

Romany Of The Snows, v3

Gilbert Parker

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THE BRIDGE HOUSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Oh, save him!" came from her faintly.

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

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

He took the slight figure in his arms, sprang out upon the slippery logs, and ran. A cheer went up from the men on the shore, and the people who were gathering on the bridges, too late to be of service. Besides, the bridge was

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pierre continued: "But then women are strange. What you expect they will not no. Riches? it is nothing; houses like that on the hill, nothing. They have whims. The hut is as good as the house, with the kitchen in the open where the river welts and washes, and a man the great man of the world to them to play the little game of life with. . . . Pshaw! you are idle: move; you are thick in the head: think hard; you like the girl: speak."

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

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

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

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

"I love the river," she said quietly.

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

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

"No one'd ever be rough with you," was the reply. "Oh yes," she said suddenly, and turned her head away. She was thinking of what the young doctor had said to her that morning; how like a foolish boy he had acted: upbraiding her, questioning her, saying unreasonable things, as young egoists always do. In years she was

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younger than he, but in wisdom much older: in all things more wise and just. He had not struck her, but with his reckless tongue he had cut her to the heart. "Oh yes," she repeated, and her eyes ran up to his face and over his great stalwart body; and then she leaned over the railing and looked into the water.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pierre was awe-stricken. Unconsciously he crossed himself.

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

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

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

"Is it morning yet, father?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You see as far as Indian Island?"

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

"And no one is coming?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Dear, carry me to the window."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The dams and booms have burst!" Pierre said. He pointed to the camps far up the river. By the light of the camp-fires there appeared a wide weltering flood of logs and debris. Pierre's eyes shifted to the Bridge House. In one room was a light. He stepped out and down, and the other followed. They had almost reached the shore, when Pierre cried out sharply: "What's that?"

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

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

The floor rocked.

"Go," he said again. "I will stay with her."

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

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

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

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

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

The three were never found.

THE EPAULETTES

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

But the years went, and there came a man to Fort Pentecost who knew not Athabasca. He was young, and tall and strong, had a hot temper, knew naught of human nature, was possessed by a pride more masterful than his wisdom, and a courage stronger than his tact. He was ever for high-handedness, brooked no interference, and treated the Indians more as Company's serfs than as Company's friends and allies. Also, he had an eye for Mitawawa, and found favour in return, though to what depth it took a long time to show. The girl sat high in the

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minds and desires of the young braves, for she had beauty of a heathen kind, a deft and dainty finger for embroidered buckskin, a particular fortune with a bow and arrow, and the fleetest foot. There were mutterings because Fyles the white man came to sit often in Athabasca's lodge. He knew of this, but heeded not at all. At last Konto, a young brave who very accurately guessed at Fyles' intentions, stopped him one day on the Grey Horse Trail, and in a soft, indolent voice begged him to prove his regard in a fight without weapons, to the death, the survivor to give the other burial where he fell. Fyles was neither fool nor coward. It would have been foolish to run the risk of leaving Fort and people masterless for an Indian's whim; it would have been cowardly to do nothing. So he whipped out a revolver, and bade his rival march before him to the Fort; which Konto very calmly did, begging the favour of a bit of tobacco as he went.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But what will my father do?" she persisted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Give 'em back, Mallory? I'll see him in Jericho first, unless he goes on his marrow-bones and kicks Kunto out of the camp."

"Very well, sir. But I think we'd better keep an eye open."

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

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

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

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

Athabasca struggled wildly. All at once there was a cold white flash, and Duc came huddling to Mallory's feet. For a brief instant Mallory and the Indian fell apart, then Athabasca with a contemptuous fairness tossed his knife away, and ran in on his man. They closed; strained, swayed, became a tangled wrenching mass; and then Mallory was lifted high into the air, and came down with a broken back.

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

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

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

THE HOUSE WITH THE BROKEN SHUTTER

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

Pierre stopped to listen. The voice singing was clear and soft, yet strong a mezzo-soprano without any culture save that of practice and native taste. It had a singular charm a sweet, fantastic sincerity. He stood still and fastened his eyes on the house, a few rods away. It stood on a knoll perching above Fort Ste. Anne. Years had

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passed since Pierre had visited the Fort, and he was now on his way to it again, after many wanderings. The house had stood here in the old days, and he remembered it very well, for against it John Marcey, the Company's man, was shot by Stroke Laforce, of the Riders of the Plains. Looking now, he saw that the shutter, which had been pulled off to bear the body away, was hanging there just as he had placed it, with seven of its slats broken and a dark stain in one corner. Something more of John Marcey than memory attached to that shutter. His eyes dwelt on it long he recalled the scene: a night with stars and no moon, a huge bonfire to light the Indians, at their dance, and Marcey, Laforce, and many others there, among whom was Lucille, the little daughter of Gyng the Factor. Marcey and Laforce were only boys then, neither yet twenty–three, and they were friendly rivals with the sweet little coquette, who gave her favors with a singular impartiality and justice. Once Marcey had given her a gold spoon. Laforce responded with a tiny, fretted silver basket. Laforce was delighted to see her carrying her basket, till she opened it and showed the spoon inside. There were many mock quarrels, in one of which Marcey sent her a letter by the Company's courier, covered with great seals, saying, "I return you the hairpin, the egg–shell, and the white wolf's tooth. Go to your Laforce, or whatever his ridiculous name may be."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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(Why should the key-hole rust?)
The Scarlet Hunter is sick for home,
(Why should the blind be drawn?)"

Now he recognised the voice. Its golden timbre brought back a young girl's golden face and golden hair. It was summer, and the window with the broken shutter was open. He was about to go to it, when a door of the house opened, and a girl appeared. She was tall, with rich, yellow hair falling loosely about her head; she had a strong, finely cut chin and a broad brow, under which a pair of deep blue eyes shone—violet blue, rare and fine. She stood looking down at the Fort for a few moments, unaware of Pierre's presence. But presently she saw him leaning against the tree, and she started as from a spirit.

"Monsieur!" she said "Pierre!" and stepped forward again from the doorway.

He came to her, and "Ah, p'tite Lucille," he said, "you remember me, eh? and yet so many years ago!"

"But you remember me," she answered, "and I have changed so much!"

"It is the man who should remember, the woman may forget if she will."

Pierre did not mean to pay a compliment; he was merely thinking.

She made a little gesture of deprecation. "I was a child," she said.

Pierre lifted a shoulder slightly. "What matter? It is sex that I mean. What difference to me five, or forty, or ninety? It is all sex. It is only lovers, the hunters of fire-flies, that think of age mais oui!"

She had a way of looking at you before she spoke, as though she were trying to find what she actually thought. She was one after Pierre's own heart, and he knew it; but just here he wondered where all that ancient coquetry was gone, for there were no traces of it left; she was steady of eye, reposeful, rich in form and face, and yet not occupied with herself. He had only seen her for a minute or so, yet he was sure that what she was just now she was always, or nearly so, for the habits of a life leave their mark, and show through every phase of emotion and incident whether it be light or grave.

