The Galaxy.

[New York, N.Y. : W.C. and F.P. Church, 1866-1878]

THE OLD AGENCY.

The buildings, of the United States Indian Agency on the island of Mackinac were destroyed by fire December 31, at midnight.—*Western newspaper item.*

THE old house is gone then! But it shall not depart into oblivion unchronicled. One who has sat under its roof-tree, one who remembers well its rambling rooms and wild garden, will take the pen to write down a page of its story. It is only an episode, one of many; but the others are fading away, or already buried in dead memories under the sod. It was a quaint, picturesque old place, stretching back from the white limestone road that bordered the little port, its overgrown garden surrounded by an ancient stockade ten feet in height, with a massive, slow-swinging gate in front, defended by loopholes. This stockade bulged out in some places and leaned in at others; but the veteran posts, each a tree sharpened to a point, did not break their ranks in spite of decrepitude, and the Indian warriors, could they have returned from their happy hunting grounds, would have found the brave old fence of the Agency a sturdy barrier still. But the Indian warriors could not return, the United States agent had long ago moved to Lake Superior, and the deserted residence, having only a mythical owner, left without repairs year after year, and under a cloud of confusion as regarded taxes, titles, and boundaries, became a sort of flotsam property, used by various persons, but belonging legally to no one. Some tenant, tired of swinging the great gate back and forth, had made a little sally port alongside, but otherwise the place remained unaltered; a broad garden with a central avenue of cherry trees, on each side dilapidated arbors, overgrown paths, and heart-shaped beds, where the first agents had tried to cultivate flowers, and behind the limestone cliffs crowned with cedars. The house was large on the ground, with wings and various additions built out as if at random; on each side and behind were rough outside chimneys clamped to the wall, in the roof over the central part dormer windows showed a low second story, and here and there at irregular intervals were outside doors, in some cases opening out into space, since the high steps which once led up to them had fallen down, and remained as they fell, heaps of stones on the ground below. Within were suites of rooms, large and small, showing traces of workmanship elaborate for such a remote locality; the ceilings, patched with rough mortar, had been originally decorated with moulding, the doors were ornamented with scroll work, and the two large apartments on each side of the entrance hall possessed chimney-pieces and central hooks for chandeliers. Beyond and behind stretched out the wings; coming to what appeared to be the end of the house on the west, there unexpectedly began a new series of rooms turning toward the north, each with its outside door; looking for a corresponding labyrinth on the eastern side, there was nothing but a blank wall. The blind stairway went up in a kind of dark well, and once up it was a difficult matter to get down without a plunge from top to bottom, since the undefended opening was just where no one would expect to find it. Sometimes an angle was so arbitrarily walled up that you felt sure there must be a secret chamber there, and furtively rapped on the wall to catch the hollow echo within. Then again you opened a door, expecting to step out into the wilderness of a garden, and found yourself in a set of little rooms running off on a tangent, one after the other, and ending in a windowless closet and an open cistern. But the Agency gloried

in its irregularities, and defied criticism. The original idea of its architect—if there was any—had vanished; but his work remained, a not unpleasing variety to summer visitors accustomed to city houses, all built with a definite purpose, and one front door.

After some years of wandering in foreign lands, I returned to my own country, and took up the burden of old associations whose sadness time had mercifully softened. The summer was over; September had begun, but there came to me a great wish to see Mackinac once more; to walk through the aisles of its pines, among its spicy cedars and blue-green spruces; to breathe its exhilarating air; to look again upon the little white fort where I had lived with Archie, my soldier nephew, killed at Shiloh. The steamer took me safely across Erie, up the brimming Detroit river, through the enchanted region of the St. Clair flats, and out into broad Lake Huron; there, off Thunder bay, a gale met us, and for hours we swayed between life and death. The season for pleasure travelling was over; my fellow passengers, with one exception, were of that class of Americans who, dressed in cheap imitations of fine clothes, are forever travelling—travelling—taking the steamers not from preference, but because they are less costly than an all-rail route. The thin, listless men, in ill-fitting black clothes and shining tall hats, sat on the deck in tilted chairs, hour after hour, silent and dreary; the thin, listless women, clad in raiment of many colors, remained upon the fixed sofas in the cabin hour after hour, silent and weary. At meals they ate indiscriminately everything within range, but continued the same, a weary, dreary, silent band. The one exception was an old man, tall and majestic, with silvery hair and bright, dark eyes, dressed in the garb of a Roman Catholic priest, albeit slightly tinged with frontier innovations. He came on board at Detroit, and as soon as we were under way he exchanged his hat for a cloth cap embroidered with Indian bead work, and when the cold air, precursor of the gale, struck us on Huron, he wrapped himself in a large capote made of skins, with the fur inward.

