French Canadian Folktales

FRENCH CANADIAN FOLKTALES

A collection of folktales from 19th century Québécois writers, translated from French into English by students and faculty at Salem State University

Dr. Elizabeth Blood, Professor of French, Translator and Editor

with student translators
Kristen Burgess, Bayron Contreras, Patrick Delva, Sage Grant, Samantha Gurney, Raymond Harris, Rachael Kuper, Anna Snyder, and Sam Stickney

Original Illustrations by Sam Stickney

Salem State University
Salem, Massachusetts
May 2022

Table of Contents

Editor's Preface

By Dr. Elizabeth Blood, Professor of French

The folktales in this collection are not Disney-like fairy tales written for young children. They are stories that were told in French-speaking communities in Québec for generations and then published by Québécois authors in the late 19th century or early 20th century to document—and sometimes comment upon—the cultural experiences and traditional values of the early French settlers of this region of North America. Each story gives us insight into the way of life and the character of French Canadians. The tales highlight the importance of hard work and Catholic traditions, but also the joy of coming together to tell a good old yarn. Many of the stories have multiple levels of narration, beginning with a narrator explaining how he came to hear the story that is then recounted as a true story by a second narrator. In these cases, the set up draws us into the world of storytelling, with the sometimes elaborate preface to the tale making it seem all the more real and engaging, giving the reader the feeling of being huddled around a warm fire on a cold day, completely enthralled by the story being recounted.

Some of these stories are quite famous, like that of the enchanted flying canoe, which is known in Québec as the legend of the *chasse-galerie*. Others are less well known. Each was chosen because it offers a glimpse into traditional life amongst French settlers in Québec. You will find stories that are fantastical, telling of fairies and ghosts, as well as stories that are historical, recounting feats of daring and bravery from the early days of the colony. Some describe humorous situations meant to teach a moral lesson, others are just about telling a funny joke to make people laugh. Each captivates and entertains in its own way while drawing the modern reader into the cultural world of early French Canada. To follow some of the stories, you may need to know a little about this region. If you already know a thing or two, feel free to skip ahead to the stories, but if you need a little refresher, here is a brief sketch of French Canadian life prior to the 20th century.

Québec was founded in 1608, with a small settlement of immigrants from France led by Samuel de Champlain. They occupied a fort-like structure, called Champlain's *habitation*, built on the site of the First Nations village of Stadacona and later renamed Québec (an Algonquin word that means "where the river narrows"). In the 17th and 18th centuries, more French arrived in what was then called New France, and small towns popped up along the shores of the St. Lawrence river, spreading out from the capital city of Québec. In the early days, people engaged primarily in agriculture, hunting, and trading, and later logging became a key industry. Daily life revolved around the calendar of the Catholic church. French settlers held tightly to their faith, religious traditions, and even some superstitious beliefs about evil spirits and werewolves, as they braved life in a new land. They survived in those early years thanks to lessons learned from indigenous people, hard work in the fields and in the forests, and the occasional clever trick to get out of a sticky situation.

Continuously menaced by British forces, New France was conquered by England in 1763. Many French retreated to their small communities and continued the traditions of their forefathers well into the next century. Storytelling was a way to communicate cultural values and teach the younger generations, while also entertaining a crowd gathered around a fire on a blustery winter evening. In the late 19th century, writers began to publish versions of these traditional tales, sometimes explaining how they came to know of the tale, and sometimes with their own commentaries or explanations of the superstitious beliefs of the early settlers.

We hope that you will enjoy these stories and gain some insight into early French Canadian life. This collection of folktales was a labor of love for myself, as a scholar of French North American cultures, and for my students, always curious about our French-speaking neighbors to the North and eager to demonstrate the translation skills they acquired in our program by taking on the challenging task of translating 19th century literary texts. These translations were completed over three years by myself and students of French at Salem State University, beginning in 2019 and culminating in 2022 with the outstanding addition of original artwork by Sam Stickney, an Honors Program student who triple majored in Printmaking, Art History, and French, while also completing a Certificate in Translation and contributing translations to this collection of folktales.

The original French versions of these tales are in the public domain and are available online in the original language. You can find them by searching the original title and author's name online, or in major libraries. Links were not included in this manuscript as they may change over time, but we encourage you to dust off (or build up?) your French skills in order to read the originals one day. The stories are filled with colorful "quebecisms," expressions unique to Québécois French that were difficult to convey in the English translations, though several translators did choose to keep some colloquial expressions in French to add a dash of local color to their stories.

We wish to thank the Department of World Languages and Cultures and the Certificate in Translation Program at Salem State for supporting the work of French faculty and students and the amazing Salem State Librarians who helped establish the French-Canadian Heritage Collection in Salem State University's Archives and Special Collections digital repository so that we can share our work with the millions of descendants of French Canadian settlers now living in the U.S.—many of whom no longer speak the language of their ancestors—as well as with other students, researchers, Francophiles, and story lovers from around the world.

We hope you enjoy this collection. *Bonne lecture!*

I.
The Legend of the Chasse-Galerie

By Honoré Beaugrand
English translation by Dr. Elizabeth Blood

There is no good English translation for the term "chasse-galerie," *unless you can think of a word in English that means "a flying canoe filled with woodsmen who have made a pact with the devil so that they can go visit their loved ones and magically return to their job site in time for work the next day." Some translators have called this story* The Flying Canoe *or* The Bewitched Canoe, *but neither conjures up the full story that the words* chasse-galerie *evoke for French Canadians. Stories of the* chasse-galerie *have been told as far back as the early years of French settlement in North America and persisted in oral tradition through the 19th century, when writers began to publish written versions of the tale.*

One of the most well-known versions was penned by Honoré Beaugrand, originally published in a magazine in 1892 and later republished and translated multiple times. His version involves lonely men working far from home in a lumber camp over the winter holidays. In Québec today, you will see images depicting this story of the chasse-galerie *in shops, on murals, even on craft beer labels, so pervasive is this humorous tale of adventure, danger, luck, and love.*

The version that follows was published in Beaugrand's collection of folktales entitled La chasse-galerie: légendes canadiennes *(1900) and has been translated into English by Dr. Elizabeth Blood, who hopes her French Canadian ancestors would approve of this retelling of the tale.*

Part 1: The Cook

"Right now, I'm about to tell you a heck of a story, a real yarn with all the details. If any of you listening are the kind of folks who think you might want to try the *chasse-galerie* or go hunting for a *loup-garou*[1], you'd better go outside and see if the owls are hooting 'cuz I'm gonna start this story by making a giant sign of the cross to scare away the devil and all his little gremlins. I dealt with those demonic buggers enough when I was young."

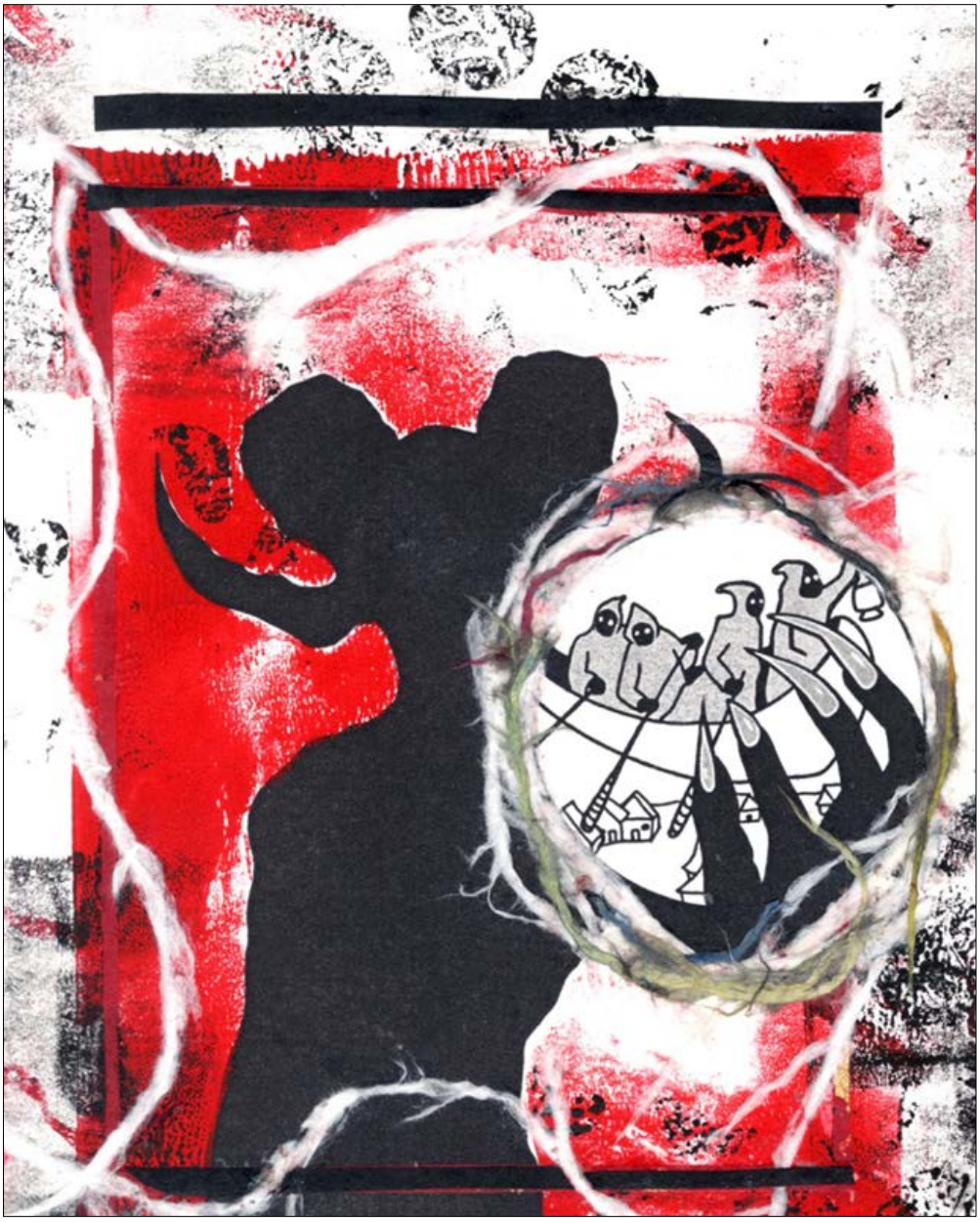
Not a single man moved towards the exit; on the contrary, they all huddled in closer to the galley where the cook was finishing up his prologue and was about to launch into telling his tale.

The boss-man, as was his custom, had ordered a small barrel of rum to be shared by the men at the logging camp, and the cook had finished up early preparing the pigs' feet stew and dumplings for the next day's meal. A thick, dark maple syrup bubbled in a large cauldron for the *partie de tire*[2] that would cap off the evening.

[1] A *loup-garou* is a werewolf.
[2] A *partie de tire* is when hot maple syrup is poured in thin lines onto cold snow, creating a kind of maple taffy that is swirled onto sticks and enjoyed as a treat.

They had all filled their pipes with good Canadian tobacco, and a cloud had drifted in front of the moon, further darkening the interior of the cabin, though the crackling pinewood fire threw off a wobbly reddish light that would, from time to time, reveal the ruddy male faces of the deep woods loggers, as in a chiaroscuro painting.

Joe the Cook was a short, odd-looking man who was generally known as “the hunchback,” though this nickname never became official. He had been working in the logging camps for at least forty years. He had seen it all over the years, and a little shot of Jamaican rum was all it took to loosen up his tongue and get him to spill all of his stories.



The Legend of the Chasse-Galerie © Sam Stickney 2022

Part 2: The Pact

As I was saying, even though I may have been a little rough in my youth, I no longer joke about religious things, and I go to confession every year. The story I'm about to tell took place when I was young and I feared nothing, neither God nor the devil.

It was a night like this, New Year's eve, about thirty-four or thirty-five years ago. My buddies and I, we were having a little drink in the galley. But just as little streams become big rivers, our little glasses turned into big fat pitchers, and in those days, we used to drink more often and chug it down fast. It wasn't a rare occurrence that a party might end with punches and hair-pulling.

That Jamaican rum was good—not better than what we have tonight—but damned good, I tell you!

Me, I had already thrown back a half a dozen little goblets; and around eleven o'clock, I'll admit it, my head was spinning and I dropped down on my thick winter blanket to catch a few winks, waiting for the midnight hour when we would jump over a pork-barrel, as we'll do tonight, to leave the old year behind and usher in the new one, before heading out to visit the neighboring camps and ring in the New Year with songs and good cheer.

I had been sleeping a while when Baptiste Durand, the boss of the wood-cutters, shook me awake and said: "Joe, it's just past midnight, and you're late for the pork-barrel jump. The guys have gone off to take their turn, but me, I'm going to Lavaltrie to see my girl. You wanna come?"

"To Lavaltrie! Are you crazy? That's a couple hundred miles away. And anyway, you'd need two months to get there since the snow has blocked all the roads. Also, what about work the day after New Year's?"

"Idiot! Not like that. We'll go by canoe and be back at the camp by six o'clock tomorrow morning."

I understood. This guy was proposing that we travel by *chasse-galerie* and that we risk our eternal salvation just to kiss our girlfriends back home. It was a tough one. Even though in those days I was pretty much a drunk and a letch, and I didn't really care much about religion, but selling my soul to the devil? That was beyond even me.

"Oh, you scaredy-cat!" Baptiste chided, "You know it's not dangerous. We just go to Lavaltrie and come back in six hours. You know that the *chasse-galerie* can fly a hundred miles an hour when you know how to handle the oars like we do. All we have to do is avoid saying the name of God during the trip and make sure we don't get stuck on any church steeple crosses during the flight. It's easy, and to avoid all danger, we just need to pay attention to what we're saying, watch where we're going, and not drink during the trip. I've done it five times, and nothing bad has ever happened to me. Come on, buddy, muster up your courage and if you agree, we'll be in Lavaltrie in two hours. Think about your pretty little Liza Guimbette and how great it would be to kiss her tonight. There are already seven of us who are going, but it has to be two, four, six or eight, and you'll be our eighth."

"Yeah, all that is well and good, but you have to make a pact with the devil, and when you do that, it's no joke."

"A minor formality, Joe. Just don't get drunk, watch your mouth, and mind your oar. Stop being such a baby, damn it! Come on! The guys are waiting outside, and the big canoe we use for driving the logs down river is ready to go."

I let myself be led outside where, in fact, I saw six of our men waiting with oars in hand. The big canoe was on the snow, in a clearing, and before I had time to think about it, I was sitting in the front, my oar hanging off the edge, waiting for the signal to take off. I'll admit, I was a bit concerned, but Baptiste, who was just passing through the camp and hadn't been to confession in seven years, didn't give me any time to figure it out. He was in the back, standing up, shouting out to us:

"Repeat after me!"

And we repeated: "Satan, king of hell, we promise to give you our souls if in the next six hours we say the name of your lord and ours, our God, and if we touch a cross during the trip. On this condition, you will transport us through the air to the place we want to go, and you will bring us back to our camp. Abracadabra! Make us fly over the mountains."

Part 3: The Flight

As soon as we had pronounced those last words, we felt the canoe lift off into the air, five or six hundred feet off the ground. I felt as light as a feather; and when Baptiste said so, we started to fly like the bunch of possessed men we were.

With the first pulls of the oars, the canoe shot off like an arrow, and it was then that the devil was carrying us. We couldn't catch our breath, and the long fur on our coon-skin hats was wafting in the wind.

We were flying faster than the wind. For about the first fifteen minutes, we were flying over the forest and could only see the tips of the tall dark pines.

It was a beautiful night. The full moon lit up the sky like the noonday sun.

It was also extremely cold. Our mustaches were covered in ice and yet we were all drenched in sweat. It's understandable, since we were being led by the devil. I assure you, it was no easy ride.

We soon noticed an opening on the horizon. It was the Gatineau river, whose slick icy surface glittered beneath us like a giant mirror. Then, little by little, we saw the lights from farmers' houses. Then, the bell towers of churches, which gleamed like the bayonets of soldiers as they march around on the Champ de Mars in Montréal.

We ticked past the bell towers as fast as you do telephone poles when you're riding a train. And we flitted along, as all devils do, jumping over villages, forests, and rivers, leaving behind us a trail of sparks. Baptiste, who was possessed, was in charge of us since he knew the route, and we soon arrived at the Ottawa river, which guided us down to the Deux Montagnes lake.

"Wait a minute!" Baptiste yelled, "We are going to skirt the edge of Montréal. Let's scare all of the revelers who are still out at this hour. You, Joe, there, in the front, warm up your voice and sing us a rowing song."

We could already see the thousand lights of the big city on the horizon, and with a pull on his oar, Baptiste led us down little by little to the level of the towers of Notre Dame cathedral. I spat out my chewing tobacco so I wouldn't swallow it, and I bellowed out this song that all of the canoe rowers repeated after me:

My father had no daughters but me,

Oh, canoe flying through the air...
And down to the sea he sent me:
Oh, canoe flying through the air,
Flying, flying, flying through the air!

And down to the sea he sent me,
Oh, canoe flying through the air...
There, a sailor started looking at me:
Oh, canoe flying through the air,
Flying, flying, flying through the air!

