

wealth besides. Anyway, if you are resolved not to marry him, you should not have promised to drive with him upon the St. Jean Baptiste.'

Aurore had forgotten the significance locally attached to that festival. It had not occurred to her when, in her anxiety to avoid a more conspicuous occasion, she had so rashly accepted the invitation.

'Then I will not go. When the carriage comes I will make an excuse.'

'I forbid you to do such a thing!' cried the father, more sternly than he had ever before spoken to his idolised daughter. 'Toussaint is my friend; he has obliged me many times, and I will not permit him to be offended.'

Aurore, like nearly all the young people of that village, was accustomed to implicit obedience. She never even dreamed of disputing her father's positively expressed command. When, therefore, she came down a few minutes later, her costume completed by a very simple hat, and sat down meekly to wait for the carriage, her father exclaimed jestingly:

'If L'Amour has conquered La Mort, who knows but that he may be able to persuade you to take one with the other?'

But Aurore obstinately set her lips, and vowed within herself that nothing would ever make her do so.

A few seconds before the appointed hour, Toussaint drove up to the door in a handsome waggonette that he had bought from the seigneur, and Aurore's father remarked upon the beauty of the horse. On pretence of making her take an extra wrap, for the sky began to look cloudy, the father got rid of Aurore for a moment; then he said to Toussaint:

'What is this, my boy? Why did you choose to-day to take my little girl for a drive?'

'Because it was to-day,' said Toussaint, boldly (he had no fear at all of any man), 'and because I have long wished to make her my wife.'

'Did she know of that?' asked the father, gravely. 'I have never spoken a word,' answered the other; 'for, you see, I am more afraid of Aurore than of a battalion of soldiers.'

Again the father laughed.

'You will soon get over that,' he predicted. 'But I think it as well to tell you that my girl will not consent.'

Poor Toussaint was all a-tremble, although he could scarcely bring himself to ask why.

'Is there some one else?' he exclaimed at last.

'She has scarcely ever spoken to a man except her brothers,' declared the father. 'It is because she is a fool, and does not like your name.'

Aurore appeared at that moment, and the conversation came to an end. There was nothing to be done but to help the girl into the carriage; and, with a nod to the father, Toussaint drove away down the dusty road, turning presently into one that was more shady. At many farmhouse doors people called out salutations, barely concealing their astonishment; while tongues were let loose almost before the pair had vanished out of sight. Aurore bitterly repented her complaisance. She realised what this outing must signify, since Toussaint had never been known to drive any girl before. She sat, therefore, pale, silent, and constrained; while Toussaint could not find a word to say.

He drove her, of set purpose, past his own house, taking a short cut through the farm, past the orchard and the maple trees, that yielded so many a dollar yearly. The sight of that fair domain gave its owner courage, especially as he knew that Aurore had been probably appraising everything as they passed; for she was a proficient in household economy and wise in the lore of the country.

'It is a good property, is it not?' he ventured to inquire.

Aurore briefly assented.

'It all belongs to me,' the suitor continued. 'There is no mortgage. The house, too, as you see,' and he waved his whip in that direction, 'is a very comfortable one, and it wants only one thing.'

'What is that?' Aurore asked, abstractedly, feeling that she was expected to speak.

'A mistress.'

'And that will not be hard to find,' she replied, with an uncomfortable laugh. 'In the parish there are many girls—'

'Yes,' interrupted Toussaint, 'there are many girls, and fine ones too; but there is one only whom I want.'

Aurore stiffened; and, in the face of her discouraging silence, Toussaint, who had now taken his courage in his hands, proceeded:

'You must know, Ma'amselle Aurore, that it is yourself, and no other, whom I adore and whom I wish to marry.'

For a moment the girl's heart bounded with a curious exultation. All the damsels in the parish wanted this man, and hitherto he had been considered indifferent to them all. By saying one little monosyllable, she could have that house, those fertile meadows, that orchard and the maple grove, horses and cattle, and—and this man himself, who was not ill-looking, who had a frank, open manner that was pleasing, and an excellent reputation. But, oh, there was that odious condition attached to it all! She would have to be called 'Madame La Mort,' which was a thing not to be considered.

Toussaint waited patiently for her answer, his honest face a shade or two paler than usual. At last Aurore spoke:

'I am not thinking of marriage.'

'But what, then?' asked the suitor, in dismay. 'You do not wish to enter the convent?'

Aurore smiled, then answered demurely:

'The Sisters said I had no vocation.'

Toussaint breathed more freely.

'Then you do not wish to remain as you are?' he went on.

'I have much to do at home. I have my father and the boys.'

'But do you not see that the boys are nearly grown up, and will not be long in finding wives; and your father can not live always?'

The tears came to Aurore's eyes.

'You are cruel!' she cried.

'Cruel!' exclaimed the poor suitor, in great distress. 'Why, Ma'amselle, I would go through fire and water rather than that you should hurt your little finger.'

'If the time you speak of comes, if I outlive my father,' said Aurore, with dignity, 'why, then I shall see.'

'So it is that you do not wish to marry me!' said Toussaint. 'Yet I love you so much, and would make you a good husband. Never have I been tipsy; I am not ill-tempered—but I know I am not worthy of you. You are an angel. You love all the beautiful things—the little flowers and the colors of the sky.'

Aurore listened in amazement. How could he have known these things, since she had never spoken about them to any one?

'You will be thrown away upon any man,' Toussaint declared earnestly; 'but I, at least, will understand and will try to make you happy.'

Aurore was deeply touched; but the thought of that terrible name suddenly recurred to her mind, and she shut her lips together obstinately. Her brothers had learned that, when she assumed that particular expression, her determination was unalterable.

'My boys could tell you,' she said, with a little laugh that thrilled Toussaint as if it had been music, 'that I am far from being an angel; and perhaps you, too, would discover that, if I consented to marry you. But it is impossible.'

(To be concluded.)

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