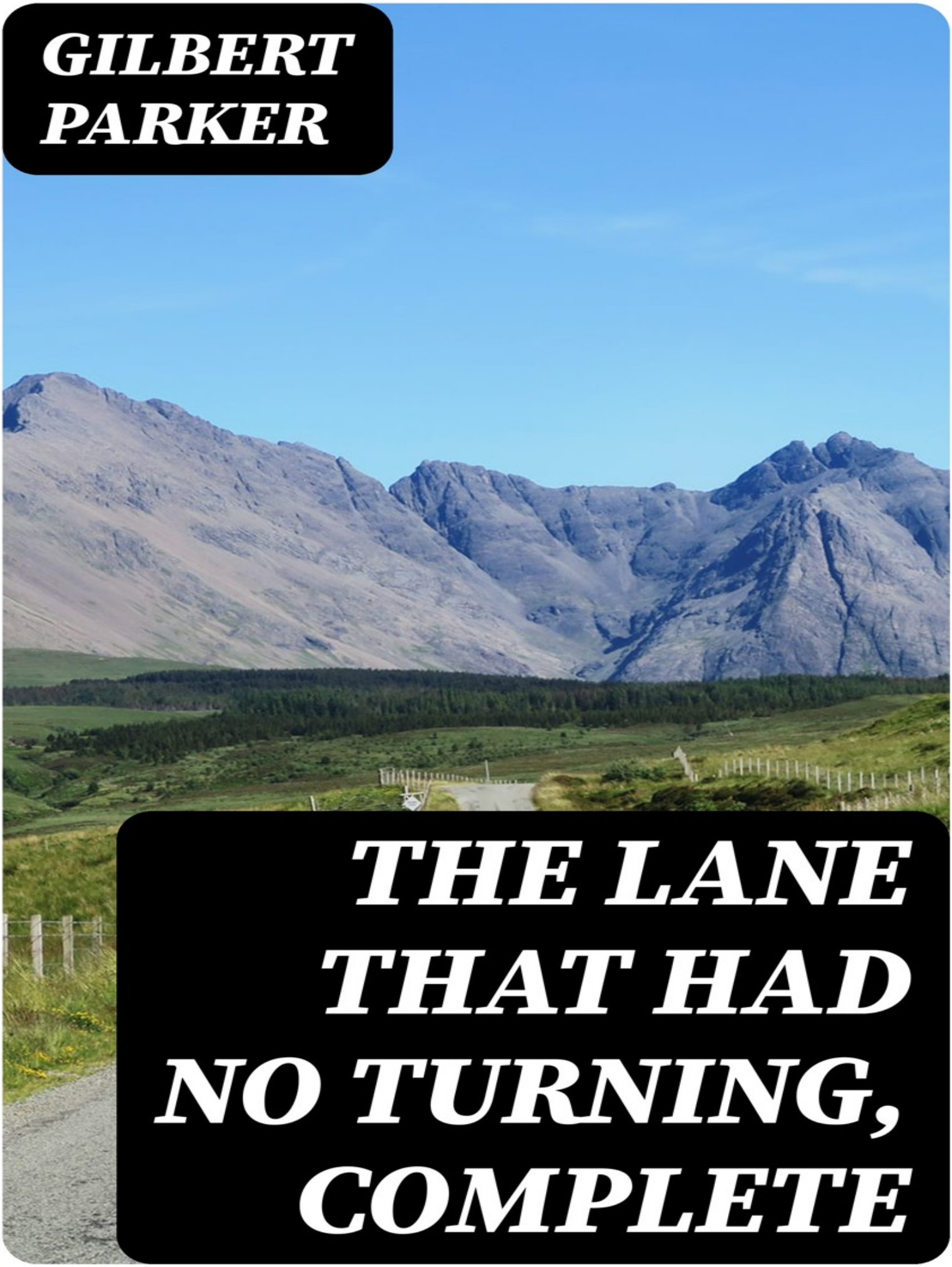
GILBERT PARKER



THE LANE THAT HAD NO TURNING, COMPLETE

Gilbert Parker

The Lane That Had No Turning, Complete

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INTRODUCTION

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The story with which this book opens, ‘The Lane That Had No Turning’, gives the title to a collection which has a large share in whatever importance my work may possess. Cotemporaneous with the Pierre series, which deal with the Far West and the Far North, I began in the ‘Illustrated London News’, at the request of the then editor, Mr. Clement K. Shorter, a series of French Canadian sketches of which the first was ‘The Tragic Comedy of Annette’. It was followed by ‘The Marriage of the Miller, The House with the Tall Porch, The Absurd Romance of P’tite Louison, and The Woodsman’s Story of the Great White Chief’. They were begun and finished in the autumn of 1892 in lodgings which I had taken on Hampstead Heath. Each—for they were all very short—was written at a sitting, and all had their origin in true stories which had been told me in the heart of Quebec itself. They were all beautifully illustrated in the Illustrated London News, and in their almost monosyllabic narrative, and their almost domestic simplicity, they were in marked contrast to the more strenuous episodes of the Pierre series. They were indeed in keeping with the happily simple and uncomplicated life of French Canada as I knew it then; and I had perhaps greater joy in writing them and the purely French Canadian stories that followed them, such as ‘Parpon the Dwarf, A Worker in Stone, The Little Bell of Honour, and The Prisoner’, than in almost anything else I have written, except perhaps ‘The Right of Way and Valmond’, so far as Canada is concerned.

I think the book has harmony, although the first story in it covers eighty-two pages, while some of the others, like ‘The Marriage of the Miller’, are less than four pages in length. At the end also there are nine fantasies or stories which I called ‘Parables of Provinces’. All of these, I think, possessed the spirit of French Canada, though all are more or less mystical in nature. They have nothing of the simple realism of ‘The Tragic Comedy of Annette’, and the earlier series. These nine stories could not be called popular, and they were the only stories I have ever written which did not have an immediate welcome from the editors to whom they were sent. In the United States I offered them to 'Harper’s Magazine’, but the editor, Henry M. Alden, while, as I know, caring for them personally, still hesitated to publish them. He thought them too symbolic for the every-day reader. He had been offered four of them at once because I declined to dispose of them separately, though the editor of another magazine was willing to publish two of them. Messrs. Stone & Kimball, however, who had plenty of fearlessness where literature was concerned, immediately bought the series for The Chap Book, long since dead, and they were published in that wonderful little short-lived magazine, which contained some things of permanent value to literature. They published four of the series, namely: ‘The Golden Pipes, The Guardian of the Fire, By that Place Called Peradventure, The Singing of the Bees, and The Tent of the Purple Mat’. In England, because I would not separate the first five, and publish them individually, two or three of the editors who were taking the Pierre series and other stories appearing in this volume would not publish them. They, also, were