"I think I understand you," she said. "I think I always did a little, from the time you stayed with Grah the idiot at Fort o' God, and fought the Indians when the others left. Only men said bad things of you, and my father did not like you, and you spoke so little to me ever. Yet I mind how you used to sit and watch me, and I also mind when you rode the man down who stole my pony, and brought them both back."

Pierre smiled he was pleased at this. "Ah, my young friend," he said, "I do not forget that either, for though he had shaved my ear with a bullet, you would not have him handed over to the Riders of the Plains such a tender heart!"

Her eyes suddenly grew wide. She was childlike in her amazement, indeed, childlike in all ways, for she was very sincere. It was her great advantage to live where nothing was required of her but truth, she had not suffered that sickness, social artifice.

"I never knew," she said, "that he had shot at you never! You did not tell that."

"There is a time for everything the time for that was not till now."

"What could I have done then?"

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"You might have left it to me. I am not so pious that I can't be merciful to the sinner. But this man this Brickney was a vile scoundrel always, and I wanted him locked up. I would have shot him myself, but I was tired of doing the duty of the law. Yes, yes," he added, as he saw her smile a little. "It is so. I have love for justice, even I, Pretty Pierre. Why not justice on myself? Ha! The law does not its duty. And maybe some day I shall have to do its work on myself. Some are coaxed out of life, some are kicked out, and some open the doors quietly for themselves, and go a-hunting Outside."

"They used to talk as if one ought to fear you," she said, "but" she looked him straight in the eyes "but maybe that's because you've never hid any badness."

"It is no matter, anyhow," he answered. "I live in the open, I walk in the open road, and I stand by what I do to the open law and the gospel. It is my whim every man to his own saddle."

"It is ten years," she said abruptly.

"Ten years less five days," he answered as sententiously.

"Come inside," she said quietly, and turned to the door.

Without a word he turned also, but instead of going direct to the door came and touched the broken shutter and the dark stain on one corner with a delicate forefinger. Out of the corner of his eye he could see her on the doorstep, looking intently.

He spoke as if to himself: "It has not been touched since then no. It was hardly big enough for him, so his legs hung over. Ah, yes, ten years Abroad, John Marcey!" Then, as if still musing, he turned to the girl: "He had no father or mother no one, of course; so that it wasn't so bad after all. If you've lived with the tongue in the last hole of the buckle as you've gone, what matter when you go! C'est egal it is all the same."

Her face had become pale as he spoke, but no muscle stirred; only her eyes filled with a deeper color, and her hand closed tightly on the door-jamb. "Come in, Pierre," she said, and entered. He followed her. "My mother is at the Fort," she added, "but she will be back soon."

She placed two chairs not far from the open door. They sat, and Pierre slowly rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

"How long have you lived here?" he asked presently.

"It is seven years since we came first," she replied. "After that night they said the place was haunted, and no one would live in it, but when my father died my mother and I came for three years. Then we went east, and again came back, and here we have been."

"The shutter?" Pierre asked.

They needed few explanations their minds were moving with the same thought.

"I would not have it changed, and of course no one cared to touch it. So it has hung there."

"As I placed it ten years ago," he said.

They both became silent for a time, and at last he said: "Marcey had no one, Sergeant Laforce a mother."

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"It killed his mother," she whispered, looking into the white sunlight. She was noting how it was flashed from the bark of the birch-trees near the Fort.

"His mother died," she added again, quietly. "It killed her the gaol for him!"

"An eye for an eye," he responded.

"Do you think that evens John Marcey's death?" she sighed.

"As far as Marcey's concerned," he answered. "Laforce has his own reckoning besides."

"It was not a murder," she urged.

"It was a fair fight," he replied firmly, "and Laforce shot straight." He was trying to think why she lived here, why the broken shutter still hung there, why the matter had settled so deeply on her. He remembered the song she was singing, the legend of the Scarlet Hunter, the fabled Savior of the North.

"Heavy of heart is the Red Patrol
(Why should the key-hole rust?)
The Scarlet Hunter is sick for home,
(Why should the blind be drawn?)"

He repeated the words, lingering on them. He loved to come at the truth of things by allusive, far-off reflections, rather than by the sharp questioning of the witness-box. He had imagination, refinement in such things. A light dawned on him as he spoke the words all became clear. She sang of the Scarlet Hunter, but she meant someone else! That was it

"Hungry and cold is the Red Patrol
(Why should the door be shut?)
The Scarlet Hunter has come to bide,
(Why is the window barred?)"

But why did she live here? To get used to a thought, to have it so near her, that if the man if Laforce himself came, she would have herself schooled to endure the shadow and the misery of it all? Ah, that was it! The little girl, who had seen her big lover killed, who had said she would never forgive the other, who had sent him back the fretted-silver basket, the riding-whip, and other things, had kept the criminal in her mind all these years; had, out of her childish coquetry, grown into what? As a child she had been wise for her years almost too wise. What had happened? She had probably felt sorrow for Laforce at first, and afterwards had shown active sympathy, and at last no, he felt that she had not quite forgiven him, that, whatever was, she had not hidden the criminal in her heart. But why did she sing that song? Her heart was pleading for him for the criminal. Had she and her mother gone to Winnipeg to be near Laforce, to comfort him? Was Laforce free now, and was she unwilling? It was so strange that she should thus have carried on her childhood into her womanhood. But he guessed her she had imagination.

"His mother died in my arms in Winnipeg," she said abruptly at last. "I'm glad I was some comfort to her. You see, it all came through me I was so young and spoiled and silly John Marcey's death, her death, and his long years in prison. Even then I knew better than to set the one against the other. Must a child not be responsible? I was I am!"

"And so you punish yourself?"

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"It was terrible for me even as a child. I said that I could never forgive, but when his mother died, blessing me, I did. Then there came something else."

"You saw him, there amie?"

"I saw him so changed, so quiet, so much older all grey at the temples. At first I lived here that I might get used to the thought of the thing to learn to bear it; and afterwards that I might learn " She paused, looking in half-doubt at Pierre.

"It is safe; I am silent," he said.

"That I might learn to bear him," she continued.

"Is he still " Pierre paused.

She spoke up quickly. "Oh no, he has been free two years."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know." She waited for a minute, then said again, "I don't know. When he was free, he came to me, but I I could not. He thought, too, that because he had been in gaol, that I wouldn't be his wife. He didn't think enough of himself, he didn't urge anything. And I wasn't ready no no no how could I be! I didn't care so much about the gaol, but he had killed John Marcey. The gaol what was that to me! There was no real shame in it unless he had done a mean thing. He had been wicked not mean. Killing is awful, but not shameful. Think the difference if he had been a thief!"

Pierre nodded. "Then some one should have killed him!" he said. "Well, after?"

"After after ah, he went away for a year. Then he came back; but no, I was always thinking of that night I walked behind John Marcey's body to the Fort. So he went away again, and we came here, and here we have lived."

"He has not come here?"

"No; once from the far north he sent me a letter by an Indian, saying that he was going with a half-breed to search for a hunting party, an English gentleman and two men who were lost. The name of one of the men was Brickney."

Pierre stopped short in a long whiffing of smoke. "Holy!" he said, "that thief Brickney again. He would steal the broad road to hell if he could carry it. He once stole the quarters from a dead man's eyes. Mon Dieu! to save Brickney's life, the courage to do that like sticking your face in the mire and eating! But, pshaw! go on, p'tite Lucille."

