; that first of all you have an interview with Dubois himself. In fact, for your purpose it is absolutely necessary that you should see him, in order to identify him with the other Dubois you used to know. After that interview, if you still persist in your course, I promise—rash as it certainly seems—to help you. Now hold yourself in readiness to start for the North-West at a moment's notice. I have private information that tells me Dubois will be hung and any intervention on your part or that of anybody else must be set on foot immediately, do you see?"

A few days afterwards Cecilia, unveiled, and dressed in an irreproachable walking costume of gray, was taken to the gloomy prison outside the little northern town of —, where the prisoner Dubois was confined. There was a bit of tricolor in her hat and her cheeks were very pale—As the beautiful daughter of Sir Robert Maxwell her way was sufficiently paved with politeness as she presented her private order to see the prisoner. Her heart was beating tumultuously and the blood surged round her temples. The turnkey showed her into a small whitewashed room, opposite the cell in which Dubois spent his time and informed her that in compliance with strict orders he would have to be present during the interview, to which Cecilia bent her head in assent; she could not have spoken just then. "It is a strange thing that I am doing," she thought, "but I shall see Pierre—poor Pierre." Approaching footsteps were soon heard and the prisoner Dubois entered, escorted by two warders. He started when he saw his visitor, and—stared.

"Mademoiselle,—" he said, evidently trying to recall her name and failing.

"Cecile," she said, eagerly, "Ma'amselle Cecile you always called me, and I liked it so much better than Cecilia. I think I like it still—Pierre—I—"

The prisoner Dubois frowned.

"If Mdme. Dubois had ears through these walls, you had not called me 'Pierre.' But—" laying his hand on his heart and bowing low, "Pierre himself is flattered—*oui, mademoiselle*—by your attention—*oui, vraiment*—and he is rejoiced to know that his image is still cherished in that heart so fair, so *Anglaise*, so pure, so good. *Belle-enfant, Je n'ai pas oublié nos amours!*"

The three men in the room suppressed a smile. Dubois stood with his head thrown back, his arms folded and his soft dark eyes fixed on Cecilia. She was still standing, indeed there was no chair in the room, and her eyes were fixed on him as his upon herself. It was Pierre, and yet not her Pierre. Rather an exaggerated growth—of the man she had once known. The same soft brown hair, only thicker and rougher, one drooping

wave looking tangled and unkempt—the dreamy eyes with the latent sneer in them dreamier than ever and yet the sneer more visible, the thin sensitive nose thinner, the satisfied mouth more satisfied and conscious, the weak chin fatally weaker. And he was married, too! M^{de}m^e. Dubois—that must be his wife! How strange it was! Cecilia's brain was in a frightful state of doubt and fever and hesitation. It was necessary for her to explain her presence there, however, for she could not but resent the opening speech of the prisoner Dubois. She was growing very tired of standing, moreover, but she would have died rather than have demanded a chair. At length the turnkey observed her fatigue and sent one of the warders for a chair.

“Fetch two,” interposed Dubois, with a flourish of his hand. “I myself shall sit down.” When the man returned, bringing only one chair on the plea that he could not find another, Cecilia, whose nerve was returning, offered it to Dubois. He accepted it calmly and sat down upon it, waiting to hear what she had to say. At this signal instance of arch selfishness Cecilia felt her heart tighten and her temples grow cold as if fillets of fire had been exchanged for ribbons of snow.

“Sir,” she began, “I am sorry to find you here.” Dubois smiled the smile of a great man who listens with condescension to what an inferior has to say. “I am glad you have not forgotten me, because all the time I was away, and it has been a long time, I never—it is quite true—forgot you—I mean (for Dubois smiled again) I never forgot that summer you spent near us at Port Joli, and the things you talked about, about your future. When I came home I found you had gone so much further than I know you ever intended to, and have been the cause of so much trouble, and the death of brave men, and I was very sorry.” Cecilia leant on the bare table before her, and felt that every moment as it passed brought with it a cooling of the once passionate feeling she had entertained for the Dubois of her childhood. But if the lover were gone, there remained the man, husband and father, maybe the leader, the orator, the martyr, the dear human being.

“So I thought that if it were possible at all, some step should be taken to—to prevent the law from taking its course—its final course perhaps.” Cecilia felt her throat tighten as she spoke. “You have plenty of friends—you must have—all the French will help and many, many English, for it is no cause to die for, it is no cause at all! There should never have been bloodshed on either side!”

Dubois uncrossed his long legs at last and said in his loftiest tone:

“*Chère enfant*, the French will not let me die. I—I myself—Pierre Dubois—allowed to hang by the neck until I am dead! That will never happen. *Voyez-vous donc chérie*, I am their King, their prophet, their anointed, their fat priests acknowledge me, their women adore me!”

Cecilia shrunk together as she listened. She had sought and she had not found, she had expected and it had been denied her. At this moment, the turnkey signified that time was up. She felt her heart burning in an agony of undefined grief and disappointment in which was also mingled the relief of resignation. The prisoner Dubois bowed low with his hand on his heart and then pressing her own hand lingeringly, gave her a tenderly insinuating glance. As she turned away she heard him exchange a laugh and a jest with one of the wardens, and her cheeks flamed with indignant anger. “Were he a good or suffering man as I dreamed he was, I would have bent low and kissed his hand; as it was, I am sorry I let him take mine.”

She was calm when she reached her carriage in which sat her father waiting. He divined at once that his plan had been successful. “You look tired, my dear,” was all he said.

“Yes, I have been standing for some time,” Cecilia returned in a peculiar voice.

“Could they not find you a chair in the establishment?”

“They found one,” she said grimly, “and that was appropriated by the prisoner Dubois.”

“The prisoner Dubois!” thought Sir Robert. “It is well. We shall hear no more of Pierre.”

Two days before Christmas the prisoner Dubois underwent the extreme penalty of the law. Cecilia sat in her room all that day. She never quite made up her mind as to whether Pierre had been a lunatic or a fanatic, a martyr or a fiend, an inspired criminal or a perverted enthusiast. Perhaps he was a mixture of all.

How the Mr. Foxleys Came, Stayed and Never Went Away.

CHAPTER I.

There flows in Western Canada, by which I mean a region east of the Saskatchewan and west of the Thousand Islands, a singular and beautiful stream. It is beautiful because it is narrow, undulating and shallow, because it has graceful curves and rounded bends, because its banks are willow-clad and its bed boulder-strewn, because it flows along between happy farms and neat white villages, because at one spot, it boasts a picturesque and ruined mill and a moss-covered bridge and because—chiefly because—it is above all

things—placid. The mind familiar with our Canadian streams will easily understand then, that if these be its attributes of beauty, they also attest to its claim of singularity. For the Canadian river is seldom placid, but oftener seething and steaming and foaming; or else deep and dark and dangerous with many a mighty gorge and tumbling cascade, wide and lonely and monotonous for the most part; pine hung down to the very edge, black and lowering, or displaying waving wisps of dry gray foliage that only resembles human hair. What a contrast, then, does this cherished river I speak of, afford! No local Laureate has as yet written it up, though picnic parties used to gather themselves together on its banks and in its well-wooded shades, defiling everything they touched from bark to beach, leaving bits of bread here, dead pie there, buttering the leaves, peppering the grass, salting the stones, and scattering greasy crumpled paper—PAPER—PAPER—everywhere. That is what picnic parties do all over the world, and with such gusto all of them, even the Sunday-schools, Dorcases, W. C. T. U's. and all the rest of them, that I really think it must be intended as a serious part of the Picnicker's Ritual and forms very likely a peace-offering or sacrifice of propitiation towards some unknown God. I don't think the Druids left paper about underneath their oaks. But presumably they left worse. Well, if as yet, this river I love so well has not been immortalized in fiction, travels or verse, it has however attracted the attention of several gifted members of the Royal Academy—Royal Canadian of course, who have from time to time invaded its peaceful shores and stuffing themselves into adjacent if inconvenient farmhouses, sketched it in water and oil, in the common-place pencil, and the more ambitious charcoal. The results are charming and you may see them any day in the studios of our foremost artists or in the picture dealers' windows or haply on the terra-cotta tinted walls of our esteemed collectors, the retired grocers of Montreal, or the aesthetic lawyers of a more western and more ambitious city. Still though the sketches are charming both in conception and execution, I, were I a Canadian artist, eager to secure Canadian subjects for my pencil, would hardly choose this particular river as one likely to give the most correct idea of Canadian scenery. No, I would chose the St. Maurice or the Richelieu, the Lièvre or the Saguenay, the Ottawa or portions of the St. Lawrence, with the grim Azoic rocks, the turbulent rapids and the somber pines. What a superb river system it is! Tell them off on your fingers and you'll have to go on borrowing from them afterwards and then all over again. Think of all those rivers that cluster in the French Canada and feed the mighty Gulf of St. Lawrence. There are the Ottawa, the Gatineau, the Rideau, the Richelieu, the Lièvre, the Matanne, the Metapedia, the Métis, the Saguenay. Those are the ones we know. Then look at the Peribonka, the Maniconagan, all the Ste. Anne's, all the Rouge or Red rivers, the Du Moine, the Coalonge, the Vermilion, the St. Francis. Then, look at that cluster of great Saxon named streams, the Churchill, the Nelson, the Severn, the English, the Albany! Lastly, glance at the magnificent Saskatchewan with the historic streams of Battle and Qu'Appelle Rivers! And now I have omitted the Athabasca, the Peace, the Moose and the Assiniboine! There is no end to them; they defy enumeration while they invite it.

Now, most of these Canadian rivers are Azoic in character; hence their grim and formidable beauty. But my river has nothing the least Azoic about it. It belongs to a more recent, a more comfortable, more placid, more satisfying a formation. It is as idyllic a stream as any English one that Tennyson noted in a contemplative ramble to work up later into the "Brook."

Crossing the moss-grown bridge I have alluded to, a gradual ascent presents itself on the opposite side, of firm white road well macadamized and leading through small neat low houses, each with a little garden in front, to a church with a needle-like spire on the top of the hill, and the parson's house adjoining. On a June day, for example, it made a pleasant picture. Pastoral and prosperous the landscape, contented the people on foot, in the fields, at the windows, and most delightful of all—a certain Old World haze hanging over it.

This is what struck the Mr. Foxleys, driving out slowly from the town one Saturday afternoon. George, the elder, pale with dark hair, lay back in the phaeton with folded arms. Joseph, the younger, fair-haired and freckled, sat up, driving. They had hardly exchanged a word since entering the phaeton. For eight miles they had proceeded in almost perfect silence. This did not mean that they were out of sorts, or not on pleasant terms with one another. On the contrary, it proved that they were the very best of friends, and never bored each other. I may as well say at once that they were Englishmen, which was easy to gather from their picturesque and unusual attire of neat gray small-clothes meeting gray stockings at the knee, low white shoes, a striped blue and white flannel shirt and canoe-shaped hats of gray, each bearing a snow-white "puggree" with blue and gold fringed ends. Such was the outward adorning of the Mr. Foxleys. Behind the phaeton ran a pretty brown retriever answering to the name of "Bess," and laid across the floor of the little carriage were a couple of walking canes, a couple of fishing rods and a gun case strapped together, while under the seat was a medium-sized portmanteau, and a peculiar long box with a leather handle. The eight miles having been traversed by them in silence, George, the elder, broke it by remarking, as they slackened their pace, before advancing over the bridge, "This is better."

"Very much so. Rather. I should think so," answered Joseph, the younger, who had a slightly more lively manner than his brother, and very laughing eyes. "It looks a little more like the—the Old Country."

The elder brother made no reply. A kind of weary smile flitted across his face instead.

"It's a little bit after—Devonshire, don't you think?" went on Joseph, surveying the green meadows, the neat painted fences, the sleeping cows, the rising uplands in the distance leaning lovingly next the sky, the bridge, the distant church, and the placid narrow river with the overhanging willows and the stony amber floor.

"A long way after," said George, without unfolding his arms or looking around him at all. He was gazing straight before him.

"But you don't half see the beauty of it," said the younger brother, stopping the horse and standing up in the phaeton, "especially after that horrid eight miles of half-cleared ugly-stumpy stubble! This is really beautiful, such soft lines you know and little corners—oh! quite English!" Some of his enthusiasm reached the quieter brother, who apparently roused himself and looked around as directed. A faint pink came into his pale cheeks, a new gleam into the weary eyes, "Well, it is *better*, as I said before—you'll remember, I noticed it first—but not English."

"Well, not English altogether of course, I know," said Joseph gathering up his reins, "but its a jolly spot enough whatever it is, and—I say, look at that now, that oak, on the other side of the road, in front of that little cottage, we'll be up with it now in a minute."

"By Jove, what a splendid tree!" Now I do not in the least wonder at the Mr. Foxleys stopping opposite this mighty oak to admire it, because I myself am quite familiar with it and have seen it scores of times, and must agree with them in pronouncing it one of the finest trees I have ever seen anywhere. Of course it has no story attached to it that the world knows, at least it never talked that I am aware of, never hid or screened anybody of importance—or anything of that sort—so naturally it has little or no interest about it. And yet, for that very reason, it is so much easier to think of it as a tree, to consider it and admire it, and learn to love and understand it just as a tree. So the Mr. Foxleys thought, as they gazed at its monstrous trunk, its glorious branches of deep, dark glossy green with here and there an upstart arm of glowing bronze or a smaller shoot of younger yellow.

"It might have grown in the *Manor Park!*" said the younger brother airily with a keen sense of pleasure in the suggestion.

"It might have grown in the *Manor Park*, as you say", rejoined the elder brother gravely.

Then they went on again, slowly up the hill, that they might the better examine the church, the parsonage and the road beyond. What they wanted now was an Inn. Presently they espied one, just on the other side of a tiny bridge spanning a tinier brook. It was no upstart brick building of flaring red with blind white windows and a door flush with the street, a dirty stable at one side and a ragged kitchen garden at the other. But low and white and irregular with a verandah running along in front, it had red curtains that would draw over the lower halves of the windows and hints of chintz at the upper portions; the door was open and revealed a tall clock in the hall, a stand of flowers, and a cat asleep in a large round chair; at one side a flight of steps led down to the kitchen door at which a buxom maid in bare arms stood in a pink gown and a pinker face, and at the other side was the boarded square that held the pump—the village pump—around which were gathered five or six bare-footed children, the hostler of the Inn, the village butcher, tailor, and cobbler. A sign swung out from the verandah.

"The Ipswich Inn, by M. Cox," said the younger Mr. Foxley. Then he looked at his brother. His brother looked at him. They understood one another at once, and Joseph pulled up in good style at the door. The hostler, dressed in old corduroy and with a fiddle under his arm, sprang forward to assist them. He dropped his H's. "Delightful," cried Mr. Joseph. So did the landlady, a cheery person of about fifty in a silk apron. The brothers were so content that they remained all night, "to look at the place."

Next morning, endless surprises awaited and greeted them. They found that the large room in front was a kind of drawing-room, in which rose-leaves, china-bowls, old engravings, a shining mahogany book-case, and a yellow-keyed piano atoned for the shortcomings of funeral horsehair and home-made carpets. They thought it on the whole a charming room, only to be eclipsed by the kitchen. For the kitchen, which was underneath the ground floor and nearly the entire size of the house, was therefore very spacious and comfortable, possessing three large pantries and an out-house or summer kitchen; besides, moreover, it was dark-raftered, ham-hung, with willow-pattern slates in a neat dresser, and peacock feathers over the high mantel; with, in one corner—the darkest—a covered well, into which I used to see myself the beautiful golden pats of butter lowered twice a week in summer time. One window, a small one, curtained with chintz and muslin drawn on a string, looked out on a small terraced garden at the back leading to an orchard; the other window, large and long, with twelve small panes and no curtains at all, adjoined the door opening on the court or yard at the side of the house. This yard was paved irregularly with grey stone slabs, between which the grass had wedged itself, with an occasional root of the persistent and omnipresent dandelion; it contained a cistern, a table with flower-pots, a parrot in one cage, a monkey in another, garden implements, rods, buckets, tins and tubs! A pleasant untidiness prevailed in the midst of irreproachably clean and correct surroundings, and the Mr. Foxleys having finished their breakfast up-stairs in the public dining-room—a bare, almost ugly apartment, devoid of anything in furniture or appointments to make it homelike, except a box of mignonette set in the side-window, looked longingly out at the little paved court-yard beneath. They had had the most delicious rasher of ham, eggs *sans peur et sans reproche*, some new and mysterious kind of breakfast cake, split and buttered while hot, and light and white inside as it was golden and glazed outside, and three glasses of fresh milk each! They had been waited on by the buxom girl in a blue gown this time, against which her arms looked pinker than ever, and during the meal the landlady of the inn had looked in, with her hands too floury and her mind too full of coming loaves to do more than inquire generally as to their comfort. Looking over the mignonette, Mr. Joseph Foxley espied her presently talking to the parrot and tending the monkey. This was more than the frivolous Mr. Joseph could stand. He took his brother and made a tour of the house accordingly, discovering in turn as I have said the drawing-room, the kitchen, the court-yard, the garden and orchard and lastly the bar! *That* proved the most comfortable, most enticing room of all. More red curtains, at the windows and over one door, an old-fashioned hearth paved with red brick and bearing even in June a couple of enormous logs against the possible cold of a rainy evening, two cases of stuffed birds, a buffalo's head over the fireplace, colored prints of Love Lies Bleeding, Stocks and Bachelor's Buttons, and over all, that odour of hot lemons and water, with something spirituous beyond, that completely won the refractory heart of the elder Mr. Foxley and caused him to drop down in a chair by the hearth with an incoherent expression of wonder and relief that did not escape his brother.