There a sailor started looking at me,
Oh, canoe flying through the air...
He said, my beauty, come and kiss me:
Oh, canoe flying through the air,
Flying, flying, flying through the air!

He said, my beauty, come and kiss me,
Oh, canoe flying through the air...
No, monsieur, I shall not kiss thee:
Oh, canoe flying through the air,

Flying, flying, flying through the air!

No, monsieur, I shall not kiss thee,
Oh, canoe flying through the air...
For if my father ever caught me:
Oh, canoe flying through the air,
Flying, flying, flying through the air!

For if my father ever caught me,
Oh, canoe flying through the air...
I'm fairly sure that he'd smack me:
Oh, canoe flying through the air,
Flying, flying, flying through the air!

Part 4: The Arrival

Even though it was nearly two o'clock in the morning, we saw groups of people stop in the street to watch us pass by. We were going so fast, however, that in the blink of an eye, Montréal and its faubourgs were far behind us. So, I began to count bell towers: Longue Pointe, Pointe aux Trembles, Repentigny, Saint-Sulpice, and finally the two silver towers of Lavaltrie high above the green pine trees surrounding the area.

"Pay attention!" Baptiste cried, "We're going to land near the woods, in a field owned by my godfather, Jean-Jean Gabriel, and we'll go on foot to surprise our friends who are probably having supper or dancing at someone's house in the neighborhood."

Just as he said, five minutes later, our canoe was resting on a snowbank at the entrance to Jean-Jean Gabriel's woods, and the eight of us took off towards the village. It was not an easy feat because there was no path and we were bounding through snow that was nearly waist-deep.

Baptiste, who was more brazen than the rest of us, went and knocked on his godfather's door. We could see lights inside, but there was only a young maid who told us that the older folks had gone to have dinner at old man Robillard's house, but the handsome bachelors and almost all the girls in town had all gone to a New Year's eve party at Batissette Augé's house on Petite-Misère lake, which was near Contrecoeur on the other side of the river.

"Let's go to Batissette Augé's party!" said Baptiste, "We are sure to find our girlfriends there."

"Let's go to Batissette's!" we all cheered.

So, we returned to the canoe, making sure that we avoided the dangers of saying certain words or drinking too much, because we knew we had to be back to the logging camp before six in the morning or we would burst into flames and the devil would take us deep into hell.

"Abracadabra! Make us fly over the mountains!" yelled Baptiste.

And so we all headed towards Petite-Misère, zipping through the air like the renegades we were. With two pulls of the oars, we had crossed the river and quickly found Batissette Augé's house, which was glowing with light from the party inside. You could hear the muffled sounds of laughter and fiddles playing, and you could make out the silhouettes of people dancing through the frosted window panes.

We hid the canoe behind some mounds of frozen dirt along the riverbank, because the ice had receded that year.

"Now," cautioned Baptiste, "don't be stupid, fellas, watch your words! Let's dance like crazy, but not a single glass of beer or rum. You hear me? And when I give you the sign, everyone needs to follow me out because we need to leave without attracting too much attention."

And up we went to knock on the door.

Part 5: The Party

Batissette's father himself opened the door, and we were welcomed in by all the guests, almost all of whom we knew.

At first, we were assailed with questions:

"Where did you come from?"

"I thought you were up at the logging camp!"

"You sure got here late!"

"Come have a drink!"

It was Baptiste who saved us again by speaking up: "Come on, let us take our coats off and then let us dance a bit. That's why we came here, after all. And tomorrow morning, I will answer all of your questions, and we will explain everything."

In the meantime, I had eyed Liza Guimbette, who was being courted by young Boisjoli from Lanoraie.

I approached her to say hello and ask for the next dance, which was a reel. She accepted, with a smile that made me completely forget that I had risked my soul just to come wiggle my legs and flap my chicken wing arms in her vicinity.

For two straight hours, I swear, one dance led to another, and I'm not bragging at all when I say that during that time, no one within a hundred mile radius danced a better gig than I. My buddies were also having the time of their lives, and all I can tell you is that by four o'clock in the morning, the farmer's sons were getting really annoyed with us.

I thought I had seen Baptiste Durand go over to the sideboard a few times, where the men were doing shots of whisky, but I was so entranced with my dance partner that I didn't really pay too much attention. Now that it was time to get back to the canoe, however, I clearly saw that Baptiste had had one drink too many, and I had to grab him by the arm to get him to go outside with me, quickly giving the others the sign that they should get ready to follow us out without attracting too much attention.

We went out, one by one, without making it seem obvious, and five minutes later, we were in the canoe. We left the dance like louts, without saying goodbye to anyone. I didn't even say anything to Liza, and I had just asked her to dance again. I've always thought that that's why she decided to betray me and marry that silly Boisjoli, without even inviting me to the wedding, the wretched girl!

But getting back to our canoe... We were very concerned to see that Baptiste Durand was so drunk because he was the one who was guiding the canoe, and we just barely had enough time to get back to the camp before six o'clock in the morning, which was wake-up call time for the men since they didn't have to work on New Year's day. The moon had disappeared, and it was darker than before. It was not without some trepidation that I took my seat in the front of the canoe, determined to make sure we followed the right route.

Before we took off, I turned to Baptiste and said: "Pay attention, old pal! Head straight for the mountain at Montréal, as soon as you can see it."

"I know what I'm doing," Baptiste responded, "Mind your own business!"

And before I had time to respond, he said, "Abracadabra! Make us fly over the mountains!"

Part 6: The Return

And off we went at top speed. But it soon became clear that our pilot no longer had a steady hand because the canoe started zigzagging back and forth in a scary way. We passed through Contrecoeur just a hundred feet away from the church tower, and instead of turning to the west towards Montréal, Baptiste jerked us towards the Richelieu river. We shot over the Beloeil mountain like a bullet and the front of the canoe came within ten feet of the large temperance cross that the Bishop of Nancy had installed there.

"To the right, Baptiste! Turn right, old pal! If you don't start steering better, we're all gonna end up with the devil!"

Baptiste instinctively turned the canoe to the right, heading for the mountain in Montréal, which we could already see on the horizon.

I'll admit that there was some fear building up inside me, because if Baptiste kept flying like this, we were all going to end up roasting in flames like hogs at a pig roast.

Well, you didn't have to wait too long for our downfall, for as soon as we reached Montréal, Baptiste made a sharp turn and before we knew it, the canoe crashed into a bank of snow on the mountain. Luckily, it was soft snow. No one was hurt and the canoe wasn't damaged.

But as soon as we all pulled ourselves up out of the snow, Baptiste started swearing like he was possessed and announced that he wanted to go into Montréal for a drink before we got back on our way to Gatineau. I tried to reason with him, but you try reasoning with a drunk guy who wants to throw another one back! So, at my wit's end, rather than handing over our souls to the devil, who was probably already licking his chops seeing us in this situation, I spoke to the other guys, who were as scared as I was. We tackled Baptiste to the ground, without hurting him, tied him up like a sausage, gagged him so he couldn't say any more bad words while we were flying, and threw him in the bottom of the canoe.

Abracadabra! And off we went, flying at top speed because we only had an hour to get back to the campsite in Gatineau. I was steering this time, and I assure you I had a strong arm and a keen eye. We went back up the Ottawa river as quick as a lick to Pointe-à-Gatineau, where we turned north towards the camp.

We were not more than twenty miles away when Baptiste, that son of a gun, was able to get loose from the ropes we had tied him with and pull the gag out of his mouth. He stood straight up in the canoe, bellowing out a swear word that made my hair stand on end!

It was impossible to fight with him in the canoe without risking falling from three hundred feet in the air, and the idiot was flailing around like a fish out of water, threatening us all with the oar he had grabbed, which he was swinging around near our heads like a crazy Irishman wielding a shillelagh. It was a terrible position to be in, as you can imagine. But, luckily, we were almost there. I was so worked up that when I ducked to avoid Baptiste's oar, the canoe slammed into the top of a huge pine tree, and we all tumbled down, yelping from branch to branch, sounding like birds squealing in a cage.

I don't know how long it took to reach the ground because I lost consciousness before landing. My last memory was that I felt like a guy dreaming about falling down a bottomless well.

Part 7: The Next Day

Around eight o'clock in the morning, I woke up tucked in my own bed, in the cabin. Some lumberjacks had found us in the area, unconscious, buried in snow up to our necks, and had brought us back to the camp. No one had any serious injuries, thankfully, but I don't have to tell you that my body was in pain like a guy who had slept on nails all week, not to mention a black eye and two or three cuts on my hands and face. But the bottom line is this: the devil didn't get us, and I didn't even try to correct the lumberjacks who said they found me, Baptiste and the six others as drunk as skunks, sleeping off our rum in a nearby snowbank. After all, it's not so fun to admit that you almost sold your soul to the devil and to have to explain it to all your friends. It wasn't until many years later that I told the story of what actually happened that night.

My friends, all I can tell you is that it's not all it's cracked up to be, using the *chasse-galerie* to go see your girlfriend in the dead of the winter, especially not if you have a crazy drunk fella steering the canoe. Now, if you believe me, you'll wait until summer to go kiss your sweethearts rather than take the risk of flying with the devil.

With that, Joe the cook plunged his big spoon into the cauldron of golden dark syrup and declared that the *tire* was ready and that all that was left to do was to pour the syrup on the snow and to twirl up some big globs of the taffy-like maple candy.

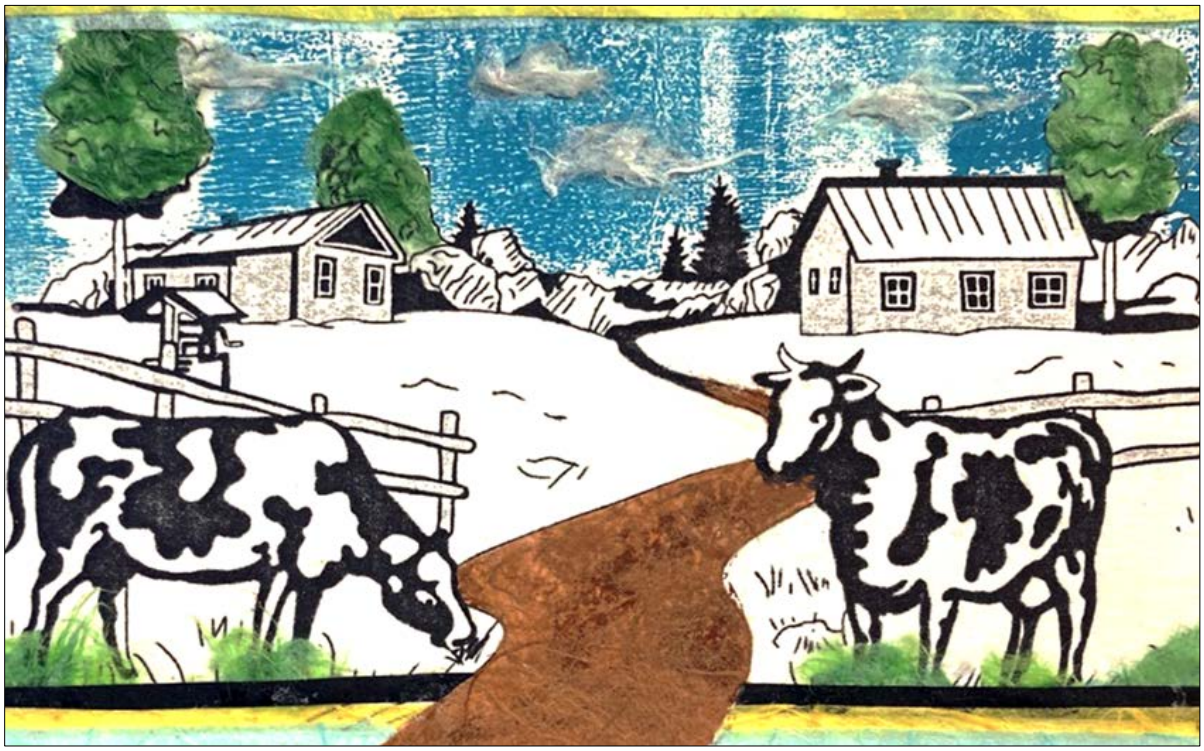
FIN

II.

The Proud Lie

By Charles Quinel

English translation by Sam Stickney



The Proud Lie © Sam Stickney 2022

Life was difficult for the handful of early settlers living in Samuel de Champlain's habitation, *a protected structure with a palisade and watch tower, a moat, and an interior courtyard, harboring spaces for living, worshiping, storing trade goods, and military defense.*[3] *Ships from France could make the voyage only seasonally in the early years of the colony, leaving long periods of time when the French were isolated and vulnerable. During those times, the French relied on indigenous people to learn about surviving the harsh climate, finding and growing food, and adapting to a new world, even though indigenous peoples' cultures were often misunderstood.*

In this story, originally entitled Le Fier Mensonge, *author Charles Quinel reconstructs life in Champlain's* habitation *in the 1620's and recounts the tale of a first encounter with the infamous Kirke brothers. The Kirkes were English adventurers who blockaded the St. Lawrence river in 1628 in an attempt to capture Québec. Although they would later succeed and Champlain would be taken prisoner and sent back to Europe from 1629 until 1633 (when a signed treaty returned the land to France), in Champlain's initial contact with the Kirkes, he was victorious. As you will see, it involved a little help from his First Nations friends and a little lie that bought some time for his fledgling colony as they awaited reinforcements from France.*

[3] The location of Champlain's second *habitation* is marked in the stone pavers of the Place Royale square in Québec's lower town today.

The version of the story that follows was published in a collection entitled Contes et Récits du Canada*, published in Paris in 1940 with co-author Adhémar de Montgon. It was translated into English by Sam Stickney, who graduated from Salem State in 2022 with a triple major in French, Printmaking and Art History and a Certificate in Translation. Sam also created the original artwork for this collection. She thought she had mistranslated something when she started work on this piece and read that Champlain's marriage had been contracted when his bride-to-be was only twelve years old, but she had not. The couple had indeed been contractually married when Hélène was just a child, but they did not actually live together until several years later.*

After two years of absence, Champlain had returned to Québec, which he had founded twelve years earlier. This time he brought Madame de Champlain with him.

Madame de Champlain was twenty-two, and their marriage had been arranged ten years prior. Her maiden name was Hélène Boulé and in her honor, Champlain named the island across from Montreal, Île Sainte-Hélène.

There was such joy to behold in Québec when people saw the lieutenant-general, whom everyone had missed so much. Oh, how the people celebrated him and his young wife. They were taken to the chapel–the first to be built on Canadian soil, which stood where rue Champlain and rue Sous-le-Fort meet today–and a *Te Deum* prayer was sung there. Then, the settlers accompanied them in procession to their home.

It was not without melancholy that Champlain saw this house again. His house: it appeared to him in a sad state; everything was dilapidated, the roofs were half blown away, the walls themselves threatened to cave in.

"My dear wife," said the lieutenant-general, "I would have wished for you to have comfortable accommodation. Alas! The climate in this country is harsh and buildings that are not maintained fall apart."

Courageously, the young wife hid her disappointment.

"My love, you will see how well we'll do here. While you take care of the great interests of New France and your citizens, I will devote myself to improving our home."

Champlain kissed his wife and led her into the garden, where, in 1608, he had sown the first seeds which were entrusted to the soil of Canada... The poor garden was as desolate as the house.

"I will take care of that too," said Madame de Champlain.

Some Hurons came rushing in. They stood at a distance, intimidated by this beautiful Frenchwoman. Madame de Champlain motioned for them to approach. She spoke to them softly and, although they could not understand her words, they were moved by the charm of her voice. After a few moments, the lieutenant-general noticed an agitation among the natives. They exchanged words of astonishment among themselves, and several threw themselves on their knees.

Champlain, who knew the Huron language, asked the oldest of them what was the cause of this disorder. The native pointed to Madame de Champlain, and explained:

“How is it that your wife carries us all in her heart?”

The lieutenant-general burst out laughing. Following the fashion of the time, the young woman wore a small mirror that hung around her neck by a ribbon, and in this mirror, the Hurons had recognized their own faces.

With Champlain back, the colonists returned to work with more enthusiasm. But, alas! Their hard work was not rewarded. There were several bad harvests, the cattle were withering away, to the point that by 1628 food shortages reigned throughout Québec.

The settlers had to ration their supplies. Food was soon reduced to seven ounces of peas a day.

“Don't worry,” said Champlain to the colonists. “France knows of our needs. It will not be long before we receive food and also gun powder, because our stores are very lacking.”

The Québec artillery had no more than fifty pounds of gunpowder in the fort to use. French ships had indeed been announced, but it would take six weeks, counting on the most favorable winds, to make the crossing. But French Canadians were not the sort of people to fall into despair. What agriculture did not provide, they tried to obtain by hunting. And they worked even harder to make the next harvest better.

One fine morning, two Algonquin runners showed up at Champlain’s *habitation*. They were extremely anxious.

“Ships! ships!” they stammered as soon as they caught their breath.

“The help we are waiting for, finally!” cried the lieutenant-general.

The natives shook their heads.

“No! They are enemies. They landed at Cap Tourmente, and they burned everything, destroyed everything, kidnapped the cattle; they set fire to the Récollets chapel; plundered chalices and sacred ornaments.”

