

"Wait. Do not go for a moment. Let me speak to you. Remember how long I have done without seeing you."

"Oh, I only came in a moment because I was curious."

"Then stay a moment because you are merciful."

"But I must go back to the convent, *Sieur des Ormeaux*," she urged, her throat swelling, her face filling with blood. "Because ——"

"Because what?"

"Because I must go back to the convent. It is the best place for me, *monsieur*. And you will soon forget."

The two poor things stood trembling, though *Dollard's* face gathered splendor.

"*Claire*, you are mine. You know that you are mine! This is love! O saints!"

He threw himself on his knees before her without a thought of any spectator, his sword clanking against the flags of the hearth.

"*Monsieur* ——"

"Say 'My husband!'"

"My husband," she did whisper; and at that word he rose up and took her in his arms.

V.

JACQUES HAS SCRUPLES.



ALL other business in the hall was suspended. Perhaps the fire and success of *Dollard's* courtship kindled envy in ruder breasts; but in *Mother Mary's* it kindled that beacon which a vestal keeps ready against the inroads of the cloister's despoilers.

Pallid and stately she placed herself before the pair. And during this conference she made dabs forward with her head, as a poor hen may be seen to do when the hawk has stolen her chicken.

"We did not understand, *monsieur*, that the commandant of *Montreal* sought a wife."

"Reverend mother," said *Dollard*, shielding the side of *Claire's* face with his hand as he held her head against him, "I never dared seek such a blessing as this. The saints have given it to me."

"But mademoiselle is not here to be married, monsieur."

"I understand that, reverend mother."

"And do you understand that she is the cousin of the Bishop of New France?"

"All Mademoiselle Laval's history is known to me. I have adored her a life-time."

"And was it to meet this young seignior, mademoiselle, that you insisted on coming into the wife market?"

"Reverend mother," replied Dollard, himself glowing as he felt Claire's face burn under his hand, "blame the saints, not us. We have been flung together from the ends of the earth. It is a blessed miracle."

Mother Mary made a dab with her head which meant, "Do not be deceived, my son."

Dollard understood a movement Claire made, and gave her his arm to lead her away.

"And the demoiselle takes this young commandant for her husband?"

"I do, reverend mother," the demoiselle replied, lifting up a countenance set in the family cast of stern stubbornness.

"It will be my duty to send an instant message to the bishop."

"The bishop may still be found at the council. I have just been with him," said Dollard. "Let your

messenger make haste, reverend mother, for I leave Quebec directly."

"Then there is no need of haste. The *Sieur des Ormeaux* can present his suit to the bishop next time he comes to Quebec."

"I shall never come to Quebec again, reverend mother."

Claire looked above the level of her own eyes to understand this riddle.

Dollard was scarcely twenty-five years old. His crystal love, so strong that it had him in possession, shone through a face set in lines of despair.

"Surely you can come again in a week?"

"My darling, it may take nearly that long to reach Montreal. How little you know of distances in this savage country!"

"Monsieur, I will send for the bishop," said Mother Mary of the Incarnation.

As her black robe moved away, the other people in the hall, seeing nothing further to gaze at, resumed their wooing and bargaining.

"What did you mean when you said you shall never come to Quebec again?" inquired Claire.

Dollard penetrated her with his look.

"Will you marry me this moment?"

"Monsieur, how can I marry you this moment?"

"By going to the notary, who has a table downstairs, and afterward to Father de Casson, who, for-

tunately, is waiting for me in the cathedral now. I see what will happen if I wait to demand you in marriage of the bishop. There will be delays and obstacles, if not a flat refusal."

"The commandant truly takes me for a king's girl," she said, her teeth showing in laughter, though her black eyelashes started into crescent-like prominence on whitening cheeks.

"Have you I will, however I take you; the whole world shall not prevent that now. And listen: suppose I had taken vows,—wait!—honorable vows. It will surely be as well with you after my pledges are fulfilled as it was before we met here. This hard convent life in New France, you cannot endure that. You will be the lady of my poor seignory, and perhaps I may add some glory to the name. My Claire, do you love me?"

"Sieur des Ormeaux, is not that enough to admit in one day?"

"No, it is not. When was a day ever granted to us before? If we lose this point of time, the dead wall of separation will rise again, and I shall be robbed of you forever."

"But why can you not come back again?"

"Because the bounds are set for me. Yet, if I could come again, would I prosper any better? Claire, if my suit is even listened to, there will be messages to the king, and to the Montmorency in

France, and a year's or two years' delay. As for me, I shall be dead long before then. We can go to the notary this moment. We can go to the cathedral to Father de Casson. We can go forthwith to my boat and start up the St. Lawrence. O my love!"—Dollard's voice was searching and deep in pleading,—
"can you not stoop to this haste for me? I shall carry you into hardship, but carry you like the cross. While we stand here the abbess sends for the bishop; the bishop comes and says, 'Go back, fair cousin, into the convent; and you, Dollard, whoever you may be, get yourself off to Montreal.' I could not then urge you against your kinsman's authority. But now the word is unspoken. Shall we stand here and wait until it is spoken?"

"I see no reason why we should, monsieur," she replied, pink as a flower.

"Then you will consent to be married at once?"

"There is, I believe, but one staircase," said Claire. "It would not be pleasant to meet the bishop or Mother Mary of the Incarnation as we go down."