"How long shall we say, George," he asked. "She will want to know, because there are other men who come out here from town occasionally it seems, and of course it's only fair to let her know about the room.

"What shall I say?" Mr. George Foxley crossed his long legs in evident comfort and took in the entire room in a smiling gaze before he answered. Outside it was beautifully quiet, in front of the house. From the back there came the faintest sounds of crow and cackle and farm-yard stir just audible, from the kitchen rose cheerful laughter, and merry voices, the smell of baking, and a fainter odor of herbs. Milly, the girl, in the blue gown, passed with a milk pail in either hand. She looked in shyly. Mr. Joseph waved his hand gallantly then laughed. Then Mr. George said, very slowly.

"Say? Oh, say that we will take the room—the one we have now, you know—for the rest of the Summer."

"That is, you will take it, and remain here, while I knock about in town and come out on Saturdays or whenever I can," said Joseph.

"Exactly," said his brother.

That afternoon Mr. Joseph returned to town in the neat hired phaeton leaving his brother in full possession of the charming and comfortable Inn. In a couple of days he came back, this time in the stage that passed through Ipswich three times a week, and bringing with him a couple of English trunks and a stout portmanteau. Thus the Mr. Foxleys entered upon life in earnest in this dear placid little village, not far from the river described in the beginning of my story.

CHAPTER II.

The Mr. Foxleys, after a week's sojourn or so at the Ipswich Inn, made a mutual discovery. This was, that not only were the landlady of the Inn, her son and the ostler all of English origin and descent, but that the entire village appeared to be populated by people of English extraction. The butcher was a Englishman, the blacksmith was a Cockney answering to the name of 'Enry Ide, the cobbler was from South Devon somewhere, and the parson was an undergraduate of Oxford. The farmers were mostly Scotch, and the village store-keeper was David Macpherson. The driver of the stage was an Irishman, and the sexton of the pretty church on the hill was an odd product of that odd corner of the world known as the Isle of Man. Certainly the two brothers found and made themselves at home. Milly perhaps was the only native Canadian that came in their way. It was a thoroughly British settlement, and it is a noteworthy fact that the only well-to-do man in the place was an American. It was he who lived in the square, red brick house with white blinds always pulled down, even in soft welcome spring days, and with plaster casts of lions and deer couchant on futile little wooden pedestals in the garden. It was he who owned the new and prosperous mill which had superseded the worn-out one lower down the stream, the old mill that the artists loved, and that reminded the Mr. Foxley's of home. It was he who owned the only family carriage in the neighborhood, other people had "buggies." It was his daughter who had been sent to New York for her education—who now appeared in church on Sundays, in muslin costumes garnished with a greater number of yards of ribbons in myriads of bows and ends than the village store had ever possessed at one time in its life. It was he who once or twice a year walked as far as the Inn and sitting down stiffly in the stiff dining room would hold a short conversation with the landlady on village matters and subjects in general. On these occasions the good woman was secretly amused and not a little bored. She knew gentlemen when she saw them and he was not one—that is, he was not one according to her knowledge of types. The aristocracy of money was as yet a phase unknown to her simple English mind accustomed to move in traditional and accepted groves. So not much interchange of civilities took place between the mill and the Inn. Not for Mr. Simon P. Rattray did the oleanders blossom in the big green tubs and the wall-flowers and mignonette in the windows. Not for him did the Jessamine climb and the one hawthorn tree at the back gate leading to the orchard yield its sweet white May, not for him did the tall clock strike and the parrot talk. Talk!! Why, the only time the creature was ever known to be quiet was when Mr. Simon P. Rattray made his portentous visits twice or three times a year. And as for the hidden sweetness of the drawing-room or the comforts of the kitchen or the fascinations of the bar, Mr. Simon P. Rattray knew nothing whatever about them. He was a total abstainer you see, and the blue ribbon appeared in his buttonhole on certain important ceremonial days and even on Sundays, and he was known to be interested in the fortunes of a cold, dismal little place built of plaster and presided over by a male Methodist just outside the village limits, known as a "Temperance Hotel." It will be easily gathered that the advent of the Mr. Foxleys did not affect the fortunes of such a person as Mr. Simon P. Rattray, nor was their subsequent career as residents in Ipswich affected in any way by his existence, prejudices or peculiarities. But to the remaining portions of the village, their arrival proved full of interest. The landlady took them to her heart at once. They were *gentlemen*, she said, and that was enough for her. Her son, a heavy lout, unlike his mother, accepted them as he did everything and everybody by remaining outwardly profoundly unconscious of their existence; the hostler adored them, especially Mr. Joseph; when the latter was there, which he was every Saturday till Monday, he would stroll over the stable with Squires—that was the hostler's name—joking incessantly, and treating the latter to an occasional cigar. Urbane Mr. Joseph would joke with anybody, Mr. George was more severe and had according to the landlady, the most perfect and distinguished manners.

"What they call *hawtoor* in the Family Herald," she told Milly, "only I never see it gone too far with." Milly of course was in love with them both.

In time, the entire village succumbed to the charms of the Mr. Foxleys. The parson called, accompanied by his eldest daughter who was the organist of the choir and chief promoter of the Sunday-school. They found the objects of their social consideration seated outside the kitchen in the little paved yard that had rapidly grown dear. When the brothers appeared upstairs in the drawing-room into which rose-scented and chintz-hung apartment the reverend Mr. and Miss had been shown in appreciation of their station, Mr. Joseph had tuned his laughing eye to a decorum as new as it was unnatural. It was a hot day in August and Mr. George was so excessively languid and long and speechless that but for his brother conversation would have been an impossibility. But he and the parson soon discovered mutual friends at home, a cousin in the Engineers, and a friendly coach at the University.

"Charles James Foxley? Oh! I knew him well, very well" said the Rev. Mr. Higgs, referring to the latter. "It is a somewhat—ah—unusual name. The only other time I remember meeting with the name was once—let me see—it was a meet, I think, at Foxley Manor, in Derbyshire it was, and a very beautiful place."

"In Nottinghamshire," said Mr. Joseph smiling. "Yes, that is—or was—our home. My father still resides there."

"Indeed?" said Mr. —. "Is it possible! And you have come out here? Really, it is most interesting, most fortunate that you should have chosen our little village, should have pitched your tent so to speak—ah! quite so."

"My brother likes the country," said Mr. Joseph.

"Ah! yes, quite so. And there is much to see in this new country, in Canada, much to see. You will remain some time?"

"We will remain as long as it suits my brother," said Mr. Joseph. "At present, we can hardly tell."

"Quite so, quite so. I hope—I am sure my daughter concurs in the hope, that we shall see you in church as often as you can come and also—ah! at the Rectory. Such society as we can give you here you may be assured we will endeavor to give with all our—ah! heart to the best of our ability."

"Thanks very much" returned Mr. Joseph. "I am sure my brother and I will be exceedingly glad to go and see you at the Rectory. About church I will say that we never go very regularly anywhere, but when it isn't too hot, too hot, you know, or too cold, or anything of that sort, I am sure we'll try to turn up there as well."

The rector, smiled indulgently. No call to be hard on the Mr. Foxleys, of Foxley Manor. Miss Maria left the Inn smitten for the fiftieth time.

"I knew I should marry an Englishman," she exclaimed ecstatically up the road with her father.

"The dark one, oh! the dark one!"

"They are somewhat peculiar young men I fancy, Maria. Of course Mrs. Cox is a very careful and a very good woman and—ah! her place is a very respectable and comfortable one, and the order of travellers one meets, that is, one would meet if one went there, is quite proper indeed, but still, I thought, mind I do not say anything, I do not express any opinion Maria, I simply say, I *thought*, that they would have smoked for instance in the dinning-room or the bar, or on the verandah instead of in that very conspicuous manner just outside the kitchen door." But this was the first and last stricture that the rector made as to the conduct of the Mr. Foxleys, for by appearing in church two Sundays after his call and spending an evening on the vine-covered verandah of the pretty Rectory, they were speedily entered in the very best books kept by that worthy if slightly common-place gentleman and his gushing daughter.

The next persons of distinction in the village were the Miss Dexters, who lived with their father, at one time a prominent medical man, in the little cottage graced by the presence of the mighty oak which had so charmed the strangers when they first beheld it. Their father was old, very old indeed, and slightly shaken in his mind. He was also an Englishman and the daughters, not daring to enter upon life in town with their small income and a helpless old man on their hands into the bargain had retired to the country some ten years before the advent of the Mr. Foxleys. Charlotte the elder was now forty and Ellen over thirty-five. Neither of them had ever been beautiful and now they were, more or less pinched and worn in their aspect, but they were gentlewomen, neat and sweet spoken, and capable of offering small evening entertainments of cribbage and hot weak tea with bread and butter with a gracious and well bred air that marked them off as people who had seen "better times." God help such all over the world and thank Him too for the colonies, where such people can retreat without being said to hide, and live down their misfortunes or their follies or their weaknesses, and be of some use to others after a while! It would be hard to say why the Mr. Foxleys went as often as they did, especially Mr. Joseph—to the Miss Dexters for tea. Perhaps the oak had much to do with it.

It had something I am sure, for indeed, it was the most beautiful tree for miles around and it was worth a good deal to sit under its cool shade in the Summer afternoons or to look up into its dark vault in the slowly dusking twilights. I can't defend Mr. Joseph further than this. For between cribbage and choir practice, Sunday rambles in the woods and rows on the river, the lending of books and the singing of songs, the handing of bread and butter and the drinking of tea, Mr. Joseph had caused both the Miss Dexters to fall hopelessly and indeed fatally in love with him. When the Xmas holidays came, Joseph, who had a clerkship in town, spent his vacation naturally at the Inn with his brother, and then ensued a period of very mixed delight for the Miss Dexters.

For the callous Joseph made as violent love to the unresisting Miss Higgs over the Xmas tree and carols as she herself would have chosen to make to Mr. George had she been given the chance.

As for Mr. George, he was just as languid and silent as ever. He hardly ever went into the town at all, but preferred to remain on quietly at the inn, fishing, shooting and taking long walks in the summer days when it was fine, and when it rained, lounging in Mrs. Cox's kitchen. Here he always had his meals, for the kind friend he had found in his landlady gratified every whim, and any fancy he chose to profess, and cooked for him, washed for him and waited on him with unceasing and in fact ever-increasing devotion. Mr. Foxley's shirts and Mr. Foxley's socks, Mr. Foxley's white coats and Mr. Foxley's jane boots, his dog, his gun, and his effects generally were all sacred, all in irreproachable order, all objects of the greatest value and interest to Mrs. Cox and her niece. You see there were no children in this comfortable *ménage* and really, when the baking and the washing and the preserving and the churning were all done with early in the day or in the week there remained a good deal of time on Mrs. Cox's hands, which in her earnest womanly heart she felt she must fill up in some way. So it came that all this time and energy and devotion were after a while centred on Mr. George Foxley, late of Foxley Manor, Notts. As for Mr. Joseph, the good woman oftener told him to "go along!" than anything else, for though she liked him, his love of mischief and several practical jokes he had played her which she termed "his ways," had rendered her cautious and a little distrustful of him. Such an existence proved very charming to all parties concerned, excepting perhaps the Miss Dexters, and their companion in misery, at the rectory. For the worst of it was, Xmas passed and Easter came, and another spring dawned for the pretty little village of Ipswich and found the Mr. Foxleys still there. They never spoke of going away and nobody hinted it to them. The impression, natural in the extreme, that they were a couple of wealthy young Englishmen going about for pleasure, who just happening to come to Ipswich and being taken with it had stayed a little longer than they intended, was fast giving way to another. For it was a well-known fact that the Mr. Foxleys did not spend too much money either on themselves or on other people. They paid their way and that was all one could say about them. Squires was not included in this arrangement, however, but was forced to remain content with cigars, cast-off studs and a present at Christmas-time of a

collie pup. I grieve to think of those poor Miss Dexters—foolish souls—going without butter on their bread and sugar in their tea that they might have both to offer Mr. Joseph when he might come in airily for a cup, and making their already too thin gowns last another winter, that they might spend a little money on a smoking cap for the same gentleman and a pair of knitted wristlets for his brother. All these tokens of friendship and attachment the brothers accepted in the most charming and unconcerned way and never troubled themselves about returning the compliment as we say. It was quite true that they had not much money, but a little management of what they did possess would have left a small sum over each year, which might have been expended on say a pair of fur-lined gloves for Charlotte or a canary for Ellen, who was fond of pets and used to keep Bess with her for days, feeding the unconscious animal for its master's sake better than she was fed herself. And all this time Mr. Joseph never proposed and never hinted at his prospects or affairs in any way whatever!

The second summer of his stay saw old Mr. Dexter die. After his death Ellen drooped visibly. General disgust at life, insufficient food and sleep, and a hopeless passion for Mr. Joseph sapped a naturally weak constitution, and her sister soon realized another bitter shock when she helped Ellen to her bed one sultry September night from which she never rose again. The windows of the little cottage were open, and the unhappy girl could see the giant oak outside their door. How often she had sat there with her cruel friend, her hand on his shoulder, and her eyes fixed on his sharp, clear-cut features and laughing eyes! He had seemed so gentle, so earnest, so winning—had talked so cleverly, so hopefully, so gleefully. He had been the sunshine of her life, and alas!—of Charlotte's too! Each knew the other's secret, but by intuitive sympathy they had never alluded to it. They referred to him only as "Mr. Joseph," and on her death-bed Ellen sent her "kindest wishes to Mr. Joseph." She lingered till near the Christmas season, and then one day a small packet per English mail arrived. They occasionally heard from friends in the Old Country, and this special parcel contained a couple of silk handkerchiefs and a sprig of holly. Charlotte took them up to her in the evening, spreading them out on the bed. Ellen sat up, eagerly pressing the holly to her lips. Alas! what were the recollections it brought that the poor, weak frame and the poor, tired spirit could not brook them? Perhaps—not perhaps—O most certainly, most truly of home and of England; of the mother so long vanished, dimly remembered, almost forgotten; of winding green lanes and of ivied walls, of little solemn churchyards—in none of which she would never lie; of peeps of blue sea from the middle of a wood; of a primrose at the foot of a tree; of the crowded coach and the sounding horn; and lastly of the recreant one whom she could not even call her lover, but who had made her love him so that her very life was eaten away by sickness of fear, of apprehension, of despair!

With the holly pressed to her lips, Ellen Dexter passed out of this world into another.

Did Mr. Joseph Foxley care? Who knows? I should know if anybody ever did, but I do not hold Mr. Joseph so very much to blame after all. For a man is often innocent of love-making at the very moment a woman is fancying herself violently in love with him, and fancying, moreover, that he is in love with her. Can anything be more fatal, more pernicious, more terrible? And yet I believe there is nothing more common. There are some men who press more tenderly than the requirements of ordinary social intercourse call for or allow, the hand of every woman they meet. They are not necessarily flirts. Perhaps they never go farther than that clinging hand-pressure. It is a relic of the customs of the days of chivalry—a little more and this man will kiss the hand. Let the lady be beautiful, gracious, the hour dusk, or close on midnight, the room a pretty one, and the environment pleasing, he will bend over the hand, and if he does not kiss it he will retain it just long enough to make her wish he had kissed it. If she is a woman of the world she will laugh as she returns the pressure, making it purposely as thrilling as she can—then she will forget it completely the next moment as she dispenses five o'clock tea or late coffee and cake to her husband or brother. But if she be not a woman of the world, then God help her on her tear-wet pillow, or before her slowly-dying fire as she thinks of that hand-pressure. It is enough to last her all her life, she thinks—and yet, should it not come again? But—*should* it come again! And the pillow is wet with fresh tears, or the brow is prematurely wrinkled watching the decaying embers, while the man—let us do him justice—is as blindly unconscious—unconscious! Why, at that very moment he is making love—what *he* calls making love—to the woman of his choice, his wife, his mistress, or his *fiancée*! These are the men who do the most mischief in the world. Your brute, your beast, your groveller in ditches, is not nearly so dangerous. Women recoil from him. They understand him. But the man who presses their hand awakes them, rouses their susceptibility, causes the tender trouble to steal over them that so often ends in grief, or despair, or death! And this is because neither sex is as yet properly trained in the vital duty of responsibility, by which I mean that faculty of self-repression which will cause a woman to try and understand what a man means when he presses her hand, and cause the man to try and understand what a woman feels when he does so. As for poor Ellen Dexter, it is dear that she was not a woman of the world; but her sister Charlotte and Miss Maria at the Rectory, if not precisely women of the world, were yet made of much sterner stuff than she had been, and consequently, after much reflection, decided that they were not going to be made fools of, in village parlance. Miss Maria had, of course, long ago given up Mr. George Foxley altogether.