frightened by the mystery and allusiveness of the tales, and had an apprehension that they would not be popular.

Perhaps they were right. They were all fantasies, but I do not wish them other than they are. One has to write according to the impulse that seizes one and after the fashion of one's own mind. This at least can be said of all my books, that not a page of them has ever been written to order, and there is not a story published in all the pages bearing my name which does not represent one or two other stories rejected by myself. The art of rejection is the hardest art which an author has to learn; but I have never had a doubt as to my being justified in publishing these little symbolic things.

Eventually the whole series was published in England. W. E. Henley gave 'There Was a Little City' a home in 'The New Review', and expressed himself as happy in having it. 'The Forge in the Valley' was published by Sir Wemyss Reid in the weekly paper called 'The Speaker', now known as 'The Nation', in which 'Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch' made his name and helped the fame of others. 'There Was a Little City' was published in 'The Chap Book' in the United States, but 'The Forge in the Valley' had (I think) no American public until it appeared within the pages of 'The Lane That Had No Turning'. The rest of the series were published in the 'English Illustrated Magazine', which was such a good friend to my work at the start. As was perhaps natural, there was some criticism, but very little, in French Canada itself, upon the stories in this volume. It soon died away, however, and almost as I write these words there has come to me an appreciation which I value as much as anything that has

befallen me in my career, and that is, the degree of Doctor of Letters from the French Catholic University of Laval at Quebec. It is the seal of French Canada upon the work which I have tried to do for her and for the whole Dominion.

THE LANE THAT HAD NO TURNING

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CHAPTER I. THE RETURN OF MADELINETTE

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His Excellency the Governor—the English Governor of French Canada—was come to Pontiac, accompanied by a goodly retinue; by private secretary, military secretary, aide-de-camp, cabinet minister, and all that. He was making a tour of the Province, but it was obvious that he had gone out of his way to visit Pontiac, for there were disquieting rumours in the air concerning the loyalty of the district. Indeed, the Governor had arrived but twenty-four hours after a meeting had been held under the presidency of the Seigneur, at which resolutions easily translatable into sedition were presented. The Cure and the Avocat, arriving in the nick of time, had both spoken against these resolutions; with the result that the new-born ardour in the minds of the simple habitants had died down, and the Seigneur had parted from the Cure and the Avocat in anger.

