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***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE HUNTED OUTLAW *****

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THE

HUNTED OUTLAW;

OR

DONALD MORRISON,

THE CANADIAN ROB ROY

"Truth is stranger than Fiction."

PROLOGUE.

Psychology strips the soul and, having laid it bare, confidently classifies every phase of its mentality. It has the spring of every emotion carefully pigeon-holed; it puts a mental finger upon every passion; it maps out the soul into tabulated territories of feeling; and probes to the earliest stirrings of motive.

A crime startles the community. The perpetrator is educated, wise, enjoys the respect of his fellows. His position is high: his home is happy: he has no enemies.

Psychology is stunned. The deed is incredible. Of all men, this was the last who could be suspected of mental aberration. The mental diagnosis decreed him healthy. He was a man to grace society, do credit to religion, and leave a fair and honored name behind him.

The tabulation is at fault.

The soul has its conventional pose when the eyes of the street are upon it. Psychology's plummet is too short to reach those depths where motive has its sudden and startling birth.

Life begins with the fairest promise, and ends in darkness.

It is the unexpected that stuns us.

Heredity, environment and temperament lead us into easy calculations of assured repose and strength, and permanency of mental and moral equilibrium.

The act of a moment makes sardonic mockery of all our predictions.

The whole mentality is not computable.

Look searchingly at happiness, and note with sadness that a tear stains her cheek.

A dark, sinister thread runs through the web of life.

CHAPTER I.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure,
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor." _Gray_.

The Counties of Compton and Beauce, in the Province of Quebec, were first opened up to settlement about fifty years ago. To this spot a small colony of Highlanders from the Skye and Lewis Islands gravitated. They brought with them the Gaelic language, a simple but austere religion, habits of frugality and method, and aggressive health. That generation is gone, or almost gone, but the essential characteristics of the race have been preserved in their children. The latter are generous and hospitable, to a fault. Within a few miles of the American frontier, the forces of modern life have not reached them. Shut in by immense stretches of the dark and gloomy "forest primeval," they live drowsily in a little world where passions are lethargic, innocence open-eyed, and vice almost unknown. Science has not upset their belief in Jehovah. God is real, and somewhat stern, and the minister is his servant, to be heard with respect, despite the appalling length of his sermons. Sincerely pious, the people mix their religion with a little whiskey, and the blend appears to give satisfaction. The farmers gather at the village inn in the evening, and over a "drap o' Scotch" discuss the past. As the stimulant works, generous sentiments are awakened in the breast; and the melting songs of Robbie Burns--roughly rendered, it may be--make the eye glisten. This is conviviality; but it has no relation to drunkenness. Every household has its family altar; and every night, before retiring to rest, the family circle gather round the father or the husband, who devoutly commends them to the keeping of God.

The common school is a log hut, built by the wayside, and the "schoolmarm" is not a pretentious person. But, what the school cannot supply, a long line of intelligent, independent ancestors have supplied, robust, common sense and sagacity.

Something of the gloom and sternness of the forest, something of the sadness which is a conscious presence, is in their faces. Their humor has a certain savor of grimness. For the rest, it may be said that they are poor, and that they make little effort to be anything else. They do a little farming and a little lumbering. They get food and clothing, they are attached to their homesteads, and the world with all its tempting possibilities passes them by. The young people seek the States, but even they return, and end their days in the old home. They marry, and get farms, and life moves with even step, the alternating seasons, with their possibilities, probably forming their deepest absorptions. It remains only to be said that, passionately attached to the customs, the habits of thought of their forefathers, the Highlanders of the Lake Megantic region are intensely clannish. Splendidly generous, they would

suffer death rather than betray the man who had eaten of their salt. Eminently law-abiding, they would not stretch out a hand to deprive of freedom one who had thrown himself upon their mercy.

CHAPTER II.

DONALD MORRISON APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

Life, could we only be well assured of it, is at the best when it is simple. The woods of Lake Megantic in the summer cast a spell upon the spirit. They are calm and serene, and just a little sad. They invite to rest, and their calm strength and deep silence are a powerful rebuke to passion.

Amongst the deep woods of Marsden, Donald Morrison spent his young years. His parents were in fairly comfortable circumstances, as the term is understood in Compton. Donald was a fair-haired boy, whose white forehead his mother had often kissed in pride as she prepared him, with shining morning face, for the village school. Donald was the pride of the village. Strong for his years and self-assertive, the boys feared him. Handsome and fearless, and proud and masterful, his little girl school-mates adored him. They adored him all the more that he thought it beneath his boyish dignity to pay them attention. This is true to all experience. Donald was passionate. He could not brook interference. He even thus early, when he was learning his tablets at the village school, developed those traits, the exercise of which, in later life, was to make his name known throughout the breadth of the land. Generous and kind-hearted to a degree, his impatience often hurried him into actions which grieved his parents. He was generally in hot water at school. He fought, and he generally won, but his cause was not always right. He was supple, and he excelled in the village games.

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE GIRL WITH YELLOW HAIR.

Minnie Duncan went to the same school with Donald. She was a shy little thing with big brown eyes, which looked at you wistfully, and a mass of yellow hair, which the sun in the summer mornings loved to burnish. Minnie at the age of ten felt drawn to Donald, as timid women generally feel drawn toward masterful men, ignoring the steadier love of gentler natures. Donald had from the start constituted himself her protector in a lordly way. He had once resented a belittling remark which a schoolmate had used towards her, by soundly thrashing the urchin who uttered it. Minnie pitied the lad, but she secretly adored Donald. He was her hero. Donald was good enough to patronize her. Minnie was too humble to resent this attitude. Was he not handsome and strong, with

fearless blue eyes; were not all her little girl companions jealous of her? Did he not go to and come from school with her and carry her books? Above all, had he not done battle in her behalf?

Minnie Duncan was the only daughter of John and Mary Duncan, who lived close to the Morrisons', upon a comfortable farm. She was dearly loved, and she returned the affection bestowed upon her with the beautiful _abandon_ of that epoch when the tide of innocent trust and love is at the full. They had never expressed their hopes in relation to her future; but the wish of their hearts was that she might grow into a modest, God-fearing woman, find a good farmer husband, and live and die in the village.

CHAPTER IV.

"MINNIE, MINNIE," SHE SAID, "I MUST GUARD MY SECRET."

Donald Morrison was now twenty-three. The promise of his boyhood had been realized. He was well made, with sinews like steel. He had a blonde moustache, clustering hair, a well shaped mouth, firm chin. His blue eyes had a proud, fearless look. The schoolmarm had taught Donald the three "R's"; he had read a little when he could spare the money for books; and at the period we are now dealing with he was looked up to by all in the village as a person of superior knowledge. His youth and young manhood had been spent working upon his father's farm. Latterly he had been working upon land which his father had given him, in the hope that he would marry and settle down. He had become restless. The village was beginning to look small, and he asked himself with wonderment how he had been content in it so long. The work was hard and thankless. Was this life? Was there nothing beyond this? Was there not a great world outside the forest? What was this? Was it not stagnation? The woods--yes, the woods were beautiful, but why was it they made him sad? Why was it that when the sun set against the background of the purple line of trees, he felt a lump in his throat? Why, when he walked along the roads in the summer twilight, did the sweet silence oppress him? He could not tell. He knew that he wanted away. He longed to be in the world of real men and women, where joy and suffering, and the extremest force of passion had active play.

Minnie was now a schoolmarm--neat and simple, and sweet. Her figure was slender, and her hair a deep gold, parted simply in the centre, brought over the temples in crisp waves, and wound into a single coil behind. Her head was small and gracefully poised; her teeth as white as milk, because they had never experienced the destructive effects of confectionery; her cheeks, two roses in their first fresh bloom, because she had been reared upon simple food; her figure, slight, supple and well proportioned. She was eighteen. Her beautiful brown eyes wore a sweetly serious look. She had thought as a woman. She was pious, but somehow when she wandered through the woods, and noted how the wild

flowers smiled upon her, and listened to the birds as they shook their very throats for joy, she could only think of the love, not the anger of God. God was good. His purpose was loving. How warm and beautiful and sweet was the sun! The sky was blue, and was there not away beyond the blue a place where the tears that stained the cheek down here would be all wiped away? Sorrow! Oh, yes, there was sorrow here, and somehow, the dearest things we yearned for were denied us. There were heavy burdens to bear, and life's contrasts were agonizing, and faith staggered a little; but when Minnie went to the woods with these thoughts, and looked into the timid eye of the violet, she said to herself softly, "God is love."

A simple creature, you see, and not at all clever. I doubt if she had ever heard of Herbert Spencer, much less read his works. If you had told that she had been evolved from a jelly-fish, her brown eyes would only have looked at you wonderingly. You would have conveyed nothing to her.

I must tell you that Minnie was romantic. The woods had bred in her the spirit of poetry. She loved during the holidays to go to the woods with a book, and, seating herself at the foot of a tree, give herself up to dreams--of happy, innocent love, and of calm life, without cloud, blessed by the smile of heaven.

Love is a sudden, shy flame. Love is a blush which mounts to the cheek, and then leaves it pale. Love is the trembling pressure of hands which, for a delicious moment, meet by stealth. Love is sometimes the deep drawn sigh, the languor that steepens the senses, the sudden trembling to which no name can be given. Minnie was in love. The hero of her childhood was the hero of her womanhood. She loved Donald modestly but passionately; but she constantly said to herself in terror, "Oh, Minnie, Minnie, you must take care; guard your secret; never betray yourself."

CHAPTER V.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

"Oh, happy love, where love like this is found!
Oh, heart-felt raptures, bliss beyond compare!
I've paced this weary mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare,
If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale."

Donald and Minnie had grown up together. They had shared in the social life of the village. They had been to little parties together. They had

gone to the same church, sat in the same pew, sang the psalms from the same book. They had walked out together in the summer evenings, and both had felt the influence of the white moonlight which steeped the trees along the Marsden road. They had, so to say, appropriated each other, and yet there had been no word of love between them. They had spoken freely to each other; their hands had touched, and both had thrilled at the contact, and yet they were only friends! The village had settled it that they were lovers and that they would be married, and felt satisfied with its own decision, because both were popular.

