

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
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Ringfield A Novel

S. Frances (Susie Frances) Harrison

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: S. Frances (Susie Frances) Harrison

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8472-2302-3

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RINGFIELD

A NOVEL

BY

S. F. HARRISON,

"SERANUS"

AUTHOR OF "THE FOREST OF BOURG-MARIE," "PINE, ROSE
AND FLEURE DE LIS," "CROWDED OUT, AND OTHER
SKETCHES," "THE CANADIAN BIRTHDAY BOOK," ETC.

TORONTO

THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY, LIMITED

1914

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CHAPTER I

THE HOLY WATERS

"..... the sounding cataract Haunted me like a passion."

In a country of cascades, a land of magnificent waterfalls, that watery hemisphere which holds Niagara and reveals to those who care to travel so far north the unhackneyed splendours of the Labrador, the noble fall of St. Ignace, though only second or third in size, must ever rank first in all that makes for majestic and perfect beauty.

It is not alone the wondrous sweep and curve of tumbling brown water that descends by three horseshoe ledges to a swirl of sparkling spray. It is not alone the great volume of the dark river above sent over, thrust down, nor the height from which the olive is hurled to the white below. So, too, plunge and sweep other falls—the Grand Loup in Terrebonne, the Petit Loup in Joliette, the Pleureuse, the Grand Lorette, the Tuque, the big and little Shawenigan, the half-dozen or so "Chaudière," the Montmorenci or La Vache, but none of these can equal the St. Ignace in point of dignified, unspoilt approach and picturesque surroundings. For a mile above the cataract the river runs, an inky ribbon, between banks of amazing solitariness; no clearing is there, no sign of human habitation, hardly any vestige of animal life. The trees stand thick along the edges, are thick towards the high rocky table-land that lies on either side; it is, in short, a river flowing through a forest. And when it drops, it drops to meet the same impassable wooded banks; it is now a cataract in a forest. Rocks are turbulently heaped upon one hand; upon the other, the three great ledges meet the shock of the descending waters and define the leap by boldly curved thick masses of olive, topaz, and greenish jelly. Where it is brown, it is nearest the rocky bed; where olive, more water is going over; and where green, it is so solid that twice a yard measure alone will penetrate the reach of rock beneath. The white of its flowing spray is whiter than the summer cloud, and the dark green of the pines framing it, shows often black against the summer blue. Its voice—roar as of wind or steady thunder—calling always—has silenced other voices. Birds do not build, nor squirrels climb too near that deep reverberating note,

although the blue heron, fearless, frequently stands in summer on the spray-washed rock and seems to listen. Below the filmy smoke of rainbowed arches there is quiet black water, with circles, oily, ominous, moving stealthily along, and below these—a quarter of a mile down—the rapids, swift, impetuous, flashing, ushering in the latter half of the St. Ignace, here at last the river of life and motion, bearing stout booms of great chained logs, with grassy clearings and little settlements at each side, curving into liliated bays, or breaking musically upon yellow beaches, a River of Life indeed, and no longer a river of Death and Negation!

For in the countryside, the *paroisse* of Juchereau de St. Ignace, the upper part or inky ribbon of the river was frequently called by that gloomy name; a Saguenay in miniature, icy cold, black, solitary, silent, River of Death, who shall live in sight of your blackness? Who may sing aloud at his toil, whether he dig, or plant, or plough, or trap, or fish? Beautiful though the grand sweep and headlong rush of the fall, the people of the settlement avoid its sombre majesty and farms were none and smaller clearings few along the upper St. Ignace. A quarter of a mile back from the fall lay the village, holding a cluster of poor houses, a shop or two, a blacksmith's forge, a large and well-conducted summer hotel patronized for the fishing, a sawmill, depending for power on the Rivière Bois Clair, a brighter, gayer stream than the St. Ignace, and lastly a magnificent stone church capable of containing 1500 people, with a Presbytère attached and quarters for some Recollet brothers.

Such was and is still, doubtless, with a few modifications, the hamlet of St. Ignace, fair type of the primitive Lower Canadian settlement, dominated by the church, its twin spires recalling the towers of Notre Dame, its tin roof shining like silver, the abode of contented ignorance and pious conservatism, the home of those who are best described as a patient peasantry earning a monotonous but steady livelihood, far removed from all understanding of society or the State as a whole. With each other, with Nature, and with the Church they had to do—and thought it enough to keep the peace with all three.

