

ON DE RAPIDE.

BY MARY KNOWLES BARTLETT.

MR. JERRY MYER, accompanied by his wife, was traveling in pursuit of his lost health. Naturally, at this time, he loathed the society of invalids.

One golden day in autumn they found themselves in a little French-Canadian village. It was Mr. Myer's custom, before he would commit himself to the uncertainties of a strange locality, to send Mrs. Myer out to see what the place was like. When they had dined comfortably at the old Hôtel de Bon Ange, as usual, he said:

"Now, my dear, you must look around and see who's here. If there is a 'hay-fever resorter' from the West, or a 'nervous-prostrate' from the East, or any other evil thing in sight, we 'll go farther."

It was also his custom to remind her that by a certain degree of affability she would invite the confidence of the natives, and that he should expect to hear something interesting when she came back. She had been well disciplined in the art of tale-gathering for the diversion of her sick lord, as a keen appetite for stories survived even the exigencies of Mr. Jerry Myer's ill health; so it was quite unnecessary to repeat this injunction, though he always did.

Then the lady went forth to spy upon the inhabitants. The village stood near the juncture of two rivers. Mrs. Myer saw a weather-beaten church, and a straggling row of steep-roofed cottages, all deep in gardens. There were blue-green fields of cabbage in the rear, but gay borders of marigold and zinnia lined the paths to the front doors; and on many a window-ledge a geranium growing in a tin can showed a brave truss of scarlet. Some women who were gathering ripe beans straightened their bent backs, and regarded her with engaging looks of interest. A group of children at a gateway, chattering a French patois, and stringing four-o'clocks on stems of seeded grass, hushed at sight of a stranger, and, with startled black eyes, huddled together like a covey of young partridges in a wood. But when she opened for them a tiny box of sugar-drops from her *chatelaine*, there was a ready flash of milk-teeth, and they bobbed courtesies, and cried, "Merci, m'dame!" like well-instructed chil-

dren. Then Mrs. Jerry Myer went down upon a floating pier formed of three or four logs chained to a stump. The murmur of broken water and, far below, a line of fringing whitecaps betrayed the presence of the rapids in the river. Along the shore a sturdy second growth of pine and fir made a dark background for the shimmering leaves and the brown-and-white trunks of slender birches.

Suddenly she was hailed by a cheery cry: "Bonjour, m'dame! Bonjour!"

A wiry little man, neither old nor young, rowed up to the landing. He wore a red worsted cap, a blue blouse, and long blue knitted stockings. His eyes were alert and glancing, like those of some small wild animal—one that gets its living by its wits, and not by its strength. But his smile was most human and friendly, and his brown and ruddy face shone with an eagerness for conversation.

"Bonjour, m'dame! Bonjour! You lak one skeef, eh? You lak I row you on de reever, me?"

"Oh, yas, m'dame; an' m'sieu', he will go? No? He ain't got no bien good healt', eh? Oh, yas; I see heem; he so w'ite on hees face."

"You come to Canadaw for hees healt'? Dat's good. I t'ink he not die ve'y soon. No, no. W'en he stay by de reever, dat's de bes' t'ing in de worl'. All de 'habitant w'at leeve by de reever, she got bien good healt'. Dat's my boy over dere, feeshin'. You t'ink he marrie? No? Oh, yas; he marry hese'f long tam. He got nice wife, plenty li'l' chillen. W'at you t'ink? Been marry eight year, an' he got ten li'l' chillen. You don' b'leeve? Oh, yas; he one lucky feller. He got two, t'ree li'l' twin! Nex' year maybe he go'n' got some mo' li'l' twin; den he go on Kebeck, govermen' geeve heem honner acre lan'. Das ve'y good, eh? An' I tol' heem de lan' mus' be by de reever. If he go on de dry lan', François he will be seek, an' hees li'l' chillen dey will be seek, an' hees femme she will be seek."

"You lak de reever, m'dame? Yas? It mak' mo' life, de rapide. I tak' you mo' near, so you can see dem, jus' lak horses, how dey t'row up deir haid! You have see dat you-se'f? Dey look lak w'ite horses? Oh, das a

ve'y good eye you got, m'dame. Some people dey cannot see dat, not w'en you tole 'em, no. Soyez tranquille, m'dame. Dis skeef are mo' safe dan a house.