It was a summer afternoon, and they were in the woods together. Minnie had a basket for wild strawberries. None had been gathered. They were seated at the trunk of a tree. Donald had told her that he thought of leaving the country, and she felt stunned. Her heart stopped. She became as pale as death.

"Yes, Minnie," he said, "I am tired of this life. I want away. I want to push my fortune. What is there here for me? What future is there for me? I want to go to the States. I can get along there. This life is too dull and narrow, and all the young fellows have left."

"Perhaps I feel too that it is a little dull, Donald," Minnie said, "but not being a man, I suppose desires like yours would seem improper. When you go," and her voice trembled a little, "I will feel the dullness all the more keenly."

"And do you think it will not cost me an effort to sever our friendship?" Donald said with emotion; "we have been playmates in childhood and friends in riper years. I have been so accustomed to you that to leave you will seem like moving into darkness out of sunlight. Minnie," he went on, taking her hand, and speaking with fervor, "can we only be friends? We say that we are friends; but in my heart I have always loved you. When I began to love you I know not. I feel now that I cannot leave without telling you. Yes, Minnie, I love you, and you only; and it was the hope of bettering my prospects only to ask you to share them, that induced me to think of leaving. But I cannot leave without letting you know what I feel. Just be frank with me, and tell me, do you return my love? I cannot see your face. What! tears! Minnie, Minnie, my darling, you do care a little for me!"

She could not look at him, for tears blinded her, but she said, simply, "Oh, Donald, I have loved you since childhood."

"My own dear Minnie!" He caught her to his breast, and kissed her sweet mouth, her cheek, her hands and hair. He took off her summer hat, and smoothed her golden tresses; he pressed his lips to her white forehead, and called her his darling, his sweet Minnie.

Minnie lay in his arms sobbing, and trembling violently. The restraint she had imposed on herself was now broken down, and she gave way to the natural feelings of her heart. She had received the first kisses of love. She was thrilled with delight and vague alarm.

"Don't tremble, darling," he said, after a long silence.

"Oh, Donald, I can't help it. What is this feeling? What does it mean?"

It was unconscious passion!

CHAPTER VI.

"SUCH PARTINGS AS CRUSH THE LIFE OUT OF YOUNG HEARTS."

Donald had made up his mind to go West In vain his parents dissuaded him.

Young love is hopeful, and Donald had pictured reunion in such attractive guise, that Minnie was half reconciled to his departure.

But the parting was sad.

Donald had spent the last evening at Minnie's parents.

The clock has no sympathy with lovers. It struck the hours remorselessly. The parting moment had come. Minnie accompanied her lover to the door. He took her in his arms. He kissed her again and again. He said hopeful things, and he kissed away her tears. He stroked her hair, and drew her head upon his breast. They renewed their vows of love.

Minnie said, through her sobs, "God bless you, Donald."

He tore himself away!

CHAPTER VII.

"TO THE WEST, TO THE WEST, THE LAND OF THE FREE."

"Bully for Donald!"

"Thar ain't no flies on him, boys, is thar?"

"Warn't it neat?"

"Knocked him out in one round, too!" The scene was a saloon in Montana. Six men were gathered round a table playing poker. The light was dim, the liquor was villainous, and the air was dense with tobacco smoke. It was a cowboy party, and one of the cowboys was Donald Morrison. He had adopted the free life of the Western prairies. He had learned to ride with the grace and shoot with the deadly skill of an Indian.

'Twas a rough life, and he knew it. He mixed but little with the "Boys," but the latter respected him for his manly qualities. He was utterly without fear. Courage is better than gold on the plains of Montana. He took to the life, partly because it was wild and adventurous, partly because he found that he could save money at it. The image of Minnie never grew dim in his heart, and he looked forward to a modest little home in his native village, graced and sweetened by the presence of a true woman.

On this night he had yielded to the persuasion of a few of the boys, and went with them to "Shorty's" saloon for a game of "keerds."

"Shorty" had a pretty daughter, who was as much out of place amid her coarse surroundings as violets in a coal mine.

She was quite honest, and she served her father's customers with modesty. Kitty--that was her name--secretly admired the handsome Donald, who had always treated her with respect upon the infrequent occasions of his visits.

On this night, while the party were at cards, "Wild Dick" Minton entered. He was a desperado, and it was said that he had killed at least two men in his time.

"Wild Dick" swaggered in, roughly greeted the party, called for drink, and sat down in front of a small table close to the card players.

Kitty served him with the drink.

"Well, Kitty," he said with coarse gallantry, "looking sort o' purty to-night, eh? Say, gimme a kiss, won't yer?"

Kitty blushed crimson with anger, but said nothing.

"Wild Dick" got up and took her chin in his hand.

"How dare you?" she said, stamping her foot with indignation.

"My! how hoighty-toighty we are! Well, if yer won't give a feller a kiss, I must take it," and Dick put his arm round her waist, and drew her towards him.

At that moment Donald, who had been watching his behaviour with increasing disgust and anger, leaped up, caught him by the throat with his left hand, and exclaimed: "Let her go, you scoundrel, or I'll thrash the life out of you."

Without a word Dick whipped out his shooter from his hip pocket; Donald's companions leaped from the table, concluding at once there was going to be blood, while "Old Shorty" ducked behind the counter in terror.

Kitty stood rooted to the spot, expecting to see her defender fall at

her feet with a bullet through his brain or heart.

Donald, the moment that Dick pulled out the pistol, grasped the arm that held it as with a vice with his right hand, and, letting go his hold, of his throat, with his left he wrenched the weapon from him.

Then he dealt him a straight blow in the face that felled him like an ox.

Dick rose to his feet with murder in his eyes.

With a cry of rage he rushed upon Donald. The latter had learned to box as well as shoot. He was quite calm, though very pale. He waited for the attack, and then, judging his opportunity, let out his left with terrific force. The blow struck Dick behind the ear, and he fell to the ground with a heavy thud.

He rose to his feet, muttered something about _his_ time coming, and slunk out.

Donald's victory over "Wild Dick," who was regarded as a bully, was hailed in the exclamations which head this chapter.

Donald never provoked a quarrel, but, once engaged, he generally came out victorious.

His prowess soon became bruited abroad, and he had the goodwill of all the wild fellows of that wild region.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARD TIMES AT HOME.

Life is hard in the Megantic district. A very small portion of the land is susceptible of cultivation. The crops are meagre, and when the family is provided for, there is very little left to sell off the farm. Money is scarce. There is very little to be made in lumber.

When Donald went away there was a debt against his farm. He sent from time to time what he could spare to wipe it off. But the times were bad. Donald's father got deeper into debt. The outlook was not encouraging.

"I wish Donald would come home," the old man frequently muttered. "I wish he would," his mother would say, and then she would cry softly to herself.

Poverty is always unlovely.

Too often it is crime!

CHAPTER IX.

"Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care."

"DEAREST DONALD,--I received your kind letter. That you are doing well, and saving money for the purpose you speak of, it is pleasant to hear. That you still love me is what is dearest to my heart. I may confess in this letter what I could scarcely ever say in your presence, that I think of you always. All our old walks are eloquent of the calm and happy past. When I sit beneath the tree where I first learned that you cared for me, my thoughts go back, and I can almost hear the tones of your voice. I feel lonely sometimes. Your letters are a great solace. If I feel a little sad I go to my room, and unburden my heart to Him who is not indifferent even to the sparrow's fall. Sometimes the woods seem mournful, and when the wind, in these autumn evenings, wails through the pines, I don't know how it is, but I feel tears in my eyes.

"And now, Donald, what I am going to tell you will surprise you. We are going away to Springfield, in Massachusetts. A little property has been left father there, and he is going to live upon it. Location does not affect feeling. My heart is yours wherever I may be.

"God bless you, dearest.

"Your own

"MINNIE."

Donald read this letter thoughtfully.

"My father going to the bad, and Minnie going away," he muttered.

He rose from his seat, and walked the narrow room in which he lodged.

"I will go home," he said.

CHAPTER X.

"BE IT EVER SO HUMBLE, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME."

Donald Morrison is back to the simple life of Marsden again. Five years had changed him enormously. His figure had always promise of athletic suppleness. It was now splendidly compact. He left the type of the conventional farmer. He returned the picturesque embodiment of the far West. Perhaps, in his long locks, wide sombrero, undressed leggings, and prodigal display of shooting irons, there may have been a theatrical

suggestion of Buffalo Bill.

The village folk accepted him with intense admiration. Here was something new to study. Had Donald not been to the great and wonderful Far West, so much the more fascinating because nobody knew anything about it? Had he not shot the buffalo roaming the plains? Had he not mingled in that wild life which, without moral lamp-posts, allures all the more because of a certain flavoring spice of deviltry? Every farmer's son in Marsden, Gould, Stornaway, and Lake Megantic, envied Donald that easy swaggering air, that frank, perhaps defiant outlook, which the girls secretly adored. Is it the village maiden alone who confesses to a secret charm in dare-devilism? Let the social life of every garrison city answer. The delicately nurtured lady's heart throbs beneath lace and silk, and that of the village girl beneath cotton, but the character of the emotion is the same.

"Oh, Donald, Donald, my dear son!"

Withered arms were round his neck, and loving lips pressed his cheek.

Donald's home-coming had been a surprise. He had sent no word to his parents. His mother was sitting in the kitchen, when he entered unannounced. For a moment she did not know him, but a mother's love is seldom at fault. A second glance was enough. It passed over Donald the bronzed and weather-beaten man, and reached to Donald the curly-headed lad, whose sunny locks she had brushed softly when preparing him for school.

"Yes, mother," said Donald, tenderly returning her greeting, "I am back again. I intend to settle down. Father's letter showed me that things were not going too well, and I thought I would come home and help to straighten them out a bit. I have had my fill of wandering, and now I think I would like to live quietly in the old place where I was born, among the friends and the scenes which are endeared to me by past associations."

"Oh, I wish you would, Donald," the old mother replied, with moist eyes.

"Your father wants you home, and I want you home. We're now getting old and feeble. We won't be long here. Remain with us to the close."

"Well, Donald, my man, welcome back," a hearty voice cried.