"There is no more. I never heard again."

"How long was that ago?"

"Nine months or more."

"Nothing has been heard of any of them?"

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"Nothing at all. The Englishman belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company, but they have heard nothing down here at Fort Ste. Anne."

"If he saves the Company's man, that will make up the man he lost for them, eh you think that, eh?" Pierre's eyes had a curious ironical light.

"I do not care for the Company," she said. "John Marcey's life was his own."

"Good!" he added quickly, and his eyes admired her. "That is the thing. Then, do not forget that Marcey took his life in his hands himself, that he would have killed Laforce if Laforce hadn't killed him."

"I know, I know," she said, "but I should have felt the same if John Marcey had killed Stroke Laforce."

"It is a pity to throw your life away," he ventured. He said this for a purpose. He did not think she was throwing it away.

She was watching a little knot of horsemen coming over a swell of the prairie far off. She withdrew her eyes and fixed them on Pierre. "Do you throw your life away if you do what is the only thing you are told to do?"

She placed her hand on her heart that had been her one guide.

Pierre got to his feet, came over, and touched her on the shoulder.

"You have the great secret," he said quietly. "The thing may be all wrong to others, but if it's right to yourself that's it mais oui! If he comes," he added "if he comes back, think of him as well as Marcey. Marcey is sleeping what does it matter? If he is awake, he has better times, for he was a man to make another world sociable. Think of Laforce, for he has his life to live, and he is a man to make this world sociable."

"The Scarlet Hunter is sick for home
(Why should the door be shut?)"

Her eyes had been following the group of horsemen on the plains. She again fixed them on Pierre, and stood up.

"It is a beautiful legend that," she said.

"But? but?" he asked.

She would not answer him. "You will come again," she said; "you will help me?"

"Surely, p'tite Lucille, surely, I will come. But to help ah, that would sound funny to the Missionary at the Fort and to others!"

"You understand life," she said, "and I can speak to you."

"It's more to you to understand you than to be good, eh?"

"I guess it's more to any woman," she answered. They both passed out of the house. She turned towards the broken shutter. Then their eyes met. A sad little smile hovered at her lips.

"What is the use?" she said, and her eyes fastened on the horsemen.

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He knew now that she would never shudder again at the sight of it, or at the remembrance of Marcey's death.

"But he will come," was the reply to her, and her smile almost settled and stayed.

They parted, and as he went down the hill he saw far over, coming up, a woman in black, who walked as if she carried a great weight. "Every shot that kills ricochets," he said to himself:

"His mother dead her mother like that!"

He passed into the Fort, renewing acquaintances in the Company's store, and twenty minutes after he was one to greet the horsemen that Lucille had seen coming over the hills. They were five, and one had to be helped from his horse. It was Stroke Laforce, who had been found near dead at the Metal River by a party of men exploring in the north.

He had rescued the Englishman and his party, but within a day of the finding the Englishman died, leaving him his watch, a ring, and a cheque on the H. B. C. at Winnipeg. He and the two survivors, one of whom was Brickney, started south. One night Brickney robbed him and made to get away, and on his seizing the thief he was wounded. Then the other man came to his help and shot Brickney: after that weeks of wandering, and at last rescue and Fort Ste. Anne.

A half-hour after this Pierre left Laforce on the crest of the hill above the Fort, and did not turn to go down till he had seen the other pass within the house with the broken shutter. And later he saw a little bonfire on the hill. The next evening he came to the house again himself. Lucille rose to meet him.

"Why should the door be shut?" he quoted smiling.

"The door is open," she answered quickly and with a quiet joy.

He turned to the motion of her hand, and saw Laforce asleep on a couch.

Soon afterwards, as he passed from the house, he turned towards the window. The broken shutter was gone.

He knew now the meaning of the bonfire the night before.

THE FINDING OF FINGALL

"Fingall! Fingall! Oh, Fingall!"

A grey mist was rising from the river, the sun was drinking it delightedly, the swift blue water showed underneath it, and the top of Whitefaced Mountain peaked the mist by a hand-length. The river brushed the banks like rustling silk, and the only other sound, very sharp and clear in the liquid monotone, was the crack of a woodpecker's beak on a hickory tree.

It was a sweet, fresh autumn morning in Lonesome Valley. Before night the deer would bellow reply to the hunters' rifles, and the mountain-goat call to its unknown gods; but now there was only the wild duck skimming the river, and the high hilltop rising and fading into the mist, the ardent sun, and again that strange cry

"Fingall! Oh, Fingall! Fingall!"

Two men, lounging at a fire on a ledge of the hills, raised their eyes to the mountain-side beyond and above them,

and one said presently:

"The second time. It's a woman's voice, Pierre." Pierre nodded, and abstractedly stirred the coals about with a twig.

"Well, it is a pity the poor Cynthie," he said at last.

"It is a woman, then. You know her, Pierre her story?"

"Fingall! Fingall! Oh, Fingall!"

Pierre raised his head towards the sound; then after a moment, said:

"I know Fingall."

"And the woman? Tell me."

"And the girl. Fingall was all fire and heart, and devil–may–care. She she was not beautiful except in the eye, but that was like a flame of red and blue. Her hair, too then would trip her up, if it hung loose. That was all, except that she loved him too much. But women et puis, when a woman gets a man between her and the heaven above and the earth beneath, and there comes the great hunger, what is the good! A man cannot understand, but he can see, and he can fear. What is the good! To play with life, that is not much; but to play with a soul is more than a thousand lives. Look at Cynthie."

He paused, and Lawless waited patiently. Presently Pierre continued:

Fingall was gentil; he would take off his hat to a squaw. It made no difference what others did; he didn't think it was like breathing to him. How can you tell the way things happen? Cynthie's father kept the tavern at St. Gabriel's Fork, over against the great saw–mill. Fingall was foreman of a gang in the lumberyard. Cynthie had a brother Fenn. Fenn was as bad as they make, but she loved him, and Fingall knew it well, though he hated the young skunk. The girl's eyes were like two little fire–flies when Fingall was about.

"He was a gentleman, though he had only half a name Fingall like that. I think he did not expect to stay; he seemed to be waiting for something always when the mail come in he would be there; and afterwards you wouldn't see him for a time. So it seemed to me that he made up his mind to think nothing of Cynthie, and to say nothing."

"Fingall! Fingall! Oh, Fingall!"

The strange, sweet, singing voice sounded nearer. "She's coming this way, Pierre," said Lawless.

"I hope not to see her. What is the good!"

"Well, let us have the rest of the story."

"Her brother Fenn was in Fingall's gang. One day there was trouble. Fenn called Fingall a liar. The gang stopped piling; the usual thing did not come. Fingall told him to leave the yard, and they would settle some other time. That night a wicked thing happened. We were sitting in the bar–room when we heard two shots and then a fall. We ran into the other room; there was Fenn on the floor, dying. He lifted himself on his elbow, pointed at Fingall and fell back. The father of the boy stood white and still a few feet away. There was no pistol showing none at all.