Pontiac had been involved in an illegal demonstration once before. Valmond, the bizarre but popular Napoleonic pretender, had raised his standard there; the stones before the parish church had been stained with his blood; and he lay in the churchyard of St. Saviour’s forgiven and unforgotten. How was it possible for Pontiac to forget him? Had he not left his little fortune to the parish? and had he not also left twenty thousand francs for the musical education of Madelinette Lajeunesse, the daughter of the village forgeron, to learn singing of the best masters in Paris? Pontiac’s wrong-doings had brought it more profit

than penalty, more praise than punishment: for, after five years in France in the care of the Little Chemist's widow, Madelinette Lajeunesse had become the greatest singer of her day. But what had put the severest strain upon the modesty of Pontiac was the fact that, on the morrow of Madelinette's first triumph in Paris, she had married M. Louis Racine, the new Seigneur of Pontiac.

What more could Pontiac wish? It had been rewarded for its mistakes; it had not even been chastened, save that it was marked Suspicious as to its loyalty, at the headquarters of the English Government in Quebec. It should have worn a crown of thorns, but it flaunted a crown of roses. A most unreasonable good fortune seemed to pursue it. It had been led to expect that its new Seigneur would be an Englishman, one George Fournel, to whom, as the late Seigneur had more than once declared, the property was devised by will; but at his death no will had been found, and Louis Racine, the direct heir in blood, had succeeded to the property and the title.

Brilliant, enthusiastic, fanatically French, the new Seigneur had set himself to revive certain old traditions, customs, and privileges of the Seigneurial position. He was reactionary, seductive, generous, and at first he captivated the hearts of Pontiac. He did more than that. He captivated Madelinette Lajeunesse. In spite of her years in Paris—severe, studious years, which shut out the social world and the temptations of Bohemian life—Madelinette retained a strange simplicity of heart and mind, a desperate love for her old home which would not be gainsaid, a passionate loyalty to her past, which was an illusory attempt to arrest

the inevitable changes that come with growth; and, with a sudden impulse, she had sealed herself to her past at the very outset of her great career by marriage with Louis Racine.

On the very day of their marriage Louis Racine had made a painful discovery. A heritage of his fathers, which had skipped two generations, suddenly appeared in himself: he was becoming a hunchback.

Terror, despair, gloom, anxiety had settled upon him. Three months later Madelinette had gone to Paris alone. The Seigneur had invented excuses for not accompanying her, so she went instead in the care of the Little Chemist's widow, as of old Louis had promised to follow within another three months, but had not done so. The surgical operation performed upon him was unsuccessful; the strange growth increased. Sensitive, fearful, and morose, he would not go to Europe to be known as the hunchback husband of Lajeunesse, the great singer. He dreaded the hour when Madelinette and he should meet again. A thousand times he pictured her as turning from him in loathing and contempt. He had married her because he loved her, but he knew well enough that ten thousand other men could love her just as well, and be something more than a deformed Seigneur of an obscure manor in Quebec.

As his gloomy imagination pictured the future, when Madelinette should return and see him as he was and cease to love him—to build up his Seigneurial honour to an undue importance, to give his position a fictitious splendour, became a mania with him. No ruler of a Grand Duchy ever cherished his honour dearer or exacted homage more

persistently than did Louis Racine in the Seigneury of Pontiac. Coincident with the increase of these futile extravagances was the increase of his fanatical patriotism, which at last found vent in seditious writings, agitations, the purchase of rifles, incitement to rebellion, and the formation of an armed, liveried troop of dependants at the Manor. On the very eve of the Governor's coming, despite the Cure's and the Avocat's warnings, he had held a patriotic meeting intended to foster a stubborn, if silent, disregard of the Governor's presence amongst them.

The speech of the Cure, who had given guarantee for the good behaviour of his people to the Government, had been so tinged with sorrowful appeal, had recalled to them so acutely the foolish demonstration which had ended in the death of Valmond; that the people had turned from the exasperated Seigneur with the fire of monomania in his eyes, and had left him alone in the hall, passionately protesting that the souls of Frenchmen were not in them.