Upon looking round Donald saw his father, who had been out in the fields, and just came in as the mother was speaking. The two men cordially shook hands.

"My, how changed you are," the father said. "I would hardly know you. From the tone of your letters, you have had an adventurous life in the West."

"Well," said Donald, "at first the novelty attracted. I was free. There was no standard of moral attainment constantly thrust in your face, and that was an enormous relief to me. You know how I often rebelled against

the strictness of life here. But even license fatigues; the new becomes the old; and where there is no standard there is but feeble achievement. I became a cowboy because that phase of life offered at a moment when employment was a necessity. I remained at it because I could make money. But I never meant this should be permanent. The wild life became dull to me, and I soon longed for the quiet scenes from which I had been so glad to escape. I learned to shoot and ride, and picked up a few things which may be useful to me here. And now, father, let us discuss your affairs."

CHAPTER XI.

"THE PRIDE OF THE VILLAGE."

It was Saturday night in the village of Lake Megantic. The work of the week is done. There is a brief respite from labor which, severe and unremitting, dulls the mind and chokes the fountains of geniality and wit. The young men,--indeed, there was a sprinkling of grey hairs, too,--had gathered in the one hotel the village boasts of. There was a group in the little room off the bar, and another group in the bar-room itself. It was well for the host that the palates of his guests had not been corrupted by the "mixed drinks" of the cities. He steadily dispensed one article,--that was whiskey. It was quite superfluous to ask your neighbor what he would take. The whiskey was going round, and the lads were a little flushed. At the head of the room off the bar a piper was skirling with great energy, while in the centre of the room a strapping young fellow was keeping time to the music.

The piper paused, and drew a long breath. The dancer resumed his seat.

"I say, boys," said one of the party, "have you seen Donald Morrison since he came home?"

Oh, yes, they had all seen him.

"What do you think of him?" the first speaker asked.

"Well," said a second speaker, "I think he is greatly changed. He's too free with his pistols. He seems to have taken to the habits of the West. I don't think we want them in Megantic."

"I saw him riding down the road to-day," said a third speaker, "and he was using the cowboy stirrups and saddle. Talking of his pistols, he's the most surprising shot I ever saw. I saw him the other day in the village snuffing a candle, and cutting a fine cord at twenty paces."

"He'd be an ugly customer in a row," remarked a fourth speaker.

"No doubt," said the first young fellow, "but Donald never was a disorderly fellow, and I think his pistol shooting and defiant air are a bit of harmless bravado."

The previous speaker appeared to be a bit of a pessimist. "I only hope," he said, significantly, as it seemed, "that nothing will come of this carrying arms, and riding up and down the country like a page of Fenimore Cooper."

"By the way," interposed the first speaker, "did you hear that Donald and his father had a dispute about the money which Donald advanced when he was away, and that legal proceedings are threatened?"

No, none of the party had heard about it, but the pessimist remarked: "I hope there won't be any trouble. Donald, I think, is a man with decent instincts, but passion could carry him to great lengths. Once aroused, he might prove a dangerous enemy."

The young man said these words earnestly enough, no doubt. He had no idea he was uttering a prophecy.

How surprised we are sometimes to find that our commonplaces have been verified by fate, with all the added emphasis of tragedy!

CHAPTER XII.

MODEST, SIMPLE, SWEET.

Minnie is in her new home in Springfield.

Springfield is a village set at the base of a series of hills, which it is an article of faith to call mountains. They are not on the map, but that matters little. We ought to be thankful that the dullness of the guide-book makers and topographers has still left us here and there serene bits of nature.

Springfield had a church, and a school, and a post office, and a tavern. It was a scattered sort of place, and a week of it would have proved the death of a city lady, accustomed to life only as it glows with color, or sparkles with the champagne of passion. Minnie had never seen a city. She was content that her days should be spent close to the calm heart of nature. She felt the parting with old friends at Lake Megantic keenly. She murmured "farewell" to the woods in accents choked with tears. All the associations of childhood, and the more vivid and precious associations of her early womanhood, crowded upon her that last day. Donald occupied the chief place in her thoughts. He was far away. Should they ever meet again? Should their sweet companionships ever be renewed?

The cares of her new home won her back to content.

Minnie's mother was feeble, and required careful nursing. Her own early life had been darkened by hardships. When a young girl she had often gone supperless to bed. Her bare feet and legs were bitten by the

cutting winds of winter. Her people had belonged to the North of Ireland. She herself was born in the south of Antrim. Her mother was early left a widow, without means of support. She worked in the fields for fourpence a day, from six to six, and out of this she had to pay a shilling a week for rent, and buy food and clothing for herself and orphan child. Her employer was a Christian, and deeply interested in the social and spiritual welfare of the heathen! When the outdoor work failed in the winter, she wound cotton upon the old-fashioned spinning-wheel, and Minnie's mother often hung upon the revolving spool with a fearful interest. Mother and child were often hungry. The finish of the cotton at a certain hour of the day meant a small pittance wherewith bread could be bought. A minute after the office hour, and to the pleading request that the goods be taken and the wages given, a brutal "No" would be returned, and the door slammed in the face of the applicant. This was frequently the experience of the poor woman and her child.

At least death is merciful. It said to the widow--"Come, end the struggle. Close your eyes, and I will put you to sleep."

Minnie's mother was adopted by a lady who subsequently took up her residence in Scotland, and a modest ray of sunshine thence continued to rest upon her life: but her early sufferings had left their mark.

Of her mother's life Minnie knew but little. What she perceived was that she needed all her love and care, and these she offered in abundant measure.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LETTER FROM DONALD.

Minnie is in her little bedroom, and she is looking, with a shy surprise mixed with just a little guilt (which is sometimes so delicious), at her blushes in the glass. In her hand was a letter. That letter was from Donald. It had been handed to her at the breakfast table, and she had hastened to her room to have the luxury of secret perusal. With love there are only two beings in the entire universe. You say love is selfish. You are mistaken. Love loves secrecy. A blabbing tongue, the common look of day, kills love. The monopoly that love claims is the law of its being. If I transcribed Donald's letter you would say it was a very commonplace production. But Minnie kissed it twice, and put it softly in her bosom. The letter announced that he was home again, and that he would shortly pay her a visit. It just hinted that things were not going on well at home; but Minnie's sanguine temperament found no sinister suggestion in the words.

The letter had made her happy. She put on her hat, and, taking the path at the back of the house that joined that which led to the mountain, she was soon climbing to the latter's summit.

It was a beautiful spring day. The sunlight seemed new, and young, and very tender. The green of the trees was of that vivid hue which expresses hope to the young, and sadness to the aged. To the former it means a coming depth and maturity of joy; to the latter, the fresh, eager days of the past--bright, indeed, but mournful in their brevity.

Minnie sat down upon a rustic seat, and gave herself up to one of those delicious day-dreams which lure the spirit as the mirage lures the traveller.

She began to sing softly to herself--

"Thou'lt break my heart thou warbling bird,
That wantons through the flowering thorn;
Thou 'minds me o' departed joys,
Departed--never to return."

Why those lines were suggested, and why her voice should falter in sadness, and why tears should spring to her eyes, she did not know. To some spirits the calm beauty of nature, and the warm air that breathes in balm and healing, express the deepest pathos. The contrast between the passion and suffering of life, and the calm assurance of unruffled joy which nature suggests, pierces the heart with an exquisite sadness.

Poor Minnie, she sang the lines of "Bonnie, Doon," all unconscious that they would ever have any relation to her experience.

But Minnie would bear her grief, and say, "God is love."

She had never subscribed to a creed, and although Mill and Huxley were strangers to her, her whole nature protested against any system of which violence was one of the factors.

Minnie was simply good. When she encountered suffering, and found that it was too great for human relief, she would whisper to her heart, "By and by." What by and by meant explained all to Minnie.

We spend years upon the study of character, and the cardinal features often escape us. A dog has but to glance once into a human face. He comprehends goodness in a moment. The ownerless dogs of the village analyzed Minnie's nature, and found it satisfactory. They beamed upon her with looks of wistful love. She had them in the spring and summer for her daily escort to the mountain.

That was a testimonial of fine ethical value.

"Why, what am I dreaming about?" Minnie exclaimed, after she had sat for about an hour. "Why are my eyes wet? Why do I feel a sadness which I cannot define? Am I not happy? Isn't Donald coming to see me? Will we not be together again? Isn't the sun bright and warm, and our little home cheerful and happy? Fancies, dreams, and forebodings, away with you. I must run home and help mother to make that salad for dinner."

The world wants not so much learned, as simple, modest, reverent women,
to sweeten and redeem it!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE TROUBLE.

We will not afflict the reader with all the complexities of a dispute which for months exercised the Press, the people, and the Government of Lower Canada; which led to a terrible tragedy, and the invasion of a quiet country by an armed force which exercised powers of domiciliary visitation and arrest resorted to only under proclamation of martial law; and which, setting a price upon a man's head, resulted in an outlawry as romantic and adventurous as that of Sir Walter Scott's Rob Roy.

Certain large features, necessary to the development of the story, will be recapitulated.

Poverty has few alleviations. Where it exists at all it takes a malevolent delight in making its aspect as hideous as possible. Donald's father had got into difficulties. Donald had helped him more than once when he was in the West, and when he came home he advanced him a considerable sum. A time came when Donald wanted his money back. His father was unable to give it to him. There was a dispute between them. Recourse was had to a money-lender in Lake Megantic.

The latter advanced a certain sum of money upon a note. In the transactions which occurred between Donald and the money-lender the former alleged over-reaching.

An appeal was made to the law.

In the Province of Quebec the law moves slowly. Its feet are shod with the heavy irons of circumlocution. It is very solemn, but its pomp is antiquated. It undertakes to deal with your cause when you have long outgrown the interest or the passion of the original source of contention. Time has healed the wound. You are living at peace with your whilom enemy. You have shaken him by the hand, and partaken of his hospitality.

Then the law intervenes, and revives passions whose fires were almost out. Before Donald's case came on, he sold the farm to the money-lender.

Donald claimed that the latter, in the transaction of a mortgage prior to the sale, and in the terms of the sale itself, had cheated him out of \$900.