"He is not human," she said to her father, "and I don't believe he *is* one of the Foxleys of Foxley Manor at all."

"There can be no doubt about that, my dear," answered the actor. "Difficulties I should say—ah—difficulties have brought these young men out here, but we must do our duty by them, we must do our duty. Their father is a fine old gentleman, and well off, and a stanch Tory, my dear. Patience, my dear Maria. The photographs are quite correct and the seals bear quite the proper crest—ah—quite so."

So Miss Maria transferred her affections to Mr. Joseph. The second Christmas passed away, and a third spring dawned for Ipswich. The Inn was just as comfortable as ever and so were apparently the two Mr. Foxleys but for one fact and that was, Mr. George's health was not as good as it had been. Always delicate, he had gradually failed, growing more and more languid, more and more whimsical in spite of his comfortable abode and the diligent care of his landlady. Poor Milly! How she worked for him too, between hours, after hours, before hours! When the attacks of pleurisy, painful in the extreme, from which he suffered, came on either in the night or during the day, Milly was always near with her strong young arms, not quite so pink as

they used to be, and her quick young eyes, a shade more subtle than they used to be, ready to apprehend and quiet the pain before it came. How Miss Maria at the Rectory and Charlotte Dexter in her lonely cottage would have envied her had they known, but though there were gossips in plenty in the village, nothing that occurred in the rose-scented drawing-room ever went out into that tattling little Ipswichian world.

"Are your young gentlemen with you yet, Mrs. Cox? And one of 'em not over strong? Deary me! that makes it hard for you and the young gal But you be standing it remarkable well. And gentlemen born you say! They do say that the other one wi' the specked skin be making fools of Miss Maria up at the Rectory and old Miss Dexter at the cottage. Well! well! Poor Miss Ellen was gone afore we knew it like, poor soul, that was so kind!"

Much of this cunning volubility sprung upon Mrs. Cox in pumping fashion failed to extort from her anything but good-humoured smiles and laughs. If I have not taken the trouble to describe this beloved Mrs. Cox to you before this, it is because I fear you will say the picture is Unreal, no such landlady, no such woman could exist out of England But why not? My story, remember, deals with people and things as they were twenty years ago. Twenty years ago there were such Inns, though few at number, to be found in Western Canada—ay—and as English as any that a certain Mrs. Lupin presided over in fascinating fiction, and much more English than many Inns of the present day in England. Twenty years ago there was such a landlady, rosy and plump and cheerful, wearing a flowered gown, a black silk apron and a cap with a purple pansy in it and broad and comfortable lappets, who, when her work was done, would sit in her small private room opposite the bar also hung with red curtains, making patchwork quilts or playing a demure rubber with the Scotch store-keeper, or Irish stage driver, or an occasional gentleman from town. Such was Mrs. Cox, widow of Captain Cox, able seaman, but bad lot, who died when they had been five years in Canada, leaving her with her one child. The public business had attracted her after her loss and she accordingly went into it on the advice of her numerous friends. People who despise her calling need not listen to me if I allude to—for I have not time to recount—all her kindness, her cheerfulness, her powers of dispensing comfort, and warmth, and happiness, and promoting the direct and indirect welfare of everyone who came in her path. By what strange coincidence the brothers Foxley had been led to her glowing fireside and her motherly arms brimming over with zeal and kindness for the whole human race, does not matter. It is sufficient that they found her and found with her a sense of comparative peace and security which compensated for the one big slice of trouble Fortune had treated them to before their departure from England. For them did the wall flowers bloom and the mignonette at the window, for them did the oleander blossom and the old clock strike, for them did the jessamine climb and the one hawthorn tree yield its annual soft white drift of snow, and yet who shall say that they were altogether unworthy, even, if with that picture of poor Ellen Dexter in my mind, I have to say that they did not deserve it?

CHAPTER III.

If Mr. Joseph Foxley had but known the sentiments animating the couple of maiden breasts that awaited his Saturday visits in Ipswich, he would have been genuinely surprised. The truth is Mr. Joseph was rather what is termed a general lover. He liked the sex in its entirety. Collectively he loved all women and belonged to that hand-pressing section of humanity which I have alluded to as mischievous. Were there not at least five young ladies in town, at whose houses he visited, and who were more or less interested in the young Englishman as he in them? Did Miss Charlotte dream of them or Miss Maria at the rectory? If so, they never dared to ask Mr. Joseph to give any account of his doings in town, although they managed to glean what he did with himself in the village. He respected Charlotte Dexter enough to intend at some future day to tell her a little more about himself and his brother than he had yet done; as for Miss Maria, she only bored him and fed his contempt.

"When a rather elderly old girl giggles after everything she says, conversation is difficult and sympathy out of the question," he had said to his brother! When Mr. Joseph had known these young ladies for four years, Miss Maria took her revenge in *her* way, that was by marrying the younger brother of Mr. Simon P. Rattray, partner in the mill and the red brick house by the river. The vision of becoming the cherished wife of an English aristocrat and going home to reside in a manor house built in the sixteenth century, with occasional visits to London and glimpses of the Royal Family had gradually faded, and she accepted the less rose-coloured lot that Mr. Lyman B. Rattray offered her, sitting in her father's study, with his hair very much brushed up on one side and very much flattened down on the other, a white tie and light-yellow duster adorning his spare person.

Such was the American of those days—twenty years ago—there are none such now I allow.

Miss Maria, who was considered "very English," shuddered as she regarded him. It so fell out that it being Saturday, Mr. Joseph was just then passing—"kind of happening along" Mr. Rattray would have said—*en route* to the Inn and his brother, on foot in spite of the dusty road and the hot August sun, clad in trim tight knickerbockers and carrying an immense bunch of red field lilies, a gun, and a leather satchel over his shoulder. Slight and straight and cool, he looked the picture of a contented cheerful energetic young English man. Along the road he came whistling an old country tune. Miss Maria who had sighted him afar off, begged her visitor's pardon and went to the window to arrange the blind. How her heart warmed to that cruel Mr. Joseph, how she loved him then just for that last moment! Her heart—that foolish old maid's heart—beat quickly, beat thickly, she remembered to have read something somewhere about people who could will other people to look at them, to speak to them, to even think of them, to move across a room at their pleasure. If

she could but do that! She did try, with her fingers clenched on the blind, and her eyes fixed on Mr. Joseph, she did wish with all her might that he would turn his head and see her at the window and wave his hand gallantly as he had done on one or two previous occasions. Then she would beckon and he would run across and entering the room disconcert this odious Mr. Lyman B. Rattray and put an end to his stony wooing. But alas! for Miss Maria and her mesmeric powers! The harder she tried, the less she succeeded. On came Mr. Joseph, supremely unconscious of the injured heart beating behind the windowpane. At one moment it seemed as if he were about to turn and look in her direction. A very brilliant wild yellow canary crossed over his head and lit on a small shrub just inside the garden paling. Had it remained there, would Miss Maria have ever become the wife of Mr. Lyman B. Rattray? No one knows, for the canary flew away again to the other side of the road and Mr. Joseph's eyes followed it. In a moment he was past, and the chance was gone for ever. Miss Maria left her window and sat down opposite her visitor. There was nothing to keep her now, nothing to give her courage and hope for the future, new fire for her faded eyes, new strength for her jaded limbs. Yet she was only thirty-four. How strange it is that some unmarried women are old at that age, even while living in luxury and surrounded by every care and all affection, while many a married woman, though beset with trials and weaknesses and perhaps a brood of restless little ones to pull her gown and get in the way of her busy feet, retains her figure and her step, her smile and her complexion, her temper and her nerves!

It but remained for Charlotte Dexter to take her revenge in her way. Going very seldom out of her house, and never visiting at the Inn she was really very ignorant of the doings of either Mr. George or Mr. Joseph Foxley. Towards the one she had never been greatly drawn, for the other she felt all the passion that only a supremely lonely woman can feel in middle age for a man younger than herself who charms her as a child, while he captivates her as a lover. Of Mrs. Cox and Milly moreover, she hardly ever thought, and in fact had not seen the latter for a long time. If she had it is not likely she would even have recognized in the tall pale shapely young woman with braids of dark hair and white linen cuffs fastened—must I tell it? with a pair of antique monogram studs, the plump little handmaiden of four years back. As it was, she only waited on day after day, to hear Mr. Joseph speak. Instead of Mr. Joseph however appeared another and less welcome confidante. This was the most malignant gossip in the village, Mrs. Woods, the wife of the butcher, a tall red faced woman with high cheek-bones on which the color seemed to have been badly smirched, watery eyes and a couple of protruding yellow teeth. She looked more like a butcher than the butcher himself who was a mild little man with soft silky fair hair and small nervous fluttering hands. Yet he managed to summon sufficient character to go on a tremendous burst—I know of no other word, every third or fourth month and disappear for a week. When these periodical eclipses took place, his wife would come flying into the Inn with her bonnet hanging round her neck and a large green and red plaid shawl streaming out behind her.

"Where's Woods?" She would say. "Where's Woods? Give me Woods! Give 'im up, I tell you; give 'im up now!"

But Woods was never found inside Mrs. Cox's neat dwelling, nor indeed anywhere, although it had been whispered on, one occasion that he had been seen in the back room of the little "Temperance Hotel" with the male Methodist in attendance. This, of course, was clearly impossible.

It was this Mrs. Woods then that stopped at Dexter's Oak one Friday morning with her donkey-cart and a small piece of the neck of mutton in it. She was not an entirely bad woman, though a downright cunning virago, and perhaps some inkling of the nature of the blow that was about to fall on Miss Dexter's head caused her to come prepared by an acceptable present to somewhat mitigate its appalling approach.

"I be at the Inn bright and early this morning Miss," she began, "and brought 'em their bit of fresh meat. And I'm bringin' you a bit as was over, and it is'n't a bad piece for a stew, if you like a stew, Miss, with an onion or two."

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Woods," said Charlotte, who had come out to the front door and now stood on the lower step, looking over the cart. "I'm afraid I can't settle with you just at present," she said further, with some effort, "you can call some other time when you are passing. Will that do? and is it weighed?"

"It is, miss, and I'll not say a word about the payin'! Six pound and a 'alf, and Woods gone agen—I weighed it myself."

"Oh! I am sorry to hear that," said Charlotte. "Your husband gives you a great deal of trouble. I am very sorry, and he is not at the inn?"

If Charlotte was guilty at that moment of purposely leading the conversation up to this always for her most enthralling, most engrossing subject, she soon enough received her punishment. On she went to her own destruction.

"At the inn!" repeated the butcher's wife, with ineffable scorn on her cruel mouth. She wiped her watery eyes and settled the refractory bonnet before going on.

"No miss, he's not at the inn, and if he was sober, he wouldn't be at the inn, and you'll never see him, nor me, nor 'Ide yonder, nor anyone on us at all no more at the inn. For the inn's changed 'ands, miss. There's an end of Mrs. Cox, who was a mother to many, if not to Woods. There's an end to good old times and dancin' and singin', and honest Robert, though he was a cross 'un—there's an end to it all now, miss, for the inn's changed 'ands, and I'm the first in the village as knows it."

"Good gracious. Is it possible?" said Charlotte, genuinely surprised. "Who can have succeeded Mrs. Cox and why? I thought she was so popular and making so much money, and what—what will become of the Mr. Foxleys?"

Mrs. Woods gave a triumphant grin. "It's them, theirselves, miss; it's them that 'as it now. And the younger one will be marrying Milly in a little while and settling down comfortable in the inn. It's gentlefolks and aristocrats we'll have now at the inn, miss, and 'ard workin' people like me and Woods may trudge all day and freeze all night, and never a pot of beer or a warm at the kitchen fire and meat paid regular for year in, year out!"

Charlotte stood aghast. The woman's injured volubility rushed past her as a scene outside a railway car rushes past us, leaving only one idea, one word caught at, as from the window through which we apprehend

the landscape, one scene or portion of a scene enchains the eye and lingers in the mind though other scenes fly past in varied succession.

"Marry?" she repeated. "Marry! Milly, did you say? That is the girl, isn't it, Mrs. Cox's niece? Which—"

"Ay," said the woman, "that's Milly, the 'ired girl; she's no I more than that, if she be her aunt's niece. And 'ard work for one's niece. Me and Woods, if we'd 'ad one, would have done better for her nor that, makin' her work like a slave or a dummy. Cows, and pigs, and poultry, and dish-washing, and scrubbing, and lamps, and starched fronts, and fine gentlemen—but she's well paid, she's well paid. She's to marry one of the fine gentlemen, Mr. Joseph it is, and they're to live on at the Inn with Milly as mistress, and her fine husband behind the bar, very like. Well, good-mornin', Miss Dexter; I wish you joy of the mutton. Me and Woods often says—we'll take this or that little Dexter's Oak, but it's most times forgot, for Woods is 'alf crazed, Miss Dexter, and I've got to do the whole. Good-mornin'."

Having adjusted her bonnet and the donkey-cart to her satisfaction, Mrs. Woods drove off rather disappointed on the whole at Miss Dexter's calm demeanour. Astonishment, perplexity, doubt, contempt and disgust she had undoubtedly shown, but not a single sigh of weakness. Charlotte Dexter was not the woman to swoon or lament or even turn pale as her sister Ellen would have done. But when she came into her house and sat down in her lonely parlour, she enacted a scene which would have petrified with astonishment any inhabitant of the prosy little village in which she had dwelt so long and indeed many other people as well, for when you and I, dear reader, go to see one of these emotional plays in which the French actress writhes on the sofa; grovels on the floor, rolls up her handkerchief into a ball or tears it into strips, prays, weeps, curses, censures, implores, looks at herself in the glass until she is on the point of going mad, and strides about the stage as no woman in real life has ever been seen to stride, ending by throwing herself across an arm-chair as rigid as marble thereby assuring the audience that she is in a "dead faint"—I say, that when we see all this performed by a travelling "star," and her truly eclectic Company, comprising a Diva, a Duenna, a Diner-out and a Devil, we are apt to look around at the placid Canadian or the matter-of-fact American audience and wonder if they understand the drift of the thing at all, the situations, the allusions, even in the slightest degree, forgetting that perhaps the most placid, most commonplace person in the theatre has gone through some crisis, some tragedy as thrilling, as subtle and as terrible as the scene we have just witnessed. "Not out of Paris," we say, "can such things happen?" Do we know what we are saying? Is it only in Paris that hearts are won and tossed aside this night—as in the play? Is it only in Paris that honor is forgotten and promises are broken this night—as in the play? Is it only in Paris that money allures and rank dazzles, and a dark eye or a light step entrances, this night—as in the play? Is it only in Paris that nature is human and that humanity is vile, or weak, or pure, or firm, as this night in the play? Oh! in that obscure little Canadian village, a lonely old maid locked her door that morning and pulled down her blind that the daylight might not come in and see her misery, might not mock even more malignantly than the ignorant, impertinent and hard-hearted woman who had dealt her this blow. Like most women in such a crisis, she lost the habit of thought. Reason entirely deserted her, and she never dreamed but that it was true. For when a woman has to own to herself that she holds no dominion over a man, that it is only too perfectly clear that the impulse of loving is all on her side and that she has neither anything to expect nor anything to fear from him, since indifference is the keynote of his attitude to her, she will all the more readily believe that he loves elsewhere, worthily or unworthily the same to her. A woman is not a noble object in such a situation. All trusting feminine instincts, all sweet emotions of hope, all sentiment, all passion even, retreat and fall away from her, leaving either a cold, bitter, heartless petrification, in a woman's clinging robe, or the Fury that is the twin sister of every little red-lipped, clear-eyed girl born into the world. She never dreamed but that this story was true. In fact so entirely had her woman's wit deserted her, she said to herself of *course* it was true. Her brain could work sufficiently to conjure up hints, phrases, words, looks, events, accidents that all bore testimony to the truth of the extraordinary tale. For it was extraordinary. Miss Dexter herself was the great grand-daughter of an Admiral, and the grand-daughter of a judge, and as such, respected all these accidents of birth which we are supposed to ignore or at least not expected to recognize in a new country. That such men as the Mr. Foxleys could make themselves as completely at home in the Inn as rumor had frequently asserted, and with truth, seemed at all times monstrous to her. She had lived so long out of England, over thirty years now, that she had forgotten the sweet relations that prevailed there between the aristocracy or landed gentry and their inferiors. The Mr. Foxleys were simply doing in Canada what they would have done had they been still in England, only they were assisted in so doing by the unusually English surroundings in which they found themselves. Miss Dexter looked around her in the yellow inclosed light. There was a sampler in a frame, worked by herself when a little child, another exactly similar, worked by Ellen, a couple of fine old family portraits in heavy gilt frames, half a dozen ivory miniatures scattered about on the walls, some good carvings in ivory, a rare old Indian shawl festooned over the wooden mantle-board, a couple of skins on the floor, a corner piece of furniture known as a "whatnot" crowded with bits of egg-shell china, birds' eggs and nests, a few good specimens of spar and coral and a profusion of plants everywhere. It was all neat, respectable, even dignified, superior. There was no such other room in the village. In the village? There were not many at that time even in the town. Sooner than part with the eggshell china or the Indian shawl the Miss Dexters had suffered the pains of poverty and hunger; these cherished reminders of an absent father and an artistic youth could never be lost or borne away by the hands of a stranger. And how glad those foolish Miss Dexters had been to possess such beautiful and interesting objects when it pleased Mr. George Foxley to drink tea out of the cups on summer afternoons on the verandah of the little cottage looking up into the splendid vault of the mighty oak, or when Mr. Joseph would wind the Indian shawl round his silly head in the winter evenings when the draughts of cold air would rush in through the thin walls. These and other memories crowded into Charlotte Dexter's brain as she looked around her room, crowded thick and fast, crowded fast and furious, surged, broke, leaving an empty moment of perfect blankness, then crowded again thicker, faster, surged and seethed and then broke again, leaving in the void of perfect blankness this time a fixed idea, a resolve, a determination, seen in the dark like a luminous point of phosphorus.

