

UNTIL DEATH.

Carve not upon a stone when I am dead
The praises which remorseful mourners
give
To woman's graves—a tardy recompense—
But speak them while I live.
Heap not the heavy marble on my head,
To shut away the sunshine and the dew;
Let small blooms grow there, and let grasses
wave,
And rain-drops filter through.

Thou wilt meet many fairer and more gay
Than I; but, trust me, thou canst never
find
One who will love and serve thee night
and day
With a more single mind.

Forget me when I die! The violets
Above my rest will blossom just as blue,
Nor miss thy tears; even Nature's self
forgets;
But while I live be true!

A DAY IN TADOUSSAC.

When the head of the shipping firm of Freytein, Wall et Cie, in Montreal sent young Noel as their agent along the lower St. Lawrence, the other partners grumbled loudly. They were shrewd Americans; Noel a mere lad, Canadian-French, gay, crochety, wordy. He had, too, heavy sums to collect, and there was an ugly story about that his father had been a professional gambler.

Pierre Noel was now old and imbecile, but his son persisted in taking him with him everywhere, and paid him an exaggerated respect. Wall et Cie. grew very uneasy about their money. Blood, they said, would tell at last. But M. Freytein was obstinate in his likings; he would not recall the lad. All they could do was to send the younger Wall to look him up now and then, and to take a rigid account of his receipts.

It never occurred to Louis Noel that he was suspected. Nothing short of a blow on the face would convince that careless fellow that anybody was his enemy. He made his headquarters at the lonely village of Tadoussac for a reason, and he supposed the same reason brought James Wall there.

The two men, one August afternoon, met in the orchard of an old pension behind the village. The wind was frosty, and Noel brought a bench out from under the trees into the open sunshine, for a young girl who was with them.

James Wall sat down upon it beside her, crossed his legs comfortably, drew out the Quebec paper, and looked at the quotations in lumber. Noel walked away. He could not come near Hester Page to-day. She had dropped a word or two to him last night, a mere nothing when one repeated it, yet very different from the cool, amused criticism with which she met him heretofore. He has repeated the words a thousand times to himself to-day. Could it be?

He could not speak to her before Wall. He felt as if he must cry out with the sudden madness of hope that sent the blood through his body like a flame. He wandered about irresolutely, a cricket chirping in the stubble counted off the long minutes; far away swelled and sank the low chanting in the church. Hester's fingers still went in and out of that wondrous net, but they shook now—she could not see her work. It seemed to her as if all had been already said between them.

"Hester," he broke out at last, "you must have known it this long time! I suppose it seems like mad folly to you. I know! I'm only Louis Noel. I'm a headlong, good-for-nothing fellow! But—" He caught her hand and stroked it passionately in his cold fingers.

He did not answer. He rose slowly, and leaning against a tree, looked steadily down into her face. She saw how he trembled, though she did not raise her eyes. The very wind was still. "It is time for our walk, my son," he said, speaking the pure French of the old families of Quebec.

Louis, with the smile still on his face, placed a chair. "We will talk a little first, father." Standing behind him, his hands on his shoulders, he glanced at the clock. Not an hour!

"If he frightened the old man he could discover nothing. He talked of indifferent matters, and then said:

"How did you amuse yourself to-day, sir?"

"With my music, Louis, and I strolled across the mountains."

"With these also?" taking from a drawer a pack of greasy cards. M. Noel started up pale and trembling as a guilty child.

"They are not mine! They were lent to me, I only play a little game of solitaire."

"Why, assuredly! Do you ever wager with yourself, sir—one hand against the other?"

"Why, I never tried that!" chuckling, delighted. "I wager with Jaques when we play. A trifle—bah!"

"And the money you play with? You hide it as you used to do? Here—there—where Jaques cannot find it?"

M. Noel nodded complacently. "Trust me for that. Nobody will ever find it. Why, there are places among the rocks—"

Louis looked out at the vast stretch of mountain ledges over which his father had wandered that day. The clock ticked faster.

"Father," he said, coming in front of him.