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"The men closed in on Fingall. He did not stir he seemed to be thinking of something else. He had a puzzled, sorrowful look. The men roared round him, but he waved them back for a moment, and looked first at the father, then at the son. I could not understand at first. Someone pulled a pistol out of Fingall's pocket and showed it. At that moment Cynthie came in. She gave a cry. By the holy! I do not want to hear a cry like that often. She fell on her knees beside the boy, and caught his head to her breast. Then with a wild look she asked who did it. They had just taken Fingall out into the bar-room. They did not tell her his name, for they knew that she loved him.

"'Father,' she said all at once, 'have you killed the man that killed Fenn?'

"The old man shook his head. There was a sick colour in his face.

"'Then I will kill him,' she said.

"She laid her brother's head down, and stood up. Someone put in her hand the pistol, and told her it was the same that had killed Fenn. She took it, and came with us. The old man stood still where he was; he was like stone. I looked at him for a minute and thought; then I turned round and went to the bar-room; and he followed. Just as I got inside the door, I saw the girl start back, and her hand drop, for she saw that it was Fingall; he was looking at her very strange. It was the rule to empty the gun into a man who had been sentenced; and already Fingall had heard his, 'God-have-mercy!' The girl was to do it.

"Fingall said to her in a muffled voice, 'Fire Cynthie!'

"I guessed what she would do. In a kind of a dream she raised the pistol up up up, till I could see it was just out of range of his head, and she fired. One! two! three! four! five! Fingall never moved a muscle; but the bullets spotted the wall at the side of his head. She stopped after the five; but the arm was still held out, and her finger was on the trigger; she seemed to be all dazed. Only six chambers were in the gun, and of course one chamber was empty. Fenn had its bullet in his lungs, as we thought. So someone beside Cynthie touched her arm, pushing it down. But there was another shot, and this time, because of the push, the bullet lodged in Fingall's skull."

Pierre paused now, and waved with his hand towards the mist which hung high up like a canopy between the hills.

"But," said Lawless, not heeding the scene, "what about that sixth bullet?"

"Holy, it is plain! Fingall did not fire the shot. His revolver was full, every chamber, when Cynthie first took it."

"Who killed the lad?"

"Can you not guess? There had been words between the father and the boy: both had fierce blood. The father, in a mad minute, fired; the boy wanted revenge on Fingall, and, to save his father, laid it on the other. The old man? Well, I do not know whether he was a coward, or stupid, or ashamed he let Fingall take it."

"Fingall took it to spare the girl, eh?"

"For the girl. It wasn't good for her to know her father killed his own son."

"What came after?"

"The worst. That night the girl's father killed himself, and the two were buried in the same grave. Cynthie "

"Fingall! Fingall! Oh, Fingall!"

Romany Of The Snows, v3

"You hear? Yes, like that all the time as she sat on the floor, her hair about her like a cloud, and the dead bodies in the next room. She thought she had killed Fingall, and she knew now that he was innocent. The two were buried. Then we told her that Fingall was not dead. She used to come and sit outside the door, and listen to his breathing, and ask if he ever spoke of her. What was the good of lying? If we said he did, she'd have come in to him, and that would do no good, for he wasn't right in his mind. By and by we told her he was getting well, and then she didn't come, but stayed at home, just saying his name over to herself. Alors, things take hold of a woman it is strange! When Fingall was strong enough to go out, I went with him the first time. He was all thin and handsome as you can think, but he had no memory, and his eyes were like a child's. She saw him, and came out to meet him. What does a woman care for the world when she loves a man? Well, he just looked at her as if he'd never seen her before, and passed by without a sign, though afterwards a trouble came in his face. Three days later he was gone, no one knew where. That is two years ago. Ever since she has been looking for him."

"Is she mad?"

"Mad? Holy Mother! it is not good to have one thing in the head all the time! What do you think? So much all at once! And then "

"Hush, Pierre! There she is!" said Lawless, pointing to a ledge of rock not far away.

The girl stood looking out across the valley, a weird, rapt look in her face, her hair falling loose, a staff like a shepherd's crook in one hand, the other hand over her eyes as she slowly looked from point to point of the horizon.

The two watched her without speaking. Presently she saw them. She gazed at them for a minute, then descended to them. Lawless and Pierre rose, doffing their hats. She looked at both a moment, and her eyes settled on Pierre. Presently she held out her hand to him. "I knew you yesterday," she said.

Pierre returned the intensity of her gaze with one kind and strong.

"So so, Cynthie," he said; "sit down and eat."

He dropped on a knee and drew a scone and some fish from the ashes. She sat facing them, and, taking from a bag at her side some wild fruits, ate slowly, saying nothing. Lawless noticed that her hair had become grey at her temples, though she was but one-and-twenty years old. Her face, brown as it was, shone with a white kind of light, which may, or may not, have come from the crucible of her eyes, where the tragedy of her life was fusing. Lawless could not bear to look long, for the fire that consumes a body and sets free a soul is not for the sight of the quick. At last she rose, her body steady, but her hands having that tremulous activity of her eyes.

"Will you not stay, Cynthie?" asked Lawless very kindly.

She came close to him, and, after searching his eyes, said with a smile that almost hurt him, "When I have found him, I will bring him to your camp-fire. Last night the Voice said that he waits for me where the mist rises from the river at daybreak, close to the home of the White Swan. Do you know where is the home of the White Swan? Before the frost comes and the red wolf cries, I must find him. Winter is the time of sleep.

"I will give him honey and dried meat. I know where we shall live together. You never saw such roses! Hush! I have a place where we can hide."

Suddenly her gaze became fixed and dream-like, and she said slowly: "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment, Good Lord, deliver us!"

Romany Of The Snows, v3

"Good Lord, deliver us!" repeated Lawless in a low voice. Without looking at them, she slowly turned away and passed up the hill-side, her eyes scanning the valley as before.

"Good Lord, deliver us!" again said Lawless. "Where did she get it?"

"From a book which Fingall left behind."

They watched her till she rounded a cliff, and was gone; then they shouldered their kits and passed up the river on the trail of the wapiti.

One month later, when a fine white surf of frost lay on the ground, and the sky was darkened often by the flight of the wild geese southward, they came upon a hut perched on a bluff, at the edge of a clump of pines. It was morning, and Whitefaced Mountain shone clear and high, without a touch of cloud or mist from its haunches to its crown.

They knocked at the hut door, and, in answer to a voice, entered. The sunlight streamed in over a woman, lying upon a heap of dried flowers in a corner. A man was kneeling beside her. They came near, and saw that the woman was Cynthie.

"Fingall!" broke out Pierre, and caught the kneeling man by the shoulder. At the sound of his voice the woman's eyes opened.

"Fingall! Oh, Fingall!" she said, and reached up a hand.

Fingall stooped and caught her to his breast: "Cynthie! poor girl! Oh, my poor Cynthie!" he said. In his eyes, as in hers, was a sane light, and his voice, as hers, said indescribable things.

Her head sank upon his shoulder, her eyes closed; she slept. Fingall laid her down with a sob in his throat; then he sat up and clutched Pierre's hand.

"In the East, where the doctors cured me, I heard all," he said, pointing to her, "and I came to find her. I was just in time; I found her yesterday."