That afternoon as Farmer Wise was driving slowly along the road, the main road leading through Ipswich to the town, he was accosted by Miss Dexter from her verandah. She had her jacket on and held her bonnet in her hand.

"Can you give me a seat as far as the Albion?" said she. "I would have sent a message to you yesterday if I had known I was going. But if it will not trouble you—"

"Oh! no trouble no trouble at all, Miss Dexter," replied Farmer Wise. "I'm sorry I've only the waggon to offer ye. But I'm takin' in apples as you see, nine barrel of 'em, and only a waggon will do for them."

"Certainly, certainly," said Miss Dexter, hurriedly trying on her bonnet. "Can you wait a moment? I won't be longer, Mr. Wise, it is just to lock the back door."

The farmer nodded and drew up under the shade of Dexter's oak. It was a beautiful afternoon late in November, characterized by the clear cold air, the blue and gold of the sky, and the russet coloring of the foliage that mark the close of the Autumnal season. He looked in at Miss Dexter's little garden, admirably neat and well-trimmed; dahlias, hollyhocks, sweet William and asters, though done with blossoms, still bore their green leaves unsmitten by the frost. The windows appeared full of flowers too, but the blinds were skimp and faded and drawn down behind them. He started when he noticed this, for he knew the outer aspect of the house well, and had never seen such a thing before, except in case of sickness or death. The honest farmer thought and thought until Miss Dexter reappeared and assisted by him, got up in her place beside him. Even after that he went on thinking, and I must here tell you that it was not the first time Farmer Wise's thoughts had dwelt so persistently upon his companion and her house and personal history. For twelve years he had nursed a kind of mild distant passion for Miss Dexter at the Oak, unguessed at by her and his family, and only half understood by himself. He could not have said he was in love with her. He had been in love once when he married his first wife, who bore him a triad of splendid sons, one "keeping store" in the Western States and the other two at home on the farm, all three great giants of fellows, handsome in the fields or at barn-doors or in market-waggons, but plain on Sundays in black coats or at evening dances in the big ball-room at the Inn, when they would shuffle noisily through cotillions or labor clumsily through a Highland Schottische.

For himself, Farmer Wise was an honest, sincere, good-hearted man, a maker of money and a spender thereof—witness the fine red ploughs, the painted barns, the handsome team, Kentucky bred, and the inner decorations of his house, situated about five miles out of Ipswich, on the main-road. After Mr. Simon P. Rattray, he was the representative man of the district, although he did not come so closely into contact with the villagers. This *penchant* for the elder Miss Dexter had been a gradual, a slow but very sure and steady thing. Her father's death had increased it, so had that of Ellen her sister, and the farmer lived too far away to know as much as other people knew about the advent of the Mr. Foxleys. Had there been a sister or a daughter, or a wife or a mother, or an aunt or a cousin about the farm, he would have known very quickly. As it was, the girl who did the housework on the farm was as ignorant of gossip, its existence and the laws which govern its nature, as any male farm hand could be. When Farmer Wise put up his horses at the Inn three or four times a year, and sat down in the cheerful bar-room to drink a glass of whisky with his feet to the fire if it were winter, or a taller glass of Belfast ginger ale if it were summer, did he never notice Mrs. Cox? Mrs. Cox, well-to-do and popular herself, fresh, blooming and hearty, a young woman yet, and just the woman one would say, for him, and above all, the woman who thought most of him and ran to change her cap—the black one with the knot of rusty widow's crape—for the smart new one that held the velvet pansy when she saw the team coming. There's where he should have chosen the second time, there was the woman he should have noticed instead of poor, proud, foolish Charlotte Dexter, whom he half feared as a "lady born," and who held in her heart, had he only knew it, the image of Mr. Joseph Foxley. The farmer got on with the English gentlemen at the Inn whenever he saw them "first-rate," and it was of them he began most unsuspectingly to talk when he and Miss Dexter had crossed the bridge, ascended the hill on the other side of the river, and the team were settling to their work as they entered upon the dreary eight miles called the Plains which lay between them and the city. The farmer was consciously happy as he moved his ponderous body slightly nearer to his companion and tucked her in with his great hands, a single touch of one of them hurting her thin frame as if they were made of iron or stiff rope. He thought he was gentle too—poor man—but long years of manual labor had changed the natural soft flesh to the consistency of leather, in which immense muscles and joints seemingly of marble had been imbedded.

Besides, there was the delicate touch of another hand, as fine, as soft as a woman's and yet almost as strong as the farmer's, in her mind, a hand whiter than her own, though somewhat freckled, a hand that had taper fingers and well-kept nails, a hand that bore an antique seal ring and a fine pearl, a hand alas that had often retained her own in its warm clinging pressure, and once—only once, and that was three years ago—clasped her unresisting waist for a moment in the dark under the Oak while her sister fumbled at the gate. And just as she cherished these memories of Mr. Joseph, so did the widowed farmer retain the few occasions in his mind on which he had met Miss Dexter, spoken with her, given her a "lift" into town or up the road to the village store, for this was not the first use she had made of his gallant good nature and the Kentucky team.

He looked down at her now as they drove along in silence and noticed her thin black gown, her short jacket, her bit of black veil drawn over her bonnet, and her dingy travelling-bag with its tarnished clasp, and he heaved a sigh.

Charlotte was a "sizeable woman" thought Farmer Wise "and wants a good live garment sometimes, to bring her figure out and make more of it and do justice to it. A shawl now! How much would a good shawl be? I miss a woman round the place; I wouldn't know what to ask for. I might ha' stopped nigh the Inn and asked Mrs. Cox." Ay, you might Farmer Wise, and have done another mischievous thing, upsetting Mrs. Cox for a week as she waited for a parcel from town and breaking her heart altogether as day after day followed and no parcel arrived.

"I ha' never seen the ekil of those Mr. Foxleys yonder," began the honest farmer as something to start a conversation with. "I ha' never seen their ekil."

"Oh!" said Miss Dexter. "Yes? In what way?"

"So gentle and so funny as they be. Gentlemen both of them with delicate hands and fine clothes—"

"Yes, yes," murmured Miss Dexter under her breath, clutching at her bag and closing her eyes.

"And not above anybody or anything going. I see the pale one this day, and pale he is and weak they say, enough to be walked about on the girl's shoulder—I see him to-day as I passed the Inn, he was on a long chair out in the bit of paved yard, you know Miss Dexter, and when he saw me he raises his head and says 'Farmer Wise, is that you?'" May be you don't remember just how he speaks. He speaks better now nor when he came, and his brother too. At first it was all in a jumble like one word run into the other and hard to understand at least for us country folks. But now 'tis a bit clearer, more as you speak, begging your pardon, Miss Dexter, for noticing that or anything else that concerns you, Miss Dexter. And I says, stopping these fellows a bit. "Yes it's me. I'm on my way to town with nine barrels of apples."

"How many?" he calls out again.

"Nine," I replies.

"Let's taste one," he says.

"A barrel?" I says, and Milly, the girl, she come oat by the door, with another quilt to put over him, laughing, and showing her teeth, rare ones too, they be and says she. "Throw us down one, Farmer Wise," and I did, for I had a couple in my pocket, and here's the tother, "now Miss Dexter, if you see your way to eatin' it now in the waggon alongside of me, or will you wait till we get to the Albion?" Charlotte Dexter put her hand out mechanically and took the apple, a large red one, from the farmer who again managed to hurt her as his great wrist touched her fingers for an instant. He blushed perceptibly and moved a little nearer still. And how unconscious Charlotte Dexter was of his mere presence, let alone tender thoughts, except when he hurt her!

"I have heard this morning, that is I believe everyone has known for some time, though it is only spoken about generally today, for the first time, that Mrs. Cox is giving up the Inn. Her niece, the girl you mention, is going to be married—indeed, it is one of those gentlemen—the Mr. Foxleys—whom she is to marry, and they will take the Inn out of Mrs. Cox's hands."

The farmer was as surprised as she had been.

"Well," he ejaculated "didn't I say I'd never seen their ekil? Milly's going to marry one of the Mr. Foxleys? Which—"

"It is Mr. Joseph," returned Miss Dexter, staring down at the apple in her lap. "The youngest one, you know. He is a very merry young gentleman and always has something to say. I daresay it will be a very comfortable arrangement."

"But it's a great thing for Milly," said her companion, "it'll be a great thing for her. She'll live in the tone, no doubt and may be cross the ocean to see his home and his parents—it'll be a great thing for Milly. A gentleman born! Ay, ay; ay, ay!"

"No, no," said Miss Dexter, irritably. "Don't I tell you, Farmer Wise, that they will live on at the Inn? These young gentlemen like comfort, like being waited upon. They do this in order to insure—in order to—oh! it is difficult to explain my meaning, but you must see, Farmer Wise, that it is not a proper marriage at all, it is a very sad thing for the girl, I should consider, and some one—some friend should tell her so. She can never be a lady, and what kind of life will it be for him, a gentleman born, as you say, when he could have chosen too, where he liked. My great grandfather, Mr. Wise, was an Admiral, and my grandfather was a Judge. My father was a member of a respected profession, although not brought up to it in early life, and *none* of my relations, or ancestors *ever* married out of their own proper circle, except my poor father. He made a most perverse and foolish marriage, Farmer Wise, which though only lasting a few years, brought sorrow and trouble and poverty and oppression to his family."

"Ay, ay," said the farmer, softly. He was thinking still about those down-drawn blinds.

"Ay, ay. You're right in the main, Miss Dexter—yes, you're right in the main. Now, I thought I'd ask ye—I said to myself this morning, when I see Miss Dexter the next time, her as is a lady, and no mistake, I'll ask her—what would you say, or what your sister have said if someone here right in this village, that is, there in Ipswich, I mean of course, someone who wanted to just be kind and lend an 'elpin 'and, had asked ye—or her—say her—had asked her anytime to marry him, startin' fair, startin' fair, with a year to think on it. And a comfortable 'ome awaitin' 'er with two 'ired girls to do the work and plenty of hands on the farm and the best of cheese and butter and the Harmonium in the parlor and drives to and fro' the Church and behind it all a—solid man—a solid man—what do ye think she'd 'uv said?"

Was ever man more in earnest, now that it had suddenly broken from him after all these years, than honest Farmer Wise? The team jogged on, but the reins were lying loosely in their owner's hands.

"I thought I'd ask ye," he repeated looking away from his companion. "I thought I'd ask ye."

Miss Dexter had hardly gathered the import of his speech. She looked up startled.

"My sister?" she said with increased irritability. "Ask my sister? What do you mean? I never knew that anybody here, in the village, had proposed to her, or dared—dared to think of her at all as a possible mate—wife, whatever it is you mean. Surely you don't mean yourself, Farmer Wise! It would never enter your head, I am sure, to propose to my sister!"

"No it never did," said the farmer quietly.

"Then it is someone else? Really, you must tell me, if you know anything about it, Farmer Wise. But I think you are making some mistake, it is quite impossible that anyone in the village—any native of the village, or indeed any native of this country should so far forget himself as to propose to my sister."

"Of course," said the farmer as quietly, "it is quite impossible. No one 'ud 'av done it. No one did do it, that I know on. But I thought I'd ask ye. And about yourself, too? There'd be no gettin' ye to forget all—all that has been and to take up with things as they be, to be makin' a new start, startin' fair, as I said, startin' fair, both parties agreed to think a year on it, and one party to save up and buy nothin' till the year 'd be out and then the other party to give the word for both to take 'ands and make the start together! For what's past is past, and what's done is done, and ye can't make this out the old country any more nor ye can bring back those that are gone, which they wouldn't be, I 'low to say, if they'd stayed behind in it. This" said the farmer, in a louder firmer voice, indicating with his whip the dreary pine forests that bordered the road on either side,

"isn't the old country. I come from it myself, and I know it taint. Them rustlin' leaves ain't the old country, heaps of brown and yella up to your knees after a while, nor yet this road, nor that sky, nor this waggon, nor them apples, nor them horses. Nor me myself. I'm no longer old country. I'm fond of it—sho! I'm fonder of it now than I was forty years ago, when I come away from it, I'm fonder of it every year that goes by. But it's the New Country that's made me, that's give me all I have and more than all I want, and accordin' I'm grateful to it, and wouldn't turn my back on it. No Miss Dexter I wouldn't, and so I says, to all as come out to it, it's better to try and forget the past, or at least as much of it as 'll bear forgetting in order to let you live, and to take up with things as they be, and not lookin' always to things as they were, and to make the best of what the New World has to offer to ye And I don't think that in England—God bless her—to-day, you 'll find a finer team, nor redder apples, nor an easier going waggon, nor even a prettier sky, than that there yella light breakin' all over the landscup like!"

There was perfect silence after that. It had suddenly dawned upon Charlotte Dexter with accession of disgust and embittered hostility that the farmer's words related to himself. What new and hateful complication was this to be reminded by such an ill-timed declaration of the ironical in her life which had always been near enough to her apprehensions! Anything and everything but what she wanted, she could have. It had always been so. A dark frown gathered on her forehead, she clutched her bag and drew herself away from the side of the honest farmer.

"I do not know what you are talking about," she cried. "Such words can have nothing to do with me. I could not disgrace myself and my father's family by allying myself with anybody out here, least of all, one of the working classes, or a farmer. You are very inconsiderate, Farmer Wise, and I must ask you to distinctly understand that even conversation on such a subject is quite out of the question. I cannot even discuss it with you or with anyone in your position. I have told you what my connections are; what my family is, you have now, I hope, some correct idea, and you will see how utterly impossible it is that I should, even to better my circumstances which I admit are somewhat precarious, make such a *mésalliance*—such a mistake, I mean, as you refer to.

"Well," said the farmer very quietly this time. "You're right in the main, Miss Dexter, you're right in the main. But I thought I'd ask ye, I thought I'd ask ye. Far from harm bein' done, there's only good, there's only good, for now you understand me and I understand *you* and thank ye for your confidences and there's an end on it."

So begun, so ended the honest man's wooing. Did he suffer disappointment as Miss Dexter's contemptuous eye and her irritated tone showed him—ah! how plainly—she was forever out of his reach? Was an idol broken, a dream dissolved, a blossom nipped, or hope murdered, just as much, in the case of this comfortable placid unimaginative elderly farmer as in the case of younger, warmer, more impetuous, more idealistic men? If so, Farmer Wise was as self-contained as the best actor among them and handed Miss Dexter out at the Albion with as gallant, though cautious politeness and sat as far away from her at the hotel tea table and met her in the hall afterwards with as severe an air, as if the situation were perfectly pleasant and completely ordinary. He asked her when she would be going back, and learnt that she would pass the night at the Albion, returning to the village by the Saturday's stage.

"Then shall I take a seat for ye?" asked the willing farmer.

"No" said Miss Dexter, who appeared to be in a great hurry, "I can arrange in the morning, thank you."

"In any case, ye're sure ye won't want a 'lift' again, Miss Dexter," said the farmer respectfully, though there might have been the least tinge of irony in the tone. "I'm not goin' back myself till to-morrow."

"No, thank you," returned Miss Dexter for the last time.

The Albion was a small hotel or tavern situated just on the outskirts of the town, which did a flourishing business with the country people. Two roads, the Ipswich and the Richmond, formed a sort of junction before its door, one leading into the fine agricultural district or valley of Richmond, Guernsey and Trenton, and the other following, the dreary Plains through Ipswich to Orangetown, a thriving little community of mills and saws and booms and planks picturesquely situated on the Upper Orange River.