"My son! Who has hurt you?"

The gentle face was full of wild terror.

"What have they done to you? You never looked like that in your life, Louis."

"Never mind. It's all right, father, all right," kneeling down before him and soothing him. He thought if he told him the truth surely God would waken some spark of intelligence in the poor dead brain to help him. The hour was nearly over. His strait was desperate.

"There was some money in a package in my desk, father. It is gone. Do you know where it is?"

The tenderness faded out of the blue eyes. They grew by turns perplexed, vacant, then cunning. "Ah, Louis! You want to find out my hiding-places to store your money. Val Val! We old people have our little secrets, eh?" clucking with his tongue.

Noel started up. "Oh, for God's sake! You are my father! Be a man again! Come back this once to save me!"

"That's a fine preacher," said the old man. "Got a mouth like a stove door. Got a devilish sight more appetite than religion. Did you see him make a pass at that stool? Wonder the hogs don't squeal when he comes around."

"Louis was no fool. He saw how he could shelter himself by leaving the crime where it undoubtedly belonged. It would probably be condemned as the act of an imbecile. He threw his arm with a shudder around the old man and reverently kissed the gray head.

"Do not be frightened, father," he said gently; "nothing shall harm you." A moment later Hester heard his firm steps without rose. "You have found it?"

"Noel! he called; "here, Noel!" It was just as well to let her know their relative positions, and that this scampish fellow, whose infatuation for her was the talk of the village, was only the paid servant of the firm. "I wish you to finish that report. I start for home to-night. By the way, I will take all your collections with me."

Noel did not move.

"D'ye hear? See it at once."

"Chut! chut! no hurry."

Louis lounged over the low stone wall, looking down the mountain. Below him was the uneven street of Tadoussac, cut through beetling gray cliffs; the old cottages, perched here and there, each sending out through its steep red or yellow or tinned roof a sleepy drift of smoke. Lights shone through the windows of the little ancient church; the door was open; he could see Grignez, the fat beadle, climbing into his high seat, then came Father Mathieu up the hill, half a dozen children of the inhabitants, with their wax-like figures and glittering black eyes, tugging at his gown.

At the foot of the hill rolled the silent, fathomless tide of the Saguenay—that mystery of the North, black as the line drawn by death through the live beauty and comfort of the hills and village. Just then the notes of a French horn filled the air with a melancholy sobbing. Louis gave a quick nod of satisfaction. That was his father; he always knew that the old man was happy as long as he was filling the world with his melodious piping. Some young

fellow—his comrades—on the pier caught sight of Noel.

"Hi! hi! Louis!" they called. He shouted back, waving his hat to Pere Matthieu, who laughed and nodded. Two Sisters of Mercy, pausing deprecatingly in their black robes to the church, glanced furtively up and smiled to each other. The whole village knew and liked the merry fellow and the old father of whom he was so fond.

The gate clicked. Wall, tired of waiting for him, had gone angrily away.

"Thanks to God!" said Noel. He hurried toward Hester, then stopped short in a spasm of shame. Who was he? To go to her? To ask her to give herself to him? The best man in the world was not fit to touch her. Look at her sitting there, the sun shining full on her. Her hands went with their work, in and out, in and out. The monotony of motion maddened him. For two years he had followed her faithful as a dog. It had been almost impossible to see her, to hear her speak now and then. If he told her now that he loved her, he would risk all this; she would drive him away. Never to see Hester again? Never? If she married Wall? For a moment he could not get his breath—the world gaped empty about him.

Then his blood swelled with sudden triumph. Why, he was not a child, he was a man, and that was her dear woman he loved. He went to her, leaping over a fallen tree, and threw himself breathless on the grass. Hester, amused, looked down at his sensitive face and burning eyes.

"I heard you singing, Monsieur Noel," she said, after a while.

"Oh! Did you like my voice?" eagerly. "My father does. I don't know, He is a great musician. Perhaps—you would like to sing to you now?" "No." Hester smiled. "You—you can talk to me instead," she added shyly.