In times of danger formality drops from us. During those long hours, when the next moment might have brought death, this old man and I were together; and when at last the cold dawn came, and the disabled steamer slowly ploughed through the angry water around the point, and showed us Mackinac in the distance, we discovered that the island was a mutual friend, and that we knew each other, at least by name; for the silver-haired priest was Father Piret, the hermit of the Chenaux. In the old days, when I was living at the little white fort, I had known Father Piret by reputation, and he had heard of me from the French half-breeds around the point. We landed. The summer hotels were closed, and I was directed to the old Agency, where occasionally a boarder was received by the family then in possession. The air was chilly, and a fine rain was falling, the afterpiece of the equinoctial; the wet storm flag hung heavily down over the fort on the height, and the waves came in sullenly. All was in sad accordance with my feelings as I thought of the past and its dead, while the slow tears of age moistened my eyes. But the next morning Mackinac awoke, robed in autumn splendor; the sunshine poured down, the straits sparkled back, the forest glowed in scarlet, the larches waved their wild, green hands, the fair-weather flag floated over the little fort, and all was as joyous as though no one had ever died; and indeed it is in glorious days like these that we best realize immortality.

I wandered abroad through the gay forest to the Arch, the Lover's Leap, and old Fort Holmes, whose British walls had been battered down for pastime, so that only a caved-in British cellar remained to mark the spot. Returning to the Agency I learned that Father Piret had called to see me.

"I am sorry that I missed him,"

I said; "he is a remarkable old man."

The circle at the dinner table glanced up with one accord. The little Methodist minister with the surprised eyes looked at me more surprised than ever; his large wife groaned audibly. The Baptist colporteur peppered his potatoes until they and the plate were black; the Presbyterian doctor, who was the champion of the Protestant party on the island, wished to know if I was acquainted with the latest devices of the Scarlet Woman in relation to the county school fund.

"But, my friends," I replied, "Father Piret and I both belong to the past. We discuss not religion, but Mackinac; not the school fund, but the old associations of the island, which is dear to both of us."

The four looked at me with distrust; they saw nothing dear about the island unless it was the price of fresh meat, and as to old associations, they held themselves above such nonsense. So, one and all, they took beef and enjoyed a season of well-regulated conversation, leaving me to silence and my broiled white fish; as it was Friday, no doubt they thought the latter a rag of popery.

Very good rags.

But my hostess, a gentle little woman, stole away from these bulwarks of Protestantism in the late afternoon, and sought me in my room, or rather series of rooms, since there were five opening one out of the other, the last three unfurnished, and all the doorless doorways staring at me like so many fixed eyes, until, oppressed by their silent watchfulness, I hung a shawl over the first opening and shut out the whole gazing suite.

"You must not think, Mrs. Corlyne, that we islanders do not appreciate Father Piret," said the little woman, who belonged to one of the old island families, descendants of a chief factor of the fur trade. "There has been some feeling lately against the Catholics——"

"Roman Catholics, my dear," I said with Anglican particularity.

"But we all love and respect the dear old man as a father."

"When I was living at the fort, fifteen years ago, I heard occasionally of Father Piret," I said, "but he seemed to be almost a mythic personage. What is his history?"

"No one knows. He came here fifty years ago, and after officiating on the island a few years, he retired to a little Indian farm in the Chenaux, where he has lived ever since. Occasionally he holds a service for the half-breeds at Point St. Ignace, but the parish of Mackinac proper has its regular priest, and Father Piret apparently does not hold even the appointment of missionary. Why he remains here—a man educated, refined, and even aristocratic—is a mystery. He seems to be well provided with money; his little house in the Chenaux contains foreign books and pictures, and he is very charitable to the poor Indians. But he keeps himself aloof, and seems to desire no intercourse with the world beyond his letters and papers, which come regularly, some of them from France. He seldom leaves the Straits; he never speaks of himself; always he appears as you saw him, carefully dressed and stately. Each summer when he is seen on the street, there is more or less curiosity about him among the summer visitors, for he is quite unlike the rest of us Mackinac people. But no one can discover anything more than I have told you, and those who have persisted so far as to sail over to the Chenaux either lose their way among the channels, or if they find the house, they never find him; the door is locked and no one answers."

"Singular," I said. "He has nothing of the hermit about him. He has what I should call a courtly manner."