There was always a knot of farmers round the Albion, all of them English or Scotch or native Canadians born of British parents. A French-Canadian would have been hoisted on a table and examined minutely all over, hair, eye, skin and costume, had one been present. But though the men were respectable and decent and hard-working and most of them earned a good income and few of them drank or gambled it away, they were noisy, smoky, staring fellows for companions and Miss Dexter, having walked some distance to a shop, made a purchase, and returned to the parlor of the hotel while it was yet light, uncertain what to do with herself or where to go to escape the bustle and clatter of tongues. Farmer Wise was smoking in the bar, she had seen him as she passed in, and the mere sight of him, with his head up against the counter, and his legs out on a chair made her shudder. She sat in the parlor listening to the intolerable noise, heavy delf and cutlery being momentarily banged down on tables and chairs, an occasional broken plate and whirling pewter mug or kitchen spoon reaching her ear with more than usual reverberation. Then would come a volley of laughter, oaths, and bets on next week's races from the bar, then more breaking of china from the scullery, the stamping of horses in the stable, then the bar door would be closed and comparative silence ensue. In one of these intervals, the girl who had waited at the tea-table appeared in the parlor and inquired of Miss Dexter if she would like a fire put in the wood stove that stood on a square of zinc in the middle of the room. It came as a relief from the nervous broodings that were settling down on her mind occupied in introspection neither healthy nor cheerful, and she eagerly assented.

When the fire burned up, she opened the door that she might see the blaze and spread out her thin hands to it and put her cold feet to its warmth. Then for the first time she unclasped her bag and taking out her purchase, looked at it. The shop she had gone into was a druggist's, and her purchase had been a small bottle of a bluish fluid that she now held up to the light and looked at long and steadily but with no change in her countenance. The bar-door opened with a creak and closed with a bang. She started and replaced the bottle in the bag and put the bag over her arm as before. For a long time she sat before the fire warming first one foot, then the other and never looking away from the blaze. When half-past ten came, so did the girl with a

lamp and two damp towels for Miss Dexter who took them without opening her mouth much to the astonishment of the girl, who though taciturn herself was well used to speech and "language" from all she came in contact with, and who was also struck with the fact that the strange lady had never removed her bonnet or jacket "since she come in the house."

She would have had additional ground for surprise had she known that the strange lady did not remove them even upon reaching her own room, but lowering the lamp, lay down fully dressed upon the bed still clasping her small travelling bag in her hands, and slept until seven o'clock in the morning. She then rose and hastily straightening her attire, descended to the dining-room, partook of ham and eggs. Upon the close of this meal, she went up again to the parlor and sat slightly back from the window that overlooked the main road until twelve o'clock, when she partook of the dinner served to the travellers at the Albion, including Farmer Wise who had sold his apples and soon after dinner hitched up ready to go homewards. After dinner she went up as before to the parlor and sat there again. Two o'clock came, half past two, three o'clock, and Miss Dexter began to look along the road in the direction of the town. Half-past three found her, still looking along the road. Four o'clock came, half-past four, then five. She grew visibly uneasy, walked to and fro in the little parlor, sat down again. Half-past five, the clatter in the kitchen which had been silent for a little while renewed itself. Six!! The men stumped into their tea, and the girl ascending asked Miss Dexter if she was coming down to hers.

"No," said Miss Dexter, "I expect to have a late tea at home, thank you. And I am just going in a moment or two."

Ten minutes past six. The late November afternoon had almost entirely faded, it would soon be dark. A quarter past six and Miss Dexter, looking continuously out of her window perceived the figure she had waited for so long at length approaching. Gay, Mr. Joseph, you have thrown off the fetters of town and work and dull care and responsibility, and here you are free and untrammelled as the air, good humored, cheerful, humming your Old Country tunes as usual, brisk, *débonnair*; untouched by thought of present trouble or evil, unthinking and unsuspecting! Gay Mr. Joseph, urbane Mr. Joseph, what have you got in your hand this time? Last time it was a bunch of the red field lily. Now it is, or it looks like—yes, it is—a genuine florist's bouquet. Something to open the eyes of the Ipswich villagers. A gorgeous wired platoon of roses, and smilax tuberose and mignonette—Mr. Joseph, Mr. Joseph, what does this mean, who is this for? On he came, brisker, more *débonnair*, more smiling than Miss Dexter had ever seen him in her life. Her breath came fast as he neared the window. Exchanging a word with the hostler and a couple of laboring men who stood almost in the centre of the road Mr. Joseph passed on, looking down with a smile at the bouquet in his hand. Miss Dexter then arose and quietly settling her bonnet at a glass walked out of the hotel having paid her small bill at dinner-time.

She walked steadily on in the direction of Ipswich in the wake of Mr. Joseph who did not appear to be walking as fast as usual himself. So by straining every nerve as we say—in reality, walking as she had never attempted to and dreamt of walking in her life—she slowly but surely gained upon the unconscious Mr. Joseph. They were about in the middle of the plains, that dreary bit of road bordered by pine forests on either side when Miss Dexter found she could distinguish the *clink, clink* or jingle of his watch-chain, a thing of steel links which she knew well by sight as well as by sound as it struck against the buttons of his coat. Slowly Miss Dexter gained on him, until it was necessary either to accost him or pass him. Which did she mean to do? Dark as it was rapidly growing, Mr. Joseph, in half turning his head to observe something in the trees or sky, became conscious of a figure close behind him. The path was narrow, for he had left the middle of the road since passing the Albion, and he stepped aside with his usual ready politeness to allow the lady room to go on before him. But in a moment he recognized Miss Dexter. She waited for him to speak.

"I—really, why—is it possible it is you, my dear Miss Dexter? I never knew you took such lonely walks so far from home. You don't mean to say you've walked out from town?"

For an answer, Miss Dexter, who had previously unclasped her bag and taken out the bottle, lifted her right hand and threw the contents over Mr. Joseph.

"In the name of God!" shrieked the unfortunate man, warding off as he imagined a second attack. But Miss Dexter had done her work and stood rigid, unmovable, stony as marble, the bag fallen at her feet, her hands fallen straight down at her sides. Mr. Joseph had sunk upon the ground moaning and writhing, but through all the torture of the terrible pain he was suffering, he thought of nothing but the inconceivable brutality of the act itself. Why had she done it?

"I suppose it is vitriol," he gasped. "Was it an accident—or—did you—mean—to—do it? How have—I—injured—you? Oh—say—say—"

He could get no further for a few moments in the appalling consciousness of that living fire which had burnt into his poor eyes and played round his poor temples. Otherwise he was not injured, for Miss Dexter's aim had been a faulty one and nearly all the contents of the bottle had in reality descended on the ground.

"Say—say" he went on. "Which it is? My—dear—Miss Dexter—I am—sorrier for you—than—for—myself, and cannot imagine—oh! Good God, I shall be blind, blind—ah!!—"

Charlotte Dexter still stood in the rapidly darkening air, a stem, rigid, immovable figure. It was too soon for remorse. That would come in good time. But a certain pity stole over her as she gazed at the huddled mass on the ground before her, which a short time ago, had been the gay, laughing, upright Mr. Joseph.

"Are you suffering very much?" She said at length in her ordinary voice.

"Good God! How—how—can you ask? Again—tell me—was it—an accident?"

"No," she replied still in her most ordinary voice. "No. It was no accident. It *is* vitriol, and I *did* mean to throw it."

"It is horrible," groaned Mr. Joseph, still in agony on the ground where he had sunk at first. "And you will not—fiend that you appear now to be—though Heaven knows—I thought you sweet and womanly enough once—you will not—tell me why! It is infamous!"

"Yes, it *is* infamous," returned Charlotte Dexter. "It *is* horrible, and I am a fiend. I am not a woman any

longer. I once was, as you say, sweet and womanly enough for—for what? Joseph Foxley. For you to come to any house and my sister's house, and blast *her* life and strike *her* down as you thought you would strike me, for this and that and for much more, but not enough for truth and honesty and an offer of marriage in fair form, not enough for common respect and decent friendship."

"My dear lady," said Mr. Joseph with great difficulty, "there was no one I—"

"And all that time, when I thought you at least free, at least your own master, at least unbiased and unbound, for unlike a gentleman you never hinted to me of these—other ties—you were engaged to this miserable girl, this common drudge, the scullery-maid of a country inn. You, you, you!"

"My dear lady," said Mr. Joseph again with greater difficulty than before, "I—upon my word—I have—I—"

Charlotte Dexter, suddenly regaining the use of her limbs, bent down quickly and peered into the poor sightless face. Mr. Joseph had fainted. She owned no fear yet however, though it was now quite dark, and five miles lay between them and her own door. Pity was just giving away to remorse. What if she had killed him? She bent down again but found that there was no fear of that and even consciousness appeared to be returning. At this moment the sound of wheels struck her ear. Nearer and nearer it came and she soon descried a waggon coming along the road sharply in which sat one man. The rest of the waggon was empty and as it was proceeding in the direction of the village, into that, she made up her mind, should Mr. Joseph be put. As it drew near, she stepped out of the dark shade of the pines and bade the man stop.

"Whose there!" said he, "What's here? What's the matter? Why, if it ain't Miss Dexter!"

"Yes," said she, stooping to assist her unfortunate companion. "How do you do, Farmer Wise! I—do you know Mr. Foxley—Mr. Joseph Foxley—is here—can you just see him—if you have a lantern, or, will you help me to get him into the waggon?"

Farmer Wise forgot Miss Dexter and her family pride in an instant, though at first sight the feeling of injury had somewhat revived, and he made haste to come to her relief. He found Mr. Joseph just coming to himself.

"Why, why, what's the matter?" said the Farmer. "It minds me of old times, this, when highway-men and tramps were a-infestin' the road and a-lyin' in wait for honest travellers—in the Old Country of course, Miss Dexter, not here, not here. Yet somethin's been at work here, eh! Mr. Joseph, or else I'm much mistaken. Here, lend an 'and, Miss Dexter; now, sir, can you see me?"

"Not very well," gasped poor Mr. Joseph. "It's dark, I know," said the farmer, "and I hadn't begun carrying my lantern yet. Never mind Here, now, place your foot there—are ye hurt anywhere that I may touch ye—tell me where I hurt ye, if I do—now then, the other foot—"

"There, now it's done! Miss Dexter, ma'am there's an old blanket at the back there, lie him on that. Put his head down and let him look straight up at them stars and he'll soon get himself, I warrant. If I knew where ye were hurt, perhaps I could bind ye up. There's no wound," anxiously.

"No," said Mr. Joseph. "Thank you, Farmer Wise. I am—much—better—really. I was unconscious!"

"Ay," said the farmer, "A little, and can you stand the joltin' now, are ye sure? For if ye are, we'll drive on."

"Stay a moment," said Mr. Joseph. "I had some flowers—a bouquet—in my hands when I—fell. I can't see—very well—in this light—look for me, will you!"

"I do spy somethin' white on yonder ground where you was when I came up. Maybe it's a pocket-handkerchief, may be it's the flowers you dropped."

The former sprang down and returned with two articles one of which—the bouquet he gave to Mr. Joseph, the other, a small bottle—he put in his own pocket The bouquet was as fresh and untumbled as when it emerged from the careful florist who had prepared it. Not a single drop of the fiery liquid had fallen upon it nor scorched its fragrant beauty and it presently lay upon the face of the suffering man, healing with its cool moist sweet leaves and petals his poor scarred skin.

"I won't ask him," thought the farmer, "I won't ask him. But what are they doin' here together? Well, I won't ask that neither. And why did not she come out by the stage as she said? I won't ask that neither. There's three things I needn't go for to enquire into. But a little general conversation in a nice kind of way, neither spyin' nor lyin' may do him good and not be altogether despised by the—the other party." He looked back and could dimly see Mr. Joseph sitting up on the blanket. He had removed his hat, and his hands were pressed to his head. Charlotte Dexter was in the furthest corner of the waggon, a dark, stern, ominous figure.

"Strange that you and me *are* goin' home together, Miss Dexter, after all," said the farmer.

"Miss Dexter drove in to the Albion alongside of me yesterday, sir, and I ask her if so be she need a second lift back to-day, and she said 'no.'"

"Ah!" said Mr. Joseph. "Yesterday, did you say? I was—to have—come out—yesterday—in answer to my brother's note—but I could not manage—it. I wish," with a grim attempt at the old humor—"I had, 'pon my soul I do."

"Your brother is well, I hope, sir?" said the farmer. "Don't talk too much, I beg of ye, Mr. Joseph. To see ye with yer hands like that!"

"It is—better—easier—that way," returned Mr. Joseph. "My brother is well for him, thank you. You know, he is—not strong he—is—never—perfectly well."

"D—" said the farmer to himself. "Of course, of course, I know. I see him yesterday morning, pale like and weak, but smiling and lookin' happy enough too, I tell ye."

"Ah, yes" said Mr. Joseph, again lying down and pressing the flowers to his hot lips. "I—these flowers—are for him and—her."

"Her!" said the farmer.

"Milly, you know. Ah—perhaps you haven't heard. My brother is going to—marry Milly, Mrs. Cox's niece, you know."

An absolutely death-like stillness prevailed in the waggon. The Kentucky team jogged on. The stars shone down on poor Mr. Joseph turning up his sightless orbs to their beauty and majesty, and on the passion of grief

and remorse that now surged in Miss Dexter's suffering breast.

"It may be vanity," thought Farmer Wise as the bridge and the river and Dexter's Oak came in sight one after the other, "it may be vanity, though I'm too old a man to be much given to that, but I can't help thinkin' I'm a wiser man than I was yesterday by a good lot. I don't half know what's happened, but somethin's goin' on, whether it's understandable or not to me and the likes of me, I don't know as yet, and I don't think I'll try to find out. If ifs bad it'll come out fast enough, and if it's good, leavin' it alone maybe will make it a little better. But here we are," he continued aloud, "at Dexter's Oak. What's to be done, Miss Dexter, now, and with you, Mr. Joseph? Of course, I'll take you straight to the Inn—as for Miss Dexter—"

"I will get out at once," said the unhappy woman. "You are sure you can take him to the Inn all right and—and—lift—that is—without—"

"Oh, I guess so," said the farmer, grimly relapsing into an Americanism that was just beginning to leaven the whole country. "I guess I'll take care on him, and as for gettin' him out at the Inn, there's plenty there. Good-night Miss Dexter, take care there!—now you're all right"

Charlotte Dexter, with a long look at the prostrate form of Mr. Joseph, leapt from the waggon and sped through the gate up to her desolate dwelling.

"Ah!" sighed the farmer to himself, one great long sigh that stirred his hardy frame to its centre. He never sighed like that again either for Charlotte Dexter or any other woman.

The next mile they traversed in silence broken only by occasional moans from Mr. Joseph which moved the old farmer to wonder and dismay that almost unnerved him.

Presently Mr. Joseph murmured some word the farmer did not catch all at once.

"Is he out of his mind on top of it all!" he said to himself, and listened.

"Farmer Wise," said the same low voice, "are we near the Inn?"

"Just there, Mr. Joseph."

"On the little bridge yet?"

"Just come on it, Mr. Joseph."

"Ah! Can you—stop your horses?"

"Certainly. There! Now what is it?" Mr. Joseph sat up.

"I am in your waggon—the market waggon, Farmer Wise, I think?"

"Yes, Mr. Joseph. You can't tell where we are, I see, being so much shook."

"No. That's not it," said Mr. Joseph. "I—are you on the seat—the front seat, Farmer Wise?"

"Yes, Mr. Joseph. You can't make me out by this queer light, and I don't wonder. The stars is beautiful, but they don't make up for havin' no moon."

"No. That's not it either, Farmer Wise. Did you say the stars were shining? Orion, I suppose, and the Bull and the rest of them! Can't you—try—like a dear old fellow—can't you—tell what's the matter with me? You say you are sitting on the front seat, and I—have no doubt but that you are, but your voice sounds so much further away—so very much further away than that—and when one—can't—see you, Farmer Wise,—"

A frightful pause.

"Can't see me, can't see me! Mr. Joseph, Mr. Joseph! Not blind—God forgive me for sayin' the word out to ye like that! But I thought it, I thought it, and so, out it come! But it is'nt that! Ye'll forgive me for sayin' the word out to ye like that! It isn't that!"

"I'm afraid it is, Farmer Wise. It can be—nothing—else."

"If, as you say, the stars are shining and to be sure they generally are about—this time—of night, and if, as you say, you are sitting directly opposite me on the front seat of your waggon, and I have no reason to doubt it, if this is so, and I—can see neither—these stars shining—nor you—yourself—dear old fellow—on the seat before me—it can be, I fear—nothing else."

"And how—"

"Ah! I can't—quite remember. Some time, perhaps, I'll tell you how—shall I go to my brother or—how can I?"

"Mr. Joseph," entreated the farmer, seizing one of those delicate hands and patting it as if it had been his own. "Will you come with me? I'll make you comfortable, and have ye seen to and we'll find out about it and what can be done, and that'll save your brother, look, and he not strong! Come, Mr. Joseph! Lie down there as you was, just as ye was—God forgive me for tellin' you to look up at them stars—and I'll speak a word for you at the Inn, as we're passing. Won't that do, nor be better than goin' in like that? Not knowin' either just what is the matter. Come, Mr. Joseph! I'll drive straight home after that and make ye comfortable for the night, and there'll be no—womankind, or, or anyone to disturb ye, just me and the two boys—come, Mr. Joseph!"