"Let us make haste, therefore," he deduced from her evasive reply; and haste they made, so that several pairs were kept waiting by the notarial table while the commandant was served.

The cathedral of Notre Dame in Quebec stood, and still stands, on the opposite side of the square. It was a massive pile of masonry, compared to the

cabins of Lower Town, and held its cross far up in their northern sky. Within were holy dimness and silence, broken only by the footfalls of occasionally coming and going devotees. Though not yet rich in altars and shrines, paintings, and glittering crystal and metal, the young cathedral had its sacred saint's joint or other worthy relic, and its humble offerings of tinsel and ribbon-tied paper flowers. The merchant people from Lower Town, and peasants from adjacent river cotes and Laval's great seigniory, came here to bathe their souls in thoughts of heaven, and to kneel on the pavement beside governor or high dame.

At this hour of morning only two persons sat in the church as if waiting for some kind of service.

There were three nuns, indeed, kneeling in a row before the chancel rail, their three small red noses just appearing beyond their black veils—noses expressing quiet sanctity. And a confessional was perhaps occupied.

But the pair who waited were neither nuns nor penitents. They had taken the usual moisture from the font of holy water, wherein many devout fingers had deposited considerable sediment. They had bowed towards the altar and told their prayers from station to station, and were now anxious to be joined in matrimony lest Dollard should arrive and cut off all chance of collecting the governor's bounty by his impatient haste.

Still, as no priest appeared, Jacques and Louise sat in repose with their eyes cast down. The feverish activity of this new world would never touch their veins or quicken the blood of any of their descendants. How many generations before them had been calmed into this pastoral peace on sun-soaked lands! Years of dwelling among pines and mountains and azure lakes, of skimming on snow-shoes over boundless winter whiteness, of shooting rapids, and of standing on peaks, would all fail to over-exhilarate blood so kindly bovine and unhurried in its action.

The penitent came out of the confessional closet and stalked away—an Algonquin Indian, with some slight smell of rum about him and a rebuked expression of countenance. A fringe or thread of his blanket trailed on the pavement as he went. Then Dollier de Casson, who never omitted confessing any sinner that appealed to him, strode out of the confessional himself on gigantic soles, though with the soft tread which nature and training impart to a priest. He saw the waiting couple, and as serenely as he would have prepared for such an office in some river cabin, he took his stole out of a large inner pocket of his cassock and invested himself in it.

During this pause Dollard came hastily into the cathedral with a muffled lady on his arm. He took her at once to Father de Casson, and beckoned Jacques to follow them to the altar.

Jacques followed with Louise, his face waxing in anxiety, until a heavy heart brought down his knees with a bump behind Dollard and that unknown dame.

"How is this, my son?" inquired Father de Casson of Dollard as he rested his eyes on the commandant's bride.

"Father, let the service go on at once, and I will make all due explanation when there is more time. The civil marriage is completed."

Father de Casson took his book to administer the sacrament of marriage to these two pairs, when Jacques, walking on his knees, brought himself behind Dollard's ear.

"Father," he whispered to the priest, the hisses of his suppressed voice scattering through the place, "I have on my mind what must first be said to my master."

"When did ye all confess last?" inquired Dollier de Casson.

"Father," urged Dollard, "believe me, we are all prepared for the sacrament of marriage."

"But, m'sieur," anxiously hissed Jacques at his ear, "I did not know you were going to take a wife too."

"Suppose you did n't know," exclaimed Dollard, turning towards him in impatience; "what is it to you?"

"You will have to change your will, m'sieur."

"Certainly I will have to change my will; but you shall not be injured."

"That's not it, m'sieur," persisted Jacques. "Whatever is right to you will be right to me. But here's this girl. I've nearly promised her the seigniory, and what will she say when she's cut out of it?"

"Get back to your place and let the service go on," said Dollard, half rising in menace.

"But I ought to take her out and explain this to her first," insisted Jacques. "Then if she chooses to go into the marriage she can blame no one but herself."

"Will you get back to your place and cease your interruption," whispered Dollard, with fierceness, "or must I take you by the neck and toss you out of the cathedral?"

"No, m'sieur, I'll not interrupt it. I'll marry her. But what she will do with me afterwards is the load upon my mind."

So, rubbing his knees on the pavement, Jacques returned like a crab to his immovable bride, and dejectedly bore his part in the service. Yet before this ordeal of marriage was over, the pastoral peace had returned to his countenance, and solemn relief appeared in his eyes. As Louise Bibelot became transmuted into Louise Goffinet, he said within himself:

"Now, if she be well contented with the commandant's change of mind, all will go right. But if she turns rebellious at these new orders, threatening to desert, and wanting the entire earth with the seigniority thrown in, there'll be only one thing for me to do. I'll whip her!"

VI.

A RIVER CÔTE.

THE four Huron Indians, cut off abruptly from the luxury of a Lower Town drinking-shop, sat in sulky readiness with their grasp upon the oars. Dollard was at the stern of the boat beside Claire, whom he had wrapped in bear-skins, because at high noon the April air was chill upon the river.

Dollier de Casson had likewise taken to his canoe with his servant and pack of sacred utensils, and this small craft rested against the larger one to resist the current's dragging. Dollard's rope yet held to the shore. His impatient eyes watched Quebec Heights for the appearance of Jacques and Louise.

Water lapping the two boats brought them together with faint jars and grindings of the edges. Dollier