"That is it," replied my hostess, taking up the word; "some say he came from the French court—a nobleman exiled for political offences. Others think he is a priest under the ban, and there is still a third story to the effect that he is a French count,

who, owing to a disappointment in love, took orders and came to this far-away island, so that he might seclude himself forever from the world."

"But no one really knows?"

"Absolutely nothing. He is beloved by all the real old island families, whether they are of his faith or not; and when he dies the whole Strait, from Bois Blanc light to far Waugoschance, will mourn for him."

At sunset the Father came again to see me; the front door of my room was open, and we seated ourselves on the piazza outside. The roof of bark thatch had fallen away, leaving the bare beams overhead twined with brier roses; the floor and house side were frescoed with those lichen colored spots which show that the gray planks have lacked paint for many long years; the windows had wooden shutters fastened back with irons shaped like the letter S, and on the central door was a brass knocker, and a plate bearing the words, "United States Agency."

"When I first came to the island," said Father Piret, "this was *the* residence *par excellence*. The old house was brave with green and white paint then; it had candelabra on its high mantels, brass andirons on its many hearthstones, curtains for all its little windows, and carpets for all its uneven floors. Much cooking went on, and smoke curled up from all these outside chimneys. Those were the days of the fur trade, and Mackinac was a central mart. Hither twice a year came the bateaux from the northwest, loaded with furs, and in those old, decaying warehouses on the back street of the village were stored the goods sent out from New York, with which the bateaux were loaded again, and after a few days of revelry, during which the improvident voyagers squandered all their hard-earned gains, the train returned westward into "the countries," as they called the wilderness beyond the lakes, for another six months of toil. The officers of the little fort on the height, the chief factors of the fur company, and the United States Indian agent formed the feudal aristocracy of the island; but the agent had the most imposing mansion, and often have I seen the old house shining with lights across its whole broadside of windows, and gay with the sound of a dozen French violins. The garden, now a wilderness, was the pride of the island; its prim arbors, its spring and spring house, its flower beds, where, with infinite pains, a few hardy plants were induced to blossom, its cherry tree avenue, whose early red fruit the short summer could scarcely ripen, its annual attempts at vegetables, which never came to maturity, formed topics for conversation in court circles. Potatoes then as now were left to the mainland Indians, who came over with their canoes heaped with the fine, large, thin-jacketed fellows, bartering them all for a loaf or two of bread and a little whiskey.

"The stockade which surrounds the place was at that day a not unnecessary defence. At the time of the payments the island swarmed with Indians, who came from Lake Superior and the northwest, to receive the government pittance. Camped on the beach as far as the eye could reach, these wild warriors, dressed in all their savage finery, watched the Agency with greedy eyes, as they waited for their turn. The great gate was barred and sentinels stood at the loopholes with loaded muskets; one by one the chiefs were admitted, stalked up to the office—that wing on the right—received the allotted sum, silently selected something from the displayed goods, and as silently departed, watched by quick eyes, until the great gate closed behind them. The guns of the fort were placed so as to command the Agency during payment time, and when, after several anxious, watchful days and nights, the last brave had received his portion, and the last canoe started away toward the north, leaving only the comparatively peaceful main-

land Indians behind, the island drew a long breath of relief."

"Was there any real danger?" I asked.

"The Indians are ever treacherous," replied the Father. Then he was silent, and seemed lost in reverie. The pure, ever-present breeze of Mackinac played in his long silvery hair, and his bright eyes roved along the wall of the old house; he had a broad forehead, noble features, and commanding presence, and as he sat there, recluse as he was—aged, alone, without a history, with scarcely a name or a place in the world—he looked, in the power of his native-born dignity, worthy of a royal coronet.

"I was thinking of old Jacques," he said after a long pause. "He once lived in these rooms of yours, and died on that bench at the end of the piazza, sitting in the sunshine, with his staff in his hand."

"Who was he?" I asked. "Tell me the story, Father."

"There is not much to tell, madame; but in my mind he is so associated with this old house that I always think of him when I come here, and fancy I see him on that bench.

"When the United States agent removed to the Apostle Islands at the western end of Lake Superior, this place remained for some time uninhabited. But one winter morning smoke was seen coming out of that great chimney on the side, and in the course of the day several curious persons endeavored to open the main gate, at that time the only entrance. But the gate was barred within, and as the high stockade was slippery with ice, for some days the mystery remained unsolved. The islanders, always slow, grow torpid in the winter like bears; they watched the smoke in the daytime and the little twinkling light by night; they talked of spirits both French and Indian as they went their rounds, but they were too indolent to do more. At length the fort commandant heard of the smoke, and saw the light from his quarters on the height. As government property, he considered the Agency under his charge, and he was preparing to send a detail of men to examine the deserted mansion in its ice-bound garden, when its mysterious occupant appeared in the village; it was an old man, silent, gentle, apparently French. He carried a canvas bag, and bought a few supplies of the coarsest description, as though he was very poor. Unconscious of observation, he made his purchases and returned slowly homeward, barring the great gate behind him. Who was he? No one knew. Whence and when came he? No one could tell.