“The English!” whispered Champlain.

It was the English indeed. They were commanded by two Huguenots from Dieppe, the Kirke brothers. Though the news had not yet reached New France, war had been declared between Louis XIII and the King of England.

The lieutenant-general called everyone together:

“We are going to be attacked,” he said. “We must immediately fortify the city, repair our entrenchments, strengthen the gates.”

Not a murmur arose among these half-starved men, debilitated by disease, plagued by famine; nevertheless, the oldest of the settlers spoke:

“How will we defend ourselves without powder for our guns and food for ourselves? In the event of a siege, we will no longer even have the resources to hunt in the forests.”

“Tomorrow will tell us,” replied Champlain. “For now, let's hurry.”

Every Canadian, whether farmer, craftsman, or fur hunter, became a soldier, a carpenter, and a mason. Those settlers who had their homes scattered around Québec flowed back into the city. The trenches were repaired in haste; the palisades were restored; the guns were brought to the proper places, although it was known that without ammunition they would be of no use.

As soon as the preparations were finished, near the tip of the Ile d'Orléans, the settlers saw a boat sailing towards the city. The occupants of the boat were welcomed ashore. They were Basque prisoners sent with a message from David Kirke, one of the two brothers. The contents of the document read:

"... I inform you that I have obtained a mission from the King of Great Britain, my very honored lord and master, to take possession of these countries, and, for this purpose, we have at our command eighteen ships. ... I had initially thought of coming directly to you myself, but I believed that it was better to devastate the crops and seize the cattle which are at Cap Tourmente, knowing that when you will be deprived of food, I will get what I want from you more easily. Therefore, see what you have to do and decide whether you want to surrender the city to me or not. I would rather it were done willingly than forcefully."

The lieutenant-general replied to Kirke's envoys:

"Go tell the Kirke brothers this: if they want to see us, then they will have to come to us. We have everything we need to welcome them. That is to say, ammunition in abundance, grains, peas, beans, not to mention smoked and salted meats."

The Basques reported this response to the Kirke brothers. The latter was convinced that they would be dealing with a strong party and knew that a siege would be long and difficult. So, they re-embarked and set sail for England.

This proud lie had saved Québec.

FIN

III.
Mother Superior's Rooster

By Aristide Filiatreault

English translation by Rachael Kuper

Mother Superior's Rooster © Sam Stickney 2022

Aristide Filiatreault (1851-1913) grew up in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Blainville, Québec, and later moved to Montréal where he worked for a variety of newspapers and got involved in a number of religious and political polemics. This story (originally titled "Le coq à la Mère Supérieure"*) was published in Montréal in an anthology entitled* Contes, anecdotes et récits canadiens *(1910); it was meant to capture the rare qualities of French Canadian humor and show that, even in the face of adversity, the author's compatriots were always up for a laugh.*

This funny anecdote was translated by Rachael Kuper, who graduated from Salem State University in 2020 with a major in English, a minor in French, and a Certificate in Translation. Rachael studied for a summer at Université Laval in Québec where perhaps she learned to appreciate the subtleties of French Canadian humor, or at least gained the courage to attempt to translate a series of funny shorts, many of which include hard-to-translate word play. Here, the joke is about Mother Superior's lack of understanding of the reproductive process, hinting at the sweet naïveté of some religious women.

One day the pastor of Saint E's went to visit the Mother Superior of the convent. He found her in a state impossible to describe, in complete distress and sorrowful ennui.

The pastor, such a good man, asked the source of her worries.

“Oh! My Father, a great misfortune has befallen us. Imagine this: we put out twelve clutches of eggs to brood, along with a thirteenth, under as many hens, and we don’t have a single chicken.”

“My Reverend Sister, you must realize that something went wrong. To what cause do you attribute this trouble?”

“I truly have no idea, my Father. The eggs were laid by our hens, right here. I don’t understand at all, and I want to find the answer.”

“My good Sister, it’s probably the rooster’s fault, no?”

“But no, but no, my Father. That’s quite impossible. We don’t have a rooster!”

FIN

IV.
The Ghost of Gentilly

By Louis Frechette

English translation by Kristen Burgess

The Ghost of Gentilly © Sam Stickney 2022

Stories of ghosts, werewolves, and other frightful spirits were quite popular in French Canadian households probably dating from the early years of New France and certainly existing well into the 19th century when this tale was published. The Ghost of Gentilly, *originally titled* Le Revenant de Gentilly, *was written by Louis Frechette (1839-1908), one of the most well-known Québécois authors of the 19th century and the first author from Québec to win a literary prize from the esteemed Académie Française in Paris. He was a poet, journalist, lawyer, politician, and author of essays and short stories, like the one below. This particular ghost story is derived from local lore which circulated in the small town Gentilly, situated on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence river in between Trois-Rivières and Québec City.*

This story was translated by Kristen Burgess, who majored in French with a Certificate in Translation at Salem State. A non-traditional student, Kristen returned to college after several years in the workforce to pursue her love of languages and literature and discovered a passion–and a great talent–for the art of translation.

If you ask someone if they believe in ghosts, ninety times out of a hundred they will answer: no! This does not prevent inexplicable things from happening, or at least from stories of such being told.

Witness the following story, which I got from the father of one of my colleagues, a liberal man with a very broad and enlightened mind, on whom popular credulity had no hold, and whose good faith was, you can believe me, above all suspicion.

Here is the story he told one evening, to some friends and to me, in the presence of his wife and his three sons, with the serious tone he employed when he spoke about serious things. These were his words…

I do not claim, he said, that one should believe in this and that or that one should not believe in it. I only want to relate what I saw and heard; you will conclude from it what you want. As for me, I racked my brains for a long time to find an explanation without being able to come up with anything positive, so I ended up not thinking about it anymore. It was in 1823.

I was finishing my studies at the college in Nicolet, and I was on vacation in the village of Gentilly with some of my classmates and two or three seminarians staying there without their families. We used to frequent the presbytery, where the good old parish priest of the time (Father C.-G. Guertin), who was very sociable and a great friend of the parish youth, welcomed us like family. He was a proud and faithful smoker, and on beautiful summer evenings we would gather under his veranda to enjoy a famous Canadian tobacco that the good old man cultivated himself with the care of a connoisseur and an artist.

Promptly at eleven o'clock in the evening, he'd say:

"Good night, my children!"

"Good night, Father!"

And we returned to our respective homes.

One evening–it was toward the end of August and the nights were beginning to cool–instead of staying out, we went to spend the evening by candlelight, in a large room which the front door opened into and which was usually used as a business office, a smoking room, or a chat room.

By a singular coincidence, the conversation had turned to apparitions, hallucinations, ghosts, and other such phenomena. Eleven o'clock was approaching and the discussion was getting a little heated, when the parish priest interrupted us in a somewhat worried tone:

"Well," he said, "they are coming to get me for a sick person."

And at that very moment, we heard the clopping of a horse and the rolling of a carriage which followed the curve of the alley leading to the door of the presbytery, and which seemed to stop right in front of the porch.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and someone went to look out the window:

“Egads!” he said, “there’s no one there.”

“They must have passed by.”

“It’s strange!”

And we were about to talk about something else, when we distinctly heard footsteps going up the stoop and someone knocking at the door.

“Come in!” said one of us.

And the door opened. Up to that point, there was nothing extraordinary. But mark our astonishment when the door closed by itself, as if someone had entered, and when, right in front of us, almost within reach, we heard steps and the shuffling of cassocks moving towards the staircase which led to the second floor, and–without our being able to see anything–one by one, we heard each stair creak as if under the weight of a heavy and tired foot.

Once at the top of the staircase, it seemed to us that it crossed the hall onto which the stairs opened, and that it entered a room directly across from the landing. We had listened without analyzing too much what was happening, bewildered and looking at each other, each one of us wondering if he was not the victim of a dream. Then the questions intertwined:

“Did you notice anyone?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Nor did I!”

“We did hear, though.”

“Of course we did.”

“Someone entering...”

“Then crossing the room...”

“Then up the stairs.”

“Yes.”

“Then entering a room upstairs?”

“Exactly.”

“What does this all mean?”

And as we realized what had just happened, I saw the others turn pale, and I felt myself turn pale too.

Indeed, we had heard well enough. And without seeing anything. We were not children, however, and we did not lack courage.

The priest took a candlestick, I took another, and we climbed up the stairs.

Nothing!

We opened the room where the mysterious character had seemed to have locked himself in.

There was no one there!

Absolutely nothing disturbed, absolutely nothing unusual.

We went back downstairs, upset and talking low.

“But was it really someone?”

“There’s nothing to say.”

“But you did not discover anything?”

“Not a soul.”

“Astonishing.”

At that moment, a terrible noise burst forth from the room we had just left, as if a huge weight had fallen on the floor.

The old priest coldly picked up his candle, went back up the stairs and entered the room again. No one followed him this time. He reappeared as pale as a ghost, and as we heard the clanking of chains and moans echoing through the room he had just left, he said, “I have looked carefully, but I do not see anything. I’ve had a good look, though, my children,” he said, “I swear to you there’s nothing there! Let us pray to the good Lord.”

And we began to pray. At one o’clock in the morning, the noise stopped.

Two of the seminarians spent the rest of the night in the rectory so as not to leave the good priest alone, and the students–I was trembling quite a bit myself–went home, promising each other all sorts of investigations for the next day.

The only things we discovered were, in front of the presbytery, the tracks of the mysterious carriage, very distinct and fresh, in sand that had been carefully raked the day before. Needless to say, this story had a lot of repercussions: it did not end there, moreover. Every evening, for more than a week, the most extraordinary noises were heard in the room where the invisible visitor had seemed to take refuge. The most serious and least superstitious men of the village of Gentilly came to spend the night in the presbytery, and left in the morning, white as ghosts.

The poor priest could no longer live like that.

So, he decided to go and consult the authorities of the diocese, and since Trois-Rivières did not yet have a bishop at that time, he left for Québec City. On the evening of his return, we were gathered together, as on previous evenings, waiting for the moment of supernatural manifestations, which never failed to occur at the stroke of midnight.

The priest was pale, and even more serious than usual. When the din began again, he got up, put on his surplice and stole, and, addressing us, said:

“My children, you will kneel down and pray, and whatever noise you hear, do not move, unless I call you. With God’s help, I will fulfill my duty.”

And with a firm step, without weapon and without light, the holy priest bravely climbed the stairs and entered the haunted room without hesitation. I still remember, as if it were yesterday, the feeling of admiration that swelled my chest upon witnessing his fearlessness, so calm and so simple.

Then there was a horrible commotion.

Screams, shouts, terrible crashes.

It sounded as if a bunch of ferocious beasts were devouring each other, while all the furniture in the room was smashed to pieces on the floor.

I have never heard anything like it in my life.

We were all on our knees, frozen, mute and with our hair standing on end.

But the priest did not call.

How long was it? I couldn’t tell you, but it seemed like a long time.

At last the infernal noise suddenly ceased, and the good priest reappeared, beside himself, all in a sweat, his hair in disarray and his surplice in tatters...

He had aged ten years.

“My children,” he said, “you may leave. It is finished; you will hear nothing more. Goodbye. Speak of all this as little as possible.”

After that evening, the rectory of Gentilly resumed its usual calm.

Except that every first Friday of the month, until his death, the good priest celebrated a Requiem Mass for someone he would never name.

“That’s a strange story, isn’t it, gentlemen?” concluded the narrator. “Well, I have only told you what I saw with my own eyes and heard with my ears, along with many other trustworthy people. What do you say to that?”

“Nothing!”

“Nor do I.”

I had occasion, already several years ago, to question some of the elders of Gentilly on this subject...even a niece of the housekeeper of Fr. Guertin; and they told me that indeed, in the time of Fr. Guertin, something very strange had happened, that the presbytery, it was said, had been haunted for several days by a mysterious, invisible character.

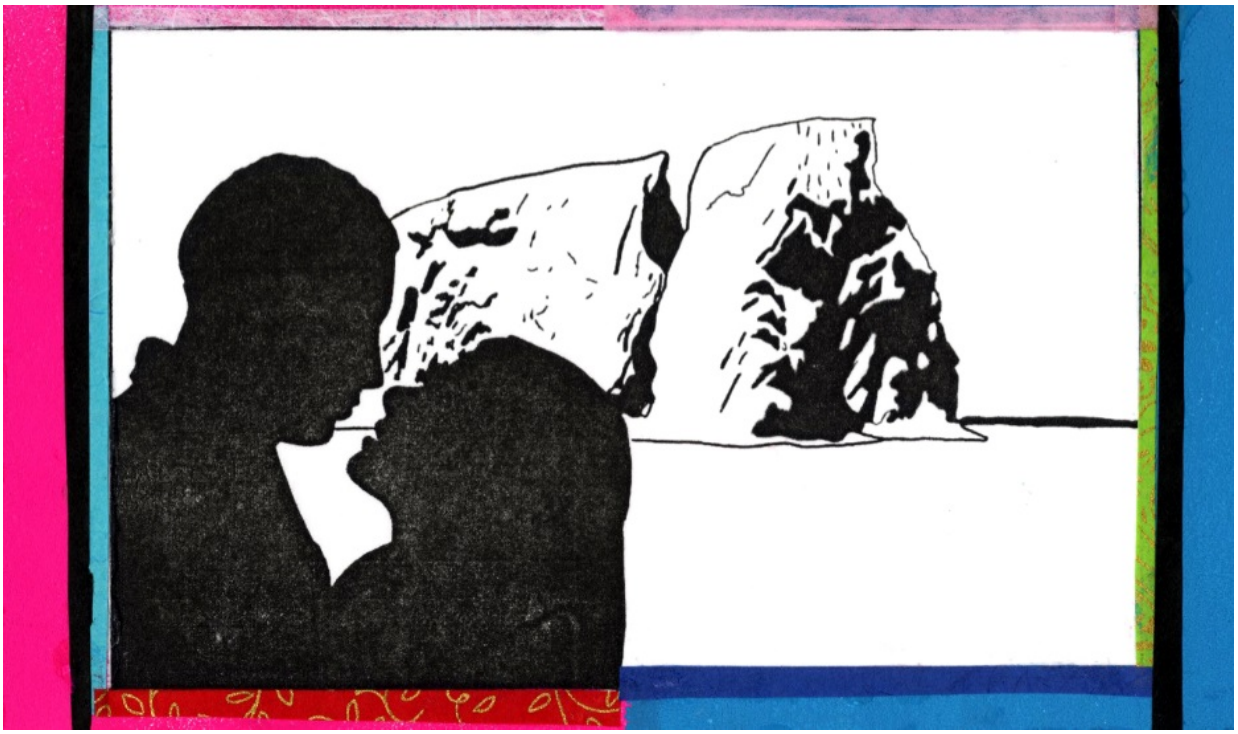
FIN

V.

The Legend of the Rocher Percé

Unknown Author

Translated by Sage Grant



The Legend of the Rocher Percé © Sam Stickney 2022

This legend, taken from oral tradition, was published in the Almanach du Peuple *in 1905. It is a tragic love story that explains the shape of the enormous limestone rock formation called* rocher percé*–or pierced rock–located in the Gulf of St. Lawrence off the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula on the easternmost edge of the Province of Québec. One of the largest natural arches located in water, it is an iconic symbol for the region of Gaspé. Both Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain reported seeing the rock, and it was Champlain who named it "Percé". The legend that follows explains the rock's curious shape and connects this part of Québec to the stories of its early French settlers.*

This story was translated by Sage Grant '21, who majored in Political Science and French at Salem State University, and spent the "pandemic year" of 2019-2020 studying abroad in France and New Zealand. Perhaps drawing on her own an adventurous spirit, Sage renders this sweeping love story into a highly readable tale in English.

In a time when the fleurdelisé flag hung high and proud on the bastions of Québec, a young French officer belonging to the upper crust nobility and serving in the regiment stationed at Versailles, was called to leave his homeland and the pleasures of the Court to go fight the enemies of an infant colony, the fierce Iroquois in New France.

The valiant knight did not have a moment to lose. Orders were given to him to embark on the vessel that would set sail from Saint-Malo for Canada in only a few short days.

Duty and honor commanded him to leave and to obey, so he had to force himself to stop listening to the other imperious and pressing voice in his head, the voice of love.

And this love was not given in vain. Our noble knight, Raymond de Nérac, was as loved as much as he was in love and had received the tender pledge of fidelity from the lips of a young woman of equal birth, as virtuous as she was beautiful, as worthy of tributes as she was susceptible to inspiring them.

Imagine for a moment the touching scene of tearful goodbyes and oaths of fidelity that were exchanged between the sad lovers. The hope of a quick return soothed de Nérac's soul and lessened the heartbreak of the couple's final kisses.

Yet, the years quickly passed, one year turning into another and that into the next, and de Nérac was never called back to France.

The passing of time added an all-powerful rival for the attentions of the young lady left behind. He had employed his influence at the Court to keep our young knight in New France, hoping that time and distance would erase his image from the heart of the young fiancée.

But absence only extinguishes affection that is weak, while only strengthening a love that is sincere. So, one day he decided that Blanche de Beaumont should join her fiancé on the other side of the ocean and that their marriage should be celebrated in New France.

That June, Blanche left to join her fiancé, who had courageously waited for her for so long. She was accompanied by her uncle, who had received permission from the King to trade furs in the colony.