Yet change was in the air, destiny or fate inevitable. The moving on process or progressive spirit was about to infect the obscure,

remote, ignorant, contented little *paroisse* of Juchereau de St. Ignace when one April morning there stood upon the edge of rock nearest the great fall, still partly frozen into stiff angular masses, two men of entirely different aspects, tastes, and habits, yet both strongly agreed upon one essential point, the importance of religion, and, more particularly, the kind of religion practised and set forth by the Methodist Church.

The elder was Monsieur Amable Poussette, owner of the sawmill at Bois Clair and proprietor of the summer hotel, a French Canadian by birth and descent and in appearance, but in clothes, opinions, and religious belief a curious medley of American and Canadian standards. Notwithstanding the variety of his occupations, one of which was supposed to debar him from joining the Methodist Church, he was an ardent member of that community. The younger man was a Methodist preacher, working as yet on the missionary circuit, and to him M. Poussette was holding forth with round black eyes rolling at the landscape and with gestures inimitably French.

"See, now," he was saying, standing perilously near the wet edge of rock, "there is no difficult thing! I own the ground. I give the money. I have it to give. My friend Romeo Desnoyers, of Three Rivers, he shall come at this place, at this point, and build the church. It will be for a great convenience, a great success. My guests, they will attend. I myself will see to that. I shall drive them over."

The younger man smiled faintly. It was necessary at times to restrain M. Poussette. He pulled him back now, but gently, from the slippery rock.

"In the summer—yes, of course, I see that. I see that it is needed then. The rest of the year — —"

"The rest of the year! Bigosh—*excusez*,—I tell you, it is needed *all* the year round. Look at that big ugly barn full of bad pictures—yes, sir, I went to Mass regular, when I was a boy—*petit garçon*—well, every one was the same, sure. But now, ah!—*excuse me*. A seegar? Yes? You will thry one?"

The minister declined, but M. Poussette lit one of a large and overfragrant variety, while he frowned at the fall, rolled his large

eyes around again and finally led the way through thick underbrush and across fallen logs to the deeply-rutted highroad where a horse and *caleche* awaited them. The prospective church builder took a long last look and then said:—

"And you—you shall preach the first sermon. How long does it take to build nice church, nice pretty Methodist church—not like that big stone barn I used to go to Mass in?"

At this the Reverend Joshua Ringfield did more than smile. He threw back his fine head and laughed heartily.

"Oh—Poussette!" he cried; "you're the funniest fellow, the funniest man alive! Ask somebody else how long it takes to build any kind of church—how should I know! But if you're in earnest, and I admire you for it if you are, and I wish there were more like you, I'll come and do the preaching with pleasure. You'll require a bigger man than I am, I'm afraid though."

"No, no," pronounced Poussette with fierce and friendly emphasis, driving away at a reckless pace. "See now, this is it. This is my affair. It will be my church, and my friend, Mister Romeo Desnoyers of Three Rivers, shall build it. Bigosh—*excusez*; I'll have only friends in it; you're my friend, I am good Methodist since I hear you preach, and Goddam,—well, *excusez* again, sir, I'll have you and no other. We'll say July, and you will have one, two, three months to get the sermon ready. Get on there, *m'rch donc, animal-l-!* I am too long away from my business."

Ringfield, who was right in supposing that his friend and patron had tasted of the "viskey blanc" before starting, refrained from any criticism of the scheme, promising his services merely, should they be required, and that evening saw him depart for the west to attend a course of lectures at a theological college. Before many hours the tumbling, foaming Fall, the lonely river, the Bois Clair settlement and Poussette were almost forgotten. A camping trip with friendly Ontarians succeeded the lectures, then ensued a fortnight of hard reading and preparation for the essay or thesis which his Church demanded from him as token of his standing and progress, he being as yet a probationer, and thus the summer passed by until on the 6th of August a letter reached him from the Lower Province bidding him attend at the opening services of the new Methodist church

recently built at St. Ignace through the enterprise and liberality of M. Amable Poussette. The letter, in Canadian French, had an English postscript; "I pay all expense. Me, Amable Poussette, of Juchereau de St. Ignace."

Ringfield put the letter away with a frown. He was busy, in demand, ambitious. Born in one of the Maritime Provinces, he owed all he was to Ontario, and now—Ontario claimed him. Return he might some day to the rapid rivers, the lonely hills, the great forests and the remote villages, but not now. Now, just as he was beginning to fill his place, to feel his power, to live and work, and above all preach, a man among men, a man for men, he resented any interruption in his plan of existence, in his scheme of self-consecration. The big bustling cities of Western Ontario and of the State of Ohio, where some of his holidays had been spent, were very far away from the hamlet of Juchereau de St. Ignace, a mere handful of souls—yes, Souls, and here Ringfield stopped and reconsidered. After all, there was his word, and Poussette, though rough, was not a bad fellow. It would take, say, three or four days out of his last week of recreation, but still, he was engaged, earnestly and sincerely engaged in the work of bringing souls to Christ, and, no small thing, his expenses would be paid. The better counsel, as it seemed, prevailed, and he went east the next night.