"Oh, yas, I go down de rapide since I have ten year. I lak bes' t'ing of all for go ride my wite horses of de rapide. You lak bes' de horses on de lan'? Oh, I 'fraid, me, of dose horses on de lan'. Of co'se dere is mo' danger in a wagon dan in a boat. For why? You can't steer no wagon. You got no rudder, no oar, jus' two li'l' strap in your hand. Den de horse maybe he go'n' jomp on de stump, an', by gosh! first t'ing you know your haid is broke off on a tree. You t'ink w'en you be ve'y kin' wid de horses den dey won' hurt you? So? I don' know. But me, I lak my wite horses of de rapide. Of co'se you mus' be acquaint wid dem; dose are wil' horses. You mus' steer jus' right, an' keep your han' on deir back, wid a light oar an' a quick oar; den dey lif' you up, an' dey lif' you down, an' laugh in your face, jus' for mak' fun.

"Don' somebody go drown on de rapide? Oh—sometam—fool feller f'om de town. He pull so hard, he stick hees oar down deep, he go dig 'em in deir side, he go contre dem, an' dat mak' 'em so mad dey hit heem back, I tol' you. An' he roll 'tween de horses lak one beeg stone, an' dey tromp heem down in de water so deep, by gosh! w'en de angel blow de las' tromp I don' b'lieve he hear it.

"You was on Lachine Rapide? An' you was scare', you? Oh, yas; but you was in beeg, beeg boat, eh? Me, I be 'fraid dose beeg boat, jus' lak beeg house. Maybe she go'n' turn over; fire-engine maybe she go'n' bus' up. Den where you are? No, no; on de rapide one li'l' small skeef an' two oar mak' all right for me. You t'ink all de woman be 'fraid de rapide? Canayenne? Oh, w'en she be so ol' an' so t'ick. You see my li'l' gell over dere, in de skeef wid François? Dat's my Louisine. On fête-day she got gol' watch an' gol' chain on her neck. M'sieu' l'engineer an' hees lady out de State mak' one belle present, eh?

"For why? My li'l' gel she not 'fraid, no. She acquaint wid de rapide.

"She li'l' gel, so li'l', so quick. Pretty, eh, you t'ink? Soch long black hair? Yas, ma jolie tite fille. But de bes' t'ing, m'dame, she got de bon sens' in dat small haid.

"You lak hear 'bout dat lady f'om de State? So? Den I tol' you f'om de begin.

"One Yankee man come off de State Boston. Big man; he engineer of de railroad for mak' new track down dere. He

commandant of de cut of de wood for de road. Please, m'dame, will you look up de reever—oder side, some willow-tree, eh? You see? Li'l' reever come in dere. One gang men go up de reever, me too; cut de beeg log, t'row 'em in de reever. Many log, not many water. Beeg bunch log get snag over dere, an' pile up mo' high as de tree. Dat winter stay long, long tam. I am so tire, me. But April she come back. I t'ink eve'ybody she's heart will broke some day w'en April she don' come. I geeve t'ree can'le to de altar, for mak' sure. I tol' de priest, 'Never min' my sin w'en it is so col'; jus' you pray for spring.' An' maybe dat pray is a good t'ing, for, sure 'nough, always April she come back. Le rapide on soch hurry, she tak' de ice out quick for us; but in dat li'l' reever de ice hol' on de lan' wid bote han's on bote side. De log mus' wait for de snow melt, an' fill up de reever, an' bus' up dat ice.

"Dat engineer, beeg man, not spik moch, no. I row boat, carry chain, shoot deer, cook bean, mak' bed; yas, mak' toddy for heem, an' he not nevair tol' me he have one wife! No! Eve'y week come one man on snow-shoe, bring bag letter. En April he say, dat engineer, 'You t'ink nex' week come one wagon f'om de town?' I say, 'I don' know. Maybe; Dieu dépose. Snow she go pooty fas'.' Den he say: 'My wife she is come on de town. I get letter; she is go'n' come to me by de firs' wagon t'rough de wood, an' my bébé boy. Don' know w'at day; so moch work I cannot go oder side reever an' wait for her.'

"'You lak I go, m'sieu'?' I say.

"'No; you mus' work, too, but your son François he is at home. Will he brong her over in de skeef?'

"'Bien sure he will, François hese'f.'

"'An' gif dollar to m'dame of l'Hôtel de Bon Ange, an' say please will she put up de beeg flag w'en my wife is arrive? We will go down on dis side de reever an' meet dem.'

"'Oh, sure, M'dame Beauseant she will, she will!'

"'All right,' he say, an' he go back to hees work, an' mak' de lines on de papier. Not one word mo'; not one laugh, not one cry! Two, t'ree tam I hear heem mak' li'l' small wistle wid hees mout', an' one day I hear heem mak' li'l' small song 'bout 'Home, sweet home.' W'en I come in he stop. Oh, dose Yankee man, dose Yankee man! Deir heart it keep so still lak one blin' bird. If dat one Frenchman, one Canayan, an' he have not see hees femme so long tam, he

laugh an' sing de whole day, an' cry: 'Hurrah! My femme she come; an' she is de mos' belle dame in de whole worl'! Bring de wine, mak' a supper; eve'ybody mus' be happy wid me.' He don' mak' no fête, de Yankee man. For why? He don' know how.