"I am willing enough to go, old fellow," answered Mr. Joseph with a groan. "Willing enough to go anywhere, but where my brother—my poor brother—is. Yes, it will be best. Drive on."

The warm cheery Inn soon appeared in view. The firelight from the bar and the lamp-light from the other rooms beamed out from the red-curtained windows. The scrape of a fiddle came from the kitchen. "Squires," murmured Mr. Joseph, feebly. "He's always at it." The farmer pulled up the team at the pump corner one instant and looking around descried not a soul in view. He got down and went to the side door leading to the bar and opening it put his head in. Mrs. Cox herself was dispensing early gin and water to three or four indolent but talkative gentlemen before the fire. But she was not so busy as not to perceive the farmer. Had she already had that cap on in which bloomed the violet velvet pansy, Mr. Joseph's whereabouts might have been discovered, for invariably on those occasions she accompanied the farmer not only to the door but even to the very feet of the horses as he straightened up one thing or loosened another and would often joke about the empty waggon or the purchases made in the town which might happen to fill it.

But Farmer Wise left her no time even to adjust her head-dress, far from changing it.

"Good evening, ma'am," said he, with his head in the door. "No. Don't trouble about Squires. He's hard at work, I can hear, and besides, I don't want him. I'm late, and the boys will wait for their supper. I just have to tell ye that I see Mr. Foxley in town, Mr. Joseph Foxley, and he says how he can't come out till—say—Monday. He was stuck full of work—he was indeed—and said positive—he couldn't come. But he give me this for his brother and for—her," producing the bouquet, which caused a thrill of amazement and awe to pervade the loungers in the bar. "For his brother and for—her," said the farmer, taking a long stride across the little room and giving it to Mrs. Cox. "I congratulate you, ma'am, I do indeed."

Before she could well answer, he had shut the door and mounting the waggon drove away as quickly as he could. He was too full of thoughts and plans concerning Mr. Joseph to notice that quick as he was, Mrs. Cox, not waiting this time to change her cap, had come out to the door and with her hand shading her eyes, was looking wistfully after the departing team.

CHAPTER IV.

It was as Mr. Joseph had said. His brother, George Albert Dacre Foxley, of Foxley Manor, Notts, was indeed contemplating marriage with Milly, niece of Mrs. Cox, landlady of the Ipswich Inn. If it seem strange, remember that he had passed the meridian of his years, health was gone, life rapidly passing away and it was impossible now for him to make any new departure in his life or habits. He had become firmly attached to Mrs. Cox's comfortable *ménage* and wanted nothing more. Never in England, even while in the enjoyment of fairly good health and luxurious surroundings had he ever felt so completely at rest, satisfied with himself and his small immediate world, every want cared for, every wish guessed at, and the best of company to his idea—company that called for nothing but pure naturalness. He could smoke for hours in Mrs. Cox's kitchen, or in her neat yard or even in the chintz-hung drawing-room and no one would interrupt him with dissertations on politics, art or literature. Like all Englishmen of the quiet country-loving stamp, he cared little about politics except when some general crisis assented itself, and knew less about art or literature. He thought Wilkie and Landseer about the summit of the one and Byron the chief modern pillar of the other. Twenty years ago, Tennyson had not made a very deep impression on a mind of his calibre. Yet this handsome, quiet, delicate gentleman when he did choose to talk had such an audience as is not given to many men, for Mrs. Cox would leave her work (if she dared) and Milly would listen with her young eyes fastened in a kind of ecstasy on the dark ones turned to hers, and Squires would come along with his hands in his trousers pockets and his fiddle under his arm, and Bess would put her paws upon her master's knees and devour him with her own dark eyes—a quintette of friends unsurpassed in the world for loyal attachment and generous devotion. What if what he had to tell was but some simple story of hunting England, or some bald description of London life seen under the surveillance of a tutor fifteen or twenty years previous to the time of narration—he was their oracle, prophet, God, what you will, and they were his dearest, yes, his very dearest friends. When Mr. Joseph appeared as one of this happy circle, it became more boisterous of course though not necessarily any happier, for it was already as happy as it could be. But the news from town and the occasional English mail, flowers and a cheap new novel—these were some of the simple delights that Mr. Joseph used to bring with him. During the first couple of years, both the brothers would saunter out to the Miss Dexters' or to the Rectory, Mr. Joseph in particular, never failing to appear on Saturday nights at choir-practice and Sunday evening service—but Mr. George gradually discontinued his visits as I have hinted and towards the fourth year of his stay hardly ever went beyond the Inn. For at the back the small terraced garden met the orchard, and the orchard sloping down met a small pebbly brook, and the brook flowing along in sweet rippling fashion met the most charming of wheat covered golden meadows in which it was pleasant and good to stroll and which moreover all belonged to that matchless paragon among landladies, Mrs. Cox. In those days people grew their own kitchen stuff, and their own fruit and their own grain, fed their own live stock, made their own butter and cheese, cured their own hams, laid their own eggs, even brewed their own beer. Now, everything is different, and let no confiding Englishman, allured by my tempting picture come out to Canada today in search of such a Utopia for he will not find it. Moreover all this pleasant prospect of wood and stream and meadow and orchard lay well *behind* the Inn, let it be understood, and it was perfectly possible for Mr. George Foxley to have all the air, walking and exploration he desired and even a little shooting and fishing if he wanted them without, as I have said, going beyond it. When he grew really weak, he was obliged to give up both the latter occupations of course, but he still walked or strolled a great deal, generally with Milly by his side. She would leave anything she was at when he called her and opening the little gate by the one hawthorn tree leading into the orchard, see him safe down the slope to the side of the little brook where she would give him her arm, and thus their walk would commence in earnest. Four years had brought a great change in Milly. New ideas, new habits, association with such thorough and high-bred gentleman and the natural desire to improve and grow worthy of such dearly esteemed company, had altered her completely. Where before she had been pink, now she was pale; thin, where she had been plump; her features actually aquiline from the girlish snub of the rounded contour four years back, her hair, three shades darker, her dress, almost that of a lady. The most perfect sympathy appeared to exist, and really did, between these two strangely met natures.

One day, they had sat down at the side of the brook as a couple of children would have done to cast in sticks and leaves and watch them float by. Sometimes these would get caught in the numberless little eddies that such a stream possesses and be whirled round and round until it was necessary to dislodge them and send them on their way after the others. One fine yellow leaf on this November day attracted Mr. Foxley's attention particularly, for it was obstinate in returning again and again to a cosy little bay formed by a couple

of large stones. Often as he poked it out, back it came into the bay and anchored itself contentedly on the calm water.

Milly laughed.

"He has found a haven," said Mr. George. "Yes, without doubt he has found his haven. What do you think, Milly?"

"I think so, sir."

"Don't call me sir, child. What makes you do so?"

"There is nothing else I can call you, is there,—sir."

"Ah!" said Mr. Foxley. He lay back at full length on the grass and put his hands over his eyes. The river rippled on and Milly watched him anxiously. "Is the leaf there still, Milly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now!" said Mr. Foxley in a warning tone. "I tell you I won't have it."

"No, sir—I beg your pardon, Mr. George."

"Nor that either," said Mr. Foxley, slowly rising into a sitting posture again. He had another poke at the yellow leaf. "Call me Dacre, my child, will you?" Milly no longer watched him with those loving, anxious, eyes. She was trembling from head to foot and had she spoken, she must have wept. Mr. Foxley's voice was of itself enough to make any woman weep, it was so soft, so tender, so subdued and indrawn. Once more he said, "Call me Dacre, my child!" That pleading voice, so low, so musical, and that it should plead to her? They were so close together that he could feel her tremble. Weak as he was, he was the stronger of the two for a moment, and turning slightly towards her met her rapturous eyes, and heard her call him the name he wanted to hear. The same instant they kissed, a long thrilling dark-enfolding kiss that was the first Milly had ever known from a man and might have been, for its purity and restraint, the first also that he had ever given to a woman.

"Have I found my haven too, like the wise leaf of autumn? Have I! Tell me, my child, my darling!"

"O sir, dearest sir—I mean, dear Dacre, it is I who have found mine. If indeed you care for me, sir!"

Mr. Foxley laid his head just on her shoulder, then let it slide into her lap, taking her trembling hands and putting them over his eyes.

"I do more than care for you, my child. I love you. Stoop and kiss me. There. Don't take your head away again like that. Leave it. Your face against mine. Your lips on mine. Is it a haven, child? Truly, yes or no?"

"Dear Dacre!"

"Well!"

"You know it is. And I have always wanted so much to—to—care for you, but I did not dare."

"Dare! There is no dare about it my child. If you will give me your young life—how old are you now, love?"

"Nineteen," whispered Milly into his ear.

"Only nineteen, and such a tall girl, with such long hair—if you will give it to me and be happy in giving it, child, that must be thought of, there is no one else—"

"You know there is not, sir."

"Then I will do all I can to deserve it. And nobody must call you Milly any more. You are Mildred now. Miss Mildred if you like and soon, very soon, to bear another name, mine. It is a good one, child."

"I am sure of it, dear Dacre, and too good—far too good—for me."

"Do you know how old I am, my child?"

"I heard your brother say."

"And did he dare? What did he say it was, my age?"

"He said—you were forty-one."

"Then he was out. It is more than that I am exactly forty-three; I say exactly, for, Milly, this is my birthday, and—I cannot hope—neither of us must dare to hope, child—that I shall see many more. You will marry me whenever I say, my love?"

The girl bent over him in a passion of weeping.

"There is nothing I would not do for you, dear sir—"

"Except call me by my dearly-beloved third name!"

It began to turn cold as they sat by the stream and Milly or Mildred as she is henceforth to be called, drying her eyes, fell into a fever over her lover and besought him to return to the house.

Standing face to face, he put her arms around his neck.

"Before we go, dear child, you are sure you love me?"

"O do not ask me again, dear Dacre!"

"That is right. And you know how old I am?"

Another assent.

"And that you are to marry me whenever I say?"

"If I can."

"Of course you can. And that you are to give me all the love you possibly have to give and more and more. I shall be exacting!"

"Dear Dacre!"

"Very well. Remember all those clauses, and now take me back to the house. And some day, my child, I will tell you all my life and what it was—or rather who it was—that sent me out of England, dear England—"

"Ah! you love it still," murmured Mildred, looking at the ground.

"I shall always love it *now*, since I have found my happiness in Canada, but once I hated it, Milly, yes, I hated it!"

So was accomplished the wooing of Mr. George Foxley. He was earnestly and sincerely in love. The girl had grown up under his eye as it were and was in fact almost a part of himself already. Marriage would complete the refining and gilding process. The tones of her voice, her accent, her pronunciation, her habits of sitting, of standing, of walking were all more or less unconsciously imitated from him, she had modelled herself upon him, she was indeed his "child" as he loved to call her. For a month these two people enjoyed as pure and perfect and isolated an happiness as can be experienced on earth. Then it became necessary to inform Mr. Joseph and worthy Mrs. Cox. As if Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Cox didn't know! There are two things that nothing can hide in this life. One is, the light in the eyes of a girl who has found herself loved by the man she adores, and the other is, the unutterable content in the mien of that man himself. And there is no phase of passion sweeter, nor purer, nor warmer, nor more satisfying, than that which is the result of a young girl's affection for a man many years older than herself.

As for the telling, Mr. George, though he could talk fast enough and fluently enough to Mildred, hated much talk or fuss about anything and so made everything the easier by informing his brother, Mr. Joseph, by note. A few lines sufficed as preparation for the news and he ended by requesting him to purchase some small and inexpensive gift as from himself in appreciation of the occasion. Mr. Joseph with characteristic good taste and delicate feeling, concluded that flowers, though perishable, were the most appropriate purchase he could light upon, and consequently walked out from town a certain Saturday afternoon late in November with a monster affair in smilax and roses in his hand. When it was placed, though not by himself, in Mildred's hands she felt a disappointment she could not altogether conceal.

"Never mind," said Mr. George at full length on a sofa with Milly beside him on a chair. He did indeed prove a most exacting lover. For a long time her share of daily work in the Inn and out of it, had been growing less and less, until now she hardly did anything at all besides wait on her master, lover and friend, prepare what he eat, read to him, and sit by him for hours, never leaving him in the evenings till long after twelve and then it was understood that in case of night attacks of the dreadful pleurisy and asthma combined that were slowing killing him, she would always be at hand to come at the sound of his bell—or indeed his voice, for Milly, sleeping in the room opposite his own, always left both doors open and would lie fully dressed on her bed night after night, listening in the dark, with wide open eyes and strained ears, for the slightest cough or sigh that came from that worshipped one across the narrow hall.

"Never mind," said he on that Saturday night "My brother *is* busy just now. Don't you remember, he found it difficult to come out last week. It's an awful grind for Joseph, poor Joseph! But he enjoys life, I think; at the present moment I expect he is flirting audaciously in town with some charming girl. Or some fearfully plain one. You never know who next, with my brother. He'll turn up on Monday."

And Mr. Joseph did turn up on Monday. Farmer Wise had fetched some doctor from Orangetown on Sunday, who after examining his injury, pronounced it incurable. Mr. Joseph was as stoical as Englishmen are generally expected to be and saw that it was absolutely imperative to tell his brother.

"I brought it on myself" he said to the farmer, "At least I try to believe I did. By Jove! to think—to think of some men! Well, I *must* tell my brother."

When he did tell him late on Monday night, having been driven over by Farmer Wise himself, with his poor eyes bandaged and the sturdy farmer's hand to guide him into the little back parlor where Mr. George and Mildred sat alone, for Mrs. Cox had been ordered out by that exacting gentleman as early as eight o'clock. Nothing but the presence of Mildred herself and the love divine and human that filled Mr. George's breast to overflowing could have saved him from succumbing to the painful shock.

"Well, I should think you are cured now, my poor Joseph!" said his brother presently.

"Of what, in heaven's name?" said poor Mr. Joseph. "By Jove to think—to think of some men, George! What had I done, what had I done?"

"I do think of them," said Mr. Foxley gravely. "I do think of them. And but for my happiness here," touching Mildred's dress reverently, "I could wish—" wistfully, "That we had never come here—'twas I who brought you my poor Joseph, 'twas I, 'twas I."

"Oh! that's rubbish!" pronounced Mr. Joseph energetically. "The main point is now, how am I to get my living. God! I am perfectly useless! They won't take me back in town there."

"Dear Mr. Joseph," said Mildred, with her eyes shining on the brother of her lover. "You will live with us of course, with—Dacre, Dacre and me, and my aunt. We all love you—see," and Milly rose, first pressing Mr. George's fingers as they touched her dress in passing and giving him a look which was meant to keep him in order for a few moments, "no one can nurse you as well as I can—ask Dacre—let me take off that bandage and put it on again more comfortably for you! Will you, dear Mr. Joseph?" Mr. Joseph groaned and hid his face against Milly's heaving breast.

"She is to be your angel as well as mine, perhaps," murmured his brother.

"I have always been so active," groaned poor Mr. Joseph, "What is to become of me? To live here with you would have been beautiful, but now—the simple thought of existence at all anywhere is unbearable! And the money—good God, George, how can I Help giving way!"

Some few other such scenes had naturally to be gone through before any course could be suggested to Mr. Joseph. Mrs. Cox had been taken into confidence, and Farmer Wise made to understand that nothing must be said about the unhappy affair. Mr. Joseph wrote into town explaining in some way his resignation of the rather important clerkship he had but just begun to fill creditably, and sending for all his belongings took to Mrs. Cox's remaining little room under the roof in the character of an invalid. The secret was admirably kept, even by the doctor who had been written to and who had seen a similar case some years ago.

"A jealous devil, I suppose," said he, when he read Mr. George Foxley's note.

"Well, he might have come off worse. But I should like to know who the country lass was that he'd been sparkin', and who revenged herself like that."

A few weeks afterwards Mildred was married to George Albert Dacre Foxley, of Foxley Manor, Notts, by the Rev. Mr. Higgs in the village church. Her lover looked wonderfully well and strong on the occasion and was so happy that he was actually mischievously inclined during the ceremony, nearly causing his bride to laugh out audibly. Handsome and distinguished and aristocratic a gentleman as he looked, Mildred was not unworthy of him, as a straighter, firmer, more composed and more smiling a bride never entered a church. The girl was too happy to know what nervousness meant nor self-consciousness. She sat with her lover after he was dressed and had lain down a few moments to rest, until it was time to start in the carriage which Mr. Rattray had in the most unexpected manner offered them and which Mr. George accepted with the easy languid grace that characterized his acceptance of most things in this world excepting Milly. He had plenty of force and passion and to spare concerning *that* gift. Stipulating that "Squires" must sit on the box seat, he and Milly and Mrs. Cox, an ideal little wedding party, drove off in actually high glee, laughing and chatting and joking immoderately to the amazement of the villagers, prominent among whom were Mrs. Woods and "Woods" himself, rescued in a dazed condition from the back premises of the "Temperance Hotel" according to popular local tradition, and Mrs. Lyman, B. Rattray, *née* Maria Higgs. Mr. Joseph alas! could not be present.