"The detail of soldiers from the fort battered at the gate, and when the silent old man opened it they followed him through the garden, where his feet had made a lonely trail over the deep snow, round to the side door. They entered, and found some blankets on the floor, a fire of old knots on the hearth, a long narrow box tied with a rope; his poor little supplies stood in one corner—bread, salted fish, and a few potatoes—and over the fire hung a rusty tea-kettle, its many holes carefully plugged with bits of rag. It was a desolate scene; the old man in the great rambling empty house in the heart of an Arctic winter. He said little, and the soldiers could not understand his language; but they left him unmolested, and going back to the fort, they told what they had seen. Then the major went in person to the Agency, and gathered from the stranger's words that he had come to the island over the ice in the track of the mail-carrier; that he was an emigrant from France on his way to the Red river of the North, but his strength failing, owing to the intense cold, he had stopped at the island, and seeing the uninhabited house, he had crept into it, as he had not enough money to pay for a lodging elsewhere. He seemed a quiet, inoffensive old man, and after all the islanders had had a good long slow stare at him, he was left in peace, with his little curling

smoke by day and his little twinkling light by night, although no one thought of assisting him; there is a strange coldness of heart in these northern latitudes.

"I was then living at the Chenaux; there was a German priest on the island; I sent over two half-breeds every ten days for the mail, and through them I heard of the stranger at the Agency. He was French, they said, and it was rumored in the saloons along the frozen docks that he had seen Paris. This warmed my heart; for, madame, I spent my youth in Paris—the dear, the beautiful city! So I came over to the island in my dog sledge; a little thing is an event in our long, long winter. I reached the village in the afternoon twilight, and made my way alone to the Agency; the old man no longer barred his gate, and swinging it open with difficulty, I followed the trail through the snowy silent garden round to the side door of this wing—the wing you occupy. I knocked; he opened; I greeted him, and entered. He had tried to furnish his little room with the broken relics of the deserted dwelling; a mended chair, a stool, a propped-up table, a shelf with two or three battered tin dishes, and some straw in one corner comprised the whole equipment, but the floor was clean, the old dishes polished, and the blankets neatly spread over the straw which formed the bed. On the table the supplies were ranged in order; there was a careful pile of knots on one side of the hearth, and the fire was evidently husbanded to last as long as possible. He gave me the mended chair, lighted a candle end stuck in a bottle, and then seating himself on the stool, he gazed at me in his silent way until I felt like an uncourteous intruder. I spoke to him in French, offered my services—in short, I did my best to break down the barrier of his reserve; there was something pathetic in the little room and its lonely occupant, and besides, I knew by his accent that we were both from the banks of the Seine.

"Well, I heard his story—not then, but afterward; it came out gradually during the eleven months of our acquaintance; for he became my friend—almost the only friend of fifty years. I am an isolated man, madame. It must be so. God's will be done!"

The father paused, and looked off over the darkening water; he did not sigh, neither was his calm brow clouded, but there was in his face what seemed to me a noble resignation, and I have ever since felt sure that the secret of his exile held in it a self-sacrifice; for only self-sacrifice can produce that divine expression.

Out in the straits shone the low-down green light of a schooner; beyond glimmered the mast-head star of a steamer, with the line of cabin lights below, and away on the point of Bois Blanc gleamed the steady radiance of the light-house showing the way into Lake Huron; the broad overgrown garden cut us off from the village, but above on the height we could see the lighted windows of the fort, although still the evening sky retained that clear hue that seems so much like daylight when one looks aloft, although the earth lies in dark shadows below. The Agency was growing indistinct even to our near eyes; its white chimneys loomed up like ghosts, the shutters sighed in the breeze, and the planks of the piazza creaked causelessly. The old house was full of the spirits of memories, and at twilight they came abroad and bewailed themselves. "The place is haunted," I said, as a distant door groaned drearily.