Friends and parents shed bitter tears about the departure of the young girl, and the lucky travelers were bid "*bon voyage*." Blanche, with love on her mind, was not afraid, and without trembling, her small hand waved her handkerchief until the ship disappeared from everyone's view.

A part of the voyage was carried out in the happiest of conditions, and Blanche hoped to soon see the coast of New France, when suddenly a vessel of unique allure appeared on the horizon. It was known for being a pirate ship that crossed the seas searching for its targets.

The attack from the enemy side was prompt and the pirate ship gained so much speed on the French galleon that the French did not have enough time to prepare for the battle. The French engaged with the enemy in desperation, and the confrontation was terrible, pitting the stubbornness of the assailants against the valor of their adversaries.

Two blows from a canon took down the two great masts of the French ship and rendered all defensive maneuvers almost impossible.

Soon the pirates scampered aboard the ship, under a storm of canons, muskets and grenades. The corsairs took the forefront, with pistols in hand and knives between their teeth. At first, the French

had the advantage and fought the enemy off three times, forcing them off their bridge and out of their living quarters.

The pirates went to pull back for the last time, when their captain gave orders to his men to go close the hatch and the bridges in order to prevent the French from finding a refuge, forcing them to fight until they were victorious…or dead…

A ferocious rage seized the pirates and they rushed with a fury towards the unfortunate French. Abandoning all hope, the crew did not fight for anything other than the honor of the flag, preferring to succumb to the fight than to remain alive in the hands of their enemies.

In the middle of this bloody chaos, Blanche de Beaumont, like a charitable angel, went to the injured and dying, giving treatments to everyone and speaking to those who were destined to leave this world, reminding them of the eternal rewards waiting for those who fought nobly for God and their country. Her feet slid in the blood as she was going about her work of charity and devotion, and watching this scene full of horror, she sometimes felt her heart deflate…. She had the sad consolation of witnessing the last breath of her uncle, mortally wounded in his chest, and of tending to him in his final moments. At the very moment when, her face covered in bitter tears, she piously shut the eyes of her relative, the captain of the vessel, who was standing close to our heroine, received such a blow to the head from a musket, that his skull shattered apart, causing his brains to be splattered all over her. It was too much; the young woman collapsed among the dead and dying, deprived of emotion.

The disabled French ship, flattened like a pontoon and unable to resist, had to surrender.

Blanche de Beaumont was considered a part of the loot that was too beautiful to be put to death and the captain of the pirate ship claimed her as his part of the spoils.

The distress of the young woman, when she regained her senses, was indescribable, but neither her weeping nor her pleading could soften her captor.

His only reply to her was that he wanted her to be his wife.

“I am not free,” cried Blanche de Beaumont. “I am engaged,” she added bravely, “to Raymond de Nérac, Knight of the Order of Saint-Louis, captain in the French regiment, and I will never marry anyone but him.”

“Where then does this handsome knight live?” The captain of the pirates demanded sarcastically.

“In New France,” Blanche said, “where honor and duty command him to be.”

At that moment, a diabolical idea came to the mind of this monster. Since his captive refused to listen to him or allow him to get close to her, he commanded the crew to set sail for Québec, to torture his innocent victim with the view of the place her heart called her to, without ever allowing her to leave the boat, even for a single moment.

Blanche was locked in her narrow cabin, where she was kept under the strictest surveillance.

One day, however, they allowed her to walk on the bridge, in order to see the land, a land covered in vast forests and the most luxuriant vegetation.

“Here is New France,” he told her, with a cruel smile.

New France! This country that she wanted to adopt as hers, where the beloved man of her dreams was living! Why did her cruel captor have to bring her here? The horrifying truth became apparent

and her pain was so immense that she lost her mind as she contemplated the terrible things that awaited her. Breaking her hands free from the restraints, she flung herself into the sea.

They tried in vain to save her. The waves mercifully swept her away from her captors but forever engulfed the unfortunate Blanche de Beaumont.

A somber mood fell on the crew and the vessel with the disappearance of the young girl. Some superstitious sailors said that they had lost their good fairy, and a strange feeling agitated all their spirits. The captain himself regretted the death of his sorrowful victim and never opened his lips other than to utter the most sinister curses.

The day that followed the death of Blanche de Beaumont, the ship, pushed by a powerful wind, arrived near the rock jutting out into the sea off of the coast of Percé.

The whole crew was stupefied at the sight of the mass of immense rock and the captain, driven by some secret motivation, commanded them to approach the rocks as close as they could without putting themselves in danger.

All eyes were fixed upon this strange phenomenon, when, all of a sudden, they saw appear on the highest point of the rocks, all dressed in white, the ghost of Blanche de Beaumont, their captive and their victim.

Hands raised above her head like in a supreme curse, the apparition seemed so terrible that a cry of fright escaped from everyone's mouth. Soon, the ghost lowered her hands in the direction of the ship and at that moment, everyone that was aboard and the ship itself was transformed into a mass of compact rock.

This strange rock still has the form of the ship with all of its sails. It is located at the entrance of the river, near the Cap des Rosiers and was known as the Phantom Vessel or the Shipwrecked Vessel.

Little by little, under the crush of the waves, the rock eroded. Piece by piece, it crumbled but there still remains enough today to mark the place where the Phantom Vessel can be found and to recall its legend.

It's in this way that the memory of Blanche de Beaumont is avenged.

The legend does not tell us about the anguish felt by the handsome knight de Nérac during his long wait, nor his anxiety, or his desperation when, one day, he had to give up hope of seeing the homeland he once loved so much. But the sensitive hearts reading this legend can well imagine his troubles.

All we know is that a few months after the sorrowful catastrophe, the captain de Nérac died bravely in an encounter with the Iroquois and the lovers were finally reunited by death.

It is still said today that when the fog lifts on the sea and it surrounds the Rocher Percé, giving it all types of fantastical forms, you can recognize the shadows of the two lovers, who return to the earth to make sure that the curse placed on the pirate ship still weighs upon it and that it will remain there until the end of time.

That is the legend of the Rocher Percé.

FIN

VI.

Pierre's Scale

By Aristide Filiatreault

English translation by Rachael Kuper

Pierre's Scale © Sam Stickney 2022

Another funny short by Aristide Filiatreault (1851-1913), a typographer, journalist, publisher and political activist born in Sainte-Thérèse-de-Blainville, Québec. This story, originally "La Balance à Pierre," *was published in Montréal in an anthology he edited entitled* Contes, anecdotes et récits canadiens *(1910). An exploration of popular humor at the turn of the 20th century in Québec, this was one of Filiatreault's final publications before his death in 1913.*

This story is part of a cluster of funny shorts selected and translated by Rachael Kuper, who graduated from Salem State University in 2020 with a major in English, a minor in French, and a Certificate in Translation. Rachael started law school immediately after college, and we are hoping she never has to settle a dispute between clients like the characters in this tale.

Pierre Matte was a baker residing in a parish in the North. He had among his clients a man named Joseph Latulippe, a farmer who had several cows and sold the butter he made to people in the village.

The latter never paid the baker for his bread, but instead supplied him with a three-pound packet of butter any time he needed it.

This exchange had been going on for several years, and there had never been a settling of scores between the two men, who were treating each other as friends. The baker had a snide look that annoyed Joe a lot. He was looking for a way to get out of this uneven exchange.

Apart from this little situation, Pierre was always overly polite towards his old friend, who returned the favor. They had grown up together and had a mutual respect for one another. However, Joe was still always trying to short-cut Pierre without him being aware of it.

One day, he thought he had found the perfect opportunity and decided to put his plan into action immediately. The next time he saw his friend, he stopped him and said this:

“My dear friend Pierre, please allow me a remark I make without malice. I don’t mean to hurt you, but it's been bothering me for a long time, and I wanted to tell you before, but waited out of fear of hurting you, and I just can’t bear it anymore. You know, I’m a pretty patient man, and I didn't want to break up our friendly relationship. But, your bread doesn't weigh the weight you claim.”

“Really? Well, I'm not surprised, because you know I don't have a scale.”

“How do you manage your accounting, so you don't get the weight of your merchandise wrong?”

“It's quite simple. I put down a stake and placed a bar across it, like this; then I took some strings and tied them to two kinds of saucers at either end, like this. My bread is supposed to weigh three pounds, and so is your packet of butter. When I receive your butter, I put it in one of the saucers, and then I put the bread in the other. It's always a perfect balance. You see, quite simple.”

FIN

VII.

The Werewolf

By Pamphile Le May

English translation by Raymond Harris and Sam Stickney

The Werewolf © *Sam Stickney 2022*

The loup-garou*, or werewolf, was a lurking threat in the early years of the French colony in Québec. He appears in folktales and scary stories, but also in newspaper articles warning their readers about recent werewolf sightings in the area. Certainly, tales of werewolves were brought over to Québec from France, where similar stories of violent beasts killing unsuspecting Frenchmen had circulated since the Middle Ages. As with other superstitious beliefs, the stories continued to be retold well into the 19th century, but often with a rational explanation for what people "back then" believed or a wink to the readers who surely no longer stayed up nights*

worrying about such supernatural beasts. This story, originally titled "Le Loup-Garou," *was one of a number of tales published by well-known author Pamphile Le May (1837-1918) in his collection* Contes vrais *(1899). Le May was a novelist, poet, translator, and a well-respected lawyer who lived most of his life in Québec City.*

Raymond Harris '22 and Sam Stickney '22 teamed up to translate this tale, which has multiple levels of narration and references to some antiquated French-Canadian cultural traditions that made it challenging to transform into modern-day English. They decided to keep some French words here and there to give their readers a feel for the story's setting. Both fans of the horror film genre, they were disappointed to learn that this story turned out to be more cautionary tale than terrifying horror story.

If I lie to you today, it's because of Geneviève Jambette.

She used to tell us the old stories of werewolves, *feux-follets*, flying boats, and deals with devils. I had been going to Sunday school and was just beginning to look at the world critically. She lost herself in those mysterious stories of days past. Such a sweet illusion!

I lost my inner child in my old age. Time stops for no one, and I had just enough to love like a fool, to dream like a poet, to suffer like a martyr, and now I'm just old. That's the truth. But I've not forgotten what I'm supposed to tell you about: Geneviève Jambette's werewolf is what I'm here to tell you about today.

Poor Geneviève, she was already of a certain age when she used to tell us these "true" stories.

"*Satanpiette!*" she used to say, "I tell you that it is the truth. Ask Firmin."

Firmin was her brother.

Geneviève lived five miles from the church, and to ensure she wouldn't miss mass on Sundays or holy days, she would arrive in town a day early. How many people in the countryside today, though they profess to be quite religious, would make such a sacrifice? And yet, there are homes happy to welcome travelers who would do so.

She usually preferred to stay in the home of old man Amable Beaudet, where I heard her tell these stories many times. Our naive storyteller died long ago; few people still remember her. For her, posterity doesn't exist, because in her love of virtue, she might have said, as the Virgin Mary did to the angel: *"Quomodo fiet istud quoniam virum non cognosco?"* (How could it be, since I have never known a man?) Alas, those who have no children die more profoundly than others.

"The werewolf! The werewolf!" You say.

Frankly, I don't know if I remember it all that well. Ha! Well, Geneviève began like so :

"Come now my children," she would say, "you must go to confession and take communion at Easter. Should you go seven years without Easter communion, you risk becoming a werewolf."

"But are there Christians who have gone seven years without it?" The children asked, astonished.

“Yes, there are, unfortunately. It's rare, but there are some. If the world continues as it is, in fifty years, I’d say it’ll be the norm. If you go out at night, you will only encounter werewolves.”

“Is a werewolf bad?” Poor little Hubert Beaudet asked her teasingly. The old woman responded:

“It’s terrifying! It uncannily resembles any other wolf, but it is not the same. It has eyes like burning coal, coarse hair, a long tail, and ears as big as the devil’s horns. They prowl, searching for people to free them.”

“Free them? How so?”

“You must draw the blood of the werewolf to turn it back to a human. Just one drop will suffice.”

“So, what if you killed a werewolf?”

“Then you’d be killing a Christian.”

“During that day, where do the werewolves hide?” Asked Élisée, Hubert’s brother.

“In the day, they take their human form. You couldn’t distinguish them from any other person. But at the first stroke of midnight, they are transformed into the beast, and the transformation lasts until the first light of dawn.”

Here, the credulous storyteller coughed, sniffled, unfolded her large checkered handkerchief, and gave us a sort-of vanquishing look. Then, she continued to recount her harrowing tale:

“Firmin, my brother, freed a werewolf. It happened many, many years ago. He almost fainted. He wasn’t expecting to do it. He thought it was a real wolf who was trying to devour him.”

“Impossible! You’re making this up!”

“*Satanpiette!* That’s the whole truth. Ask Firmin. Maybe today you don’t believe me, because you’re young. As you grow up you’ll better understand the price you pay for sin.”

Now, here is the story of the werewolf freed by Geneviève’s brother Firmin.

Misaël Longnea and Catherine Miquelon from Cap-Santé were going to marry. The third banns of their upcoming marriage had just been publicly announced. The couple had met the previous winter, during the carnival season. The Miquelons had gone to see one of their relatives in Cap-Santé, and the couple met at a party. They danced together and then sat next to each other for the meal. Dancing and sitting at the table, they spent the entire evening together.

Catherine munched on the golden crust of a pie with her pearly white teeth; Misaël, who was one heck of a reveler, re-filled his glass several times.

On Shrove Monday, old man Miquelon was getting ready and hitched up his carriage to leave. Misaël who was proud to show off his young horse, his white harness, and his freshly varnished *carriole*, offered to give Catherine a ride home. The young girl could not refuse. The ice bridge[4] was ready. Bright, shimmering ice covered the entire width of the river, all the way from the Portneuf river to the farm.

[4] An ice bridge is a frozen natural phenomenon. During cold winters in Québec, the St. Lawrence river would freeze, allowing people and animals to cross from one shore to the other on top of the ice.

You should have heard the lively trot of the horses and the song of the sleigh's steel blades skimming along the sonorous road. They whipped past the pine trees, two by two, as if being propelled by a torrent. But the young people barely glanced at the landscape and hardly heard the jingling of the horse's brass bells. Through the cold mist and the light frost forming on their batting eyelashes, they only saw each other and listened only to the sweet voice that rose from deep in their hearts.

When they finally arrived, they felt the journey had flown by. As those who are happy are apt to do, they had lost track of distance and time. Unlike those who suffer, who experience the opposite: time drags on for them and the path has no end.

Misaël celebrated Mardi Gras with his lady friend. It was a bittersweet conclusion. Much like a happy funeral. No black tomb or melancholic candles; no gloomy psalms or gaping pit where, with a sinister noise, shovelfuls of holy earth pile up; instead this ending was a table laden with mouthwatering dishes, sparkling candles, raunchy songs, large glasses filled with golden drops of old Jamaican rum which caused cheerful murmur. The horrible thing was that they had to say goodbye to these festivities because Lent starts right after Mardi Gras.

The faithful love of Catherine and Misaël had lasted for a year, and the marriage was to take place after Lent.

In those days, the time of Lent was difficult: abstinence and fasting were required every day. Our ancestors were either great sinners or great penitents. But they were strong, drawing their strength from working the field and inhaling the invigorating aroma of the woods. We, their degenerate children, are ruining the countryside and inhaling the polluted air of the city. Why don't we return to the plow and fields? Let us plant trees around our homes, and have our sons become much stronger and virtuous than us. Then, during this long Lenten period, our children will seek penance for our past sins. Our children will one day work harder than we, and be more virtuous than we'd been, so they may ask forgiveness for the sins of their parents.

But back to our story! The third banns of our couple's upcoming marriage had just been publicly announced. The groom arrived at the home of his future wife, with his best man, his father, and several of his other friends. Everyone fought for the opportunity to tend to them. It was the night before the wedding, the time to celebrate the bride. Led by the fiddlers, all of the guests arrived at old man Miquelon's house. They came to bid farewell to the young bride-to-be, who would soon enter womanhood and peek into the world of serious and prudent matrons. They all wished her well, casting a shadow of doubt into her inexperienced mind.

Since the celebrations were off to such a good start, the wedding was surely going to be enjoyable. The violins vibrated, the strings on the bow were being played fervently; from the distance, you could hear the dancer's rhythmic movements; their feet hitting the ground like the thunderous sifting of grain threshers. Now, as the laughter spread and smiles radiated from the lively guests, and the lively refrains of folk songs erupted into the atmosphere, filling the world with their joy and light, the first stroke of midnight struck. The groom sneaked away and left the house.

The celebration was meant to end at midnight. The violins relaxed their melodious strings and no longer sang. The best man then stepped into the thrilled crowd and asked:

"Is the groom here? He has to come with me! Tomorrow a beautiful woman may come and free him from my grip, but for tonight he is still my prisoner."

At first, everyone burst into laughter. Then, after a while, one of the guests said that he had seen him at the stroke of midnight. He went out the back door bareheaded.

We waited a few moments, then the best man opened the door a crack and peeked outside. He didn't see anyone.

He decided to go look around. After about half an hour, he returned alone.

“It’s strange,” he remarked.

“Did you call him?” We asked.

“Yes, but I had no luck.”