The sale of the farm was made in a moment of angry impetuosity. Donald regretted the act, and wanted the sale cancelled upon terms which would settle his claim for the \$900.

The money-lender re-sold the farm to a French family named Duquette.

Popular sympathy is not analytical. It grasps large features. It overlooks minutiae.

Donald had been wronged. He had been despoiled of his farm. His years of toil in the West had gone for nothing, for the money he had earned had been put into the land which was now occupied by a stranger. This was what the people said. The young men were loud in their expressions of sympathy. The older heads shook dubiously.

"There would be trouble."

"Donald had a determined look. Duquette made a mistake in taking the farm. The cowboys in the North-West held life rather cheap."

So the old people said.

CHAPTER XV.

A SHOT IN THE DARKNESS.

The Duquettes took possession of the farm.

They were quiet, inoffensive people.

Donald had been seen moving about between Marsden and Lake Megantic wearing an air of disquietude.

Something was impending. In a vague way the people felt that something sinister was going to happen.

'Twas about midnight in the village of Marsden. Darkness enveloped it as a mourning garment. Painful effort, and strife, and sorrow were all forgotten in that deep sleep which, as the good Book says, is peculiarly sweet to the laboring man.

The Duquettes had not yet retired to rest. Mrs. Duquette had been kept up by an ailing child. She was sitting with her little one on her knee.

Suddenly there was a detonation and a crash of glass. A whizzing bullet lodged in the face of the clock above Mrs. Duquette's head. Who fired the shot? And what was the motive? Was it intended that the bullet should kill, or only alarm?

Was it intended that the Duquettes should recognize the desirability of

vacating the farm?

Who fired the shot?

Nothing was said openly about it; but the old people shook their heads, and hinted that cowboys, with pistols ostentatiously stuck in their belts, were not the most desirable residents of a quiet village like Marsden.

CHAPTER XVI.

"BURNT A HOLE IN THE NIGHT."

That shot in the darkness furnished a theme for endless gossip amongst the villagers. There was not much work done the next day. When the exercise of the faculties is limited to considerations associated with the rare occurrence of a wedding or a death, intellectual activity is not great. Abstract reasoning is unknown; but a new objective fact connected with the environment is seized upon with great avidity. That shot was felt to be ominous. Was it the prologue to the tragedy? There was to be something more than that shot.

What was it?

Would anything else happen, and when would it happen?

The villagers were not kept long in suspense.

A few nights afterwards there was a lurid glare in the sky.

It was red, and sinister, and quivering.

What could it mean?

Was it a celestial portent which thus wrote itself upon the face of the heavens?

The villagers assembled in alarm.

"Why, it's Duquette's place on fire!"

Yes, the homestead had been fired, and the conflagration made a red, ragged hole in the blackness of the night!

CHAPTER XVII.

SUSPICION FALLS UPON DONALD, AND A WARRANT IS ISSUED AGAINST HIM.

This was the second act in the drama.

The situations were strong and in bold relief. Would the interest deepen in dramatic accrement?

Donald was generally suspected; but he had commenced to experience that sympathy which was to withstand all attempts of the Government to shake it--attempts which appealed alternately to fears and cupidity.

There was no proof against him, but even those who, if there had been proof, would have condemned the act, would not put forth a hand to injure him.

To understand the strength of the feeling of clannishness in this district one must reside amongst the people.

Donald was suspected, as we have said, and a warrant was made out against him on the charge of arson.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HE THOUGHT OF HIS WIFE AND FAMILY, AND HE RETURNED TO SHERBROOKE.

"Good morning, Mr. A----."

"Good morning, Mr. L----. A lovely morning."

"Yes, indeed."

"Are you going far?"

"I am going to Marsden. By the way, have you seen Donald Morrison lately?"

"I saw him yesterday. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I may tell you that I have a warrant to arrest him on a charge of arson."

Mr. L---- looked very thoughtful. "Do you know the kind of man you have to deal with?"

"I have heard a good deal about him, especially since he returned from the West. But why do you ask?"

"I don't know," said Mr. L----, "whether Donald set fire to the Duquette's place or not, but I know that his real or fancied wrongs have made him morose and irritable--aye, I will add, dangerous. You are a married man, Mr. A----?"

"Yes."

"You have a family?"

"Yes."

"Take my advice," said Mr. L---- impressively. "Don't try to execute this warrant. Go straight back to Sherbrooke."

"But my duty," said Mr. A---- irresolutely.

"Where could you find Morrison, anyway? And if you did find him, and attempted to execute the warrant, I tell you," said Mr. L-----, with great earnestness, "there would be bloodshed."

Mr. A----- thought a moment, held out his hand to Mr. L-----, and turned his face towards Sherbrooke.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRAGEDY.

MACBETH--" I have done the deed. This is a sorry sight."

James Warren was a stout, thick-set man, about forty years of age. He was an American by birth, but he had lived for many years in Compton County. It was said that he had made a good deal of money by smuggling goods into the States. He had the reputation of being a hard liver, and something of a braggart.

Warren had been sworn in as a special constable to arrest Donald. Armed with the warrant, he had lounged round the village of Megantic watching his opportunity. He made loud boasts that he would take Morrison dead or alive. He pulled out a pistol. This gave emphasis to the threat. We have already said that Donald always went armed. Sometimes he carried a rifle: more generally a couple of six-shooters.

Warren was in the hotel drinking. It was about noon on a beautiful day in June.

One of the villagers rushed into the bar.

"Here's Morrison coming down the street," he said, in a tone of excitement.

"All right," said Warren, "this is my chance."

"You daren't arrest him," a by-stander said.

"Daren't I, by ----," he replied. "Here, give me a drink of whiskey."

He quaffed the glass, and went out to the front. Donald was coming towards him. He saw Warren, and crossed to the other side to avoid him.

Warren went over and intercepted him.

"You've got to come with me," said Warren, pulling out the warrant.

"Let me pass," Donald replied in firm, commanding tones, "I want to have nothing to do with you."

"But, by ----, I have something to do with you," Warren angrily retorted. "You have got to come with me, dead or alive."

"What do you mean?" Donald demanded, while his right hand sought his hip pocket.

"I mean what I say," Warren replied, fast losing control over himself. Pulling out his revolver, he covered Donald, and commanded him to surrender.

About a dozen people watched the scene in front of the hotel, chained to the spot with a species of horrible fascination.

The moment that Donald saw Warren pull out his revolver, and cover him with it, he clenched his teeth with a deadly determination, and, whipping out his own weapon, and taking steady aim, he fired.

Warren, with his pistol at full cock in his hand, fell back--dead!

The bullet had entered the brain through the temple.

Donald bent over him, saw that he was dead, and, muttering between his teeth, "It was either my life or his," walked down the street out of sight.

Warren lay in a pool of blood, a ghastly spectacle. Some poor mother had once held this man to her breast, and shed tears of joy or sorrow over him!

CHAPTER XX.

AFTERWARDS.

The inquest was over. Donald Morrison was found guilty of having slain Warren. He walked abroad openly. No one attempted to interfere with him. After the natural horror at the deed had subsided, sympathy went out to Donald. He had slain a man. True. But it was in self-defence. Had not Warren been seen pointing the pistol at him? Even admitting that Warren

had no intention to shoot, but only intended to intimidate Donald, how could the latter know that? Donald had killed a man in the assertion of the first law of nature--self-preservation.

The people deplored the act. But they did not feel justified in handing Donald over to justice.

The news of the terrible tragedy spread. The papers got hold of the story, and made the most of it.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BLOW FALLS.

"Father, father, what is the matter? What ails you?"

Mr. Minton had taken up the paper after breakfast. He had glanced carelessly down the columns.

The editorials were dull, and the news meagre. Suddenly, he came across a large heading--"DREADFUL TRAGEDY!"

He read a few lines, and then uttered a cry of horror. He threw down the paper, and looked at Minnie. It was a look of anguish.

Minnie reached forward for the paper. Her eye caught the fatal head line. By its suggestion of horror it provoked that hunger for details which, in its acute stage, becomes pruriency.

This is what the eye, with a constantly augmenting expression of fearfulness, conveyed to the brain:--

"DREADFUL TRAGEDY.--About mid-day yesterday one of the most fearful tragedies ever enacted in this province, indeed in Canada, took place in the village of Megantic. Our readers are familiar with the agrarian troubles in which Donald Morrison has been figuring for some time past. They have also been apprised that, upon the burning of Duquette's homestead, suspicion at once fell upon Donald. A warrant, charging him with arson, was sworn out against him, and a man named Warren undertook to execute it. It is alleged that the latter, armed with the warrant and a huge revolver, swaggered about Megantic for several days, boasting that he would take Morrison dead or alive. Be that as it may, the two men met yesterday outside the village hotel. The accounts of what followed are most conflicting. One of our reporters interviewed several witnesses of the scene, and the following statements, we believe, may be relied upon. Warren approached Morrison, and, in a loud tone of voice, told him that he had a warrant for him, and commanded him to surrender. The latter attempted to get past, and said he wanted to have nothing to do with him. With that Warren pulled out a pistol, and ordered Morrison to throw up his hands. Now, whether Morrison fully believed that Warren meant to shoot him, will never, of course, be known. That is the

statement he made to our reporter with every appearance of earnestness, subsequent to the occurrence. At any rate, the moment that Warren's pistol appeared, Morrison whipped out his revolver, and shot him through the head. Warren fell backward, and died in a few minutes. The dreadful act has caused the utmost excitement throughout the country, whose annals, as far as serious crime is concerned, are stainless. A singular circumstance must be noted. There is not a single person who regards Morrison in the light of a murderer. The act is everywhere deplored, but Morrison's own statement, backed by several witnesses, that he committed the deed in self-defence, is as generally accepted, and the consequence is that every house is open to him, no man's back is turned upon him, and his friends still hold out to him the hand of fellowship. He is still at large, and likely to be so, as the county is without police, and strangers coming here would have no chance of arresting him. Indeed, Morrison, armed with a rifle and two revolvers, walks about Megantic and Marsden in broad daylight--perfectly safe from harm, as far as the people themselves are concerned. It is said the Provincial Government are about to take some steps in the matter."