Next day, upon the church, upon the Louis Quinze Hotel, and elsewhere, the Union Jack flew—the British colours flaunted it in Pontiac with welcome to the Governor. But upon the Seigneury was another flag—it of the golden-lilies. Within the Manor House M. Louis Racine sat in the great Seigneurial chair, returned from the gates of death. As he had come home from the futile public meeting, galloping through the streets and out upon the Seigneury road in the dusk, his horse had shied upon a bridge, where mischievous lads waylaid travellers with ghostly heads made of lighted candles in hollowed pumpkins, and horse and man had been plunged into the stream beneath. His faithful servant Havel

had seen the accident and dragged his insensible master from the water.

Now the Seigneur sat in the great arm-chair glowering out upon the cheerful day. As he brooded, shaken and weak and bitter—all his thoughts were bitter now—a flash of scarlet, a glint of white plumes crossed his line of vision, disappeared, then again came into view, and horses' hoofs rang out on the hard road below. He started to his feet, but fell back again, so feeble was he, then rang the bell at his side with nervous insistence. A door opened quickly behind him, and his voice said imperiously:

"Quick, Havel—to the door. The Governor and his suite have come. Call Tardif, and have wine and cake brought at once. When the Governor enters, let Tardif stand at the door, and you beside my chair. Have the men-at-arms get into livery, and make a guard of honour for the Governor when he leaves. Their new rifles too—and let old Fashode wear his medal! See that Lucre is not filthy—ha! ha! very good. I must let the Governor hear that. Quick—quick, Havel. They are entering the grounds. Let the Manor bell be rung, and every one mustered. He shall see that to be a Seigneur is not an empty honour. I am something in the state, something by my own right." His lips moved restlessly; he frowned; his hands nervously clasped the arms of the chair. "Madelinette too shall see that I am to be reckoned with, that I am not a nobody. By God, then, but she shall see it!" he added, bringing his clasped hand down hard upon the wood.

There was a stir outside, a clanking of chains, a champing of bits, and the murmurs of the crowd who were

gathering fast in the grounds. Presently the door was thrown open and Havel announced the Governor. Louis Racine got to his feet, but the Governor hastened forward, and, taking both his hands, forced him gently back into the chair.

“No, no, my dear Seigneur. You must not rise. This is no state visit, but a friendly call to offer congratulations on your happy escape, and to inquire how you are.”

The Governor said his sentences easily, but he suddenly flushed and was embarrassed, for Louis Racine’s deformity, of which he had not known—Pontiac kept its troubles to itself—stared him in the face; and he felt the Seigneur’s eyes fastened on him with strange intensity.

“I have to thank your Excellency,” the Seigneur said in a hasty nervous voice. “I fell on my shoulders—that saved me. If I had fallen on my head I should have been killed, no doubt. My shoulders saved me!” he added, with a petulant insistence in his voice, a morbid anxiety in his face.

“Most providential,” responded the Governor. “It grieves me that it should have happened on the occasion of my visit. I missed the Seigneur’s loyal public welcome. But I am happy,” he continued, with smooth deliberation, “to have it here in this old Manor House, where other loyal French subjects of England have done honour to their Sovereign’s representative.”

“This place is sacred to hospitality and patriotism, your Excellency,” said Louis Racine, nervousness passing from his voice and a curious hard look coming into his face.

The Governor was determined not to see the double meaning. “It is a privilege to hear you say so. I shall recall the fact to her Majesty’s Government in the report I shall

make upon my tour of the province. I have a feeling that the Queen's pleasure in the devotion of her distinguished French subjects may take some concrete form."

The Governor's suite looked at each other significantly, for never before in his journeys had his Excellency hinted so strongly that an honour might be conferred. Veiled as it was, it was still patent as the sun. Spots of colour shot into the Seigneur's cheeks. An honour from the young English Queen—that would mate with Madelinette's fame. After all, it was only his due. He suddenly found it hard to be consistent. His mind was in a whirl. The Governor continued:

"It must have given you great pleasure to know that at Windsor her Majesty has given tokens of honour to the famous singer, the wife of a notable French subject, who, while passionately eager to keep alive French sentiment, has, as we believe, a deep loyalty to England."