"So one day dat wagon she come mo' quick dan we t'ink. An' de lady de l'engineer she come, too. François, my son, he have not know she was go'n' come so soon, an' he have go wid all de boys an' ol' men for spear some feesh. De wagon she brong dat lady à l'Hôtel de Bon Ange. On her arm is one bébé boy, oh, so beau lak St. Jean! But he Yankee li'l' boy—no laugh, no cry. All de woman dey so much please for come see de lady. M'dame Beauseant she come out wid her mos' fine cap on her haid. Den she bow herse'f, an' she say: 'Welcome, m'dame; we have de mos' gran' happiness for see you! Entrez, m'dame; I got nice chambre for you, an' beeg fire. Li'l' boy cole, eh?'

"De lady she spik ve'y positif. She say she was ve'y moch obligé; she want no'ting but a man an' boat for row her over de reever. M'dame Beauseant once mo' she mak' her politesse, an' she say: 'Oh, yas; but firs' you will refresh you'se'f, eh? You lak glass wine, m'dame?' 'No, I don' drink wine,' say de lady. 'Permettez-moi, m'dame, dat I geeve you cup coffee?' 'Un'erstan', she say, an' she spik mo' severe, 'I want no'ting but a boat.' Den she walk herse'f down to de reever, an' her li'l' boy too. All de womans dey go wid her, but M'dame Beauseant she go in her hotel.

"De lady look aroun'. 'W'ere are all de men?' she say. My femme she moch 'fraid, but she mus' tole her. 'De men all gone for de feesh, m'dame. Better you go à l'hôtel an' res' you'se'f. M'dame Beauseant she have de fine beeg feder bed for mak' you go on sleep.' 'I mus' have a man an' boat at once,' she say. My femme she tire'. She say: 'We cannot mak' miracle. Better you go to church and pray. Le bon Dieu himse'f he don' mak' one man in hurry.'

"Soch lady ve'y difficile. One Canayenne, one Française, she will cry an' mak' her tears fall down; but w'en she cannot, she know she cannot. Den she say, 'Voilà! I have do my possible; it is de will of God. I go to dinner; give me glass wine.' She have de bon sense, yas; mais la Yankee, she is jus' lak her man, she cannot change her min'. For why? She don' know how.

"Once mo' she say, 'Is dere no woman, no gel, w'at can row boat over de reever?' An' my Louisine she laugh, an' say, 'Oh, yas; I

can row skeef.' 'Why don' you tole me?' say de lady.

"So no mo' word. In de skeef she go, an' her li'l' boy. My Louisine she tak' oar an' bend herse'f so quick she can, lak bird skim for de feesh. Me, I was on hill two mile back, an' I see de flag go up on l'hôtel. I call l'engineer. We tak' two men an' sled for go to de reever to meet de skeef, an' we all ronne on de track. Den lak one gun come beeg 'Boom! Boom!' We all stop. 'W'at's dat?' say l'engineer.

"'I don' know,' I say.

"'Is 't a gun?' he say.

"'Boom! Boom!'

"'I don' know,' I say, an' I lie lak de debil. W'en de water go bus' up de ice an' de log in dat li'l' reever, dat's w'at she say, 'Boom! Boom!'

"'Ronne, ronnel' I cry. L'engineer he know too, an' we all ronne lak mad. Den we see de log mak' beeg fight, fly up, an' jump out on de reever, a honner, a t'ousan' log! W'en we got to de shore we see de skeef comin'. She's half-way over. I see de water up dere an' de log dey boil up lak one beeg rapide. I t'ink it is my son François, an' I put up my han', so, an' I cry:

"'En garde! En garde!'

"She stop row, an' she stan' up, an' I see it is my li'l' gel—oh, ma chère li'l' gel!

"De log spread over de reever, an' dey fight lak beeg snake. Dey come so fas' I t'ink dey will be on her befo' she can go back; dey will strike her befo' she can come over. Oh, m'dame, I tol' you, my heart was go'n' broke w'en I see my li'l' gel go drown! An' den she raise her han' an' point to de rapide. I un'erstan', an' I cry:

"'Allez! allez à la rapide! Vite! vite à la rapide!'

"She turn her skeef so quick an' fly down de reever lak one duck wid two wing.