Catherine, the bride-to-be, was getting worried.

“He’s going to come back,” they said, “I’m sure nothing bad has happened to him.”

“Who knows?” ... Suddenly dizziness, then a fall ...

All the men went out looking for him. They searched the barn, the hayloft, the hay, the stable and cowshed, then in the horse stalls and oxen stalls, the manger. They looked everywhere.

When one o'clock struck and Misaël had not returned, the women began to cry. Catherine looked pale in the candlelight, and deep anguish gripped her heart. She was suffering.

At the stroke of two o'clock, most of the men had come back. They spoke gravely, as you would when someone has died. All of a sudden, the door opened and the groom appeared. He looked deathly pale. Yet there was still a spark in his eyes. Blood ran down his arm, you could see it on his frozen hands. Firmin followed him in, pale, and seemed bewildered as he didn't know if he was asleep or awake, if he just woke from a nightmare or had witnessed something atrocious.

“Where’d you go Misaël?” Asked the best man.

He then awkwardly explained that he’d felt ill and that he thought going out for some fresh winter air would set him straight, but he’d fallen on the ice and suffered a wound on his shoulder that knocked him out so he didn’t remember.

Firmin looked at him with huge wide eyes. You could see on his face that he wanted to speak as if he knew something more, which you could tell from the nodding of his head and shrug of his shoulders. Yet he did nothing. They dressed Misaël’s wound. It was said it looked like the cut of a knife. Some icicles are known to fall and cut like blades.

The festivities resumed. The guests drank their last drinks, and the next day, the church bells rang out to announce the joyous marriage of Catherine and Misaël.

“And the werewolf, what about the werewolf?”

“Hold on for just a minute,” said Geneviève.

Before the wedding mass, Misaël went to confession. He stayed in that booth for some time. Firmin started giving him the look again like he did the night before, but this time with an air of approval. He spoke not a word, for he promised to tell no one.

Now, here’s what actually happened the night before. Everyone was looking for the missing person. Firmin thought he might have gone to the stable to see that young horse of his. Still, that wouldn’t make much sense if he didn’t have a winter hat on. Regardless, he decided to check. As

he was about to put his hand on the iron latch that kept the door closed, he heard something walking on the snow behind him. At first, he thought it was someone from the wedding party. It was certainly possible that someone else also thought to look for the groom in the stables. So, he turned around. A beast the size of a large dog, but more slender, lurked along the path that connected the barn to the house. It was black with blazing red eyes.

Firmin, who was usually brave, was quite afraid, so afraid that he just stood there motionless, unable to run away. The animal came towards him and looked at him. He thought he was going to be devoured. Suddenly, his instinct for self-preservation returned to him, and he threw open the iron latch on the door and rushed inside the stable. But the dreaded beast followed him. After making the sign of the cross, he pulled out his pocket knife and prepared himself to fight for his life. He thought it was a real wolf. The beast stood up, placed its hairy paws on his shoulders, and stretched out its body as if to bite or lick him, hot breath exhaling from its pointed snout. Firmin struck. The knife hit its shoulder and blood was shed. Suddenly, the wolf was gone, and a man with a wounded shoulder appeared out of nowhere.

“You saved me, thank you,” said the man.

“What, Misaël, is that you?”

“Oh! Don't say anything, please!”

“You became a werewolf? ... My god! Who would have thought? ... So it’s been seven years since you last took communion?”

“Seven years; please don’t tell anyone about this, please. I will go straight to confession tomorrow morning, and I promise to be a good Christian in the future.”

“Do you swear it?”

“I swear!”

“I’ll be in church, and if you don’t keep your word, I’ll tell everyone about this. Your marriage will be ruined.”

“I understand.”

That’s it, the story is finished.

Geneviève Jambette was careful to add: “My brother Firmin never said a word about it; the truth was never discovered.”

Her story ended with a burst of laughter.

Perhaps you will tell me that you don’t believe a word of this story…?

Well! Neither do I.

FIN

VIII.
The Three Soldiers of Fort Saint Anne

By Charles Quinel

English translation by Patrick Delva

The Three Soldiers of Fort Saint Anne © Sam Stickney 2022

As we saw in "The Proud Lie," survival in New France often required some trickery on the part of the French as they encountered the well-equipped British military. Here, we find three hapless French soldiers who are caught by surprise by incoming British war ships. Thanks to a bit of cunning, a dash of ignorance, and the will to survive, the three are able to outwit, if not outlast, their English adversaries. Charles Quinel (1886-1946), was a journalist and a writer known for his many collaborations with Adhémar de Montgon (1868-1942), who wrote young adult literature. This tale, originally titled "Les Trois du Fort Sainte-Anne" *was published in their collection* Contes et récits du Canada.

This story was translated into English by Patrick Delva, who graduated from Salem State University with a bachelor's degree in French and a Certificate in Translation in 2020. Born in Haiti, Patrick is trilingual in English, French, and Haitian Creole.

There were three French soldiers who guarded Fort Saint Anne on Hudson Bay, and their names were: La Ramée, La Fleur, and Picard.

Fort Saint Anne was not a simple fenced-in redoubt like so many others; it had walls, real stone walls, a solid door, buildings to house men, ammunition and supplies, and cannons to ward off the enemy from afar. In front of the walls, there was a ditch and, in front of the ditch, a great timber fence. The fort had an excellent position at the top of a small cliff, and the land below stretched all the way to the bay.

The three soldiers were not, of course, the entire garrison of the place. They had been left there by the commander, who had gone off with the rest of his troops on an expedition for a few days. Their role was to maintain the buildings and prevent the local tribes from entering and pillaging the fort.

La Ramée, La Fleur, and Picard were bored. They were bored as would be bored three young guys from France who had never imagined serving their King in a place that was two months travel distance from their homeland. A long time ago, they had stopped enjoying conversation with each other. They had told each other everything there was to say about their families, their friends, their village. Had they been childhood friends or twin brothers, they could not have known more about each other.

Other soldiers in such conditions, on their own for several weeks, on this shore without any other European inhabitants, might have frequented the wigwams of the local Indians and might have drunk the forbidden alcohol with them. This idea tempted neither La Ramée, nor La Fleur, nor Picard. They did not like the natives and professed a certain disdain for men who dressed in animal skins, painted their faces and bodies in red and yellow, and whose chiefs prided themselves on decorating their heads in feathers.

The indigenous people, despite their apparent simplicity, did not lack finesse. As much as they loved the commander of the fort, who was quite friendly towards them, they detested the three men who were currently the garrison. In the mornings, when they would bring the catch from their fishing and hunting expeditions to supply the fort with provisions, they would appear with engaging smiles on their faces, as every merchant who wants to sell his goods must do. However, even though they could not understand French, they knew that greetings like the “it’s you again, log-head” of La Ramée, and the “the son of a pig” of La Fleur, or the “rat-face” of Picard, were not compliments. Thus, relations between the garrison at Fort Saint Anne and their indigenous neighbors were tense at heart but friendly on the surface.

That day, as every day, to entertain themselves, the three soldiers quarreled, and what better pretext for a quarrel than to gamble with dice, which as we all know, is the best way to start a fight.

By coincidence, one exclamation united them in agreement.

“What a bloody terrible place!” Spewed la Ramée

“Damned place!” Growled La Fleur.

“A devil of a place!” Picard solemnly added.

La Ramée developed his thought: “There is no shortage of space around the fort, and yet there is no place to stretch your legs! Everything seems deserted but you can’t go fifty paces without encountering an Indian hiding behind a tree.”

“And this sea, this sea!” Cried Picard, who was from Crotoy, “This sea where you do not see a single ship passing by! And if there is one, it is so far away that you can’t recognize the sail!”

He spit on the ground with contempt and continued: “I love the sea, though! Everyone in the family is a sailor. As soon as I could walk, I would go down to the shore, you know! Believe you me, the sea, here, I don’t even want to look at it!”

The dice game resumed. The men were in a vaulted room, in the very center of the fort, and from there the view was limited on all sides by the walls that surrounded the courtyard. It was cool in this room. Outside, the August sun was burning.

“They must be hot, our comrades,” remarked La Fleur.

“At least they get to move about,” grumbled La Ramée.

“We probably won’t see them again until the fall,” predicted Picard. “The commander promised to be back by September, but they will probably be late.”

The dice were rolled. There was a dubious outcome. The three men squabbled over who was best.

“There is no way to play with you; you cheat all the time!” cried La Ramée.

“We cheat?” the other two replied, “Say that again and you’ll see!”

La Ramée rose and, in a few strides, was at the door, out of reach of the fists of his partners.

“Yeah, you are cheaters,” he repeated, with the assurance that comes from the certainty of impunity.

No sooner had he uttered that sentence when he jumped easily out onto the platform. The intense heat assured him that we would not be pursued there.

A swear word came to his lips: three ships, all sails out, were sailing towards Fort Saint Anne.

Finally, something’s happening! Finally, an unexpected event in this monotonous life. La Ramée, forgetting his grudge against his companions, wanted them to share in this interesting news right away. He shouted: “La Fleur, Picard, come up, quickly!”

The two soldiers thought it was a trick, designed to make them leave their cool shelter. La Ramée renewed his appeal: “Picard, La Fleur, boats in sight!”

Boats! Picard’s mariner’s soul could not resist this announcement; if it was a joke, we would settle it up there. He emerged on the platform with La Fleur.

It was his turn to let out a curse: “The English,” he shouted, having recognized them immediately.

This changed things considerably; they wanted the unexpected, well, this was it.

Picard explained with ease: “They are three frigates: two of forty cannons, one of twenty-eight.”

“What if we opened fire?” Proposed La Ramée.

In the army, even when there are only three men, there is always a leader, and the leader here was Picard, the eldest. He suddenly felt grown up. Facing the enemy, he was the commander of Fort Saint Anne. This position of honor gave him confidence:

“Rat-face!” He replied to La Ramée’s suggestion. “The three of us can only man one cannon at a time, and they will see that there aren’t enough men here… Also, they’re out of reach.”

“If they continue at this speed,” remarked La Fleur, “they will soon be in range and it is they who will launch the first round.”

“We still have time to decide,” said Picard.

Whether they feared taking fire from the fort, or they did not want to venture too close to the coast, not knowing the depth of the water, the English stopped far enough from the shore.

“They are wary,” said Picard.

“Look,” cried La Ramée, “they are preparing to come ashore.”

The English had put their rowboats into the sea. A hundred men, taken from the three crews, were loading into these boats. At least that is what Picard said as he spied their maneuvers with the help of an old telescope left behind by the fort commander, which he had found in his room.

“They will attack us,” grumbled La Fleur.

“No,” said La Ramée sarcastically, “they’re coming on behalf of the King of England to give us presents to butter us up!”

“What shall we do?” asked La Fleur.

“Defend ourselves, damn it!” Replied Picard in a tone that would better suit a local governor.

After the moment of reflection that a leader must have, the guy from Crotoy issued his orders: “La Ramée, make sure the doors are closed. I will go get some ammunition, we do not need to spare any now. We have many muskets, so we will place them around in the openings. The important thing is to give the illusion that we are many, at least more than three! You, La Fleur, since you know how to play the drum, you will play ‘the general.’ Wait until they are close enough to hear you, don’t waste your music!”

Everything was arranged as Picard had commanded. The English landed at the far edge of the land and, once they were on the ground, they took their fighting formations. They advanced quickly to cover the open space separating them from the fort with the least chance for loss of life.

Even before they had reached a good firing range, a round of musket shots saluted them. Contrary to the ordinary rules of combat, the fire was not fired by volleys; the blows were staggered. This worried the attackers, who thought that Fort Saint Anne might be defended by hunters who did not waste their gunpowder shooting at sparrows, but who gave themselves the time to aim and lock in on their prey.

At the same time, the British were unpleasantly shaken by furious drum rolls. Behind the walls, commands were being hurled from one side to the next. The wind carried the sound, and they heard distinctly:

“Captain La Fleur, your men on the north flank!”

“Lieutenant La Ramée, get ready to exit!”

“Colonel Picard, everything is ready!”

And always accompanied by the drum battery and always the rolling gunfire!

The English captain hesitated for a moment. He did not believe the garrison was so strong. However, he did not want to be proven wrong in front of all of his comrades who remained on board the ships. He gave the order to go on the assault, having noticed that, on one side of the fort, there were lower walls that could be scaled.

The attack began. The drum had stopped beating. The gunfire was raging. Several Englishmen fell under the rain of bullets. The British did not reach the ramparts; they turned around and fled. They stopped only at the shore.

Inside the small square, Picard and his two associates were loudly congratulating each other on their success. They were very tired, covered in black powder. During the assault, they had not stopped running from one opening to another, barely having time to reload the different rifles each had.

“Perhaps they will leave?” suggested La Ramée.

“Hmm! I doubt it,” grunted Picard.

The English captain got his men together. He wanted to try again.

The British headed towards them again. This time they were more cautious, advancing in leaps and bounds, sheltering to shoot behind ground movements and firing volleys. Once again, they were greeted by heavy fire. They suffered losses.

At a respectful distance from the walls, the attackers halted. In vain did their captain give encouragement and make threats; in the end, for better or worse, he had to give the signal of retreat.

The three defenders of the fort were completely spent. Picard had been wounded in the hand by a stray bullet that ricocheted off the walls. Victory, nevertheless, exalted the trio.

“They got what was coming to them,” joked La Ramée.

“No doubt now they will decide to flee,” said La Fleur.

They did not know the British. From the shore, they signaled their ships.

“They’re asking for reinforcements,” rebuked Picard.

On the frigates, all had understood. More rowboats were put into the water, more soldiers embarked, and heavy objects were lowered by hoists.

“Cannons!” Cried, Picard. “Here we go again!”

The playing field was terribly uneven. Against cannons, it would be impossible for the three men to hold off the enemy. Must they die in the ruins of this place, without any means to counter with enemy deaths?

Picard resolved: “The south side is completely hidden from view of the English; we will escape through there and head into the forest. We did what we could to defend this place; our honor is secure!”

The three comrades, having filled their packs with all they could carry in terms of provisions and objects of any value, escaped through the small door. Without incident, they reached the woods and headed to the nearest post which was several miles away.

The English, as soon as the reinforcements and the guns were landed, adopted the usual measures to conduct a proper attack. The captain wanted to know the composition of the garrison and the armament of the fort, so he sent reconnaissance teams off to the right and left. They brought back some natives whom the captain questioned:

“How many men are there in the fort? Do they have many cannons? Weigh your words well. If you lie, we will burn you at the stake.”

Despite the threat, the natives burst out laughing. This hilarity irritated the British officer who did not understand the cause. The natives rejoiced at the good trick they were going to play on La Ramée, Picard and La Fleur. They had the opportunity to get their revenge for the “rat faces”, the “pig sons”, the “log heads” and other slurs launched by the soldiers; for this, all they need to do was to tell the truth.

They replied: “There are three men in the fort.”

The captain exploded. Three men! These Indians were openly mocking them. He knew well that there were more than three of them, since they kept a hundred English sailors in check and had killed a dozen of them. He shouted, exasperated: “Tell the truth or else!!!”

Calmly, one of the natives, the one who spoke a bit of French, replied: “On my father and my mother, I swear our words are true. There are no more than three men.”

Unable to endure such impudence any longer, which was an insult to the flag of Great Britain and its sailors, the officer had the natives beaten.

With this just punishment complete, the captain waited for nightfall. In the darkness, he set up trenches and mounds, out of range of the muskets but a good distance for the artillery, to strategically place the cannons. As the day dawned, the fort was completely encircled with trenches designed according to the best methods for a siege on fortifications.

At around eight o’clock, the English opened fire. A shower of iron fell on the little fort. The extraordinary thing was that all remained silent. The French did not respond to the attackers. The rifles were also silent. There was an explanation. The defenders had probably decided not to waste their ammunition on people who were out of range of their weapons.

“They’re waiting for the next wave of the assault,” the British officer sneered. “When I launch it, the garrison will be overwhelmed!”

Throughout the morning, the cannon fire raged on. The outer fence was shattered; the stone walls began to yield. A mortar that had, with a thousand precautions, been pushed forward, hurled its cannonballs into the interior courtyard. At each explosion the English cheered in hurrahs. Those who had the best vantage point claimed that they saw the arms and legs flying into the air; one of them even claimed to have seen a head adorned with a wig flung to vertiginous heights.

“It must be the head of the commander of the fort,” the captain confided to a young lieutenant.

At noon, a lucky bomb exploded the ammunitions hold. The British officer had to admit: “These French are brave! I know a thing or two about courage, and it takes courage to suffer such a

bombardment without resisting. Why, why do they not respond with fire? They had ammunition, the explosion of the hold is proof of that."

The passivity worried him, after all.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, a piece of the wall collapsed. The breach was sufficient to allow a regiment to enter. The captain continued to fire.

At three o'clock, the order was given to attack. Soldiers and sailors donned their hats. Men with swords and stakes were placed in the front row. Those who had guns gathered behind them.

Upon the call to charge, the troops rushed towards the fort. They reached the place where, twice, they had been pushed back. They crossed the line marked by the corpses of the soldiers killed in the first attempts. They were about to breach the fort.

"Hurrah for old England!" Cried the captain, brandishing his sword.