"She knew you?" whispered Pierre.

"Yes, but this fever came on." He turned and looked at her, and, kneeling, smoothed away the hair from the quiet face. "Poor girl!" he said; "poor girl!"

"She will get well?" asked Pierre.

"God grant it!" Fingall replied. "She is better better."

Lawless and Pierre softly turned and stole away, leaving the man alone with the woman he loved.

The two stood in silence, looking upon the river beneath. Presently a voice crept through the stillness. "Fingall! Oh, Fingall! Fingall!"

It was the voice of a woman returning from the dead.

THREE COMMANDMENTS IN THE VULGAR TONGUE

I

"Read on, Pierre," the sick man said, doubling the corner of the wolf-skin pillow so that it shaded his face from the candle.

Pierre smiled to himself, thinking of the unusual nature of his occupation, raised an eyebrow as if to someone sitting at the other side of the fire, though the room was empty save for the two and went on reading:

"Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!

"The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

"And behold at evening-tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us."

The sick man put up his hand, motioning for silence, and Pierre, leaving the Bible open, laid it at his side. Then he fell to studying the figure on the couch. The body, though reduced by a sudden illness, had an appearance of late youth, a firmness of mature manhood; but the hair was grey, the beard was grizzled, and the face was furrowed and seamed as though the man had lived a long, hard life. The body seemed thirty years old, the head sixty; the man's exact age was forty-five. His most singular characteristic was a fine, almost spiritual intelligence, which showed in the dewy brightness of the eye, in the lighted face, in the cadenced definiteness of his speech. One would have said, knowing nothing of him, that he was a hermit; but again, noting the firm, graceful outlines of his body, that he was a soldier. Within the past twenty-four hours he had had a fight for life with one of the terrible "colds" which, like an unstayed plague, close up the courses of the body, and carry a man out of the hurly-burly, without pause to say how much or how little he cares to go.

Pierre, whose rude skill in medicine was got of hard experiences here and there, had helped him back into the world again, and was himself now a little astonished at acting as Scripture reader to a Protestant invalid. Still, the Bible was like his childhood itself, always with him in memory, and Old Testament history was as wine to his blood. The lofty tales sang in his veins: of primitive man, adventure, mysterious and exalted romance. For nearly an hour, with absorbing interest, he had read aloud from these ancient chronicles to Fawdor, who held this Post of the Hudson's Bay Company in the outer wilderness.

Pierre had arrived at the Post three days before, to find a half-breed trapper and an Indian helpless before the sickness which was hurrying to close on John Fawdor's heart and clamp it in the vice of death. He had come just in time. He was now ready to learn, by what ways the future should show, why this man, of such unusual force and power, should have lived at a desolate post in Labrador for twenty-five years.

"This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us" Fawdor repeated the words slowly, and then said: "It is good to be out of the restless world. Do you know the secret of life, Pierre?"

Romany Of The Snows, v3

Pierre's fingers unconsciously dropped on the Bible at his side, drumming the leaves. His eyes wandered over Fawdor's face, and presently he answered, "To keep your own commandments."

"The ten?" asked the sick man, pointing to the Bible. Pierre's fingers closed the book. "Not the ten, for they do not fit all; but one by one to make your own, and never to break comme ca!"

"The answer is well," returned Fawdor; "but what is the greatest commandment that a man can make for himself?"

"Who can tell? What is the good of saying, 'Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day,' when a man lives where he does not know the days? What is the good of saying, 'Thou shalt not steal,' when a man has no heart to rob, and there is nothing to steal? But a man should have a heart, an eye for justice. It is good for him to make his commandments against that wherein he is a fool or has a devil. Justice, that is the thing."

"'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'?" asked Fawdor softly.

"Yes, like that. But a man must put it in his own words, and keep the law which he makes. Then life does not give a bad taste in the mouth."

"What commandments have you made for yourself, Pierre?"

The slumbering fire in Pierre's face leaped up. He felt for an instant as his father, a chevalier of France, might have felt if a peasant had presumed to finger the orders upon his breast. It touched his native pride, so little shown in anything else. But he knew the spirit behind the question, and the meaning justified the man. "Thou shalt think with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman," he said, and paused.

"Justice and mercy," murmured the voice from the bed.

"Thou shalt keep the faith of food and blanket." Again Pierre paused.

"And a man shall have no cause to fear his friend," said the voice again.

The pause was longer this time, and Pierre's cold, handsome face took on a kind of softness before he said, "Remember the sorrow of thine own wife."

"It is a good commandment," said the sick man, "to make all women safe whether they be true or foolish."

"The strong should be ashamed to prey upon the weak. Pshaw! such a sport ends in nothing. Man only is man's game."

Suddenly Pierre added: "When you thought you were going to die, you gave me some papers and letters to take to Quebec. You will get well. Shall I give them back? Will you take them yourself?"

Fawdor understood: Pierre wished to know his story. He reached out a hand, saying, "I will take them myself. You have not read them?"

"No. I was not to read them till you died bien?" He handed the packet over.

"I will tell you the story," Fawdor said, turning over on his side, so that his eyes rested full on Pierre.

He did not begin at once. An Esquimau dog, of the finest and yet wildest breed, which had been lying before the fire, stretched itself, opened its red eyes at the two men, and, slowly rising, went to the door and sniffed at the

cracks. Then it turned, and began pacing restlessly around the room. Every little while it would stop, sniff the air, and go on again. Once or twice, also, as it passed the couch of the sick man, it paused, and at last it suddenly rose, rested two feet on the rude headboard of the couch, and pushed its nose against the invalid's head. There was something rarely savage and yet beautifully soft in the dog's face, scarred as it was by the whips of earlier owners. The sick man's hand went up and caressed the wolfish head. "Good dog, good Akim!" he said softly in French. "Thou dost know when a storm is on the way; thou dost know, too, when there is a storm in my heart."

Even as he spoke a wind came crying round the house, and the parchment windows gave forth a soft booming sound. Outside, Nature was trembling lightly in all her nerves; belated herons, disturbed from the freshly frozen pool, swept away on tardy wings into the night and to the south; a herd of wolves, trooping by the hut, passed from a short, easy trot to a low, long gallop, devouring, yet fearful. It appeared as though the dumb earth were trying to speak, and the mighty effort gave it pain, from which came awe and terror to living things.

So, inside the house, also, Pierre almost shrank from the unknown sorrow of this man beside him, who was about to disclose the story of his life. The solitary places do not make men glib of tongue; rather, spare of words. They whose tragedy lies in the capacity to suffer greatly, being given the woe of imagination, bring forth inner history as a mother gasps life into the world.

"I was only a boy of twenty-one," Fawdor said from the pillow, as he watched the dog noiselessly travelling from corner to corner, "and I had been with the Company three years. They had said that I could rise fast; I had done so. I was ambitious; yet I find solace in thinking that I saw only one way to it, by patience, industry, and much thinking. I read a great deal, and cared for what I read; but I observed also, that in dealing with men I might serve myself and the Company wisely.