Minnie read this account through to the end. She seemed to grow stiff, and her eyes dilated with a nameless horror. She did not faint. That is a privilege reserved for the heroines of the Seaside Library. This is a very modest narrative of fact, and we could not afford so dramatic a luxury as that. Minnie was a hearty country girl, and oatmeal repudiates all affinity with hysterics.

Minnie read the article, threw down the paper, and rushed to her room. She flung herself beside her bed. First of all, she didn't believe the story. It was a foul lie. "What! Donald Morrison kill a man! Donald, my lover, whom I have known since childhood--whose generous instincts I have so often admired! Donald Morrison to redden his hands with the blood of his fellow! Impossible, impossible! Oh, Donald, Donald," she cried wildly, "say it isn't true; say it isn't true!"

She knelt over the bed, too deeply stricken for tears. After that passionate prayer for denial--a prayer which is constantly ascending from humanity, and which, asking for an assurance that the storm shall not ravish the rose of life, has in it perhaps at bottom something of selfishness--she remained motionless. She was thinking it out. It was true Donald had killed a man. The report could not lie so circumstantially. The place, and the date, and the details were given. The story was true, and Donald had taken a life. But then, had he committed murder? A thousand times, no! Warren had threatened to kill Donald. Warren would have killed him. Donald defended himself; and if, in defending himself, he had taken a life, what then? Terrible--too terrible for words; but life was as sweet to Donald as it was to Warren. A moment later and he would have been the victim. He obeyed the fundamental law of nature.

Thus Minnie tried to reason, but it brought no comfort to her. Her simple dream of love and modest happiness was over. She knew that. The beautiful vase of life was broken, and no art could mend it!

When thought was in some degree restored, she sat down and wrote the following letter:--

"Oh, Donald, Donald, what have I read in the papers? Is it true? Is it true?"

"Tell me all. Even if the truth be the very worst, do not fear that I shall reproach you. God forbid that I should sit in judgment upon you. Look to God. He can pardon the deepest guilt. My feelings are not changed toward you. I loved you when you were innocent, and I would not be worthy the name of woman if I were not faithful even in despair. Hasty you may have been, but I know that wickedness never had a lodgment in your heart.

'Oh, what was love made for if 'tis not the same
Through joy and through torment, through glory and shame."

"Your broken hearted

"MINNIE."

CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT WAS DONALD ABOUT.

When Mrs. Morrison learnt the dreadful news that Donald had shot Warren, the poor old woman was overwhelmed with despair. Donald himself broke the news to her. After satisfying himself that Warren was dead, he turned on his heel and went home to Marsden.

"Mother," he said, with terrible calmness, when he entered the door, "I have killed Warren."

Mrs. Morrison looked at him vaguely. She did not comprehend.

"Warren wanted to arrest me this morning in Megantic, and because I refused to go with him he pulled out a pistol, as I thought, to shoot me. I fired at him. The shot killed him."

Mrs. Morrison uttered a shriek. "Oh, Donald, my son, my son," she exclaimed, "what is this, what is this? Killed Warren! Oh, you must fly at once, or they will be after you!"

"No, mother, I will not run. I will stay where I am. They can't arrest me. I can easily avoid all who are sent for that purpose. My friends will keep me informed of their doings. But, mother, whatever others say, I want you to believe that I never thought of harming a hair of Warren's head when he met me. I fired in self-defence. I deplore his death; but it was either he or I."

"Oh, I believe you, Donald, and your poor mother," breaking into a violent fit of weeping, "your poor mother will never turn against you. But what will be the end? The officers must take you some time."

"I don't know what the end will be," he said gloomily. "If I thought I would get a fair trial I might give myself up; but if I did so now they would hang me, I believe. I will wait and see, and the woods, with every inch of which I am familiar, will be my retreat, should the pursuit ever be dangerous."

Donald's father took the news stoically. His nature was not emotional. The relations between father and son were strained. Little was said on either side.

Donald walked about as usual. He had repeated to his immediate friends every circumstance of the tragedy. They fully believed him innocent of murder. This exoneration was of great value to him. From mouth to mouth the story spread that Donald fired in self-defence, and the latter found that all the faces he met were friendly faces.

What he said to himself in his own room every night, he said to his friends--"I regret the deed. I had no thought of touching Warren. When I saw his pistol flash in front of me, I felt in a moment that my life was at stake. I obeyed an instinct, which prompted me to get the first shot to save myself. I could get back to the States, but I'll stay right here. Let them take me if they can."

In vain his friends urged flight. He was inflexible on this point.

So, as we have stated, he walked abroad in perfect safety. He carried his rifle and his two revolvers, and possibly, in some quarters, this rather suggestive display may, in some degree, have accounted for the civility with which he was everywhere greeted.

The county authorities had not moved against him. The Provincial Government had not as yet intervened. A price was not yet set upon his capture. He was free to go and come as he chose, and yet he moved amongst those who had seen him take the life of a fellow creature.

Minnie's letter, addressed to his father's care, reached him. It moved him deeply. Since the tragedy he had frequently tried to write to her, but never found the courage.

He recognized that all hope of future union with Minnie was now impossible. He had taken a life. At any moment the officers of the law might be on his track. His arrest might lead him to the scaffold.

In his reply to Minnie, Donald described the tragic scene with which the reader is familiar, deplored the occurrence, but, with great earnestness, asked her to believe that he had acted only in self-defence. "I started out," he said, in one portion of his letter, "to go to church last Sunday evening. I had reached the door, when I thought--'Donald, you have broken a law of God!' and I had not the

courage to go in."

We quote this passage merely in confirmation of our statement that Donald felt perfectly free to go abroad after the tragedy, and to participate in the social life of the village.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ACTION OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT.--FIVE OFFICERS SENT TO MEGANTIC.

To the common mind government is something vast, mysterious, and powerful. It is associated with armies and navies, and an unlimited police force. There are a glittering sword, a ponderous mace, and an argus eye, that reaches to the remotest point of territory like a great big electric search light, in it.

No man is a hero to his valet, and the nearer you get to the seat of power, the less does government impose upon the imagination. Those who read, with infinite respect, "that the Government has decided, after a protracted meeting of the Cabinet, to levy a tax upon terrier dogs for purposes of revenue," would be shocked to learn that government meant a small table, a bottle of wine, a few cigars, and two men not a whit above the mental or moral level of the ordinary citizen. Government imposes when you meet it in respectful capitals in the public prints, but when you get a glimpse of it in its shirt sleeves, *_en famille_*, or playing harlequin upon the top of a barrel at the hustings, or tickling the yokels with bits of cheap millinery and silk stockings, and reflect that you have paid homage to *_that_*, you begin to doubt the saving efficacy of the ballot box.

Now, the Government of Quebec is neither a naval nor a military power. It doesn't want to fight, and if it did it hasn't got either the ships, or the men, or the money. The Sergeant-at-Arms in the Legislative Assembly is the only military person in its pay. It has not even a single policeman to assert the majesty of the law.

The Government of Quebec is the Hon. Honore Mercier.

Mr. Mercier is like the first Napoleon. He chooses *_tools_* to assist, not strong individualities to oppose, him.

Party journalism in the Province of Quebec is peculiarly bitter and mendacious. The Press generally had made the most of the shooting of Warren. A month had elapsed, and no attempt had been made to arrest Morrison, who, it was alleged, swaggered through the country armed to the teeth, and threatening death to the man who should attempt to take him. It was generally agreed that this was a scandal. But the opposition journals made political capital out of the affair.

"What! was this the Mercier Government? Was this the sort of law and

order we were promised under his _regime_? Here was a criminal at large defying the law. Was Mr. Mercier afraid to arrest him, lest he might forfeit the Liberal votes of the county? It looked like it. Could Mr. Mercier not impress, for love or money, a single man in the Province to undertake the task of arresting Morrison? Or was Mr. Mercier so taken up with posing in that Gregory costume that he had no time to devote to the affairs of his country?"

Mr. Mercier's reply to the party Press was to send down five special constables to Megantic.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TELLS HOW THE CONSTABLES ENJOYED THEMSELVES.

CAESAR--"Let me have men about me that are fat--
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights."

The five constables that Mr. Mercier sent down to Megantic put up in the village hotel.

Within an hour Donald had received the following note:--

"Dear Donald,--Action at last. Five men from Quebec after you. Keep away from Marsden for a day or so. I don't think there is much to fear. They would not know you, I believe, if they met you, and they are so frightened by the stories they have heard about you, that I don't believe they would dare to arrest you, even if they found you. However, as well be on the safe side. Go into the woods a little bit"

The people soon knew that an attempt was to be made to arrest Donald. The young men gathered in the hotel round the constables, and told blood-curdling stories of his dare-devilism in the North-West. The constables were fat, phlegmatic, and anything but heroic. What they had been accustomed to was an unexciting and steady beat in the drowsy old city of Quebec, and small but unfailingly regular drinks of whiskey _blanc_. This duty was new. Worst of all, it was perilous. This Morrison--he might shoot at sight. True, they were armed with rifles and revolvers; but they had heard that he was a dead shot. Perhaps he might shoot first. That would, to say the least, be awkward, perhaps dangerous, perhaps even fatal. No, they had not much stomach for the work, and the people, perceiving this, encouraged their fears. In a very short time Donald became a combination of Italian brigand, Dick Turpin, and Wild West Cowboy, as these latter are depicted in the dime stories.

Whenever, therefore, the officers took their walks abroad, they stepped very gingerly as they approached the village of Marsden. It never occurred to them to enter Donald's home. They might have found him half-a-dozen times a day. They never once crossed the threshold of the woods.

Did not this terrible character know every tangled path, and might he not open fire upon them without being seen?

The country roads are really white lines through the green of the woods.

One morning the constables left the hotel, primed with a little whiskey. They took the road to Marsden. The woods skirted the narrow way on either side. The summer was now well advanced, and the foliage was so thick as to form an impenetrable lacy.

"We have been here a month now," said the officer in charge, in French, "and we have accomplished nothing. I shall ask to be relieved at once. The people will not help us. How could we ever find a man in these woods? He might be here this moment," pointing to the trees at his right, "yet what chance would we have of taking him?"