With a formidable and triumphant roar, sailors and soldiers swarmed into the ruined fort.

It was empty.

FIN

IX.

As Strong as an Archambault

By Aristide Filiatreault

English translation by Samantha Gurney

As Strong as an Archambault © Sam Stickney 2022

Archambault is a well-known Québécois surname and the name of a well-known bookstore chain in Québec. This humorous tale explains a local expression "strong like an Archambault" but also pokes fun at woodcutters, who may have been known more for their physical prowess than their mental acuity. Excerpted from the anthology Contes, anecdotes et récits canadiens *(1910), edited and published by Aristide Filiatreault (1851-1913), the original French title is* "Forts comme les Archambault".

This story was translated into English by Samantha Gurney, who double majored in French and Dance. At first, she didn't get the punch line of the story, for you need to envision how an old-fashioned crosscut saw works in order to get the joke. It's a long saw with handles on each end, meant to be used by two people who work in unison, sliding the saw back and forth, to cut through the massive tree trunks.

L’Assomption, a suburb of Montréal, was the early home to generations of the Archambault family, a rather large family, actually, whose descendants can be found throughout Québec today, holding prestigious positions as clergy, judicial authorities, politicians, and other public figures. Throughout the region, the people have often used the phrase “Strong like the Archambaults” and for good reason! This family will certainly leave a lasting mark on our history, which they have deserved with their great talents.

One day, a farmer in L’Assomption, wanting to chop down a half dozen maple trees on his property, hired two Archambaults, stocky young fellows who were universally recognized as the two strongest men in the region. He gave them two axes, a crosscut saw and pork fat to use as grease, requesting that they diligently cut the trees into logs twelve feet in length in order to make building lumber. They cut down the biggest of the six maples and started sawing it, but it wasn’t going well at all.

At two o’clock, the farmer returned to the woods to see how far along they were, but he found the two men, face to face, each holding one of the crosscut saw handles. They had barely scratched through the bark and were glaring at each other like rabid dogs.

“What have you been doing since you got here this morning? This is not right!” The farmer bellowed.

“It’s not our fault, Monsieur Painchaud, we did what we could, but neither of us is stronger than the other. We are both pulling as hard as we can, and the saw won’t budge!”

FIN

X.
And the Bell Tolled...

By Charles Quinel

English translation by Anna Snyder

And the Bell Tolled © Sam Stickney 2022

Ghost stories were quite common in New France and persisted into the 18th and 19th centuries in the collective imagination, though the 19th-century writers who published print versions of the stories made sure their readers knew that there were completely logical explanations for everything. In this tale, a shopkeeper recounts a story he heard from his grandfather, the story of a haunted bell tower in an 18th-century church, a mad bell-ringer's ghost, and a village living in fear. The author, Charles Quinel (1886-1946), was a journalist and a writer known for his collaborations with Adhémar de Montgon (1868-1942). This tale, originally titled "Et la cloche sonnait…" *was published in their collection* Contes et récits du Canada.

This story was translated into English by Anna Snyder, who graduated in May 2020 with a B.A. in World Languages and Cultures and a Certificate in Translation. She assures us that the only nightmares she had when translating this tale were about finding the right English words to translate some of the trickier language in the text.

The grocery store in Saint-Charles-de-Bellechasse, René Fillon's shop, was a well-renowned place for the stories you could hear there; not that the esteemed shopkeeper was very talkative himself, but his customers were quite chatty and the smuggled whisky that he sold them that had the virtue of making them particularly talkative.

One day, we entered his more than modest establishment to find shelter from a quite disagreeable gust of wind that was blowing outside. The onshore breeze brought with it its usual waves of rain and fog. Where else might one take refuge, in Saint-Charles-de-Bellechasse, if not at the grocer's, for a recent change in the alcohol laws had led to the bankruptcy of official distributors in favor of their competitors.

There was no one in the grocery store that evening, except René Fillon himself.

"Bad weather," said one of us sitting down.

"Bad weather indeed," replied the grocer.

Then, as if he was talking to himself, he added, "It's the damned east wind!"

There was such an intonation in those simple words that we asked him, "Is the east wind worse than another? It seems that it blows here often."

This meteorological observation surprised the shopkeeper, "Yes, here in these parts, it's true!" he asserted.

"And elsewhere?"

"It depends! But elsewhere, it's something else."

It was all quite enigmatic. It seemed to us that by pressing a little, we'd be told a story. A story which would be welcome to entertain us on this evening that had started off quite hollow.

After some questions that we deemed skillful, René Fillon let himself go; maybe it was simply because we pretended we were going to leave without ordering anything. Here is his story…

Though you folks find me here now, I haven't always lived here. My father ran a business similar to this one, though a bit more rustic, in a small parish between Madeleine and Anse-Pleureuse. It was a real small town, fifty houses and a church, next to the forest.

There were also several businesses and farms in the vicinity, whose owners came to buy what they needed in the village.

Now, I told you there was a church. And that church wasn't ugly; it was even topped with a beautiful bell tower that had a large bell made in France. The bell had been sponsored by the Marquis of Vaudreuil, the Governor of Canada; you can still see his name engraved on the bronze. In honor of this illustrious sponsor, the bell was named the Philippine. The story of the east winds relates to this church and this bell.

In the olden days, when my great-grandfather was very little–I'm talking 'bout the beginning of the 19th century–the church was just as it is today, since it had been built by the French, but there wasn't no priest. Why would there be a priest there? No one went to mass and there weren't neither weddings nor baptisms celebrated there, only funerals, for that, we can't avoid them.

Long before the time of my great-grandfather, the parish had a pastor. He performed ceremonies like all rectors and priests; he married young people and baptized children. There was also a bell-ringer that set in motion the beautiful bell which called the faithful to prayer, rejoiced in happy events, and commiserated when folks were mourning.

This bell-ringer–his name was Pierre, I forget his last name–though he was just a bell-ringer, he still had feelings. He was enamored with a young girl from Madeleine and would have liked to marry her, only the father of the young girl, a rich farmer, didn't want the bell-ringer as a son-in-law, and Pierre had no other means besides those he got for ringing the bell.

The girl married in the city, and Pierre remained inconsolable. We saw him wander in the village, amongst the trees, in the fields, without knowing where he was going. His mind was so melancholy and troubled that he often sounded the death-knell instead of ringing the wedding-toll and that earned him reproach from the pastor and complaints from the farmers.

"You must change the bell-ringer," said the parishioners to the pastor, "He's gone mad."

The good priest responded, "He is not crazy. He is unhappy, and just because he is unhappy doesn't mean we should take away his bread."

The pastor continued to scold his bell-ringer, the parishioners yelled at him, and he continued to wander miserably and without reason.

On the wedding night of a church-goer's daughter where Pierre had rung the wrong bell toll, much to the horror of the parishioners, Pierre was later discovered dead at the foot of a tree in the forest. This tree was a forked oak. Near the bell-ringer, they found Philippine's rope. The body had its tongue hanging out of its mouth, its face contorted, the greenish complexion of someone who'd been hanged; however, we can't well say if he had killed himself by hanging since we had not actually seen him hanged. At this time in our country we weren't doing autopsies like they do now for everyone, it seems.

Everyone believed that Pierre had hanged himself from the fork in the oak tree and had let himself swing with a noose around his neck. Some Hurons must have been passing by and had cut him down, and realizing that they might be accused and have to give explanations to the white judges, had preferred to slip away without boasting about this charitable and useless good deed.

This is what all the villagers were murmuring about; all except the pastor who, wishing to give his bell-ringer a Christian burial, always refused to accept the notion of suicide.

And so, they buried Pierre in holy ground. His tomb was dug behind the church, to the east–note this well–in the area most exposed to the rough ocean winds. Not one parishioner cared to bury their dearly departed in this section of the graveyard.

They chose another bell-ringer from the village. They had to get the Philippine back in working order, to replace the rope that Pierre had cut for the purpose you can guess. And, for this, it was necessary to climb into the bell tower.

The new bell-ringer put it off from one day to the next, not that he was lazy, but a vague instinct held him back. For the daily masses he served, he used a small bell that wasn't located in the bell tower.

He resolved to ring the bell the day a young gentleman from the neighborhood got married.

It was winter. The wind blew from the east–the east, mark my words–as the bell-ringer entered the church tower's staircase, and suddenly, he froze. The tower vibrated with a very soft buzz at first, then louder, then louder again. The bronze voice of the large bell filled the belfry, and the bell sounded the death knell.

You can imagine that the bell-ringer didn't wait for it to end and that he ran down the stairs faster than he had climbed them.

The wedding procession was already in route, preceded by the village musicians who played old tunes from France.

The village musicians stopped playing, their bows suspended in the air. The bride burst into tears, and refused with all her might to enter the church with the sound of the death knell tolling; the groom attempted to calm her, but he was probably a little more frightened than she was. The pastor raised his arms to the sky, pulling on his hair … and during all this time, sinister and tragic, the death knell that no one rang reverberated out over the village from the top of the belfry.

You can't say that the pastor wasn't a great man, but he wasn't a man who was great at dealing with things like this. He felt that it was his obligation to solve the mystery. He firmly set off for his bell tower preceded by the cross, carried by an altar boy, followed by the verger carrying holy water and the aspersorium, and by the bell-ringer with a new rope. Before arriving at the stairs, the altar boy laden with the cross fled as quickly as possible, the verger slipped away with the holy water, and the bell-ringer found himself suddenly paralyzed. The pastor, whose dignity forbade him from continuing alone, returned to his presbytery.

Gradually the storm calmed. The wind shifted. The bell ceased to toll. The most courageous of the parish, men who had seen war, responding to the rector's invitation, climbed the bell tower stairs to the place where one could catch sight of Philippine. She yawned motionless above their heads, calm and innocent. It was decided that the rope would be replaced and that they would again use the bell as before.

Only, four days later, a new storm blew from the sea, the death knell sounded once again.

If you asked any parishioner, they would give you the key to the puzzle: because the bell tolls all alone, without pulling on the rope to set it in motion, it's the wind blowing from the east … The east, does that mean anything to you? … The east, the side where, on holy ground, lay Pierre the suicidal, in his tomb marked by a simple slab.

You can imagine that the pastor was informed of this theory. At first, he shrugged his shoulders very hard, then a little less hard, then not at all.

No one came to his church from then on. The young women married in Madeleine; little children were brought there to be baptized. Just think, if in the middle of the ceremony, the death knell began to toll by itself. The poor pastor, all alone in his empty sanctuary. The bell-ringer, fearing that he may be called to go into the bell tower, had given up his position. They couldn't replace him. The verger declared himself ill. The mothers of the altar boys refused to let them leave to serve, and each Sunday the entire parish traveled three miles to hear mass in Madeleine or four to go to Anse-Pleureuse.

Given these conditions, the pastor asked the bishop of Québec to send him to another post where his ministry would be more useful. The bishop granted him what he asked, so that, as I told you, the village had a church but the church didn't have a priest.

Years went by. The British became the masters of Canada. Large groups of French people left the country; the English settled in. One century followed the other; we spoke here of Napoleon's victories and, in a whisper, we thought that maybe the fate of Canada would change, until the day that we heard news of Waterloo.

That day, by order of the English authorities, all the parishes' bells rang. The Philippine did not take part in the concert.

Like in the past, when nature was angry and when the East wind blew violently, the bell was set in motion and tolled its perpetual death knell. Upon hearing it, good folks would make the sign of the cross and small children would run to the safety of their mothers.

What I'm about to tell you, my great-grandfather witnessed it, because he was four when these things took place.

We were almost at the beginning of winter, my ancestor played with the other kids his age in his father's grocery store. He saw the priest enter. The event struck him because his mother made him remove his hat and stand there head uncovered, as did, out of respect, his father and the regulars who were there to chat.

The clergyman was a tall boy, young, robust, with a clear face, a smiling mouth, an open face.

"Hello my friends," he said, bowing round, "I'm your new pastor and I'm coming to move into the presbytery. It's been too long since there's been a priest here and Your Grace the Bishop ruled that it was not reasonable for you to go to services in Madeleine or in Anse-Pleureuse when you have such a beautiful church here."

Everyone stayed quiet. The young priest continued, "I saw in passing that it was a bit rundown. You will certainly help me restore and even beautify it."

“Of course, of course,” politely replied the people who were there, joined by other parishioners who, having learned of the pastor’s arrival, were curious to see him.

“I hope,” continued the imperturbable clergyman, “that for Christmas, we will be able to celebrate a beautiful midnight mass. There certainly isn’t a shortage of young men and women who can sing. I will teach them hymns. We will illuminate the church, and it will be superb.”

“Of course, of course,” those in attendance said, embarrassed.

“Don’t you regret,” said the priest again, “with such a bell tower, that the bell’s beautiful sounds never rise?”

The father of my grandfather, who had more self-confidence than the others since he was in his own house, spoke, “Father, of course we are happy to see you. Of course we would be pleased to not go to services in Madeleine or Anse-Pleureuse, which are far away. Of course we would like to have, like all the others, beautiful ceremonies… but the bell, that’s an issue.”

The pastor let his interlocutor speak and never stopped smiling. My great-grandfather lowered the tone of his voice, “As for ringing, the bell, it rings; in fact, it rings all alone, without a bell-ringer, or at least without a living bell-ringer, because we all know well who makes it chime.”

“And who is that?” asked the priest without showing any sign of surprise.

“An old bell-ringer from the past who killed himself and who, despite that, was buried in holy ground. When the east wind blows over his grave, he rises and rings for the dead.”

“Oh! Oh!” cried out the rector, “this is a story that can be told at night to scare small children, but I’m surprised that you, grown adults, put your faith in it. I had been told of it in Québec and had been warned that I would find a bell without a rope; that’s why I brought a brand new one.”
The priest took out from under his cape a beautiful wound cable.

“If you want,” he said decisively, “we will go, not later on but immediately, and climb up to the belfry, attach the rope, and ring a joyous song that will chase away these foolish ideas.”

“Now?”

“Yes, now. Why leave to tomorrow when we can do today?”

With a firm step, the pastor went to the door and opened it.

A gust of wind rushed into the grocery store; the storm was rising, and rightly, it was coming from the east.

From the top of the church tower, located across from the store, fell a whisper; this whisper grew louder; it was like a hum, but then the strokes of the bell spaced out until the death knell was recognizable.

The men and women rushed around the clergyman.

“Do you hear that, Father. It’s not a tale; the bell-ringer is greeting you in his own way.”

The priest was expected to close the door and retrace his steps. He did nothing. His smile hadn't left his face when he said, "My good friends, if this bell rings, I want to know why. Nothing is done without reason. I will go find out. Stay here, I won't be long."

The pastor had rolled up his cassock. He had crossed the square with great strides, indifferent to the storm. He disappeared through the small door of the bell tower.

On the threshold of the grocery store, everyone was tormented. He was kind, this young priest, and it was feared that harm would come to him, and also, it must be admitted, they feared the consequences that this recklessness would have for the parish. Who knows if the dead bell-ringer wouldn't take revenge on the parish for the boldness of the rector!

Meanwhile, the Philippine continued to toll its mournful chime.

"He must be in the belfry by now," ventured a woman.

"Will he ever come down?" grumbled another.

"Listen! Listen!" ordered the father of my grandfather, with the authority granted to him by his age and by being an important businessman.

"Do you hear something?" asked his wife anxiously.

"I think so."

It seemed that one could make out, coming from the belfry, blows of an axe or hammer, some kind of blows. Only the noise was very unclear because of the wind and especially due to the loud ringing of the bell.

The women joined their hands.

"The pastor is battling with the soul of the dead."

"What! No, you don't fight a soul with blows of an axe."

"You, what do you know?"

The dispute stopped. The Philippine then fell silent.

"However," someone noted, "the east wind hasn't died down."

"That's true, it's still blowing!"

"It seems like it's blowing even harder."

"And nevertheless…"

The pastor, calm, and not at all boastful, as one can be when one is right against a whole village, crossed the square again. On his shoulder he carried an axe with as much ease as a woodsman.

This axe caused a little unease amongst the parishioners. My grandfather's father summed up everyone's opinion, "I see, Father, that you killed Pierre the bell-ringer a second time. Well, maybe

it was necessary to finally restore peace to the parish, but, all the same, the poor deceased also deserved pity. Couldn't you have done the same thing with holy water? It is said to be very good in such cases."

He was trying to be careful not to irritate the priest who had defeated the ghost. He who can overcome a supernatural being can cause great damage to simple humans; that's why the village spokesperson hastened to add, "In any case, we are grateful to you for having freed the parish, and we hope that if poor Pierre still wants revenge, you will protect us."

The young clergyman had, at first, not fully understood the words of this spokesperson; it was only by noting all of the eyes fixed on his axe that he finally realized that they believed he had actually killed the ghost with the weapon.

He started with a great laugh, a laugh which got caught in his throat and prevented him from speaking, a laugh that recurred every time he opened his mouth. The parishioners understood nothing; there were even those who thought the ghost bell-ringer, in order to punish his murderer, had deprived him of reason.

The pastor's hysterical laughter finally died down, and he was able to explain, "My good friends, I didn't encounter a ghost in the belfry, nor shadow of a ghost. This axe, which is actually very good and which I found in a corner of the bell tower, was not used to exterminate ghosts."