The Governor had said too much. He had thought to give the Seigneur an opportunity to recede from his seditious position there and then, and to win his future loyalty. M. Racine's situation had peril, and the Governor had here shown him the way of escape. But he had said one thing that drove Louis Racine mad. He had given him unknown information about his own wife. Louis did not know that Madelinette had been received by the Queen, or that she had received "tokens of honour." Wild with resentment, he saw in the Governor's words a consideration for himself based only on the fact that he was the husband of the great singer. He trembled to his feet.

At that moment there was a cheering outside—great cheering—but he did not heed it; he was scarcely aware of

it. If it touched his understanding at all, it only meant to him a demonstration in honour of the Governor.

“Loyalty to the flag of England, your Excellency!” he said, in a hoarse acrid voice—“you speak of loyalty to us whose lives for two centuries—” He paused, for he heard a voice calling his name.

“Louis! Louis! Louis!”

The fierce words he had been about to utter died on his lips, his eyes stared at the open window, bewildered and even frightened.

“Louis! Louis!”

Now the voice was inside the house. He stood trembling, both hands grasping the arms of the chair. Every eye in the room was now turned towards the door. As it opened, the Seigneur sank back in the chair, a look of helpless misery, touched by a fierce pride, covering his face.

“Louis!”

It was Madelinette, who, disregarding the assembled company, ran forward to him and caught both his hands in hers.

“O Louis, I have heard of your accident, and—” she stopped suddenly short. The Governor turned away his head. Every person in the room did the same. For as she bent over him—she saw. She saw for the first time; for the first time knew!

A look of horrified amazement, of shrinking anguish, crossed over her face. He felt the lightning-like silence, he knew that she had seen; he struggled to his feet, staring fiercely at her.

That one torturing instant had taken all the colour from her face, but there was a strange brightness in her eyes, a new power in her bearing. She gently forced him into the seat again.

“You are not strong enough, Louis. You must be tranquil.”

She turned now to the Governor. He made a sign to his suite, who, bowing, slowly left the room. “Permit me to welcome you to your native land again, Madame,” he said. “You have won for it a distinction it could never have earned, and the world gives you many honours.”

She was smiling and still, and with one hand clasping her husband’s, she said:

“The honour I value most my native land has given me: I am lady of the Manor here, and wife of the Seigneur Racine.”

Agitated triumph came upon Louis Racine’s face; a weird painful vanity entered into him. He stood up beside his wife, as she turned and looked at him, showing not a sign that what she saw disturbed her.

“It is no mushroom honour to be Seigneur of Pontiac, your Excellency,” he said, in a tone that jarred. “The barony is two hundred years old. By rights granted from the crown of France, I am Baron of Pontiac.”

“I think England has not yet recognised the title,” said the Governor suggestively, for he was here to make peace, and in the presence of this man, whose mental torture was extreme, he would not allow himself to be irritated.

“Our baronies have never been recognised,” said the Seigneur harshly. “And yet we are asked to love the flag of England and—”

“And to show that we are too proud to ask for a right that none can take away,” interposed Madelinette graciously and eagerly, as though to prevent Louis from saying what he intended. All at once she had had to order her life anew, to replace old thoughts by new ones. “We honour and obey the rulers of our land, and fly the English flag, and welcome the English Governor gladly when he comes to us—will your Excellency have some refreshment?” she added quickly, for she saw the cloud on the Seigneur’s brow. “Louis,” she added quickly, “will you—”

“I have ordered refreshment,” said the Seigneur excitedly, the storm passing from his face, however. “Havel, Tardif—where are you, fellows!” He stamped his foot imperiously.

Havel entered with a tray of wine and glasses, followed by Tardif loaded with cakes and comfits, and set them on the table.

Ten minutes later the Governor took his leave. At the front door he stopped surprised, for a guard of honour of twenty men were drawn up. He turned to the Seigneur.

“What soldiers are these?” he asked.

“The Seigneury company, your Excellency,” replied Louis.

“What uniform is it they wear?” he asked in an even tone, but with a black look in his eye, which did not escape Madelinette.

“The livery of the Barony of Pontiac,” answered the Seigneur.

The Governor looked at them a moment without speaking. “It is French uniform of the time of Louis Quinze,” he said. “Picturesque, but informal,” he added.

He went over, and taking a carbine from one of the men, examined it. “Your carbines are not so unconventional and antique,” he said meaningly, and with a frosty smile. “The compromise of the centuries—hein?” he added to the Cure, who, with the Avocat, was now looking on with some trepidation. “I am wondering if it is quite legal. It is charming to have such a guard of honour, but I am wondering—wondering—eh, monsieur l’avocat, is it legal?”