With one accord, the four subordinates answered "None."

"Suppose he were here," and the officer halted on his step, how--What is that? Did you hear anything?"

"Yes," said one of the constables timorously, "I heard a noise in the brushwood."

"Suppose it were Morrison?"

And they looked at each other apprehensively.

"We will return," said the officer. "It is probably a bear. If I thought it were Morrison, I would enter the wood," he said valorously. When they were gone, a brown face peeped out. It was Donald. "They're scared," he said to himself, laughing. "Not much danger from _them_. I don't believe they would know me. I'll test it."

He laid down his rifle at the foot of a tree, looked to his pistols, and walked rapidly in the direction the constables had taken. Overtaking them, he pushed his way through the brushwood, in advance of them, and then, at a bend in the road which hid him from view, he leaped out upon the road, turned, and met the party. He walked straight up to them, looked them in the eye, and passed on. They did not know him; or, if, as was alleged against them afterwards, they knew him, they were afraid to arrest him. The statement that Donald carried his audacity so far as to enter the hotel, and drink with them, he himself laughingly denied to his friends.

The opposition papers jeered at the failure of the expedition. Ridicule is the most powerful of weapons. Man is not half so humorous as the dog or the elephant. With the latter it is an instinct. With the former it is an acquirement. Still, the perception of humor is fairly general. Don't argue with your opponent, Kill him with ridicule. Laughter is deadly. When the people laugh at a Government it can put its spare collar and shirt in its red handkerchief, and retire to the privacy of

its family. Mr. Mercier is sensitive to ridicule.

Mr. Mercier withdrew that expedition, and offered \$3,000 reward for the capture of Morrison!

CHAPTER XXV.

PROOF AGAINST BRIBES!

"A man's a man for a' that."

It was now that Donald was to prove that integrity which for ages has been so noble an attribute of the Highlander.

To many of the villagers \$3,000 would have been a fortune. But if Donald spent more of his time in the woods now than formerly, it was not that he doubted the honor of the poorest peasant in the county. He well knew that there was not a man or woman who would have accepted the reward if it were to save them from starvation. He had no fear on that score. He became more reserved in his movements, because his friends informed him that since the offer of the reward, several suspicious-looking individuals from Montreal, pretending to be commercial travellers, had been seen loitering in the village. He therefore drew farther into the woods, and avoided his father's house, either going to the houses of his friends for food, or having it brought to him. If danger seemed pressing, he passed the night in the woods, his rifle close to his side; but ordinarily, during this time he slept at the homes of his friends. The arrival of every stranger was known to him. Faithful friends noted down their description, and these notes either reached him at a given rendezvous in the woods, or at the houses where he passed the night.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REWARD FAILS.

Time passed on. Donald was still at large. The reward had failed. Private detectives from Montreal, who had remained in the district for weeks, returned in disgust, confessing that Morrison's capture was impossible so long as he had friends to inform him of every movement, and the woods to retreat to.

At the police headquarters in Montreal various schemes were discussed. Chief Hughes was of opinion that thirty resolute men, skilfully directed, could accomplish the capture.

It was now the fall, and if action were not speedily taken, the winter woods, filled with snow, would soon mock all effort of authority.

The press kept up the public interest in the case. Morrison had been seen drinking at the hotel in Lake Megantic. He had attended a dance in Marsden. He had driven publicly with the Mayor of Gould, with his rifle slung from his shoulder. He went to church every Sunday, and he had taken the sacrament. All this according to the press. Did the Mercier Government, then, confess that it had abdicated its functions? Was this Scotland in the Seventeenth Century, and this Morrison a romantic Rob Roy, with a poetic halo round his picturesque head, or was it America in the Nineteenth, with the lightning express, the phonograph, and Pinkerton's bureau, and this criminal one of a vulgar type in whose crime sentiment had no place?

Did the Government intend to allow this man to defy the law? If it did, was this not putting a premium upon crime? If it did not, what steps did it intend to take to secure his arrest? Thus far the newspapers.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GOVERNMENT TAKES OFF ITS COAT.

The winter had passed. The first expedition had failed. The reward had failed, for the people, sincerely regretting the tragedy, and anxious that Donald should give himself up, scorned to betray the man who had trusted in their honor.

Donald had spent the winter in comparative security. Anxiety had made him thin, but he was as firmly fixed as ever in his determination to hold out. He knew that as long as his friends remained faithful to him he could never be taken. His mind did not seem to travel beyond that. "He would never be taken." He was urged in vain to escape to the States. He was urged in vain to give himself up. To the promise that his friends would see that he received a fair trial, he would answer bitterly: "Promises are easy now because they have not to be kept. How would it be when, behind iron bars, and hope cut off, they could not be kept?"

Mr. Mercier felt that if the Government was not to suffer serious loss of prestige, it must adopt heroic measures.

Mr. Mercier obtained from the city of Montreal the loan of fifteen picked men. He placed these in the immediate charge of High Constable Bissonnette. Major Dugas, a police magistrate, a skilled lawyer, and a gallant officer, who, in 1885, had promptly responded to the call of duty in the North-West, he placed in supreme command of this expedition, to which he said dramatically, "Arrest Morrison!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HUNTED OUTLAW.

The expedition arrived in Stornaway upon a raw morning in April.

Donald knew all that could be learned within an hour.

"I must be careful now," he said. "Well, if they can follow me through the woods on snowshoes, they're welcome to begin the pursuit."

Major Dugas' capacity was largely magisterial. He had the supreme direction of the men, indeed, but the carrying out of the movements was to be entrusted to the High Constable. The men had been carefully chosen. They were armed with rifles and revolvers, and their orders were to shoot Morrison, if, when accosted, he should refuse to surrender. Major Dugas' plan was eminently politic. He first wanted to conciliate the people, and then induce them to bring such pressure upon Donald as would induce him to surrender upon being promised a fair trial. "This," said the Major to the leading men of the place, with whom he placed himself in communication the first day of his arrival, "is the wisest way to end the affair. The Government is in earnest. Morrison must be arrested. No matter how long it takes, this must be accomplished. Let the people come to the assistance of the law, let them refuse to harbor Morrison, and the thing is done. But should they fail to do this, then, however disagreeable it may be to me, I must arrest all suspected of helping him in any way."

At first the people were sullen. They resented the incursion of an armed force. Among the party was Sergeant Clarke, who brought his bagpipes with him. There may be some people who have a prejudice against the bagpipes. This proceeds from defective musical education. Sergeant Clarke's bagpipes proved a potent factor in securing the personal goodwill of the people. He played "Auld Scottish airs," and many of the old men, mellowed with whiskey, wept in the bar-room of the little hotel at Stornaway. The courtesy of Major Dugas, and the civil bearing of the men, told upon the people, but nevertheless they did not abate one jot of what they called their loyalty to Donald.

The latter's best friends now saw there could only be one ending. Donald might not be taken alive. But he would be taken, alive or dead. That was clear. The Government could not now retreat. The expedition must be carried to a successful issue. Whatever hope there was for Donald if brought to trial now, there would be none if he shed more blood. But Donald was past reasoning with. These considerations, urged again and again, fell upon dull ears. "I am determined," he said, "to fight it out." He said this with firmly compressed lips. It was useless to persuade.

The expedition was divided into three parties. To cordon the woods would have required an army. The points covered were Stornaway (Major Dugas' headquarters), Gould and Marsden. Photographs of the outlaw were

obtained and distributed among the men. The roads were mud, and the woods filled with soft snow. Infinite difficulty was experienced at every turn. The men were not prepared for roughing it. They required long boots and snowshoes. They had neither. Detective Carpenter, indeed, essayed the "sifters," but he could make little progress, and he did not see the man whose name was upon every lip, and who had just declared to the enterprising reporter who had penetrated to his fastness, "that he would never be taken alive." The several parties contented themselves with scouring the roads, watching the railroad, and searching the houses of sympathizers. This continued for a week, night and day. There was no result. The men suffered great privations. But the duty was new, the adventure was exciting, and the element of peril lent spice to it. And then, was there not the consideration of \$3,000? So, at Gould, and Stornaway the men made merry in the few hours' rest allotted to them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DONALD IN THE WOODS OF MEGANTIC.

This romantic region has been proudly termed the Switzerland of Canada. Its majestic hills--so grandly rugged--its placid lakes, and its dense and undulating forests lend an indescribable enchantment to the companion and lover of nature, who for the first time beholds their supreme beauty. The tree-topped hills in their altitude are at times lost in the clouds. The lumberman has not yet ventured to their summits. He contents himself with a house in a more convenient and safer spot. The monotony of the prevailing quietness around these spots is only broken by the tiny little stream as it meanders on its course to the bottom, where it refreshes the weary traveller who may perchance pass that way. Tableland there is none except little patches of less than an acre. The environments of this region are peculiarly suited to the nature and tastes of the settlers, who will tell you that they would not change them for all the gold you could offer. The means of access to the villages, away from the railway, are extremely poor. The roads--if they can be so called--offer little inducement to the tourist. The woods adapt themselves to the security of the fugitive at all times and during all seasons. In summer the verdant branches darken the surroundings, while in the winter months the drooping boughs, appealing in their solitude to nature, are sufficient in their loneliness to convince one that to penetrate into their midst is by no means a safe venture.

Yet it was here that Donald spent his days and nights at this period. Did Donald hesitate whether his bed was to be on feathers or branches? No. His friends were always his first consideration, and did he for a moment think that by spending a night at a friend's cabin he would endanger their hospitality, he would quietly retire to the woods. His bed consisted of a few balsam branches spread rudely on the ground, with the overhanging boughs pulled down and by some means or other transformed into a bower. This as a means of protection. When the snow covered the ground to the depth of several feet, Donald did not change

his couch, but he made the addition of a blanket, which, next to his firearms, he considered his greatest necessity. He slept well, excepting when he was awakened by the roar of a bear or some other wild animal. Then he simply mounted a tree, and with revolver cocked, awaited his would-be intruder. His life in the woods--so full of exciting events--was pleasant and safe. He never for a moment believed that he could be caught were he to remain hidden among the towering pines. Often--strong man as he was--would he allow his feelings to overcome him when thinking of the possibilities which he believed life might have had in store for him. The constant mental strain under which he found himself seemed to affect but lightly his keen sense of vivacity. Wearily did he pass some of his time amidst the verdancy of the woods. The sun often rose and set unheeded by the fugitive. When darkness set in he would furtively steal out to a friend's hut, where he would participate in the frugal supper, and afterwards engage in the family worship, which is never forgotten by the Highlanders.