"Oh, I am so happy, me! Den dat Yankee man he cotch me, an' oh, he mak' soch a beeg 'By-damn' as you have never hear in your life! As one dog shake de rat, so he shake me. But de oder two Canayan dey pull hees two leg, so he fall down, an' dey mak' a sit on heem, an' I mak' heem one oration. I say:

"'M'sieu' l'engineer, you been say dat I sen' your wife an' your bébé fo' die on de rapide? I tol' you dat is my li'l' gel, my Louisine, in dat skeef. W'en all de Yankee people go leeve, I don' care. Go die? H'mm! Mais ma Louisine? She mus' be safe fo' me, m'sieu', fo' me! She know de w'ite horses; she is acquaint wid dem. Dey

will tak' her down de rapide befo' dose log cotch her. An' below dere de current go close by de shore at de ben' of de reever. Easy she can slip on de still water, by de house of M'dame Trouville, an' dere she lan' herse'f. An' dere she go res' herse'f an' your femme, m'sieu'. By-by, pooty soon de log all go by. I tak' skeef an' go down de rapide, an' I find my Louisine, an' your wife, an' your li'l boy. An', m'sieu' l'engineer, if you got all de "By-damn" out your mout', you can go too. An' I t'ink you bè ve'y please fo' see my li'l gel. For why? She have some bon good sense in her small haid.'

"An' it was ve'y true w'at I say. M'sieu' he got some tear in hees eye w'en he tak' de han' of my li'l gel. An' he mak' pray jus' lak one priest. 'God bless you!' He don' say not'ing mo'. I t'ink hees heart are mo' tendre, but he spik not moch. For why? He don' know how.

"One tam, pooty soon, come dat fine gol' watch fo' Louisine, an' gol' pin fo' my femme. An' fo' me? Oh, t'ree gol' button fo' my shirt, two gol' button fo' my sleeve.

"You go on de church, eh? Yas? Den you go'n' see me, h'n h'm! Den you go'n' see

how dose w'ite horses she brong de bien good luck fo' my Louisine an' fo' me.

"I go 'way some tam in de beeg wood, kill some deer. Go trap some fox, some mink; go on de State, sell some basket, mak' some money. One day I can sleep no mo' in de night. I am so lone, me, fo' my house an' my femme; fo' my Louisine an' my François; an' fo' de w'ite horses of my rapide! So dark? I don' care; I mus' go. I don' can wait fo' de sun come up. I tramp, tramp four day, ten day, vingt day t'rough de wood. De las' day I am so tire' I res' myse'f. I t'ink I hear somet'ing. I say, 'No, no; dat 's de win' in de tree.' I tramp some mo'. I am mo' sure; I put my haid on de ground, an' I hear de water. I am jus' one bébé w'at hear de mama call: I laugh, an' I ronne, an' I ronne!

"W'en I come to de rapide, it seem lak it mak' a play fo' me. Dere is mo' music dan a honner fiddle, an' mo' laughin' dan a many li'l chillen. De whole day we mak' fête in my house. W'en de night come I lie down, an' I hear de rapide, an' I sleep lak chile in rock-a-bye bed, whose mudder was sing to heem all de long night."

THE AUTHOR'S READING IN SIMPKINSVILLE.

A MONOLOGUE.

SPEAKER: SONNY'S FATHER.

BY RUTH McENERY STUART,

Author of "Sonny," "Holly and Pizen," etc.



AS, I've no doubt it 's thess ez you say, doctor. It was the highest-class show we've ever had in Simpkinsville, that is, it 's the genuwine thing—liter'chure firs'-hand, ez Sonny says. An', takin' it all round, I liked it myself, tiptop.

An' you say the little one is doin' fine, is she? An' the mother, too? Seem like little Mary Elizabeth was thess constructed for a mother—an' I'm glad it's another girl. Two brothers an' two sisters is ez fair a distribution ez I could wush—so far. But talkin' about this here author's readin' (an' was n't it a pity Mary Elizabeth could n't 'a' went? She 'd 'a' laid it up so sacred).

In some ways I'm afeard I was a leetle bit disapp'inted in it myself, ez a show.

Of co'se, when I heerd thet we was goin' to have a book read out to us from the platform by the one thet made it up out of her head, why, I nachelly looked for everything to be acted out thess the way we've seen others speak pieces, only more so. I ricollec' time Jim Bradshaw he recited that pome about the bells, why, he rung so loud, one way an' another, thet I thought likely they was n't no person thet could 'a' done it better, lessen it was him thet wrote it; an' now, after las' night's performance, I don't know ez he 'd 'a' put hisself out ez much ez Jim done. Looks to me like actin' the thing out is what makes it a *performance*; that 's the way it is to *my* mind. Time Jim done this same lady writer's piece about the chanti-cleer, now, don't you ricollec' how, when the