"One day the governor of the Company came from England, and with him a sweet lady, his young niece, and her brother. They arranged for a tour to the Great Lakes, and I was chosen to go with them in command of the boatmen. It appeared as if a great chance had come to me, and so said the factor at Lachine on the morning we set forth. The girl was as winsome as you can think; not of such wonderful beauty, but with a face that would be finer old than young; and a dainty trick of humour had she as well. The governor was a testy man; he could not bear to be crossed in a matter; yet, in spite of all, I did not think he had a wilful hardness. It was a long journey, and we were set to our wits to make it always interesting; but we did it somehow, for there were fishing and shooting, and adventure of one sort and another, and the lighter things, such as singing and the telling of tales, as the boatmen rowed the long river.

"We talked of many things as we travelled, and I was glad to listen to the governor, for he had seen and read much. It was clear he liked to have us hang upon his tales and his grand speeches, which seemed a little large in the mouth; and his nephew, who had a mind for raillery, was now and again guilty of some witty impertinence; but this was hard to bring home to him, for he could assume a fine childlike look when he pleased, confusing to his accusers. Towards the last he grew bolder, and said many a biting thing to both the governor and myself, which more than once turned his sister's face pale with apprehension, for she had a nice sense of kindness. Whenever the talk was at all general, it was his delight to turn one against the other. Though I was wary, and the girl understood his game, at last he had his way.

"I knew Shakespeare and the Bible very well, and, like most bookish young men, phrase and motto were much on my tongue, though not always given forth. One evening, as we drew to the camp-fire, a deer broke from the woods and ran straight through the little circle we were making, and disappeared in the bushes by the riverside. Someone ran for a rifle; but the governor forbade, adding, with an air, a phrase with philosophical point. I, proud of the chance to show I was not a mere backwoodsman at such a sport, capped his aphorism with a line from Shakespeare's Cymbeline.

Romany Of The Snows, v3

"Tut, tut!" said the governor smartly; 'you haven't it well, Mr. Fawdor; it goes this way,' and he went on to set me right. His nephew at that stepped in, and, with a little disdainful laugh at me, made some galling gibe at my 'distinguished learning.' I might have known better than to let it pique me, but I spoke up again, though respectfully enough, that I was not wrong. It appeared to me all at once as if some principle were at stake, as if I were the champion of our Shakespeare; so will vanity delude us.

"The governor I can see it as if it were yesterday seemed to go like ice, for he loved to be thought infallible in all such things as well as in great business affairs, and his nephew was there to give an edge to the matter. He said, curtly, that I would probably come on better in the world if I were more exact and less cock-a-hoop with myself. That stung me, for not only was the young lady looking on with a sort of superior pity, as I thought, but her brother was murmuring to her under his breath with a provoking smile. I saw no reason why I should be treated like a schoolboy. As far as my knowledge went it was as good as another man's, were he young or old, so I came in quickly with my reply. I said that his excellency should find me more cock-a-hoop with Shakespeare than with myself. 'Well, well,' he answered, with a severe look, 'our Company has need of great men for hard tasks.' To this I made no answer, for I got a warning look from the young lady, a look which had a sort of reproach and command too. She knew the twists and turns of her uncle's temper, and how he was imperious and jealous in little things. The matter dropped for the time; but as the governor was going to his tent for the night, the young lady said to me hurriedly, 'My uncle is a man of great reading and power, Mr. Fawdor. I would set it right with him, if I were you.' For the moment I was ashamed. You cannot guess how fine an eye she had, and how her voice stirred one! She said no more, but stepped inside her tent; and then I heard the brother say over my shoulder, 'Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud!' Afterwards, with a little laugh and a backward wave of the hand, as one might toss a greeting to a beggar, he was gone also, and I was left alone."

Fawdor paused in his narrative. The dog had lain down by the fire again, but its red eyes were blinking at the door, and now and again it growled softly, and the long hair at its mouth seemed to shiver with feeling. Suddenly through the night there rang a loud, barking cry. The dog's mouth opened and closed in a noiseless snarl, showing its keen, long teeth, and a ridge of hair bristled on its back. But the two men made no sign or motion. The cry of wild cats was no new thing to them.

Presently the other continued: "I sat by the fire and heard beasts howl like that, I listened to the river churning over the rapids below, and I felt all at once a loneliness that turned me sick. There were three people in a tent near me; I could even hear the governor's breathing; but I appeared to have no part in the life of any human being, as if I were a kind of outlaw of God and man. I was poor; I had no friends; I was at the mercy of this great Company; if I died, there was not a human being who, so far as I knew, would shed a tear. Well, you see I was only a boy, and I suppose it was the spirit of youth hungering for the huge, active world and the companionship of ambitious men. There is no one so lonely as the young dreamer on the brink of life. "I was lying by the fire. It was not a cold night, and I fell asleep at last without covering. I did not wake till morning, and then it was to find the governor's nephew building up the fire again. 'Those who are born great,' said he, 'are bound to rise.' But perhaps he saw that I had had a bad night, and felt that he had gone far enough, for he presently said, in a tone more to my liking, 'Take my advice, Mr. Fawdor; make it right with my uncle. It isn't such fast rising in the Company that you can afford to quarrel with its governor. I'd go on the other tack: don't be too honest.' I thanked him, and no more was said; but I liked him better, for I saw that he was one of those who take pleasure in dropping nettles more to see the weakness of human nature than from malice.

"But my good fortune had got a twist, and it was not to be straightened that day; and because it was not straightened then it was not to be at all; for at five o'clock we came to the Post at Lachine, and here the governor and the others were to stop. During all the day I had waited for my chance to say a word of apology to his excellency, but it was no use; nothing seemed to help me, for he was busy with his papers and notes, and I also had to finish up my reports. The hours went by, and I saw my chances drift past. I knew that the governor held the thing against me, and not the less because he saw me more than once that day in speech with his niece. For she appeared anxious to cheer me, and indeed I think we might have become excellent friends had our ways run

together. She could have bestowed her friendship on me without shame to herself, for I had come of an old family in Scotland, the Sheplaws of Canfire, which she knew, as did the governor also, was a more ancient family than their own. Yet her kindness that day worked me no good, and I went far to make it worse, since, under the spell of her gentleness, I looked at her far from distantly, and at the last, as she was getting from the boat, returned the pressure of her hand with much interest. I suppose something of the pride of that moment leaped up in my eye, for I saw the governor's face harden more and more, and the brother shrugged an ironical shoulder. I was too young to see or know that the chief thing in the girl's mind was regret that I had so hurt my chances; for she knew, as I saw only too well afterwards, that I might have been rewarded with a leaping promotion in honour of the success of the journey. But though the boatmen got a gift of money and tobacco and spirits, nothing came to me save the formal thanks of the governor, as he bowed me from his presence.

"The nephew came with his sister to bid me farewell. There was little said between her and me, and it was a long, long time before she knew the end of that day's business. But the brother said, 'You've let, the chance go by, Mr. Fawdor. Better luck next time, eh? And,' he went on, 'I'd give a hundred editions the lie, but I'd read the text according to my chief officer. The words of a king are always wise while his head is on,' he declared further, and he drew from his scarf a pin of pearls and handed it to me. 'Will you wear that for me, Mr. Fawdor?' he asked; and I, who had thought him but a stripling with a saucy pride, grasped his hand and said a God-keep-you. It does me good now to think I said it. I did not see him or his sister again.