He was always welcome wherever he went. He had no fear of being betrayed. He knew his friends, and trusted them. Were he invited to share the couch of his host, he would first ascertain whether all was safe, and then stealthily enter.

CHAPTER XXX.

SECOND WEEK OF THE SEARCH--MAJOR DUGAS BECOMES SEVERE.

A week was gone. Donald had not been caught. Major Dugas' policy of conciliation had won personal regard. It had not caused the slightest wavering among Donald's friends. The very men to whom the Major talked every day knew his hiding-place, and could have placed their hands upon him at an hour's notice. They made no sign. Every fresh measure of the authorities was known to Donald, and during the first week--devoted, as we have said, to a rigorous search of the farmhouses likely to be visited by the fugitive--the police repeatedly reached his hiding-place only to find that the bird had just taken wing!

Major Dugas was in his room at the Stornaway hotel. A severe look was in his eye. He had tried conciliation. That had failed. It was idle to expect any assistance from the people. The better sort--perhaps all of them--would have been glad if the fugitive had surrendered, but they were not going to help the authorities to induce him to do so. Very well. Then they, must be punished for conniving at his outlawry.

High Constable Bissonnette entered for orders.

"I have determined," said the Major, "to arrest all who may be suspected of harboring Morrison. This measure will probably bring the people to their senses. But for their help he must surrender. When that is removed, I am hopeful that we can take him without bloodshed. I will issue the necessary warrants, and I will hand them over to you for

execution. The measure is a severe one, but the circumstances justify it."

The High Constable looked ruefully at his clothing, torn and covered with mud. M. Bissonnette had ample energy. He entered upon the hunt with a light heart. He had not spared himself, and had even ventured into the wood without either long boots or snow-shoes. He was fatigued and dilapidated, but he had not caught Donald.

"All right, your honor," said the High Constable, when the Major has signed a batch of warrants, "I will have these attended to at once."

The High Constable was as good as his word.

The prominent friends of Donald were arrested and conveyed to Sherbrooke Jail, bail being refused.

Major Dugas had committed an error. This measure, undertaken with the proper motive of putting an end to the struggle by depriving the outlaw of all chance of help, was impolitic. It accomplished nothing. The men were arrested, but the women remained. The shelters still remained for the fugitive. A bitter feeling now grew in the common breast against the police--a feeling which the women, whose sympathies were with the outlaw, and who resented the arrest of their husbands, fathers, and brothers, did their utmost to encourage. The police found it hopeless to get a scrap of information. The common people even refused to fraternize with them in the evenings when they were gathered round the bar-room of the village hotel.

During this second week the police made a great effort to locate the fugitive. There were constant rumors regarding his whereabouts. He had been seen at Gould. He had slept last night at his Father's house. He had been seen on the edge of the wood. He had been seen to board a train bound for Montreal. The Scotch delight in grim humor. These rumors reached the police at their meals, and there was a scramble for firearms and a rush for the wagons. They reached them at midnight, while they were dreaming of terrific encounters with murderous outlaws in the heart of the forest, and there was a wild rush into the darkness. A few of Donald's nearest friends, who had escaped arrest, and started the rumors to favor the movements of the outlaw, laughed sardonically at the labors they imposed upon the police.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"MANY WATERS CANNOT QUENCH LOVE."

"Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met and never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

Ideal love does not ask conventional recognition. Love is not comfort, nor house, nor lands, nor the tame delights of use and wont. Love is sacrifice. Always ask love to pour out its gifts upon the altar of sacrifice. This is to make love divine. But fill the cup of love with comfort, and certainty, and calm days of ease, and you make it poor and cheap. The zest of love is uncertainty. When love has to breast the Hellespont it feels its most impassioned thrill. Let there be distance, and danger, and separation and tears in love. Let there be dull certainty, and custom stales its dearest delights.

Love is worthiest when it asks no requital. Minnie knew that all was over. She received short notes from Donald from time to time, and the newspapers kept her informed of the progress of events. She clearly perceived that if Donald did not give himself up, one of the two things must happen--he would either be killed himself by the police, or he would kill one or more of his pursuers, with the certainty of being ultimately caught, and probably hung. In her letters she implored him to give himself up, and not further incense the Government, which was not disposed to be implacable. Finding all her entreaties unavailing, she determined to visit him. This was a bold resolution. It was carried out without hesitation. A more sophisticated nature would have asked--"Will this seem modest?" Modesty itself never asks such a question. Modesty is not conscious. There is no blush on its cheek. Minnie believed that if she could see Donald, she could persuade him to give himself up.

We won't tell you what Minnie wore, nor how she got to Marsden, nor what fears she endured, lest the police, suspecting her as a stranger, should follow her, and discover Donald's whereabouts.

Minnie reached Marsden in safety. It was in the afternoon.

She had written a brief note to Donald, telling him that she was coming.

The meeting took place in his father's house, the old people keeping guard, so as to be able to warn the fugitive should any stranger approach the house."

"Donald!"

"Minnie!"

Then they shook hands.

A mutual instinct caused them to shrink from endearments. Donald was brown, thin, and weary-looking. His pistols were in his pockets, and his rifle slung by his side. He had just come in from the woods.

Minnie looked at him, and the calmness which she thought she had schooled herself to maintain deserted her. She burst into tears.

"Oh! Donald, Donald," she cried, "why will you not end this? If you ever

loved me, I beg of you to give yourself up, and stand your trial. Your friends will see that you get fair play. I never believed you guilty of murder. From what I can hear outside, nobody believes such a thing. That you should have taken a life is dreadful--dreadful! but that you took it in self-defence I fully believe. For God's sake, Donald, let the struggle end. You will be killed; or, carried away by passion, you may take another life, and then think of your terrible position. Can I move you? Once I could. I love you in this terrible hour as dearly as ever, and I would to God I could spare you what you must now suffer. But let me try to save you from yourself. Listen to reason. Give yourself up to Major Dugas. Your friends will procure the best legal advice, and who knows but that you may still have a future before you. Let me urge you," and she went up to him, and laid her hand upon his arm, while the tears streamed down her cheeks.

Donald took her hand, and kissed it. He was greatly moved. "I can't, Minnie," he said. "I can't do it. I would never get a fair trial. I feel it. No, once arrested, they would either keep me in jail for ever, or hang me. I have baffled them now for nearly a year, and I can baffle them still. They must give up at last."

"But have you not heard," Minnie said, "that they are bringing on fifteen more men from Quebec?"

"Oh, yes," said Donald, smiling sadly it seemed, "I am kept well informed, though they have arrested most of my friends. Let them bring on a hundred men. They can't take me without I'm betrayed."

"And I saw in the papers," said Minnie, with a look of horror, "that if these failed, they would employ bloodhounds against you."

Donald flushed. "I can't believe they would dare to do such a thing," he said. "Public opinion would not stand it. No, I'm not afraid of that."

"Then, must my visit be in vain, Donald?" Minnie pleaded.

"I may be acting unwisely, Minnie," Donald responded, "but I can't agree to give myself up. I feel that I must fight it out as I am doing. What the end will be God only knows. But I want you to forget me, Minnie. Forget me, and learn, by and by, to be happy in other companionships. You are young, and life is before you. I never thought we would end like this. But it must be. I can't recall what has happened. I am an outlaw. Perhaps the scaffold awaits me. Your love would have blessed my life. I suppose fate would not have it so."

"Donald, Donald." It was the voice of his mother, who now came quickly in exclaiming, "they are coming towards the house; away to the bush; quick."

Donald took Minnie's hand and wrung it hard. He bent down and kissed her forehead. "God bless you," he said--"farewell."

Then he rushed out of the house, and disappeared from view in the woods.

It was a party of five policemen, armed with rifles.

They were too late!

CHAPTER XXXII.

MAJOR DUGAS MEETS THE OUTLAW FACE TO FACE--A UNIQUE INTERVIEW.

Minnie was right about the reinforcements, though the suggestion as to bloodhounds proved to be nothing but idle rumor. Fifteen men came from Quebec. The expedition numbered now thirty-five men. The search increased in rigor. The houses were visited day and night. The roads and the outskirts of the wood were watched almost constantly. Donald was not caught. He could not sleep in the houses of his friends, but he could make a bed in the woods. He could not venture to take a meal under a roof, but a neighbor woman could always manage to bring him a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk. The police visited his father's house, broke open his trunk, and took away all his letters, including poor Minnie's correspondence--an act which, when Donald knew of it, caused him to declare with an oath that if he met the man who did it, he would shoot him down like a dog.

Major Dugas was disgusted. He had been in the district nearly three weeks. He had tried conciliation. That had failed. He had tried severity. That, too, had failed. He had increased the searching force. That, also, had availed nothing.

When, therefore, three of Donald's firmest friends approached the Major with the proposition that he should order the suspension of operations while he held an interview with the outlaw, they found him not indisposed to listen to the extraordinary proposal. Donald was to be found, and his friends pledged their honor that he would meet the Major when and where he pleased, provided the latter would give his word that he would take no measures to arrest him.

Major Dugas hesitated for a long time, but finally accepted the terms. He was severely blamed in the press for parleying with an outlaw. Whatever maybe said about the wisdom of the arrangement, in scrupulously observing the terms of it, Major Dugas acted like a gentleman and a man of honor. That he should be blamed for honoring his own pledged word proves how crude is the common code of ethics.

Major Dugas ordered the suspension of operations. In the company of Donald's friends, he drove to Marsden; and there, in a rude log school-house, he was introduced to the famous outlaw.

"You are alone, Major Dugas," Donald said suspiciously, keeping his hands upon his pistols.