"Yes," replied Father Piret, coming out of his abstraction, "and this wing is haunted by my old French friend. As time passed and the spring came, he fitted up in his fashion the whole suite of five rooms. He had his parlor, sleeping-room, kitchen, and store-room, the whole furnished only with the articles I have already described, save that the bed was of fresh green boughs instead of straw. Jacques occupied all the rooms with ceremoni-

ous exactness; he sat in the parlor, and I too must sit there when I came; in the second room he slept and made his careful toilet, with his shabby old clothes; the third was his kitchen and dining-room, and the fourth, that little closet on the right, was his store-room. His one indulgence was coffee; coffee he must and would have, though he slept on straw, and went without meat. But he cooked to perfection in his odd way, and I have often eaten a dainty meal in that little kitchen, sitting at the propped-up table, using the battered tin dishes, and the clumsy wooden spoons fashioned with a jack-knife. After we had become friends Jacques would accept occasional aid from me, and it gave me a warm pleasure to think that I had added something to his comfort, were it only a little sugar, butter, or a pint of milk. No one disturbed the old man; no orders came from Washington respecting the Agency property, and the major had not the heart to order him away. There were more than houses enough for the scanty population of the island, and only a magnate could furnish these large rambling rooms. So the soldiers were sent down to pick the red cherries for the use of the garrison, but otherwise Jacques had the whole place to himself, with all its wings, outbuildings, arbors, and garden beds.

"But I have not told you all. The fifth apartment in the suite—the square room with four windows and an outside door—was the old man's sanctuary; here were his precious relics, and here he offered up his devotions, half-Christian, half-pagan, with never failing ardor. From the long narrow box which the fort soldiers had noticed came an old sabre, a worn and faded uniform of the French grenadiers, a little dried sprig, its two withered leaves tied in their places with thread, and a coarse wood-cut of the great Napoleon; for Jacques was a soldier of the empire. The uniform hung on the wall, carefully arranged on pegs as a man would wear it, and the sabre was brandished from the empty sleeve as though a hand held it; the wood-cut framed in green, renewed from day to day, pine in the winter, maple in the summer, occupied the opposite side, and under it was fastened the tiny withered sprig, while on the floor below was a fragment of buffalo skin which served the soldier for a stool when he knelt in prayer. And did he pray to Napoleon, you ask? I hardly know. He had a few of the Church's prayers by heart, but his mind was full of the Emperor as he repeated them, and his eyes were fixed upon the picture as though it was the face of a saint. Discovering this, I labored hard to bring him to a clearer understanding of the faith; but all in vain. He listened to me patiently, even reverently, although I was much the younger; at intervals he replied, "Oui, mon père," and the next day he said his prayers to the dead Emperor as usual. And this was not the worst; in place of an Amen, there came a fierce imprecation against the whole English nation. After some months I succeeded in persuading him to abandon this termination; but I always suspected that it was but a verbal abandonment, and that, mentally, the curse was as strong as ever.

"Jacques had been a soldier of the empire, as it is called—a grenadier under Napoleon; he had loved his General and Emperor in life, and adored him in death with the affectionate pertinacity of a faithful dog. One hot day during the German campaign, Napoleon, engaged in conference with some of his generals, was disturbed by the uneasy movements of his horse; looking around for some one to brush away the flies, he saw Jacques, who stood at a short distance watching his Emperor with admiring eyes. Always quick to recognize the personal affection he inspired, Napoleon signed to the grenadier to approach. 'Here, mon brave,' he said smiling; 'get a branch and keep the flies from my horse a few moments.' The proud

soldier obeyed; he heard the conversation of the Emperor; he kept the flies from his horse. As he talked, Napoleon idly plucked a little sprig from the branch as it came near his hand, and played with it; and when, the conference over, with a nod of thanks to Jacques, he rode away, the grenadier stopped, picked up the sprig fresh from the Emperor's hand, and placed it carefully in his breast pocket. The Emperor had noticed him; the Emperor had called him "mon brave;" the Emperor had smiled upon him. This was the glory of Jacques's life. How many times have I listened to the story, told always in the same words, with the same gestures in the same places. He remembered every sentence of the conversation he had heard, and repeated them with automatic fidelity, understanding nothing of their meaning; even when I explained their probable connection with the campaign, my words made no impression upon him, and I could see that they conveyed no idea to his mind. He was made for a soldier; brave and calm, he reasoned not, but simply obeyed, and to this blind obedience there was added a heart full of affection which, when concentrated upon the Emperor, amounted to idolatry. Napoleon possessed a singular personal power over his soldiers; they all loved him, but Jacques adored him.

"It was an odd, affectionate animal," said Father Piret, dropping unconsciously into a French idiom to express his meaning. "The little sprig had been kept as a talisman, and no saintly relic was ever more honored; the Emperor had touched it!