The Avocat made no reply, but the Cure’s face was greatly troubled. The Seigneur’s momentary placidity passed.

“I answer for their legality, your Excellency,” he said, in a high, assertive voice.

“Of course, of course, you will answer for it,” said the Governor, smiling enigmatically. He came forward and held out his hand to Madelinette.

“Madame, I shall remember your kindness, and I appreciate the simple honours done me here. Your arrival at the moment of my visit is a happy circumstance.”

There was a meaning in his eye—not in his voice—which went straight to Madelinette’s understanding. She murmured something in reply, and a moment afterwards the Governor, his suite, and the crowd were gone; and the men-at-arms-the fantastic body of men in their antique livery-armed with the latest modern weapons, had gone back to civic life again.

Inside the house once more, Madelinette laid her hand upon Louis’ arm with a smile that wholly deceived him for a moment. He thought now that she must have known of his deformity before she came—the world was so full of tale-

bearers—and no doubt had long since reconciled herself to the painful fact. She had shown no surprise, no shrinking. There had been only the one lightning instant in which he had felt a kind of suspension of her breath and being, but when he had looked her in the face, she was composed and smiling. After all his frightened anticipation the great moment had come and gone without tragedy. With satisfaction he looked in the mirror in the hall as they passed inside the house. He saw no reason to quarrel with his face. Was it possible that the deformity did not matter after all?

He felt Madelinette's hand on his arm. He turned and clasped her to his breast.

He did not notice that she kept her hands under her chin as he drew her to him, that she did not, as had been her wont, put them on his shoulders. He did not feel her shrink, and no one, seeing, could have said that she shrank from him in ever so little.

"How beautiful you are!" he said, as he looked into her face.

"How glad I am to be here again, and how tired I am, Louis!" she said. "I've driven thirty miles since daylight." She disengaged herself. "I am going to sleep now," she added. "I am going to turn the key in my door till evening. Please tell Madame Marie so, Louis."

Inside her room alone she flung herself on her bed in agony and despair.

"Louis—Oh, my God!" she cried, and sobbed and sobbed her strength away.

CHAPTER II. WHEN THE RED-COATS CAME

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A month later there was a sale of the household effects, the horses and general possessions of Medallion the auctioneer, who, though a Protestant and an Englishman, had, by his wits and goodness of heart, endeared himself to the parish. Therefore the notables among the habitants had gathered in his empty house for a last drink of good-fellowship—Muroc the charcoalman, Duclosse the mealman, Benoit the ne'er-do-weel, Gingras the one-eyed shoemaker, and a few others. They had drunk the health of Medallion, they had drunk the health of the Cure, and now Duclosse the mealman raised his glass. "Here's to—"

"Wait a minute, porridge-pot," cried Muroc. "The best man here should raise the glass first and say the votre sante. 'Tis M'sieu' Medallion should speak and sip now."

Medallion was half-sitting on the window-sill, abstractedly listening. He had been thinking that his ships were burned behind him, and that in middle-age he was starting out to make another camp for himself in the world, all because of the new Seigneur of Pontiac. Time was when he had been successful here, but Louis Racine had changed all that. His hand was against the English, and he had brought a French auctioneer to Pontiac. Medallion might have divided the parish as to patronage, but he had other views.

So he was going. Madelinette had urged him to stay, but he had replied that it was too late. The harm was not to be undone.

As Muroc spoke, every one turned towards Medallion. He came over and filled a glass at the table, and raised it.

“I drink to Madelinette, daughter of that fine old puffing forgeron Lajeunesse,” he added, as the big blacksmith now entered the room. Lajeunesse grinned and ducked his head. “I knew Madelinette, as did you all, when I could take her on my knee and tell her English stories, and listen to her sing French chansons—the best in the world. She has gone on; we stay where we were. But she proves her love to us, by taking her husband from Pontiac and coming back to us. May she never find a spot so good to come to and so hard to leave as Pontiac!”

He drank, and they all did the same. Draining his glass, Medallion let it fall on the stone floor. It broke into a score of pieces.

He came and shook hands with Lajeunesse. “Give her my love,” he said. “Tell her the highest bidder on earth could not buy one of the kisses she gave me when she was five and I was twenty.”