"Quite alone," the Major replied. "I have acceded to the wish of your friends, in order to avert the possibility of bloodshed. Now, Morrison, I ask you to surrender like a sensible man. Your capture is only a matter of time. The Government must vindicate the law, no matter at what cost. Give yourself up, and I will do what in me lies to see that you get the utmost fair play in your trial. I speak to you now in a friendly way. I have no personal feeling in the matter. I am the instrument of the law. If this pursuit is continued, there will probably be bloodshed either on one side or the other. You are only making your position worse by holding out; and think what it will be if there is any more shooting."

"The Major speaks reasonably, Donald," Morrison's friends said, "for God's sake, take his advice."

"Can the Major give me the \$900 of which I have been defrauded, to help me to conduct my defence?" Donald asked.

"I have nothing to do with your money matters whatever," the Major replied. "I can make no terms with you of that nature. I am here to urge your surrender on the grounds of prudence, for the sake of your own interests."

"It was very kind of you, Major, to grant this interview," the outlaw said, "but I can't surrender unless you can give me some promise, either of money or an acquittal."

"Oh, this is absurd," the Major said. "Our interview ends. Within six hours the pursuit will be recommenced. My last word to you, Morrison, is, don't make your case hopeless by shooting any more."

"I will take your advice, Major. I give you my word," Donald replied.

"Well, good-bye."

"Good-bye, sir."

Thus ended the memorable interview.

Major Dugas drove back to Stornaway in disgust. He ordered the resumption of the search, and upon the following morning left for Montreal.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE EXPEDITION IS BROKEN UP.

Donald's friends were greatly disappointed. They fully expected that he would surrender himself to Major Dugas.

A few days subsequent to the interview it was announced that the expedition had been broken up. The Government had recalled all the men but five, who were left in charge of Detective Carpenter.

There was a tacit confession of failure.

The opposition press burst into a loud guffaw. "Was this the result of a year's effort to capture a criminal? Was this the return for all the expenditure which had been incurred?" The comic papers poked outrageous fun at the expedition. The illustrated journals mocked it in pen and ink sketches that smarted like aquafortis. The ribald versifiers flouted it in metrical lampoons whose burden was--"The man I left behind me."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CARPENTER ON THE SCENT--A NARROW ESCAPE.

Carpenter had five men at his disposal, and he was sanguine that an unremitting pursuit must end in the capture of the outlaw. Consequently, upon the removal of the bulk of the expedition, he set himself to make such disposition of his men as would lead to the most substantial results. Where did Donald get his food? Where did he get changes of clothing? He must pay visits to the houses in the neighborhood. They had been searched in vain. Very well. Let them be searched again. Let them be persistently watched. The outlaw would be tracked at last.

It was about ten o'clock at night. Dark, heavy clouds hung overhead like a mournful pall. A brooding darkness and silence enveloped the woods.

A figure parted the young branches, came out into the open, ran stealthily along the road, reached a small cottage, and disappeared within it.

Donald had tempted fate at a moment when fate, in the form of two eager officers of the law, was closing him in.

McMahon and the Indian scout were out that night. They had made a round of the cottages. Fatigued and a little dispirited, they were about to go back to their quarters, when a feeble glimmer of light was seen through the darkness, proceeding from the cottage which Donald had entered.

"Is it worth while to search it?" McMahon asked his companion doubtfully.

"Well," replied the scout, "we may as well take it in to wind up for the night. I don't suppose we'll have any luck."

"Not likely," McMahon said. Donald was eating a little plain supper, when the poor honest peasant woman whose hospitality he was sharing, thought she heard footsteps outside the door. She listened. "Donald," she

said, in a quick, sharp voice, "I hear footsteps. They are approaching the door. It may be the police. What will you do?"

"I don't think they're about so late," Donald replied carelessly, feeling nevertheless for his pistols in his pockets.

"Donald, they're coming. It's the police. I'm sure of it. My God, if you should be taken. Here, quick! come into this bedroom, and lie quiet under the bed."

Donald sprang from his seat and did as he was directed. He was not a moment too soon.

The police knocked smartly at the door.

The woman opened it.

"Have you got Morrison here?" McMahon asked.

"Look and see," the woman replied.

The two men searched the four rooms of the small house, and then they sat down upon the bed beneath which, close to the wall, Donald was concealed!

"There's no use in stopping here," Leroyer said.

"No," replied McMahon, "we may as well go." As he spoke he carelessly ran the butt end of his rifle under the bed!

Donald grew to the wall, and held his breath!

The rifle conveyed no sense of contact. It was thrust in without conscious motive.

The police took their departure.

"What a narrow escape!" Donald said, when he had emerged from his hiding-place. His face showed pale beneath the bronze. The perspiration stood in beads upon his brow.

The friendly creature who sheltered him trembled like an aspen.

She had expected discovery, arrest, perhaps even bloodshed. She felt all a woman's exaggerated horror of police, and law, and violence.

"Forgive me," Donald said, "for coming near the house. I'll not trouble you again."

ANOTHER TRUCE ASKED FOR.

The friends of the outlaw made a last effort to bring about an accommodation. A noted lawyer in Toronto had been written to, and had offered to defend him. They went to Donald, showed him the letter, and peremptorily insisted that he should give himself up, or be content to have all his friends desert him.

Perhaps the outlaw realized at last how severely he had tried his friends' patience.

"Very well," he said, "I agree to give myself up. Tell the police, and get them to suspend operations. Come back here and let me know what they say."

Detective Carpenter was seen, and the situation explained to him.

"Well," said he, "I don't believe in truces with outlaws. This thing has lasted long enough. But if you can rely upon this new attitude of the outlaw's, I would not be averse to a short suspension, though, if my men meet him before your next interview, they will certainly do their best to capture him."

Carpenter had placed two men--McMahon and Pete Leroyer (an Indian scout)--close to the outlaw's home, and told them to watch for him entering, and capture him at all hazards.

Carpenter knew that Donald must get his changes of clothing at his father's, and that a strict watch would sooner or later be rewarded.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SHOTS IN THE DARKNESS--DONALD IS CAPTURED.

It was about eight o'clock on Sunday evening. McMahon and Leroyer had watched all through Saturday night and all through Sunday close to the house, hidden from view in the bush. They were wetted through with the snow; they were cold and hungry.

In the gathering darkness two men passed them, knocked at the cottage door and entered.

"Did you see who they were?" McMahon asked.

"No," said his companion. "But see! they have lit the lamp; I'll creep forward and look through."

The scout crept towards the window on his hands and knees. He was as lithe and stealthy as a panther. He raised his head and looked in.

"My God, it's Morrison," he said to himself, as he crept back to his companion.

"It's Morrison," he said in an eager whisper. "I saw him sitting on a chair, talking to his mother. We have him when he comes out. How'll we take him?"

"We must call upon him to surrender, and if he refuses we must fire so as to lame, but not to hurt him."

At the moment that the glowing eyes of the scout looked in through the window, Donald was sitting on a chair in the middle of the floor talking to his mother, who was filling a bottle of milk for him.

"I'm to meet M---- in the morning in the woods, and then I'm going to surrender. The police by this time know my intention."

"You have acted wisely, Donald," his mother said. "We will all see that you get a fair trial. My poor hunted boy, what have you suffered during the past twelve months. Anything would be better than this. You are liable to be caught at any moment--perhaps shot."

"Have no fear, mother, on that score. I hope I am acting for the best in giving myself up."

"I'm sure you are, Donald. Here's your bottle of milk and your blanket."

"I don't know what may happen before we meet again, mother. Good-bye," and he bent down and kissed her withered face.

He opened the door, and went out into the darkness. "Throw up your hands," a ringing voice exclaimed.

"My God, I'm betrayed at last," Donald muttered, as he leaped the fence close to the house, and made a straight line for the woods.

McMahon and the scout leaped from their concealment, followed hard upon the fugitive, and fired repeatedly at him from their revolvers.

Could he escape?

He had fronted worse perils than this. Would fortune still smile upon him, or, deserting him in the moment of supreme need, leave him to destiny? The darkness favored him. The dense woods were near. Would he be able to reach them in safety?

McMahon and Leroyer, by simply going up to the door, and grasping the outlaw firmly the moment he came out, might have made the capture in a perfectly certain though commonplace manner. Both might be forgiven, however, for a little nervousness and excitement. The prize was within their grasp. For this moment they had lain out in the snow, wet and hungry. Brought suddenly face to face with the moment, the moment was a little too big for them. Neither of the pursuers aimed very steadily.

They grasped their revolvers, and made red punctures in the night.

What was that? A cry of pain.

The pursuers came up, and saw a figure totter and fall at their feet.

"You have caught me at last," Donald said; "but had the truce been kept, you never could have taken me."

The outlaw was wrapped in blankets and conveyed to Sherbrooke prison, and the following morning the papers announced all over the Dominion that "Donald Morrison, the famous outlaw, who had defied every effort of the Government for twelve months, had been captured, after having been severely wounded in the hip by a revolver shot."

In the jail Donald said--"I was taken by treachery."

But the outlaw had been secured!

CONCLUSION.

It was dreadfully unromantic, but Minnie did not fall into a decline. She is alive and well at this moment. Life may be over, and yet we may live functionally through long stagnant years. Life is not a calendar of dates, but of feelings. Minnie will live a calm, chastened life. She cannot love again; but she is not soured by her experience. She will be one of those rare old maids who are so sweet and wholesome that even youth, hot and impatient, tenders cordial homage to them.

Minnie braves her sorrow bravely. To look at her one would not suspect that she had ever passed through deep suffering. Disappointment and loss either curl the lips in bitter cynicism, or give them so soft, so gracious, so touching an expression, as make their caress, falling upon the wretched and forsaken, a benediction. When suffering steels the heart, and poises the nature in an attitude of silent scorn for the worst affront of fortune, it is fatal. It takes the life simply. That is all. When it melts the heart, pity finds a soft place, and the ministry of sorrow becomes, not a phrase, but an experience. Very few know Minnie's secret. Her parents never mention the name of Donald Morrison. She quietly goes about her modest duties, and the few poor old people in the village left desolate in their old age, when the shadows lengthen, and, the gloom of the long night is gathering, find that she has

"A tear for pity,
And a hand open as day for melting charity."

THE END.

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