"Grenadier Jacques made one of the ill-fated Russian army, and, although wounded and suffering, he still endured until the capture of Paris. Then, when Napoleon retired to Elba, he fell sick from grief, nor did he recover until the Emperor returned, when, with thousands of other soldiers, our Jacques hastened to his standard, and the hundred days began. Then came Waterloo. Then came St. Helena. But the grenadier lived on in hope, year after year, until the Emperor died—died in exile, in the hands of the hated English. Broken-hearted, weary of the sight of his native land, he packed his few possessions, and fled away over the ocean, with a vague idea of joining a French settlement on the Red river; I have always supposed it must be the Red river of the South; there are French there. But the poor soldier was very ignorant; some one directed him to these frozen regions, and he set out; all places were alike to him now that the Emperor had gone from earth. Wandering as far as Mackinac on his blind pilgrimage, Jacques found his strength failing, and crept into this deserted house to die. Recovering, he made for himself a habitation from a kind of instinct, as a beaver might have done. He gathered together the wrecks of furniture, he hung up his treasures, he had his habits for every hour of the day; soldier-like, everything was done by rule. At a particular hour it was his custom to sit on that bench in the sunshine, wrapped in his blankets in the winter, in summer in his shirt sleeves with his one old coat carefully hung on that peg; I can see him before me now. On certain days he would wash his few poor clothes, and hang them out on the bushes to dry; then he would patiently mend them with his great brass thimble and coarse thread. Poor old garments! they were covered with awkward patches.

"At noon he would prepare his one meal; for his breakfast and supper were but a cup of coffee. Slowly and with the greatest care the materials were prepared, and the cooking watched. There was a savor of the camp, a savor of the Paris café, and a savor of originality; and often, wearied with the dishes prepared by my half-breeds, I have come over to the island to dine with Jacques, for the old soldier was proud of his skill, and liked an appreciative guest. And I—but it is not my story I tell."

"Oh, Father Piret, if you could but——"

"Thanks, madame. To others I say, 'What would you? I have been here since youth; you know my life.' But to you I say, there was a past; brief, full, crowded into a few years; but I cannot tell it; my lips are sealed! Again, thanks for your sympathy, madame. And now I will go back to Jacques.

"We were comrades, he and I; he would not come over to the Chenaux; he was unhappy if the routine of his day was disturbed, but I often stayed a day with him at the Agency, for I too liked the silent house. It has its relics, by the way. Have you noticed a carved door in the back part of the main building? That was brought from the old chapel on the mainland, built as early as 1700. The whole of this locality is sacred ground in the history of our Church. It was first visited by our missionaries in 1670, and over at Point St. Ignace the dust which was once the mortal body of Father Marquette lies buried. The exact site of the grave is lost; but we know that in 1677 his Indian converts brought back his body, wrapped in birch bark, from the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, where he died, to his beloved mission of St. Ignace. There he was buried in a vault under the little log church. Some years later the spot was abandoned, and the resident priests returned to Montreal. We have another little Indian church there now, and the point is forever consecrated by its unknown grave. At various times I told Jacques the history of this strait—its islands, and points; but he evinced little interest. He listened with some attention to my account of the battle which took place on Dousman's farm, not far from the British landing; but when he found that the English were victorious, he muttered a great oath and refused to hear more. To him the English were fiends incarnate. Had they not slowly murdered his Emperor on their barren rock in the sea?

"Only once did I succeed in interesting the old soldier. Then, as now, I received twice each year a package of foreign pamphlets and papers; among them came, that summer, a German ballad, written by that strange being Henri Heine. I give it to you in a later English translation:

THE GRENADIERS.

To the land of France went two grenadiers,
From a Russian prison returning:
But they hung down their heads on the German frontiers,
The news from the fatherland learning.

For there they both heard the sorrowful tale,
That France was by fortune forsaken:
That her mighty army was scattered like hail,
And the Emperor, the Emperor taken.

Then there wept together the grenadiers,
The sorrowful story learning;
And one said, "Oh, woe!" as the news he hears,
"How I feel my old wound burning!"

The other said, "The song is sung,
And I wish that we both were dying!
But at home I've a wife and a child—they're young,
On me, and me only, relying."

"Oh, what is a wife or a child to me?
Deeper wants all my spirit have shaken:
Let them beg, let them beg, should they hungry be!
My Emperor, my Emperor taken!

"But I beg you, brother, if by chance
You soon shall see me dying,
Then take my corpse with you back to France.
Let it ever in France be lying.

"The cross of honor with crimson band
Shall rest on my heart as it bound me—
Give me my musket in my hand,
And buckle my sword around me.