In the year that followed this remarkable marriage, the relative positions of the Mr. Foxleys underwent a great change. So much love and so much care lightened the elder brother's existence so materially, that his health actually improved, and by the end of the sixth month of marriage he was able to shoot and fish once more, and walk with his adoring wife without the help of her strong arm and shoulder. Indeed it was she who about this time began to need his assistance during those long strolls by the side of the brook or through the tall grain grown meadows—a matter which astonished them both to the extent of stupefaction. Mr. George took his trouble to Mrs. Cox.

"I don't know what you expected, Mr. George, I don't indeed," said she, secretly amused at his simplicity. "You went and got married, as was only natural, and now you are frightened at the results, as is only natural."

"But, my dear lady," expostulated the perplexed gentleman, "it involves so many things, all manner of complications. For instance, money. I shall have—I really believe, my dear good Mrs. Cox—I shall have to make some money."

"You!" ejaculated Mrs. Cox.

"I know. It appears hopeless. I never turned a penny, honest or otherwise in my life. Joseph you see—ah! poor Joseph!"

Poor Joseph indeed, darkness for light, solitude for society, enforced idleness for long-continued habits of activity, who could enjoy life under these circumstances—and careful of him as Mildred was, and sympathetic as his brother was, these two were too intensely absorbed in each other to give him all the amusement and attention he craved. He grew thin and weak and slightly perverse and seemed to care more for Mrs. Cox's company than for his brother's. And yet there was nothing wrong with him except his terrible affliction. Mrs. Cox was sure he had something on his mind, and one day she ventured to tell him so. He flushed all over his pale freckled skin, and feeling for her motherly hands took them in his own.

"There is," he said. "I wonder no one has ever guessed it. Miss Dexter, where is she? Does anyone ever see her?"

"My poor boy, my dear Mr. Joseph," cried Mrs. Cox. "You did not really care for her, did you? Surely! You did not care for her!"

"No," said he decidedly. "No, I did not care for her—I didn't, never could have cared for her as George cares for Mildred, say—but she was a lady and kind to me, and I liked to go there, and the fact is—I miss her—and I am so sorry for her! and yet, you know, I am half frightened of her too and afraid to go out, thinking she may meet me and I wouldn't see her coming, you know! Yet she wouldn't do it again, I think!"

"Heaven save us, no, Mr. Joseph! And you so forgiving! Mercy me, and people say men make all the trouble!"

"It's half-and-half, Mrs. Cox, dear old soul," muttered Mr. Joseph, leaning back on his cushions. "I suppose we were both to blame. I can't, for the life of me, fall to talking of it as a judgment, for before heaven, I had done nothing. Yet I forgot how lonely she was and how proud, and I forgot too, that Ellen—that Ellen—"

"Ay, Mr. Joseph. It was Ellen too. Poor Ellen, that passed away out of it all!"

"And she—Miss Dexter—is still here, still living by herself in the cottage by the oak! I remember so well, Mrs. Cox, the first time my brother and I ever saw that oak!"

"I daresay, Mr. Joseph, I daresay. Yes, she is still there, living in her cottage unloved and unheeded, Mr. Joseph. And may she ever continue so!"

"Oh! don't say that, dear old soul! Don't say that! Do you know, I should like to see her—I mean—meet her once again!"

Mrs. Cox was certain he was not in "his right head" as she said to herself.

"See her again! Meet her, talk to her! The woman who served ye like this! what can you be thinking of? Let me call your brother. There he is coming along the road, brown and bonny, with his wife on his arm, bless them both?"

"Did you say he was brown, Mrs. Cox? My brother brown! What a change! He looks so well then, dear old soul!"

"If you could but see him, Mr. Joseph, you would see how well."

"Well and brown! And Mildred, she is pale, I suppose, and with her eyes turned up to his and her lips brushing his shoulder every now and then—O I can see them—I suppose they go on a worse than ever."

"Indeed and they do, Mr. Joseph. After, breakfast this morning I sent them up into the drawing-room to be out of the way of the drover's meeting to be held in the bar, and when I went up to ask them about the lunch they would take with them on the river this afternoon I heard no sound like and just whispered at the door a

bit if I might come in. When I went in, there was your brother standing behind her in a chair, with all her hair down, and a brush in his hand and his wife fast asleep! He looked frightened for a minute when he saw me and I besought him to bring her to, thinking he'd mesmerized her. He'd been brushing it and playing with it and the morning over warm—she had fallen asleep. And I left them, Mr. Joseph, I left them, for they love each other so. And when I think of the honor he has done my girl, and how particular he is that she shall be called Mrs. Foxley—it—”

“Well, well, Mrs. Cox, ours is a good name, and I do not think my brother would have ever allowed any but a good girl to bear it. And if a girl is lovely and gentle and pure-minded, and innocent, and neat, and clean, and refined as your niece was, it matters not about her birth. Birth! O my dear old soul, I am sick of the word! Miss Dexter now, is a lady, you know.”

“Ay.”

“And I must see her again,” enforced Mr. Joseph, brought back to his one idea. “I must see her again.”

Mrs. Cox communicated this intelligence to her niece, Mrs. Foxley.

“I think I can understand why,” said she, lying back in her husband's arms one hot summer night under the trees at the back of the blouse. “It seems a hard wish to understand and a harder one to comply with, but it may have to be done. Dacre—”

“What my darling!”

“When are you going to tell me about your life in England and—and—about the woman who sent you out of it?”

“The woman! I never told you about a woman, child!”

“No. But I guessed. It is sure to have been a woman, Dacre.”

“Well, I don't mind when I tell you. Nothing of all that time is anything to me now. Shall I tell you now?”

“If you please, dearest Dacre. For I must be close to you when I listen to that, and must not have you see me, for I know I shall cry.”

“Dearest child! Well then, it shall be now, for you could scarcely be closer to me than you are now? And if you cry, as you must try not to do, you shall be allowed to cry here upon my breast and I will not look. I can hardly see you as it is, it is so dark. Let me think, how I shall begin. You know Joseph—our poor Joseph—is my only brother and I never had any sisters. My father—you know this too—is an English country gentleman living in one of the most beautiful seats in England. If I were to describe the old place to you, you would want to go, and I could not spare you, so I will only say—well, you have seen those photographs?”

“Yes, dearest Dacre.”

“They only give you a faint idea of what it is. It is Tudor you know—do you know what Tudor is, Mrs. Foxley—and all red brick, weathered all colors, and terraced, with lots of little windows and some big ones with stained glass in them, and urns on the terrace, and a rookery, and an old avenue of poplars, haunted too, and so on, and so on—there's no end to it, Mildred! Yes, it's a fine old place, without doubt Well, that is where I was born. I don't remember my mother. I wish I did. She died when Joseph was born, he is just four years younger than I am. Our youth was passed there—at the Manor, of course, and we had the usual small college education not extending to a university career that gentleman's sons have in England, you know. I didn't make many friends at school, and where we lived, there was no one to visit, and we had very few relations. It is quite unusual I believe for two boys to grow up as we did, in comparative isolation. My father was a kind of Dombey—you know Dombey, Mildred—wrapped up in his old place and the associations of his youth and in his family pride. The Foxleys are better born I believe than half of the aristocracy; we go back to the Conquest on my father's side—a thing which he never permits himself to forget for an instant. Well, Milly, it was a dull life for two lively, affectionate lads like Joseph and me, wasn't it, and had it not been for all this, child, nature, you know, and the trees and the streams and the out-door sports I love so well, I could never have got on at all. Then when I was nineteen—just your age, love—came a change. I, being the elder and heir to the estate was sent off to town—I mean, London, my dear—and the Continent, with a tutor. Joseph—well, I believe I have never fully understood what became of Joseph during the four years I was away, but I suppose he amused himself. He has a knack of doing that I never had, except when I am in the country. Well, this tutor wasn't a bad sort of a fellow and at first we got on splendidly, living in town in chambers, going to the plays and the opera, and dining all over, just wherever I liked or he knew, and excursions out of London, you know—oh! jolly enough for a little while! Then we went across to Paris—”

“Yes, dearest Dacre?”

Mr. Foxley stopped a moment to lift his wife's face closer to his own. He kissed it—a long long kiss that entranced them both to the degree of forgetting the story.

“If you would rather not go on—” said Mildred.

“Oh! I must now. Well, we did Paris, and then the other capitals and Nice—Nice was just then coming into vogue, and ran down into Italy—I remember I liked Genoa so much—and then we came back to Paris, for Harfleur—that was the tutor's name, and it doesn't sound like a real one, does it—preferred Paris to any other European town and of course so did I. About this time, his true character began to show itself. He went out frequently without me, smoked quite freely, would order in wine and get me to drink with him, and was very much given to calling me fresh, green, and all that you know. I began to think he was right. I was past twenty-one, and I had never even had a glimpse into the inside of life. Women, now and all that kind of thing—I was positively ignorant of—but to be sure, one quickly learns in Paris.”

For one night, Harfleur asked me in his usual sneering tone how I was going to spend my evening.

“I am going out to a charming *soirée* at the house of Madame de L'Estarre, the most charming woman in Paris,” said he.

“Then I shall accompany you,” I said, fired by his insulting tone. And I went, Mildred. I suppose I was good-looking, eh, my child—and had sufficient air of distinction about me to impress Madame de L'Estarre, for she left the crowd of waxed and perfumed Frenchmen and devoted herself entirely to me. Although she was—

beautiful—she was not tall, and I, standing at her side all that evening, never took my eyes off her dazzling face and her white uncovered bosom. In a week, my child, I had learnt to know and love every feature in that dazzling face and began to dream of the day when I should be allowed to kiss that bosom. Yes, I certainly loved her.”

“I am sure you loved her, Dacre my darling. And how could she help loving you, dear, in return?”

“Oh that is another thing entirely, quite another thing. After that night, Harfleur showed me more respect than he had done for some time previously and we began to hit it off again better. I went to her *hotel*—her house you know, every day. At first she would always receive me alone, sending anybody away who happened to be there and refusing to admit anybody who came while we were together.—It is difficult, even to my wife, to explain what kind of a woman she was. All that first time, when we would be alone, she would—make love, I suppose it must be called—with her eyes and her hands, and her very skirts and her fan, and the cushion, and the footstool. The room was always beautiful and always dim, and she would greet me with outstretched hands and a shy smile, making room for me beside her on the sofa—she always sat on a sofa. We would talk of nothing at all perhaps but look into each other's eyes, until the force of her look would draw me close, close to her till we were almost in one another's arms, and I could feel her breath coming faster every moment when just as I imagined she would sink upon my shoulder—she would draw herself up with a laugh and push me away, declaring somebody was coming. Then, if nobody came, she would go through the same farce again. This would happen perhaps two or three times a day. In the evening, I was again at her side, night after night regarding her with a devotion that amazed even my friend Harfleur.

“She treats you like a dog. It will kill you yet, George. Come away.” But of course I would not go. I accompanied her to the theatre, to the Bois, to the shops, to church—yes, even to church, Mildred, think of that—and she was very careful and circumspect and all that. I even believe as far as direct actions go, she may have been a virtuous woman, for she certainly, had no other lover when I knew her. She was a widow, enormously rich and nothing to do. Therefore, I suppose she went in for the torturing business as a profession. Her Frenchmen did not mind; that was the secret of her charm with them—so clever, they called her, but it nearly killed me, her cleverness. I grew pale and worn—sleep—I never slept. All my life I had lived without natural affection, and now I was pouring forth upon this woman the love I might have rendered friends, sister, brother, mother, as well as the passion of a young man. I say to you now, Mildred, my wife, that the woman who tramples on the passion of a young man is as bad as the man who slays the innocence of a young girl. And that's what she did. Finally, when this had lasted for a year and a half, and Harfleur had gone back to England, one day, when I was perfectly desperate and could have killed her, Milly, as she lay at full length on her damned sofa—pardon, my dear, no, don't kiss my hand, child, don't—dressed in some rose-colored stuff all trailing about her and her hands clasped under her head, I fell by her on my knees and besought her to tell me what she meant and if she ever could care for me. I give you my word, my dear, and with my hand over your innocent heart, you know I dare not lie—in all that year and a half I had not even touched her lips. You cannot, happily imagine the torture of such a position.

Well, that day, she bent over to me on her side and said “What do you want, is it to kiss me? Chut! wait for that till we are married.”

“Do you mean to marry me?” I gasped out. “She said 'yes,' Mildred, and brushed my cheek with her lips. What do you think I did then, Mildred?”

“How can I tell, dearest Dacre!”

“I fainted, dearest. Think of it. But I believed her, you see, and the revulsion was too great. In a moment or two I came to myself with the sounds of laughter in my ears. I was on her sofa—that damned sofa—pardon again, my dear—and she was standing with three of her cursed Frenchmen around her all laughing fit to kill themselves. I saw through it all in a moment. They had been on the other side of the curtains. I went straight up to her and said 'Did you say that you were ready to become my wife?' She only laughed and the men too with her. Then I struck her—on her white breast, Milly—and struck the three Frenchmen on the face one after the other. They were so astonished that not one of them moved, and I parted the curtains, and left the house.”

“Did you never see her again?”

“Never. I left Paris considerably wiser than I had entered it and avoided society generally. I had one year's life in London, and was considered no end of a catch by the mammas, I believe, but you can imagine I did not easily fall a victim. No. That is all my story, my dear, all at least that has been unguessed at by you. My health was very bad at home and beyond my love of sport I cared for nothing. I grew to hate my life in England, even England, though she had done me no harm. Finally, I quarrelled with my father who married again, a woman we both disliked, Joseph and I, and so we turned our backs on the Old World and came out to Canada and to—*you*.”

Mildred still lay, crying softly, in her husband's arms. “I had sometimes dreamt,” continued Mr. Foxley, “of meeting some young girl who could love me and on whose innocence and sweetness I could rest and whom besides I should really love. It did not dawn upon me when I first saw you, that *you* were the one I wanted, for we must confess, dear, that you were very plump and rather pink and spoke—”

“Why, Dacre, how can you? I was only fifteen! Cruel!”

“Yes, I know. And how you changed! Now, you are so different that it is not the same Mildred at all. Such is the power of a true love, my child, and we must always be happy,—ours is one of those marriages.”

Theirs was indeed one of those marriages. Mr. Foxley took to farming and enriched his purse as well as his health. Mr. Joseph had an interview with Miss Dexter the nature of which I am not going to reveal, but which resulted in a placid intimacy between the two to the surprise of all save Milly who always said that “she thought she knew why.” Miss Dexter frequently accompanied blind Mr. Joseph on his lonely walks or would sit with him when the others were out, as none but he cared to meet her. Towards his death which occurred in about four years time, she was with him constantly, and died herself in a fortnight after, having left in her will, all her maiden belongings to her “good friend, Farmer Wise.” The farmer was not much moved when informed of this fact, so incomprehensible to the rest of the village. He had always kept the little bottle with

its cruel label, and had always feared and avoided poor, proud, foolish, wicked Charlotte Dexter since that Saturday night.

As for Mr. George and his wife, I see a vision of a successful and happy husband and father in the prime of early old age (which means, that at fifty-three one is not old with a young wife and three sweet children) and of Mildred, who is always a little pale, has her eyes constantly turned up to her husband's with her lips brushing her shoulder every now and then.

Still?

Ay, still and forever. And so ends my sketch of how the Mr. Foxleys came, stayed and never went away.

The Gilded Hammock.

Who does not know the beautiful Miss De Grammont? Isabel De Grammont, who lives by herself and is sole mistress of the brown-stone mansion in Fifth Avenue, the old family estate on the Hudson, the villa at Cannes, the first floor of a magnificently decayed palace at Naples, who has been everywhere, seen everything and—cared for nobody?

She reclines now in her latest craze—a hammock made of pure gold wire, fine and strong and dazzling as the late October sun shines upon it stretched from corner to corner of her regally-furnished drawing-room. Two gilded tripods securely fastened to the floor hold the ends of the hammock in which she lies. The rage for yellow holds her as it holds everyone who loves beauty and light and sunshine. Cushions of yellow damask support her head, and a yellow tiger-skin is under her feet. The windows are entirely hidden with thick amber draperies, and her own attire is a clinging gown of some soft silk of a deep creamy tint that as she sways to and fro in the hammock is slightly lifted, displaying a petticoat of darker tint, and Russian slippers of bronzed kid. Amber, large clear and priceless, gleams in its soft waxy glow in her hair, on her neck, round her waist, where it clasps a belt of thick gold cloth and makes a chain for a fan of yellow feathers.

Because you see, although it is autumn, it is very warm all through Miss De Grammont's mansion, as she insists on fires, huge bonfires, you may call them, of wood and peat in every room and on every hearth. Out of the fires grew the desire for the hammock.