"The next day was Sunday. About two o'clock I was sent for by the governor. When I got to the Post and was admitted to him, I saw that my misadventure was not over. 'Mr. Fawdor,' said he coldly, spreading out a map on the table before him, 'you will start at once for Fort Ungava, at Ungava Bay, in Labrador.' I felt my heart stand still for a moment, and then surge up and down, like a piston-rod under a sudden rush of steam. 'You will proceed now,' he went on, in his hard voice, 'as far as the village of Pont Croix. There you will find three Indians awaiting you. You will go on with them as far as Point St. Saviour and camp for the night, for if the Indians remain in the village they may get drunk. The next morning, at sunrise, you will move on. The Indians know the trail across Labrador to Fort Ungava. When you reach there, you will take command of the Post and remain till further orders. Your clothes are already at the village. I have had them packed, and you will find there also what is necessary for the journey. The factor at Ungava was there ten years; he has gone to heaven.'

"I cannot tell what it was held my tongue silent, that made me only bow my head in assent, and press my lips together. I knew I was pale as death, for as I turned to leave the room I caught sight of my face in a little mirror tacked on the door, and I hardly recognised myself.

"'Good-day, Mr. Fawdor,' said the governor, handing me the map. 'There is some brandy in your stores; be careful that none of your Indians get it. If they try to desert, you know what to do.' With a gesture of dismissal he turned, and began to speak with the chief trader.

"For me, I went from that room like a man condemned to die. Fort Ungava in Labrador, a thousand miles away, over a barren, savage country, and in winter too; for it would be winter there immediately! It was an exile to Siberia, and far worse than Siberia; for there are many there to share the fellowship of misery, and I was likely to be the only white man at Fort Ungava. As I passed from the door of the Post the words of Shakespeare which had brought all this about sang in my ears." He ceased speaking, and sank back wearily among the skins of his couch. Out of the enveloping silence Pierre's voice came softly:

"Thou shalt judge with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman."

II

"The journey to the village of Pont Croix was that of a man walking over graves. Every step sent a pang to my

heart, a boy of twenty-one, grown old in a moment. It was not that I had gone a little lame from a hurt got on the expedition with the governor, but my whole life seemed suddenly lamed. Why did I go? Ah, you do not know how discipline gets into a man's bones, the pride, the indignant pride of obedience! At that hour I swore that I should myself be the governor of that Company one day, the boast of loud-hearted youth. I had angry visions, I dreamed absurd dreams, but I did not think of disobeying. It was an unheard-of journey at such a time, but I swore that I would do it, that it should go into the records of the Company.

"I reached the village, found the Indians, and at once moved on to the settlement where we were to stay that night. Then my knee began to pain me. I feared inflammation; so in the dead of night I walked back to the village, roused a trader of the Company, got some liniment and other trifles, and arrived again at St. Saviour's before dawn. My few clothes and necessaries came in the course of the morning, and by noon we were fairly started on the path to exile.

"I remember that we came to a lofty point on the St. Lawrence just before we plunged into the woods, to see the great stream no more. I stood and looked back up the river towards the point where Lachine lay. All that went to make the life of a Company's man possible was there; and there, too, were those with whom I had tented and travelled for three long months, eaten with them, cared for them, used for them all the woodcraft that I knew. I could not think that it would be a young man's lifetime before I set eyes on that scene again. Never from that day to this have I seen the broad, sweet river where I spent the three happiest years of my life. I can see now the tall shining heights of Quebec, the pretty wooded Island of Orleans, the winding channel, so deep, so strong. The sun was three-fourths of its way down in the west, and already the sky was taking on the deep red and purple of autumn. Somehow, the thing that struck me most in the scene was a bunch of pines, solemn and quiet, their tops burnished by the afternoon light. Tears would have been easy then. But my pride drove them back from my eyes to my angry heart. Besides, there were my Indians waiting, and the long journey lay before us. Then, perhaps because there was none nearer to make farewell to, or I know not why, I waved my hand towards the distant village of Lachine, and, with the sweet maid in my mind who had so gently parted from me yesterday, I cried, 'Good-bye, and God bless you.'"

He paused. Pierre handed him a wooden cup, from which he drank, and then continued:

"The journey went forward. You have seen the country. You know what it is: those bare ice-plains and rocky unfenced fields stretching to all points, the heaving wastes of treeless country, the harsh frozen lakes. God knows what insupportable horror would have settled on me in that pilgrimage had it not been for occasional glimpses of a gentler life for the deer and caribou which crossed our path. Upon my soul, I was so full of gratitude and love at the sight that I could have thrown my arms round their necks and kissed them. I could not raise a gun at them. My Indians did that, and so inconstant is the human heart that I ate heartily of the meat. My Indians were almost less companionable to me than any animal would have been. Try as I would, I could not bring myself to like them, and I feared only too truly that they did not like me. Indeed, I soon saw that they meant to desert me, kill me, perhaps, if they could, although I trusted in the wholesome and restraining fear which the Indian has of the great Company. I was not sure that they were guiding me aright, and I had to threaten death in case they tried to mislead me or desert me. My knee at times was painful, and cold, hunger, and incessant watchfulness wore on me vastly. Yet I did not yield to my miseries, for there entered into me then not only the spirit of endurance, but something of that sacred pride in suffering which was the merit of my Covenanting forefathers.

"We were four months on that bitter travel, and I do not know how it could have been made at all, had it not been for the deer that I had heart to eat and none to kill. The days got shorter and shorter, and we were sometimes eighteen hours in absolute darkness. Thus you can imagine how slowly we went. Thank God, we could sleep, hid away in our fur bags, more often without a fire than with one, mere mummies stretched out on a vast coverlet of white, with the peering, unfriendly sky above us; though it must be said that through all those many, many weeks no cloud perched in the zenith. When there was light there was sun, and the courage of it entered into our bones, helping to save us. You may think I have been made feeble-minded by my sufferings, but I tell you plainly that,

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in the closing days of our journey, I used to see a tall figure walking beside me, who, whenever I would have spoken to him, laid a warning finger on his lips; but when I would have fallen, he spoke to me, always in the same words. You have heard of him, the Scarlet Hunter of the Kimash Hills. It was he, the Sentinel of the North, the Lover of the Lost. So deep did his words go into my heart that they have remained with me to this hour."

"I saw him once in the White Valley," Pierre said in a low voice. "What was it he said to you?"

The other drew a long breath, and a smile rested on his lips. Then, slowly, as though liking to linger over them, he repeated the words of the Scarlet Hunter:

"O son of man, behold!
If thou shouldest stumble on the nameless trail,
The trail that no man rides,
Lift up thy heart,
Behold, O son of man, thou hast a helper near!

"O son of man, take heed!
If thou shouldst fall upon the vacant plain,
The plain that no man loves,
Reach out thy hand,
Take heed, O son of man, strength shall be given thee!

"O son of man, rejoice!
If thou art blinded even at the door,
The door of the Safe Tent,
Sing in thy heart,
Rejoice, O son of man, thy pilot leads thee home?"