"And there I will lie and listen still,
In my sentry coffin staying
Till I feel the thundering cannon's thrill,
And horses tramping and neighing.

"Then my Emperor will ride well over my grave,
'Mid sabres bright slashing and fighting,
And I'll rise all weaponed up out of my grave,
For the Emperor, the Emperor fighting!"

"This simple ballad went straight to the heart of old Jacques; tears rolled down his cheeks as I read, and he would have it over and over again. 'Ah! that comrade was happy,' he said. '*He* died when the Emperor was only *taken*. I too would have gone to my grave smiling, could I have thought that my Emperor would come riding over it with all his army

around him again! But he is dead—my Emperor is dead! Ah! that comrade was a happy man; he died! He did not have to stand by while the English—may they be forever cursed!—slowly, slowly murdered him—murdered the great Napoleon! No; that comrade died. Perhaps he is with the Emperor now—that comrade-grenadier.'

"To be with his Emperor was Jacques' idea of heaven.

"From that moment each time I visited the Agency I must repeat the verses again and again; they became a sort of hymn. Jacques had not the capacity to learn the ballad, although he so often listened to it, but the seventh verse he managed to repeat after a fashion of his own, setting it to a nondescript tune, and crooning it about the house as he came and went on his little rounds. Gradually he altered the words, but I could not make out the new phrases as he muttered them over to himself, as if trying them.

"'What is it you are saying, Jacques?' I asked.

"But he would not tell me. After a time I discovered that he had added the altered verse to his prayers; for always when I was at the Agency I went with him to his sanctuary, if for no other purpose than to prevent the uttered imprecation that served as Amen for the whole. The verse, whatever it was, came in before this.

"So the summer passed. The vague intention of going on to the Red river of the North had faded away, and Jacques lived along on the island as though he had never lived anywhere else. He grew wonted to the Agency, like some old family cat, until he seemed to belong to the house, and all thought of disturbing him was forgotten. 'There is Jacques out washing his clothes;' 'There is Jacques going to buy his coffee;' 'There is Jacques sitting on the piazza,' said the islanders; the old man served them instead of a clock.

"One dark autumn day I came over from the Chenaux to get the mail. The water was rough, and my boat, tilted far over on one side, skimmed the crests of the waves in the daring fashion peculiar to the Mackinac craft; the mail-steamer had not come in, owing to the storm outside, and I went on to the Agency to see Jacques. He seemed as usual, and we had dinner over the little fire, for the day was chilly; the meal over, my host put everything in order again in his methodical way, and then retired to his sanctuary for prayers. I followed, and stood in the doorway while he knelt. The room was dusky, and the uniform with its outstretched sabre looked like a dead soldier leaning against the wall; the face of Napoleon opposite seemed to gaze down on Jacques as he knelt, as though listening. Jacques muttered his prayers, and I responded Amen; then, after a silence, came the altered verse; then, with a quick glance toward me, another silence, which I felt sure contained the unspoken curse. Gravely he led the way back to the kitchen—for, owing to the cold, he allowed me to dispense with the parlor—and there we spent the afternoon together, talking, and watching for the mail-boat. 'Jacques,' I said, 'what is that verse you have added to your prayers? Come, my friend, why should you keep it from me?'

"'It is nothing, mon père—nothing,' he replied. But again I urged him to tell me; more to pass away the time than from any real interest. 'Come,' I said, 'it may be your last chance. Who knows but that I may be drowned on my way back to the Chenaux?'

"'True,' replied the old soldier calmly. 'Well, then, here it is, mon père: my death-wish. Voilà!'

"'Something you wish to have done after death?'

"'Yes.'

"'And who is to do it?'

"'My Emperor.'

"'But, Jacques, the Emperor is dead.'

"'He will have it done all the same, mon père.'

"In vain I argued; Jacques was calmly obstinate. He had mixed up his Emperor with the stories of the Saints: why should not Napoleon do what they had done?

"'What is the verse, any way,' I said at last.

"'It is my death-wish, as I said before, mon père.' And he repeated the following. He said it in French, for I had given him a French translation, as he knew nothing of German; but I will give you the English, as he had altered it:

> The Emperor's face with its green leaf band
> Shall rest on my heart that loved him so.
> Give me the sprig in my dead hand,
> My uniform and sabre around me.
> Amen.

"So prays Grenadier Jacques.

"The old soldier had sacrificed the smooth metre; but I understood what he meant.