"And yet, the Philippine stopped ringing."

"Yes. Wouldn't you know that, on the other side of the belfry, the side opposite of this place, and exposed, I think, to the east, one of the planks that make up the shutters had come off at one end, with the other forming a hinge, so that when the wind blows violently on this side, the board hits the bell. It bounces off the bronze bell, the wind brings it back, and so on, as long as the gust is strong enough to move the piece of wood. With my axe, I completely detached the board and, one of these next few days, we will put it back into place, nailing it in on both sides."

From that day on, everything took place in the village as in other villages. People got married, children were baptized, and we never heard another thing from Pierre, the ghost ringer. Of course, no one dared contradict the story told by the pastor, but nevertheless, everyone held their own opinion.

"And what was that?" we asked the grocer, genuinely curious.

It's that the pastor had indeed met the bell ringer's ghost and that… It's better not to talk about that today. You see, gentlemen, the east wind's blowing and it's a strange wind!

FIN

XI.
The Christmas Pudding

By Charles Quinel

English Translation by Bayron Contreras

The Christmas Pudding © Sam Stickney 2022

Logging was an important part of the economy in French Canada, and the timber trade was a major industry throughout the 19th century. Men would be contracted to work far away in logging camps for extended periods of time, and as we saw in the story of the chasse-galerie, *sometimes there were hijinks involved. Here, a lumberjack has a boozy encounter with a hungry bear. This story, originally entitled* "Le Pudding de Noël" *in French, was published in the collection* Contes et récits du Canada, *curated by* Charles Quinel (1886-1946) *and co-author Adhémar de Montgon.*

Bayron Contreras translated this story. A native speaker of Spanish, who studied French and Italian in college, Bayron graduated in May 2020 with a major in World Languages and Cultures and a Certificate in Translation. Bayron also spent a summer studying French at Université Laval in Québec. While the summer program at U Laval was no logging camp, we heard some tales of parties held by Bayron and his friend Kenny at the latter's family chalet near Québec City, a place they affectionately dubbed "Chez Kenny." We do not know if there was ever any whisky involved…but we are fairly sure there were never any bears inside the house.

Tom Caribou, Jacques Blamont, and Hugues Lamy were three lumberjacks who lived together in a nice, warm wooden house on the edge of the forest. Jacques and Hugues were peaceful and hard-working men; on the contrary, Tom Caribou was rowdy, stubborn, rebellious and boastful. Headstrong, but with a good heart. According to him, he was afraid of nothing and respected nothing. At home, he was great fun, and when he set himself to work, he did the work of ten men, because he was so strong and robust; a true colossus.

Only Tom Caribou had one flaw, and from that flaw flowed all the others: he was a drunk. When he drank, he became lazy and quarrelsome, so his two associates sought to cure him of this evil inclination. It was a difficult task. Tom Caribou was one of those drunks who drank alone and secretly. It was impossible even for his buddies, who lived with him, to know where he was hiding the whisky that he was consuming so excessively. At first, they had managed to find the hiding place where he buried his bottles. But then he moved them, and he chose his spot so well that all their investigations were futile.

When the three of them were at the work site, Tom would suddenly disappear. Soon he'd come back smelling of alcohol and the trio's peaceful lives would be disrupted.

On the evening of December 24, Jacques and Hugues decided to go to midnight mass; the church was four miles away, but such a small trip was no big deal for these fellows.

"Will you be coming with us, Tom?"

Caribou shook his head: "I do not want to go to midnight mass."

The others didn't want to start an argument: "As you wish."

As they were about to leave, Tom, who was in the best of spirits, said to them: "I still want to take part in the joy of this night. I'm going to make you a honey and whiskey pudding that you'll find here when you get back, and we'll have a great time diving into it together!"

Jacques and Hugues left. On the way, they joked: "Our Tom must be in a good mood to share his whiskey with us!"

All alone in the house, Caribou prepared honey cake batter and placed it on the table; there was nothing left but to sprinkle it generously with alcohol.

This alcohol was not, as you can imagine, inside the house, where no hiding place would have been safe. The living quarters of the three guys consisted of a single room with a stove in the corner; in the middle, a table with some stools; against the walls, the three bunks of the occupants. The most important piece of furniture, the glory and pride of the owners, was a vast cabinet, taller than a man, which the three had made with their bare hands and which contained all their possessions, mainly their spare clothes, a few—very few—linens, their personal trinkets and their tools. In all this, where could even a single bottle of whiskey have been concealed?

Tom opened the door and went out into the woods.

The night was splendid, clear, like beautiful winter nights are in Canada. A thick carpet of snow covered the ground; the snow clung to the trees, causing a kind of fringe to dangle from the branches, one that shimmered under the white rays of the moon. The forest was wrapped in a great icy silence. The animals, living in this solitude, slept in their shelters.

Being a man who knows where he is going, Caribou headed for a crooked, forked cherry tree that projected its black, tormenting silhouette along the edge of a small clearing. With the greatest ease,

as the knots of the tree formed a real ladder, Tom climbed up to the fork of the cherry tree. There, there was a hole, for the wood was rotten. Caribou pushed the snow aside with the back of his hand and grabbed a small jug wrapped in straw that rested in the cavity as if in a nest. He took the container, uncorked it, and took a big whiff. The smell of alcohol awakened a greedy sensation within him; he lifted the bottle to his lips and drank a few long gulps.

It was very cold, did we mention that? Tom was wearing his fur mittens which made him a little clumsy, and thus a little stream of the precious liquid dribbled down the side of his mouth. This made him laugh. He closed the jug, tucked it lovingly under his arm, climbed back down and resumed the path towards the cabin.

At the foot of the cherry tree, between its knotty roots, a bear had dug a hole in the snow. He was asleep, this gentle mammal, and he planned to keep on napping until the end of the winter. This is the custom of bears; long before men, they ascribed to the axiom "*qui dort dîne*"—he who sleeps, dines—and, since they find it difficult to get their dinner during the winter because of the migration of their regular game, they instead sleep peacefully under the snow.

So our bear, while he was blissfully dreaming of the things about which bears dream, suddenly felt a burning in the left eye. He opened up his eye; the burning became more intense. At the same time, a thin stream of liquid descended along his cheek and reached his mouth. He stuck his tongue out and tasted the liquid.

He had never tasted such a drink; it was not melted snow, which he knew exceedingly well lacked all flavor. It was spicy, bitter, and strong. The bear sneezed. After sneezing, he took another lick. Decidedly, this unknown liquid was bad. A third time, he put his tongue to his lips and his opinion changed. It changed so much that he had a sudden desire to indulge more abundantly in this mysterious liquor.

Cautiously, he emerged from his hole, shook off the snow that sprinkled his fur and smelled the night air. Bears have a keen sense of smell, and he smelled whiskey—because we know it was a little bit of that alcohol that Tom dripped from the cherry tree—and it was drifting away. The bear, without hesitation, began to track the scent.

Caribou, quite cheerful, brightened by the gulps of alcohol he enjoyed while up in the tree, returned to the house. He took off his fur coat, his mittens, warmed himself for a moment near the stove which he loaded with some logs and, returning to the table, he poured a good amount of the whiskey onto the honey pudding. "The rest we shall drink afterwards," he muttered, laughing alone at the surprise in store for his companions.

With a wooden spoon, Tom had to stir the honey and the whisky together in order to obtain a very firm dough.

He was so absorbed in this work that he did not hear the door open with a thrust—the latch had never been solidly closed—nor the beautiful brown bear making his dignified entrance. It was only when the bear announced his presence with a welcome grunt that Tom turned around. At first, he believed it to be a prank from one of his roommates and shouted jovially:

"Hello, Hugues! You can't fool me with this masquerade."

The bear shook his head from right to left, so Tom resumed:

"It's not Hugues, so Jacques. Get rid of that bearskin and come eat the pudding."

The bear growled a second time. Caribou realized that it was not a joke, but he figured it was the whiskey messing with his mind. “I never thought the smell of whiskey alone could make you so intoxicated.” He forgot what he had imbibed in the forest.

The mammal finished inspecting the room and happy with its pleasant warmth, took a few steps forward. Tom no longer doubted the reality of his vision. He was seized with a terror all the more violent because it was delayed.

Run! How? The bear was in front of the door. Exit through the window? Difficult task; the window was high, well barricaded, and Caribou would not have time to open it before the bear had reached it.

The wild animal made a movement. Instinctively, Caribou rushed into a corner of the room. Waddling along—you have no idea how fast a bear can waddle—the bear joined him. Tom ducked into another corner, the bear was there at the same time as him. You would have thought that man and beast were playing a game together.

Tom was hoping that if he passed by the door, during this pursuit around the room, he could get out. The animal had certainly foreseen this tactic, as he was maneuvering in a way that prevented Tom from approaching the exit. An idea crossed Caribou’s mind, and he was mad he hadn’t thought of it earlier: the cabinet! With a punch, he pushed a stool towards the piece of furniture. He jumped on this stool, tipping it over with his foot, while, with a hearty bound, he perched himself on top of the cabinet.

The mammal was left disappointed, he searched for a way to follow the man. He scratched the cabinet doors a little with his strong claws but eventually gave up. He had just smelled the scent of whisky, that pleasant smell which, after drawing him from his sleep, had caused him to be so disturbed.

He saw the pudding on the table and headed towards it. Oh the happiness! Honey! Precisely the thing he loves most in the world and what nature defends from greedy bears with those stupid little buggers that sting your nose!

There, the honey was all gathered, no bees to fear, no wax sticking to your teeth. The bear tasted this delectable food, and he realized that it was made even better by the unknown liquor in which it bathed.

Eating food slowly is a human thing; a bear does not have to constrain himself. In four licks, the dish was clean; no more honey, no more whiskey.

“As long as he doesn’t consider the whiskey an appetizer and he doesn’t want me as the roast!” thought poor Caribou, from the top of his cabinet, watching his pudding disappear.

The bear had no such carnivorous appetite; the whiskey made a warm happy feeling run through his limbs. He had a heavy stomach, and this heaviness soon went up to his head. He yawned two or three times, looked around lazily, laid down without a care on the floor beside the table, and fell asleep.

As he saw the bear fall asleep, Tom Caribou felt reassured. In other times, he would certainly have come down from his perch, would have taken an axe and he would have split the head of the wild beast. Tonight, he did not even think about it. He was very tired. His fear had passed, he felt an incredible heaviness in the brain. The whiskey paralyzed him, he did not resist it, and soon he too fell asleep.

Later that night, Jacques and Hugues returned to the house.

“What! The door is not closed!” Remarked Hugues.

“Tom must be out looking for snow to melt,” Jacques suggested.

“Unless he’s planning a prank.”

“Let’s enter with caution and beware.”

The two friends advanced into the room. An unusual concert welcomed them. Hugues was surprised.

“What’s going on? It sounds like Tom is snoring.”

“He’s snoring really loudly,” replied James, “and he’s also not in his bunk.”

At the same time, the two friends uttered two simultaneous exclamations. One, raising his eyes, had seen Tom asleep on top of the cabinet, the other, lowering them, had seen the bear cuddling his whiskey.

What happened to the bear, you can guess. As for Caribou, he was cured of his drunkenness because his buddies joked with him: “You see how the bears like alcohol. One day you will be really drunk and one of them will eat you, thinking that whiskey Caribou is just as tasty as whiskey pudding!”

We think that since then they lived happily ever after, but we don’t really know, since we’ve not been up to see them.

FIN

XII.

The Cremation

By Aristide Filiatreault

English translation by Rachael Kuper

The Cremation © Sam Stickney 2022

This funny short story–or rather, long joke–is another selection from the anthology Contes, anecdotes et récits canadiens *(1910), edited and published by Aristide Filiatreault (1851-1913). The original French title is* "La Crémation" *and the joke revolves around a play on words. The French expression "dur à cuire" literally translates as "hard to cook" but is used in French to describe a person who is very reserved or rough around the edges. In English, we might say someone is a "tough cookie" or "hard as nails". Translator Rachael Kuper, who graduated with a major in English, minor in French, and Certificate in Translation in May 2020, chose to translate the phrase as "a hard nut to crack." We think the joke still works!*

Two gentlemen on the wrong side of 80 years accompanied the dead body of another old friend to the crematorium. He had asked them before his death to help with the cremation. Because they respected the last wishes of their friend, the gentlemen helped, impassively, with the ceremony.

After more than three hours, the dead body was still cooking away, and the two old men were getting tired. Suddenly, one said to the other:

“Tell me this, Hyacinthe, did you know that this was going to take so long?”

“I didn’t. But as you remember, our friend Honoré always was, throughout his life, a hard nut to crack!”

FIN

XIII.

The Art of Hunting Feux-Follets

By Charles-Edmond Rouleau

English translation by Dr. Elizabeth Blood

The Art of Hunting Feux-Follets © Sam Stickney 2022

The English translation of "feu-follet*" is will-o'-the-wisp, which is known today to be a scientific phenomenon: a fleeting flash of light caused by the combustion of gasses emanating from decaying natural matter often found in areas like marshlands or graveyards. Early European settlers in North America often viewed these lights as spirits, orbs, or magical fairies. In the collective imagination of the early French-Canadian settlers, however, the* feux-follets *were more demonic. They were considered to be evil spirits who tried to lure people into their trap in order to destroy them. By the mid 19th century,* feux-follets *still existed in folktales and legends told by the elders, but French-Canadian authors and historians were starting to try to dispel this superstition by offering various explanations for the mysterious lights. One author claimed the eerie lights seen across the river on the Ile d'Orléans at various times of the year were the lanterns of fishermen going to check their eel traps when low tide occurred at night. In this tale, the author relates the story of a man who triumphantly defeated a* feu-follet*, offering yet another possible explanation.*

Originally entitled "L'Art de chasser les feux-follets" *and published by Charles-Edmond Rouleau (1841-1926) in the collection* Légendes Canadiennes *(1901), this story has been translated into English by Dr. Elizabeth Blood, who enjoyed the challenge of translating folktales along with her students during the long days of quarantine and remote teaching in 2020. She even thinks she might have seen a* feu-follet *in her yard, at dusk on a warm early summer night…but it was probably just some fireflies.*

It was springtime. The sky was calm and serene. The weather was magnificent, not a single cloud on the horizon—you might think this a school child's composition, but no matter, we'll continue on nonetheless. The sun, nearing the end of its day, was spreading golden rays across the Laurentians mountains. Nature was proclaiming the return of warm weather. Harmonious melodies were emanating from the wooded countryside: the streams were softly babbling as they meandered through the prairies; the foliage was gently rustling in the light breeze; the flocks were quietly grazing in the fields; workers were returning from the fields humming joyfully. In a word, the earth was coming back to life. It was, no more and no less, one of those delightful days that the poets write about.

After contemplating this amazing scenery, we continued on our walk, which the late M. H. Larue might have called a pensive promenade. We were headed to Beauport. But which way should we turn? The panoramic vistas before us were so impressive! The air we were breathing was so pure! And all of nature's wonders seemed so sublime!

Québec, the old city built by Champlain, the Gibraltar of the Americas, beckoned us. Flooded, so to speak, by resplendent rays of light and surrounded by a blanket of calm waters traversed by hundreds of charming little boats, the city once called Stadaconé looked like a queen seated on a golden throne wearing a stunning crown and surrounded by her courtiers. We began to imagine the whole trajectory of the history of our young and beautiful country. But, let's admit it, on this particular day we were more interested in admiring artistic masterpieces than in studying history. So, we pushed those thoughts from our minds and headed towards the city with the single goal of finding something to entertain us.

We headed up the Rue du Pont to the intersection with Rue Saint-Joseph, turned back and took a left and then headed east, walking nonchalantly as if we were noblemen strolling through the streets of Paris.

We looked to the right and then to the left. Nothing could satisfy our curiosity. Perhaps we are too demanding. But what can you expect? Journalists are as curious as a ten year old (some would say as an old maid, but we respect the fair sex too much to make such a comparison).

We forged on without a plan, and arrived at the palace. The Palace of the Intendant of New France! The edifice again evokes memories of historical events; but let's put them aside. Here, we stopped briefly and looked around in all directions. Nothing caught our attention, nothing pleased us, nothing amused us. We were about to head back when we saw an assembly near the Pacific railroad station. We joined the circle formed by a dozen people surrounding a man from the Saint-Roch neighborhood. The man, well known for his skill as a hunter, was speaking and gesticulating. The listeners were paying close attention to the story the hunter was telling. We did the same, "listening with both ears," as they say. We had arrived just in time, for the man from Saint-Roch was beginning a quite interesting tale. Here is what we heard. It's a true story, as you shall see. Let's listen as the hunter begins to talk...

One evening, I was sitting near the wood burning stove, smoking my pipe, thinking about something that may seem trivial to you, sirs; but it was bothering me. I had twelve beautiful hens and didn't know where to put them for the winter because I had no suitable place to keep them. What to do? I didn't want to sell them, for my hens used to pop out eggs like crazy. I came up with a thousand ideas, but voted them all down myself. In my mind, there's only one political party, the left and the "loyal opposition" (how can you be loyal and be the opposition!) don't exist. I was still thinking about what to do when someone knocked on my door. I quickly opened it and found a nice farmer from Charlesbourg. After the customary greetings, my nocturnal visitor informed me of the reason for his travels.