"Why," says Miss De Grammont, with a faint yawn, "why must I only lie in a hammock in the Summer, and then, where nobody can see me? I will have a hammock made for the winter, to lie in and watch my fires by."

And so she did, for money is law and beauty creates duty, and one day, when the fashionable stream, the professional cliques and the artistic hangers-on called upon her "from three to six," they were confronted by the vision of an exquisitely beautiful woman dressed in faint yellow with great bunches of primroses in brass bowls from Morocco on a table by her side, who received them in a "gilded hammock," with her feet on a tiger-skin, and her chestnut hair catching a brighter tinge from the flames of her roaring fire, and the sunlight as it came in through the amber medium of the silken-draped windows.

The tea was Russian, like the slippers, and the butler who presented it was a mysterious foreigner who spoke five languages. The guests all wondered, as people always did, at De Grammont. Nobody knew quite what she had done with herself since she had been left an orphan at the age of nineteen. She suddenly shot up into a woman, beautiful, with that patrician and clear-cut loveliness with yet a touch of the *bohémienne* about it which only *les belles Américaines* know. Then she took unto herself a maid, two dogs, and three Saratoga trunks and went over to Europe wandering about everywhere. At Cannes, she met and subjugated the heir to the crown; of this friendship the tiger-skin remained as a *souvenir*. The heir to the crown was not generous. Next came various members of embassies, all proud, all poor, and all frantically in love. She laid all manner of traps for her lovers and discovered in nearly every case that these men were after her money. A certain Russian Grand Duke, from whom had come some superb amber ornaments—he being a man of more wealth than the others—never forgave her the insult she offered him. He sent her these ornaments from the same shop in Paris that he ordered—at the same time—a diamond star for a well-known ballet dancer, and the two purchases were charged to his account. Through some stupidity, the star came to her. She ordered her horses and drove the same day to the jewelers, who was most humble and anxious to retrieve his error. He showed her the amber. She examined it carefully. "It is genuine, and very fine," she said gravely. "I have lived in Russia and I know. I am very fond of amber. I will buy this myself from you, and you may inform His Highness of the fact."

The delighted shop-keeper did not ask her very much more than its genuine value and next day all Paris knew of the transaction and flocked to the Opera to see her in the ornaments which had cost the Russian Duke his friendship for the bearer. But though eccentric, impulsive and domineering, no whisper had ever attached itself to her name. On her return to her native New York, was she not welcomed, fêted, honored, besieged with invitations everywhere? People felt she was different from the girl who went away. *She* had been undecided, emotional, a trifle vain, self-conscious, guilty of moods—no small offence in society; this glorious creature was a queen, a goddess, always calm, always serene, always a trifle bored, always superbly the same. Her house she re-furnished altogether. The three Saratoga trunks were now represented by nine or ten English ones, dress baskets, large packing cases, and one mysterious long box which when opened contained several panels of old Florentine carved wood-work which interested all New York immensely. Pictures and tapestries, armor and screens, and a gate of mediæval wrought iron were all among her art treasures. The foreign butler was her *chargé d'affaires*, and managed everything most wisely and even economically. He engaged a few servants in New York, her maid, housekeeper and the two housemaids she had brought out with her. Her house was the perfect abode of the most faultless æstheticism. It was

perfection in every detail and in the *ensemble* which greeted the eye, the ear, every sense, and all mental endowments, from the vestibule in marble and rugs to the inner boudoir and sanctum of the mistress of the house, hung with pale rose and straw-color in mingled folds of stamped Indian silks, priceless in color and quality. Two Persian cats adorned the lounge and one of her great dogs—a superb mastiff—occupied the rug before the door night and day, almost without rest.

Such were the general surroundings of Isabel de Grammont. Art and letters, music and general culture were inseparable from the daily life of such a woman as well as immediate beautiful presences, so that into this faultless house came everything new that the world offered in books, magazines, songs and new editions. Thanks to European travel, there was no language she could not read, no modern work she had not studied. Also came to her receptions the literary lions of New York. Aspiring journalists, retiring editors, playwrights and composers, a few actors and crowds of would-be poets flocked to the exquisite drawing-rooms hung with yellow, wherein the owner of so much magnificence lounged in her golden hammock. Sonnets were written of her descriptive of orioles flying in the golden west, and newspaper paragraphs indited weekly in her praise referred to her as the “Semiramus of a new and adoring society world.” Baskets of flowers, tubs of flowers, barrels of flowers were sent weekly to her address, and she was solicited—on charitable, fashionable, religious, communistic, orthodox and socialistic grounds as lady patroness of this or member of that and subscriber to the other. In short, she was a success, and as nothing succeeds like success, we may take it that as the months rolled on, and the great house still maintained its superb hospitality and Miss De Grammont still appeared in her sumptuous carriage either smothered in furs or laces according to the seasons, she still maintained in like manner her position in society and her right to the homage and admiration of all classes.

But this was not the case. Even a worm will turn and public opinion is very often a little vernacular, let us say. And it happened, that public opinion in the case of Miss De Grammont, began to turn, to raise itself up in fact and look a little about it and beyond it as we have all seen worms do—both in cheeses and out of them—when the fact that she lay most of the time in a gilded hammock swung in front of her drawing-room fire was announced from the pulpits of society journals. It may have been that her friends were devoid of imagination, that they were cold, prudish, satirical, unpoetical, unaesthetic, anything we like to call them, that will explain their action in the matter, for they clearly, one and all, disliked the notion of the hammock. One spoke of it disparagingly to another, who took it up and abused it to a third, who described it to a friend who “wrote for the papers.” This gifted gentleman who lodged with a lady of the same temper and edited a fashion journal, concocted with her help a description of the thing which soon found its way into his paper and was then copied into hers. The public grew uneasy. It would swallow any story it was told about the Heir Apparent, for instance and a Russian Grand Duke—is it not the sublime prerogative of American women to dally with such small game as those gentlemen—but it kicked against the probability of such an actual fact as the hammock already described which seemed too ridiculous a whim to possess any real existence. However, the tongues of the fashionable callers, the professional cliques and the artistic hangers-on coincided in the affair to that extent that soon the existence of the gilded hammock was established and from that time Miss De Grammonts' popularity was on the wane. Dowagers looked askance and matrons posed in a patronizing manner, the flippant correspondents of society journals and the compilers of sonnets in which that very hammock had been eulogized and metaphored to distraction now waited upon her, if at all in an entirely different manner. Strange how all classes began to recall the many peculiar or unaccountable things she had done, the extraordinary costumes she had worn, the fact that she lived alone, and the other fact that she made so few friends. From aspersions cast on her house, her equipage, her dresses, there came to be made strictures on her private character, her love affairs, her friends and career in Europe, her *ménage* at present in New York and the members thereof. Finally public opinion finding that all this made very little impression outwardly, upon the regal disdain of Miss De Grammont in her carriage or in her Opera-stall, however she might writhe and chafe when safely ensconced within that rose and straw-colored boudoir, made up its mind that the secret of the whole three volume novel, the key to the entire mystery lay with the—butler.

That black-moustached functionary, they whispered, had his mistress in his power. He had been a courier, and she had fallen in love with him abroad. Or he had been a well-known conjurer and coerced her through means little less than infernal to run away with him. He was a mesmerist, so they said, and could send her into trances at will. Then he had been the famous Man Milliner of Vienna, whose disappearance one fine day with the entire trousseau of an Austrian Grand Duchess had been a nine days' wonder. These dresses she wore, strange mixtures never seen on earth before of violet and blue, pink and pea-green, rose and lemon, were the identical ones prepared for the Grand Duchess. Finally, he was an Italian Prince rescued from a novel of “Ouida's,” whom she had found living in exile, having to suffer punishment for some fiendish crime perpetrated in the days of his youth.

When the stories had reached this point, Miss De Grammont, to whom they were conveyed through papers, notes from “confidential friends,” her maid and others, wrote a letter one day directed to the:

REV. LUKE FIELDING,
Pastor, Congregational Church,
Phippsville, Vermont.

A week or ten days after, Miss De Grammont, seated—not, in the gilded hammock though it still swung gracefully before the glowing fire—but in the cushions which graced her window looking on the front of the house, saw a gentleman arrive in a cab. She rose hastily and opened the door of the room herself for her visitor. This was the Rev. Luke Fielding, a gentleman of the severest Puritanical cut and a true New Englander to boot. With his hat in his hand he advanced with an expression on his face of the deepest amazement and dismay which increased momentarily as he saw not only the gorgeous coloring and appointments of the room but the fair figure of its occupant. To be sure, she had with infinite difficulty selected the plainest dress she could find in her wardrobe to receive him in, a gown of dark green velvet made very simply, and high to the throat. But alas! there was no disguising the priceless lace at her wrists, or the gems that glittered on her firm white hands.

“My dear cousin!” said the lady, giving him both her hands.

“My dear cousin Isabel,” returned the minister, laying his hat down on a plush-covered chair on which it

looked curiously out of place, and taking her hands in his.

"My dear cousin Isabel, after so many years!"

"It is only eight years, cousin," returned the lady.

"True," replied the minister gravely. "Yet to one like myself that seems a long time. You sent for me, cousin." His gaze wandered round the room and then fastened once more upon Miss De Grammont.

"Yes," she said faintly. "I could not tell you all in my letter. I wanted—I want still—somebody's help."

"And it is very natural you should apply for mine, cousin, I will do anything I can. I have"—the minister grew sensibly more severe, more grave—"I have this day, on the train, seen a paper—a new kind of paper to me, I confess,—a *Society Journal* it calls itself, in which a name is mentioned. Is your—trouble—connected with that?"

Miss De Grammont blushed deeply. "Yes. That is my name. I would not have troubled you—but I must ask your advice, for you are the only one of the family, of my mother's family—" Her voice broke.

"Yes, cousin, you are right."

The minister rose and stood up before her, a stern though not unsympathetic figure in his stiff black coat and iron gray hair. "I know what you are going to ask me to do. You will ask me to see these people, these editors, reviewers, whatever they are, to talk to them, to impress upon them what you are and who you are, and who your mother was, and what is the end of the base man who imagines lies and the end of all the workers of iniquity. You will ask me to tell them that it is all false, all abominable intrigue and treachery and I shall demand in your name and in my own as your only near relative and a minister of the Gospel, an apology. It is but jealousy, cousin. Forgive me, but you are too beautiful and too young to live alone in such a house, in such a manner. You must marry. Or else you must give up such a life. It maketh enemies within your gates and behold! there shall be no man to say a good thing of thee!"

The minister had lifted up his voice as if he had been in the pulpit and for one instant laid his hand on his cousin's hair. Then he went back to his seat.

Miss De Grammont was profoundly moved. Great tears coursed down her cheeks and until they had stopped she could not trust herself to speak.

"The paper!" she said dismally. "You have seen a paper, you say, with—my—my name in it! There is nothing new in that. I have been in the papers for months past. I am never out of them. And this one says—"

The minister drew it out of his pocket.

"That with you, in this house lives, in the character of a butler, an exiled Italian Prince who committed grave personal and political offences many years ago and was sent to prison. That you are married to him. My dear cousin, it is monstrous!"

Miss De Grammont took out her handkerchief already wet through with her tears and pressed it to her eyes.

"It is not monstrous," she said, "but it is most extraordinary. He *is* an Italian Prince, and I *am* married to him."

To use a hackneyed phrase, the room swam around Mr. Fielding for an instant. When he recovered he could only sit and gaze at the beautiful woman before him. The details of village life, in Vermont had not educated him up to exigencies of this sort. A fearful chasm seemed to have opened under his feet, and he began to comprehend dimly that there were other lives than his own and that of his estimable but commonplace wife being daily lived out in this world.

"Yes," said Miss De Grammont, a little more bravely now that the worst shock was over. "That is quite true. And the extraordinary part of it is that they can only have guessed at it; evolved it, as it were from the depths of their inner consciousness, they can't possibly have discovered it. It isn't known anywhere, save perhaps to one or two in Italy."

"In Italy," murmured the Rev. Mr. Fielding. "You met him in Italy? And why keep it secret? My dear cousin, you have made a great mistake. And all this sad and singular story is true?"

"Very nearly true. All but the offences. They never happened."

"Your husband is not a political character then?"

"Oh! not in the least. He knows nothing of politics. My José! he couldn't hurt anything, moreover!"

"José is a Spanish name, surely," said Mr. Fielding.

"His mother was a Castilian, fair and proud as only a Castilian can be. She named him José—But he has other names, three, all Italian—Antonio—"

"I see," said the minister dryly. "I am sorry that I cannot give you all the sympathy in this matter that you may desire, but you have entered on a course of action which is perplexing at least, to say no more. I feel, my dear cousin, that as a—married woman—your confidences are—ill placed and I must ask you to withdraw them. You must settle this matter with your—ahem—husband." Mr. Fielding took up his hat and in another moment would have been gone forever, but that turning at the door he saw such intense supplication in his cousin's eyes that his orthodox heart melted.

"Forgive me cousin," he said coming back. "There may be still a way out of it. Will you tell me all?" Miss De Grammont then related her different heart episodes abroad, entanglements, half-engagements, desperate flirtations and all the rest of it to this sober, black-coated gentleman. Such a revelation poured forth in truly feminine style nearly drove him away the second time, but true to his word, he remained nevertheless, sitting bolt upright in a padded chair only meant for lounging. Finally, she told him of her snares to catch lovers and how one day she was caught herself by the dark-browed, eloquent Prince Corunna.

She fell in love herself for the first time in her life, and he with her, so he declared. But he was miserably poor and with the pride of a Castilian would not woo her because of her money. She hated it, yet she could not live without it.

The minister smiled pityingly.

However she made him marry her, and then proposed as a test, in which he joyfully acquiesced, that he should make himself of use to her, be in fact, her major-domo, steward, butler, amanuensis, anything and everything.

"It is most unprecedented," sighed the minister. "That a man with Castilian blood in his veins—"

Miss De Grammont interrupted him. "He was happier so, dear cousin. But I—I grew most unhappy. And since I have been here, I have been very unhappy still. We are both in a false position and now—thanks to that unlucky hammock—our secret has become common property."

"The hammock!" said Mr. Fielding. "What has that got to do with it? It is a pretty idea."

"So I think," said Miss De Grammont, delighted beyond measure. Then she told him about the paragraphs, large and small, the confidential friends, the small beginnings that had lead insensibly up to the culminating point—that of scandal.

"I am being dropped gradually," she said.

"Of course you are," said the minister. "Of course you are. Soon you will be—forgive me—a dead letter. There is only one thing to be done and that I can do at once. A letter must be written to this paper, stating calmly in as few words as possible that this paragraph is true, that you *are* married to Prince—ah—Corunna, that he *is* a political offender and for that reason the marriage *was* kept secret, but that now of course as informers must already have given the secret away, you are obliged to endorse it yourself."

"But José is not a political offender! Never did anything wrong in his life!"

"Of course not," said the minister. "Some of us others, even clergymen, are not so fortunate. Now that must be included, else there is no good reason for having kept your marriage secret. Other explanations will not be taken. Besides this will entitle you to sympathy at once. Will you write the letter and I can leave it at the office for you? There is time for me to do that before my train starts."

Miss De Grammont wrote her letter as dictated by her cousin. He put it in his pocket and rose to go.

"Will you not stay and see my husband?" she said timidly.

"Thank you, no." returned Mr. Fielding. "I haven't met many foreigners. I don't think, perhaps, we should get on. Down in Phippsville—well, my circle is so different from yours, Isabel. It is the fashion I hear to live abroad now, and desert America—at least to depreciate it, and not to care about its opinion—but that hasn't spread yet to our little village. It seems as if it might have been better for instance, had you stayed in Europe. You see, having married an Italian, all this trouble would have been avoided—I mean—it could have gone on over there—but now—well, riches are a snare, my dear cousin, as you have by this time found. Good-bye, dear cousin, and God be with you."

When a letter addressed to the editor of the Society Journal appeared the next day signed Isabel Corunna (née De Grammont) with its paralysing statement in a few concise words, New York was startled to its foundation. Public opinion which for a week had been at the culminating point of distrust, malevolence and resentment, turned the corner in a moment and for the moment believed implicitly in the faith of the lady it had abandoned. The greatest sympathy was shown Madame La Princesse Corunna, or Princess Corunna, or Miss De Grammont that was, or whatever her friends chose to call her. The butler disappeared for ever and the Prince came in. It was a transformation scene equal to Beauty and the Beast. Dark-browed and eloquent as ever, the Prince was a social success whenever he chose to be, but as time went on, he and his wife became more and more absorbed in each other and the world saw little of either of them. For a time he posed as a political offender which gave his wife no end of amusement. They were so far reinstated into public favor that the hammock—source of mingled joy and woe—was again considered as a thing of beauty and a thing to be imitated. There are a dozen such hammocks now in New York City.

But there are still a few ill-natured people, dowagers, matrons, an old love or two, and a handful of shrivelled spinsters who declare that the Prince is no Prince at all, but a Pastrycook.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CROWDED OUT! AND OTHER SKETCHES ***

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