"The storm increased, and I spent the night at the Agency, lying on the bed of boughs, covered with a blanket. The house shook in the gale, the shutters rattled, and all the floors near and far creaked as though feet were walking over them. I was wakeful and restless, but Jacques slept quietly, and did not stir until daylight broke over the stormy water, showing the ships scudding by under bare poles, and the distant mail boat laboring up toward the island through the heavy sea. My host made his toilette, washing and shaving himself carefully, and putting on his old clothes as though going on parade. Then came breakfast, with a stew added in honor of my presence, and as by this time the steamer was not far from Round Island, I started down toward the little post-office, anxious to receive some expected letters. The steamer came in slowly, the mail was distributed slowly, and I stopped to read my letters before returning. I had a picture-paper for Jacques, and as I looked out across the straits, I saw that the storm was over, and decided to return to the Chenaux in the afternoon, leaving word with my half-breeds to have the sail-boat in readiness at three o'clock. The sun was throwing out a watery gleam as, after the lapse of an hour or two, I walked up the limestone road and entered the great gate of the Agency. As I came through the garden along the cherry-tree avenue, I saw Jacques sitting on that bench in the sun, for this was his hour for sunshine; his staff was in his hand, and he was leaning back against the side of the house with his eyes closed, as if in reverie. 'Jacques, here is a picture-paper for you,' I said, laying my hand on his shoulder. He did not answer. He was dead.

"Alone, sitting in the sunshine, apparently without a struggle or a pang, the soul of the old soldier had departed. Whither? We know not. But—smile if you will, madame—I trust he is with his Emperor."

I did not smile; my eyes were too full of tears.

"I buried him, as he wished," continued Father Piret, "in his old uniform, with the picture of Napoleon laid on his breast, the sabre by his side, and the withered sprig in his lifeless hand. He lies in our little cemetery on the height, near the shadow of the great cross; the low white board tablet at the head of the mound once bore the words "Grenadier Jacques," but the rains and the snows have washed away the painted letters. It is as well."

The priest paused, and we both looked toward the empty bench, as though we saw a figure seated there, staff in hand. After a time my little hostess came out on to the piazza, and we all talked together of the island and its past. "My boat is waiting," said Father Piret at length; "the wind is fair, and I must return to the Chenaux to-night. This near departure is my excuse for coming twice in one day to see you, madame."

"Stay over, my dear sir," I urged. "I too shall leave in another day. We may not meet again."

"Not on earth; but in another world

we may," answered the priest, rising as he spoke.

"Father, your blessing," said the little hostess in a low tone, after a quick glance toward the many windows through which the bulwarks of Protestantism might be gazing. But all was dark, both without and within, and the Father gave his blessing to both of us, fervently, but with an apostolic simplicity. Then he left us, and I watched his tall form, crowned with silvery hair, as he passed down the cherry-tree avenue. Later in the evening the moon came out, and I saw a Mackinac boat skimming by the house, its white sails swelling full in the fresh breeze.

"That is Father Piret's boat," said my hostess. "The wind is fair; he will reach the Chenaux before midnight."

A day later, and I too sailed away. As the steamer bore me southward, I looked back toward the island with a sigh. Half hidden in its wild green garden I saw the old Agency; first I could distinguish its whole rambling length; then I lost the roofless piazza, then the dormer windows, and finally I could only discern the white chimneys, with their crumbling crooked tops. The sun sank into the Strait off Waugoschance, the evening gun flashed from the little fort on the height, the shadows grew dark and darker, the island turned into green foliage, then a blue outline, and finally there was nothing but the dusky water.

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON.

SONNETS.

I THINK of human wrongs when I lie down
Upon my peaceful pillow to repose.
I seem to feel the agony that rose
From martyred saints who wore the bitter crown,
And, smiling, died rather than truth disown.
I think of them who patient bore the blows
Of heartless hate, till o'er their burning brows
The morning of Emancipation shone.
I think of them whose lot it is to roam
Friendless in city throngs—the weak and poor,
The lonely outcast, wandering far from home,
The weary beggar, driven from door to door—
For all I weep, all in my heart find room,
Whose sorrows make me tender more and more.

Into the web of every human life
Is woven some thread of sin—like a fair flower
Blighted by poisonous breath—some little hour
The purest heart doth fold in pitiless strife.
Then soft-eyed Innocence, pale and fugitive,
To Passion's fiery sceptre yields her power,
And frighted Reason sleeps—yet evermore,
In the deep soul beauty and truth revive;
Fate comes again with tearful tenderness,
And from life's broken fragments moulds anew
The image of God's love, with sweet redress
For wrongs that out of blinded free-will grew.
Then Virtue's glorious might with high devotion
Inspires each gentle thought, each chaste emotion.

H. S.