"Would you happen to have a *Petit Albert* in your possession?" He asked.

"Of course," I said.

"Would you mind lending it to me for a day or two? Here's why: for the past couple of weeks, we have seen a feu-follet in our cellar. It appears every night at the same time. My wife and children are so scared that they won't even go downstairs, not even during the day! I can find out how to get rid of it with your *Petit Albert*."

"You do not need a book of magic spells to rid yourselves of this feu-follet. I can take care of it for you myself, if you'd like."

"Oh! You are so good, sir; I will pay whatever you ask if you can do what you are promising."

"It won't cost too much. Say, what if you took care of my twelve hens for the winter? We could call it even."

"Yes, I'll happily take that deal."

"Wonderful. I'll be at your place tomorrow night at eight o'clock. Goodbye."

The next night, at the agreed upon time, I arrived at the man's home. They all ran to me, greeting me as if I were their savior. They thought me nothing less than an important man, and I was laughing to myself about this outrageous welcome. But without wasting any time, I got to work. I said to the farmer: "You told me that a feu-follet appears each day at the same time."

"Correct, sir."

"Can it be seen right now?"

"I'm sure of it. My feu-follet always appears in the same place, in the northwest corner of the cellar; it is no bigger than an egg and has a long glimmering tail like that of a comet, which spans the length of the house."

"That's good. I will now go down to the cellar. Open the trap door."

"But wait. We will give you a candle."

"No, not that. I do not need any light. And, if you hear any noises, do not come down. I may be endangering myself by engaging in this battle, but please do not come down and do not say a word."

The door opened, and I plunged into the darkness armed only with a big club.

I saw the feu-follet right away in the exact spot I had been told to look. I jumped into combat. I sure found myself in a pickle, or rather in a jam, for I was dealing with a formidable opponent. I

thrashed it around, but it kept coming back at me. I screamed bloody murder, but nothing seemed to scare it. On the contrary, the more I yelled, the stronger it came back at me. I had been battling it for a quarter of an hour, and victory seemed doubtful. I was tired and sweating like a pig; no lie, my hair was drenched with sweat. The feu-follet mocked my weakness; it flitted around me making noises that sounded like squeals of joy and sardonic laughter. I was enraged. I grabbed my bat in both hands, rushed towards my enemy, and finally struck it down. The combat was over, and I had won. The feu-follet evaporated in a waft of blue smoke.

The owner opened the trap door when I called out, and I rejoined the crowd of folks who had come from all over to witness my great feat. They were all trembling in fear. Exhausted, I fell into the chair they brought over. I was about to pass out. The mother and daughters came over with a cloth and a bowl of water and patted my face with cool water until I returned to my senses.

“I’m totally fine now,” I told them. “It was a nasty business, but like Caesar at the Battle of Pharsalus, I can now say: *Veni, vidi, vici!* I came, I saw, I conquered.”

All the good people gathered there were shocked and dared not take my word for it.

“You all seem to doubt my victory over the enemy. Well, then! Let the owner come down to the cellar with me, and he will be convinced that the feu-follet is gone forever.”

The owner of the house and four of his friends, who had come to see me rid the home of the feu-follet, took me up on my offer and were happy to confirm that I was telling the truth; the comet-tailed spirit was no longer in the northwest corner of the cellar. When they announced this happy news, everyone breathed a sigh of joy.

Just when I was about to go greet the assembled crowd, the owner showered me with thanks and blessings and said to me:

“Your hens, you shouldn’t bother bringing them all the way here. I’ll come pick them up myself.”

And the next day, my twelve hens went to winter in Charlesbourg.

The hunter had finished his tale, and the audience was silent. It was clear that not all of his listeners believed his story. One of them spoke up and asked for further explanation about how he was able to defeat the feu-follet.

“It’s simple,” he said. “All you need to do is imagine that the battle I described never happened, for there was no feu-follet at all. When I went down to the cellar, I saw a light in the corner. I approached the area and discovered a small crack in the wall where the light from the neighboring house was shining through. So, I took some mud and packed it into the crack to fill up the hole. And, *voilà*, the feu-follet with the long comet-like tail was no more. Now you know my secret for hunting feux-follets.”

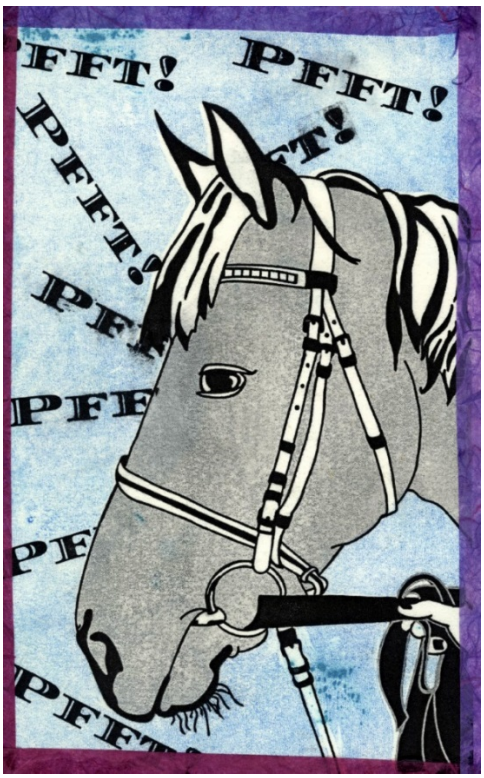
Upon hearing these last words, everyone roared with laughter, and then the crowd of curious Quebeckers quietly dispersed.

FIN

XIV.
Pfft! Pfft! Pfft!

By Aristide Filiatreault

English translation by Rachael Kuper



Pfft! Pfft! Pfft! © Sam Stickney 2022

Yet another humorous story from the anthology Contes, anecdotes et récits canadiens *(1910), edited and published by Aristide Filiatreault (1851-1913), with another great translation by Rachael Kuper, Salem State class of 2020. Again, we find a long set up for a joke that is a play on words, but this time, the joke was on her professor, who tried to correct Rachael's translation by changing the names back to those in the original story. "The man's name is 'Proulx', not 'Pfaff'," I said to her, with a tinge of annoyance in my voice. "Why would you change it? Pfaff isn't even a French-sounding name." Rachael blinked, thought for a second, and looked me directly in the eye and calmly explained: "It's a fart joke, Dr. Blood. If you don't change the name, it doesn't make sense." Alas, sometimes the student becomes the master.*

Mr. J. M. Tellier was campaigning for the votes of his constituents several years ago. He was accompanied by two formidable debaters, sirs C. A. Cornellier and the lawyer Joseph Martel, who, for over thirty years, had taken on all the campaigns in the two provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

I do not have the honor of knowing Mr. Tellier well myself, having met him and spoken with him only once or twice, but I have heard a lot about him from mutual friends, and I know for a fact that he likes to laugh.

There is no need to tell you about my friend Cornellier in minute detail, since Charles-Auguste was better known in the country than the late Barabas was in his time and among his people. His brilliant successes as a criminal lawyer, his virile and catchy eloquence, his sound judgment, so well balanced, earned him the high reputation he deserved. Not to mention his presence of mind allowed him to strike a chord that was always just right. Every time he saw an opening, he would jump right in. I am indebted to him for many of the anecdotes and memories I am publishing today, and they are not unfunny, far from it.

Joseph Martel was a tall man, sparkling in spirit, but with a devilish bite. It's quite simple: there were electric sparks that flitted in the air when he uttered a word, and he would captivate a crowd every time he spoke.

Here we are, in the presence of this trio.

Our three friends were at Joe Rivard's hotel, waiting for their horses to be harnessed to go to Saint-Félix-de-Valois, a distance of about twenty miles away, when the Montreal convoy stopped at the station. Joe came in with a traveler whom everyone knew but whom they pretended not to see. He was a bald, toothless man, his forehead slightly depressed, his eyes piercing like tendrils, his ears wide in the shape of a fan moving all by themselves under the force of the breeze, his nose planted above a longitudinal slit announcing a hole of unfathomable depth; below him, a harmless chin.

The four set off, each in an individual "four-wheeler" carriage driven by a farmer, in the following order: Corneillier was at the head of the caravan, closely followed by Tellier, Joseph Martel in third place, and finally the stranger.

All went down to the only inn in Saint-Félix-de-Valois and rushed into a vast smoky room that smelled of Canadian tobacco, approached the counter and asked for a *petit coup*.

The stranger continued to stick to himself, and as he saw that no one was taking mind of him, he became impatient and approached Mr. Martel:

“You don't know me, do you? Well, I came from Montreal on purpose to fight you, and I alone will tear you apart. My name is Pfaff.”

“That's true, I'm not sure I remember you, but my horse knows you well.”

“What do you mean? Your horse knows me!”

“That's right! All along the way, he stood with his tail in the air, upright, you know, and I could hear him saying, ‘Pffft! Pffft! Pffft! Pffft!’ I thought he was talking to you.”

FIN

XV.
Never Put Off to Tomorrow What You Can Do Today

By Paul Stevens
English translation by Bayron Contreras

Never Put Off to Tomorrow © Sam Stickney 2022

Paul Stevens (1830-1881) was a Belgian-born writer and teacher who immigrated to Québec in the 1850's. This story, originally entitled "Il ne faut jamais remettre au lendemain ce qu'on peut faire le jour même" *comes from his collection* Contes populaires, *published in Montréal in 1867. Like many of his stories, this tale is inspired by a popular maxim: "Don't put off to tomorrow what you can do today." It reveals the belief that hard work ultimately pays off and shows us the*

nostalgia that many still had in the late 19th century for the by-gone innocence of simple country life. The story takes place in Lévis, located across the river from Québec City on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, where you can still enjoy a peaceful afternoon gazing across the river and watching the boats drift by.

Bayron Contreras, who translated this tale, graduated from Salem State University amid a pandemic in May 2020. He majored in World Languages and Cultures (French concentration) with a Certificate in Translation. A self-avowed procrastinator in college, he was particularly amused at having been assigned this tale to translate…and he did meet the deadline to turn it in.

"Who, by his own fault, loses an egg, may as well lose an ox.
Do your work the day before rather than the next."

While I was in Québec City, I had so often admired, from the top of its walls, the village of Pointe-Lévis whose houses seem to have climbed up the hill on the other side of the St. Lawrence. One day, I decided to cross the river to get a closer look at this scenic landscape that I never tired of admiring from afar.

Well, I brought back from this field trip a story and this singular aphorism which may serve as an introduction: "The rain is the friend of the ducks in general and of the people of letters in particular."

And here's why:

I had been ambling along for quite some time (always following the "old road", like Jean Lafortune) and taking deep breaths of the pure fragrant air that you can only find in the countryside, when I suddenly realized that it was going to rain.

Big, ugly black clouds gradually covered this beautiful blue sky that had graced my departure; the dazzling face of the sun, which apparently does not like clouds, was soon covered and only threw, from time to time, on its beautiful pastoral scene, some sad, pale rays, reminiscent of a dying man's farewell.

At the same time, a furious wind from the north swept in, blowing in gusts and lifting all the dust on the road up in thick swirls.

Without being an augur or astronomer, I concluded that the storm was not far away and that the most cautious option was to turn back. But as soon as I had made a few hundred steps in the direction of the pier, a cloud that seemed to be dancing over my head suddenly burst. Drops of rain as large as coins began to fall, mixed with hailstones cracking down on the dust of the road lightly at first, then with violence and torrents, as if the sky were falling.

In a blink of an eye, I had climbed the three or four steps onto the porch of a farmhouse to my left, and without wasting any time knocking, I entered through the front door at the same time as the people who owned the house were coming in through the back door.

After we greeted each other, with the satisfaction you feel when you are wet but are happy you didn't get wetter, I went straight up to a man who was about forty years old who seemed to me to be the head of the family, and while shaking his hand, asked permission to "light up."

"Sit down, sir, and make yourself at home," he replied, "or rather come in here, you will be more comfortable."

While saying these words he opened the door to a rather large room, serving as a living room, which was dazzlingly clean.

Curious as I was to learn about the numerous family members of my impromptu host, I did not inquire, especially since a huge dog, muddy up to his ears and with rain dripping from his coat, persisted in coming to smell the sides of my garment, despite the repeated commands of its masters, both large and small, modulated in all tones.

"Go to bed, Castor!"

And so I was seated in the living room, sitting comfortably and smoking a blissful tobacco pipe with my host, who also smoked. We were talking about many things, when my attention suddenly focused on a beautiful golden frame that adorned the top of the fireplace and which seemed to me to contain two lines of beautiful writing.

While chatting, I tried to decipher the lines, but not quickly enough to my liking. So, I got up and stood in front of the frame and read this great truth: *You should never put off to tomorrow what you can do today*.

"This is an admirable maxim," I said, "It is unfortunate that it is not always followed to the letter."

"Yes," answered my host, "for all who follow it end up doing well. At this time, after thirty years, I still believe that this maxim is the best legacy left to me by my late father, whose soul rests with God."

"So this frame came from your father?"

"Yes, sir, and it's quite a story."

"A story, you say, eh? Well, this is lucky since I'm actually looking for a story. Would you do me the pleasure of telling it? I bet it must be very interesting."

"Very gladly, especially since the rain will not stop anytime soon. It's a northeasterly wind; we'll likely be in it for three full days."

It wouldn't have bothered me if he said it would last for a month. I had a story, a story "with the scent of the St. Lawrence in it," as Mr. Taché so aptly put it, so I laid down my pipe to better collect myself, and my host began to tell the tale that follows.

You have to know, sir, that I wasn't born here. My late father had only a small piece of land at Saint-Lazare, the parish of the "beggars" as they called it, a few miles down the way. Well, a long time ago, on a summer night, the good old fellow was socializing with a few neighbors, and the conversation turned to lawyers, and all of them—except my father, who had never dealt with legal folks—agreed that there is nothing better in the world than a "consultation."

One of them, thanks to a "consultation," had made fifty dollars. Another had seen the boundaries of his land increase by half an acre the whole length of his field. In short, Baptiste was outdoing Pierre, and Pierre was outdoing Baptiste. So, my late father returned home with his thoughts swirling, determined to have his very own "consultation" at the first opportunity.

The harvest was approaching; so, one morning, just after he had cut his wheat, he harnessed his fair horse and went to Québec.

After searching for a lawyer's office for some time, he found one, walked in and sat down, waiting for his turn. He took care to place his hat on the ground and to pull his legs under his seat so as to occupy as little space as possible in the office, which felt a bit like a sanctuary.

"Well! Old man, how can I be of service?" asked the lawyer after dismissing the other visitors.

"I'd like a consultation, sir."

"Very well; tell me about your situation."

"What situation, sir? I have no situation. I just want a consultation, and a good one, like the one you gave Baptiste, for example."

"But do you have a trial pending?"

"No."

"Do you want to sue your neighbors?"

"*Sainte croix bénite!* May God strike me down."

"But there must always be some reason to ask for a consultation."

"No, sir," said my father, rising up suddenly, "this is what I heard." And he began to tell all that he had heard at Saint-Lazare. "Baptiste gained ten acres of land with a consultation; Big Pierre got fifty bucks with a consultation. The lawyers' consultations are good, you see, so give me one for heaven's sake, so I'll have the same good luck that they did."

"All right, old man, sit down," the lawyer said, pretending to open some of the large books from his library.

My father followed him with his eyes. Soon he saw him write a few words, and after a moment he handed him, with a solemn look, the piece of paper that you have just read, and that my late father received with the deepest respect.

“It is a penny for your consultation, my good man, follow it well and may God bless you.”

“Thank you,” said my father, paying the man of the law, “may God bless you too, and good health to you.”

When he got out to the street, he carefully folded his “consultation” in four, wrapped it in his handkerchief, and fastened it to his jacket, on the side of the heart, with four pins.

By two o'clock, sir, about the time we sat down to chat, my late father was back home; and as you can imagine, he had nothing more urgent to do than to show off his “consultation.” I still remember it as if it happened yesterday. Since there was no one who could read at home, and I was only seven or eight years old, I was sent to fetch the schoolmaster. I ran like the wind. As soon as he arrived, my father gladly handed him the paper he had brought back from the city, and the schoolmaster read it aloud, declaring that it was beautifully written.

“Well said,” added my late father, carefully clutching his “consultation,” along with his marriage contract and First Communion image.

The heat was overwhelming that day.

“Go and rest, my poor José,” said my dear old mother, whom you saw when you entered, “it seems to me that you have earned it well, and you will have all the more energy tomorrow to bring in our grain.”

“Think about it, my dear,” answered my father, who finished putting on his working clothes. “Are you thinking about it?...You should never put off to tomorrow what you can do today. We’ll get our grain in right away, and if Baptiste has finished with his, he’ll give us a hand. Go see if he’s home, boy!”

By evening, our harvest was in the barn. That night, there arose a ferocious storm. A northeasterly wind, blowing like today, that lasted three days. The rain fell in torrents. If our harvest had remained outside, it would have been lost. Since then, my late father always followed the “consultation” to the letter, and so as not to lose sight of it, it was he who had it framed.

A decade later, we left Saint-Lazare to settle here. God has blessed us, we are happy and joyous, and everything is working for us because: “We never think of putting off to tomorrow that which we can do today.”

FIN