"I never seemed to be alone after that call it what you will, fancy or delirium. My head was so light that it appeared to spin like a star, and my feet were so heavy that I dragged the whole earth after me. My Indians seldom spoke. I never let them drop behind me, for I did not trust their treacherous natures. But in the end, as it would seem, they also had but one thought, and that to reach Fort Ungava; for there was no food left, none at all. We saw no tribes of Indians and no Esquimaux, for we had not passed in their line of travel or settlement.

"At last I used to dream that birds were singing near me, a soft, delicate whirlwind of sound; and then bells all like muffled silver rang through the aching, sweet air. Bits of prayer and poetry I learned when a boy flashed through my mind; equations in algebra; the tingling scream of a great buzz-saw; the breath of a racer as he nears the post under the crying whip; my own voice dropping loud profanity, heard as a lad from a blind ferryman; the boom! boom! of a mass of logs as they struck a house on a flooding river and carried it away. . . .

"One day we reached the end. It was near evening, and we came to the top of a wooded knoll. My eyes were dancing in my head with fatigue and weakness, but I could see below us, on the edge of the great bay, a large hut, Esquimau lodges and Indian tepees near it. It was the Fort, my cheerless prison-house."

He paused. The dog had been watching him with its flaming eyes; now it gave a low growl, as though it understood, and pitied. In the interval of silence the storm without broke. The trees began to quake and cry, the light snow to beat upon the parchment windows, and the chimney to splutter and moan. Presently, out on the bay they could hear the young ice break and come scraping up the shore. Fawdor listened a while, and then went on, waving his hand to the door as he began: "Think! this, and like that always: the ungodly strife of nature, and my sick, disconsolate life."

"Ever since?" asked Pierre. "All the time."

"Why did you not go back?"

"I was to wait for orders, and they never came."

"You were a free man, not a slave."

"The human heart has pride. At first, as when I left the governor at Lachine, I said, 'I will never speak, I will never ask nor bend the knee. He has the power to oppress; I can obey without whining, as fine a man as he.'"

"Did you not hate?"

"At first, as only a banished man can hate. I knew that if all had gone well I should be a man high up in the Company, and here I was, living like a dog in the porch of the world, sometimes without other food for months than frozen fish; and for two years I was in a place where we had no fire, lived in a snow-house, with only blubber to eat. And so year after year, no word!"

"The mail came once every year from the world?" "Yes, once a year the door of the outer life was opened. A ship came into the bay, and by that ship I sent out my reports. But no word came from the governor, and no request went from me. Once the captain of that ship took me by the shoulders, and said, 'Fawdor, man, this will drive you mad. Come away to England, leave your half-breed in charge, and ask the governor for a big promotion.' He did not understand. Of course I said I could not go. Then he turned on me, he was a good man, and said, 'This will either make you madman or saint, Fawdor.' He drew a Bible from his pocket and handed it to me. 'I've used it twenty years,' he said, 'in evil and out of evil, and I've spiked it here and there; it's a chart for heavy seas, and may you find it so, my lad.'

"I said little then; but when I saw the sails of his ship round a cape and vanish, all my pride and strength were broken up, and I came in a heap to the ground, weeping like a child. But the change did not come all at once. There were two things that kept me hard."

"The girl?"

"The girl, and another. But of the young lady after. I had a half-breed whose life I had saved. I was kind to him always; gave him as good to eat and drink as I had myself; divided my tobacco with him; loved him as only an exile can love a comrade. He conspired with the Indians to seize the Fort and stores, and kill me if I resisted. I found it out."

"Thou shalt keep the faith of food and blanket," said Pierre. "What did you do with him?"

"The fault was not his so much as of his race and his miserable past. I had loved him. I sent him away; and he never came back."

"Thou shalt judge with the minds of twelve men, and the heart of one woman."

"For the girl. There was the thing that clamped my heart. Never a message from her or her brother. Surely they knew, and yet never, thought I, a good word for me to the governor. They had forgotten the faith of food and blanket. And she she must have seen that I could have worshipped her, had we been in the same way of life. Before the better days came to me I was hard against her, hard and rough at heart."

"Remember the sorrow of thine own wife." Pierre's voice was gentle.

"Truly, to think hardly of no woman should be always in a man's heart. But I have known only one woman of my race in twenty-five years!"

"And as time went on?"

"As time went on, and no word came, I ceased to look for it. But I followed that chart spiked with the captain's pencil, as he had done it in season and out of season, and by and by I ceased to look for any word. I even became reconciled to my life. The ambitious and aching cares of the world dropped from me, and I stood above all alone in my suffering, yet not yielding. Loneliness is a terrible thing. Under it a man "

"Goes mad or becomes a saint a saint!" Pierre's voice became reverent.

Fawdor shook his head, smiling gently. "Ah no, no. But I began to understand the world, and I loved the north, the beautiful hard north."

"But there is more?"

"Yes, the end of it all. Three days before you came I got a packet of letters, not by the usual yearly mail. One announced that the governor was dead. Another "

"Another?" urged Pierre.

"was from Her. She said that her brother, on the day she wrote, had by chance come across my name in the Company's records, and found that I had been here a quarter of a century. It was the letter of a good woman. She said she thought the governor had forgotten that he had sent me here as now I hope he had, for that would be one thing less for him to think of, when he set out on the journey where the only weight man carries is the packload of his sins. She also said that she had written to me twice after we parted at Lachine, but had never heard a word, and three years afterwards she had gone to India. The letters were lost, I suppose, on the way to me, somehow who can tell? Then came another thing, so strange, that it seemed like the laughter of the angels at us. These were her words: 'And, dear Mr. Fawdor, you were both wrong in that quotation, as you no doubt discovered long ago.' Then she gave me the sentence as it is in Cymbeline. She was right, quite right. We were both wrong. Never till her letter came had I looked to see. How vain, how uncertain, and fallible, is man!"

Pierre dropped his cigarette, and stared at Fawdor. "The knowledge of books is foolery," he said slowly. "Man is the only book of life. Go on."

"There was another letter, from the brother, who was now high up in the Company, asking me to come to England, and saying that they wished to promote me far, and that he and his sister, with their families, would be glad to see me."

"She was married then?"

The rashness of the suggestion made Fawdor wave his hand impatiently. He would not reply to it. "I was struck down with all the news," he said. "I wandered like a child out into a mad storm. Illness came; then you, who have nursed me back to life. . . . And now I have told all."

"Not all, bien sur. What will you do?"

"I am out of the world; why tempt it all again? See how those twenty-five years were twisted by a boy's vanity and a man's tyranny!"

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"But what will you do?" persisted Pierre. "You should see the faces of women and children again. No man can live without that sight, even as a saint."

Suddenly Fawdor's face was shot over with a storm of feeling. He lay very still, his thoughts busy with a new world which had been disclosed to him. "Youth hungers for the vanities," he said, "and the middle-aged for home." He took Pierre's hand. "I will go," he added. "A door will open somewhere for me."

Then he turned his face to the wall. The storm had ceased, the wild dog huddled quietly on the hearth, and for hours the only sound was the crackling of the logs as Pierre stirred the fire.