He did not answer. He rose slowly, and leaning against a tree, looked steadily down into her face. She saw how he trembled, though she did not raise her eyes. The very wind was still.

"We will wait here until the hour is over," she said, quietly, and Wall recognized himself as a prisoner. A stronger will than his had resolved on justice for Noel. He could not go out as he had intended, to publish the theft in Tadoussac.

"Unfortunately," he said, "suspicion has been directed against this young man for some time. A charming fellow, too! A thousand pities!"

Hester's fingers steadily went in and out of the blue web, but she remained silent.

Noel, on the upper floor, halted at the door of a chamber next to his own. Within, the French horn sounded a wailing cry. He stood a minute, drew a long breath of gathered strength, and went in smiling. M. Noel, seated by the window, rose quickly to meet him, laying down his instrument carefully. He wore a velvet jacket, and cap on his long white hair. Noel took as much fond pride in devising picturesque costumes for his father as a woman would for her baby. His features were sensitive and fine as those of Louis, but the eyes were shallow and glassy, and there was a perpetual deprecating smile on the mouth.

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fellows—his comrades—on the pier caught sight of Noel.

"Hi! hi! Louis!" they called. Hester went quickly up to Noel. There was something wholesome and invigorating in her decisive step, in the keen common sense lighting her brown eyes.

"You can set this right, of course?" she said.

"I have not spent the money. It was in my desk yesterday."

She looked at him a moment, then for the first time in her life laid her hand on his arm.

"I can say nothing." He turned away.

Hester went up to Louis. "You do not defend yourself," she said, with a queer choking in her throat.

"No."

"You do not even say that you were not guilty?"

Their eyes met. There was a long silence. Noel put his hand up to his mouth uncertainly.

"I can say nothing." He turned away.

She stood still, her clear eyes following him, her unconscious finger tearing the web she had netted bit by bit. It fell in a heap on the floor. She came to his side with a little rush as Pere Matthieu entered the room.

"He does not understand of what you accuse him," she said impatiently to Wall.

"I do understand. I will search for the money again."

He turned to Hester. "The boat will not be for an hour, Give me that time."

The stupor was shaken off. Something of his usual gusty, awkward vehemence was in his manner as he went out. But when Wall said, "He knows not bring the money back," Miss Page secretly felt that he was right. She took up her netting and seated herself by the window.

"The good father was shocked at her want of decorum. Her cheeks burned, her eyes shone with soft brilliance, "Come, come!" she cried; "we may yet be in time to tell the news to our friend James Wall. It will cheer him on his voyage."

She almost dragged Louis down to the garden which overlooked the pier on which a little crowd had gathered. He held her back.

"You shall not blast your life for me!"

"Because I love you," she sobbed.

At that instant Wall, stepping from a little batteau onto the deck of the steamer, looked up. He saw her clinging to Noel's arm, staggered, and hastily drew back; the batteau rocked over, and Wall, with the Indian boatman, was struggling in the water. The Indian, who swam like a fish, easily gained the land, but Wall was washed, a helpless lump, under the steamer, and then drifted down into the black, resistless current of the Saguenay.

Hester was a gentle creature, but she certainly did remember at that moment that the drowning man was the only witness against Noel. On the contrary, Louis, in an instant, was his old self, frantic with excitement, shouting, kicking off his boots.

"Why, Wall cannot swim," he cried, plunging into the rushing flood. Both men disappeared in the night. The whole village gathered on the pier, crying, swearing, talking at once. Pere Matthieu ordered out boats and went in one himself, which presently brought both men ashore. Louis was conscious and staggered to his feet. They laid Wall's heavy body under the trees and stood about it with their lanterns, while Pere Matthieu drew off his coat and put his ear to his breast.

"He is alive," he said. "Carry him—"

But Hester's keen eyes saw what no one else did. She swooped down on the prostrate body like a white bird on its prey. "Stop!" she cried, wildly, taking something from his breast. "Take me, all of you, that I take from him. It's a package marked 'Louis Noel. Five thousand pounds.' Oh, Louis!