Then he shook hands with them all and went into the next room.

“Why did he drop his glass?” asked Gingras the shoemaker.

“That’s the way of the aristocrats when it’s the damnedest toast that ever was,” said Duclosse the mealman. “Eh, Lajeunesse, that’s so, isn’t it?”

“What the devil do I know about aristocrats!” said Lajeunesse.

“You’re among the best of the land, now that Madelinette’s married to the Seigneur. You ought to wear a

collar every day.”

“Bah!” answered the blacksmith. “I’m only old Lajeunesse the blacksmith, though she’s my girl, dear lads. I was Joe Lajeunesse yesterday, and I’ll be Joe Lajeunesse to-morrow, and I’ll die Joe Lajeunesse the forgeron—bagosh! So you take me as you find me. M’sieu’ Racine doesn’t marry me. And Madelinette doesn’t take me to Paris and lead me round the stage and say, ‘This is M’sieu’ Lajeunesse, my father.’ No. I’m myself, and a damn good blacksmith and nothing else am I!”

“Tut, tut, old leather-belly,” said Gingras the shoemaker, whose liquor had mounted high, “you’ll not need to work now. Madelinette’s got double fortune. She gets thousands for a song, and she’s lady of the Manor here. What’s too good for you, tell me that, my forgeron?”

“Not working between meals—that’s too good for me, Gingras. I’m here to earn my bread with the hands I was born with, and to eat what they earn, and live by it. Let a man live according to his gifts—bagosh! Till I’m sent for, that’s what I’ll do; and when time’s up I’ll take my hand off the bellows, and my leather apron can go to you, Gingras, for boots for a bigger fool than me.”

“There’s only one,” said Benolt, the ne’er-do-weel, who had been to college as a boy.

“Who’s that?” said Muroc.

“You wouldn’t know his name. He’s trying to find eggs in last year’s nest,” answered Benolt with a leer.

“He means the Seigneur,” said Muroc. “Look to your son-in-law, Lajeunesse. He’s kicking up a dust that’ll choke

Pontiac yet. It’s as if there was an imp in him driving him on.”

“We’ve had enough of the devil’s dust here,” said Lajeunesse. “Has he been talking to you, Muroc?”

Muroc nodded. “Treason, or thereabouts. Once, with him that’s dead in the graveyard yonder, it was France we were to save and bring back the Napoleons—I have my sword yet. Now it’s save Quebec. It’s stand alone and have our own flag, and shout, and fight, maybe, to be free of England. Independence—that’s it! One by one the English have had to go from Pontiac. Now it’s M’sieu’ Medallion.”

“There’s Shandon the Irishman gone too. M’sieu’ sold him up and shipped him off,” said Gingras the shoemaker.

“Tiens! the Seigneur gave him fifty dollars when he left, to help him along. He smacks and then kisses, does M’sieu’ Racine.”

“We’ve to pay tribute to the Seigneur every year, as they did in the days of Vaudreuil and Louis the Saint,” said Duclosse. “I’ve got my notice—a bag of meal under the big tree at the Manor door.”

“I’ve to bring a pullet and a bag of charcoal,” said Muroc. “‘Tis the rights of the Seigneur as of old.”

“Tiens! it is my mind,” said Benoit, “that a man that nature twists in back, or leg, or body anywhere, gets a twist in’s brain too. There’s Parpon the dwarf—God knows, Parpon is a nut to crack!”

“But Parpon isn’t married to the greatest singer in the world, though she’s only the daughter of old leather-belly there,” said Gingras.

“Something doesn’t come of nothing, snub-nose,” said Lajeunesse. “Mark you, I was born a man of fame, walking bloody paths to glory; but, by the grace of Heaven and my baptism, I became a forgeron. Let others ride to glory, I’ll shoe their horses for the gallop.”

“You’ll be in Parliament yet, Lajeunesse,” said Duclosse the mealman, who had been dozing on a pile of untired cart-wheels.

“I’ll be hanged first, comrade.”

“One in the family at a time,” said Muroc. “There’s the Seigneur. He’s going into Parliament.”

“He’s a magistrate—that’s enough,” said Duclosse. “He’s started the court under the big tree, as the Seigneurs did two hundred years ago. He’ll want a gibbet and a gallows next.”

“I should think he’d stay at home and not take more on his shoulders!” said the one-eyed shoemaker. Without a word, Lajeunesse threw a dish of water in Gingras’s face. This reference to the Seigneur’s deformity was unpalatable.

Gingras had not recovered from his discomfiture when all were startled by the distant blare of a bugle. They rushed to the door, and were met by Parpon the dwarf, who announced that a regiment of soldiers was marching on the village.

“‘Tis what I expected after that meeting, and the Governor’s visit, and the lily-flag of France on the Manor, and the body-guard and the carbines,” said Muroc nervously.

“We’re all in trouble again-sure,” said Benoit, and drained his glass to the last drop. “Some of us will go to gaol.”

The coming of the militia had been wholly unexpected by the people of Pontiac, but the cause was not far to seek. Ever since the Governor's visit there had been sinister rumours abroad concerning Louis Racine, which the Cure and the Avocat and others had taken pains to contradict. It was known that the Seigneur had been requested to disband his so-called company of soldiers with their ancient livery and their modern arms, and to give them up. He had disbanded the corps, but he had not given up the arms, and, for reasons unknown, the Government had not pressed the point, so far as the world knew. But it had decided to hold a district drill in this far-off portion of the Province; and this summer morning two thousand men marched 'upon the town and through it, horse, foot, and commissariat, and Pontiac was roused out of the last-century romance the Seigneur had sought to continue, to face the actual presence of modern force and the machinery of war. Twice before had British soldiers marched into the town, the last time but a few years agone, when blood had been shed on the stones in front of the parish church. But here were large numbers of well-armed men from the Eastern parishes, English and French, with four hundred regulars to leaven the mass. Lajeunesse knew only too well what this demonstration meant.

Before the last soldier had passed through the street, he was on his way to the Seigneury.

He found Madelinette alone in the great dining-room, mending a rent in the British flag, which she was preparing for a flag-staff. When she saw him, she dropped the flag, as

if startled, came quickly to him, took both his hands in hers, and kissed his cheek.

“Wonder of wonders!” she said.

“It’s these soldiers,” he replied shortly. “What of them?” she asked brightly.

“Do you mean to say you don’t know what their coming here means?” he asked.

“They must drill somewhere, and they are honouring Pontiac,” she replied gaily, but her face flushed as she bent over the flag again.

He came and stood in front of her. “I don’t know what’s in your mind; I don’t know what you mean to do; but I do know that M’sieu’ Racine is making trouble here, and out of it you’ll come more hurt than anybody.”

“What has Louis done?”

“What has he done! He’s been stirring up feeling against the British. What has he done!—Look at the silly customs he’s got out of old coffins, to make us believe they’re alive. Why did he ever try to marry you? Why did you ever marry him? You are the great singer of the world. He’s a mad hunchback habitant seigneur!”

She stamped her foot indignantly, but presently she ruled herself to composure, and said quietly: “He is my husband. He is a brave man, with foolish dreams.” Then with a sudden burst of tender feeling, she said: “Oh, father, father, can’t you see, I loved him—that is why I married him. You ask me what I am going to do? I am going to give the rest of my life to him. I am going to stay with him, and be to him all that he may never have in this world, never—never. I am going to be to him what my mother was to you, a slave to

the end—a slave who loved you, and who gave you a daughter who will do the same for her husband—”

“No matter what he does or is—eh?”

“No matter what he is.”

Lajeunesse gasped. “You will give up singing! Not sing again before kings and courts, and not earn ten thousand dollars a month—more than I’ve earned in twenty years? You don’t mean that, Madelinette.”

He was hoarse with feeling, and he held out his hand pleadingly. To him it seemed that his daughter was mad; that she was throwing her life away.

“I mean that, father,” she answered quietly. “There are things worth more than money.”

“You don’t mean to say that you can love him as he is. It isn’t natural. But no, it isn’t.”

“What would you have said, if any one had asked you if you loved my mother that last year of her life, when she was a cripple, and we wheeled her about in a chair you made for her?”

“Don’t say any more,” he said slowly, and took up his hat, and kept turning it round in his hand. “But you’ll prevent him getting into trouble with the Gover’ment?” he urged at last.

“I have done what I could,” she answered. Then with a little gasp: “They came to arrest him a fortnight ago, but I said they should not enter the house. Havel and I prevented them—refused to let them enter. The men did not know what to do, and so they went back. And now this—!” she pointed to where the soldiers were pitching their tents in the valley below. “Since then Louis has done nothing to give