Meanwhile the energetic Poussette, mill owner of Bois Clair, rich man and patron of the countryside, had put his plan into execution, and in the space of three months a tract of rocky ground on the north side of the Fall had been cleared and a neat, convenient church erected from the native woods, furnished with benches, a table and chair for the minister, and a harmonium. St. Ignace was quite excited, for the thing seemed pure imbecility to the French, who were to a man true Catholics, but Poussette stoutly asserted his belief that before long conversions to Methodism would be numerous and for the present there were his "guests," a couple of families from Beaulac, the foreman of the mill—*voilà un congrégation très distingué!* Much, too, would depend upon the choice of a preacher, and Poussette was cherishing the hope that some inducement might be held out to retain Ringfield in their midst.

Of this the younger man was at first ignorant. Impatience at detention in such a place warred with strict conceptions of duty, yet his excellent training in subservience to his Church and a ready gift of oratory assisted him in a decision to do the best he could for the new *paroisse*, heretofore so distinctively Catholic, of Juchereau de St. Ignace. That M. Poussette's congregation was more *distingué* than numerous did not for a moment affect the preacher on the warm, rainy Sunday when he stood within sound of the great Fall and read from the forty-seventh chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel. Romeo Desnoyers, thin, keen, professional looking; Poussette and his wife, the latter an anaemic, slightly demented person who spoke no English; Mr. Patrick Maccartie, foreman of the mill, who likewise was ignorant of English, despite his name, and the Methodist contingent from Beaulac were planted along the front seats at markedly wide intervals, for Poussette had erected his church on a most generous scale. Summer visitors of all denominations trickled in out of the moist forest arcades, so that when Ringfield rose to conduct the service he was facing seventy or eighty people, far more than he or the architect had expected to see, although doubtless inferior in numbers to the great throngs existing in the imagination of M. Poussette.

The opening hymn and prayer over, the young man took his Bible and read in natural colloquial tones but with considerable emphasis as follows: —

"Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the fore-front of the house stood towards the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar".

A slight pause was here made by the reader and caused a rustling in the porch to be the more distinctly heard, as a late comer, a lady, evidently afraid of the weather because of cloak and veil, moved to a seat near the door and sat down. The reader, seeing only a female figure merge itself in the congregation, resumed.

"Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that

looketh eastward; and behold, there ran out waters on the right side."

Again there was that slight pause, and again, too, a rustling as of silken feminine garments. Ringfield caught Poussette's eye, but it was somewhat vacant; evidently the analogy of the picture was lost upon him.

"And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a River that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a River that could not be passed over. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river."

With the climactic force and aptness of the description his voice had grown louder till it completely filled the building. His fine head erect, his steady passionless blue-gray eyes fastened more on the dark sopping cedars outside the window than upon the people in front, his large but as yet undeveloped frame denoting strength, vigour, rude health—all testified to his unsullied manhood, to the perfection of sane mind in pure body which it was his highest joy and duty to retain.

There is an asceticism among Methodists of his class which does not differ greatly from that enforced by other religious orders. Thus Ringfield, handsome, healthy, with pulsing vitality, active senses and strong magnetic personality, was consecrated to preaching and to what was called "leading souls to Christ" as much as any severe, wedded-to-silence, befrosted and tonsured priest. And over and beyond this self-consecration there was the pleasure involved in fulfilling his mission, and herein perhaps he differed from the conventional and perfunctory Roman. The sound of his own voice, the knowledge that he was bound to interest, to convince, even to convert, the very attitude in which he stood, with chest inflated, head thrown back, hand uplifted, all these things delighted him, communicated to his lively sentient side many delightful and varying sen-

sations. As the *prima donna* among women so is the popular preacher among men.

"Now, when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, ... everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, ... And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it ... they shall be a place to spread forth nets: their fish shall be according to their kinds, exceeding many.... And by the river, upon the bank ... shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaves shall not fade, ... because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for a medicine."

This concluded the customary reading of a portion of Scripture, but when the second hymn had been sung and the preacher began his sermon he asked the congregation to let their minds revert for a moment to that Vision of the Holy Waters which he was about to take as a text. Yet, although throughout the sometimes flowery, sometimes didactic, but always eloquent address which followed, more than one present looked for a reference to the landscape outside, so markedly similar to that pictured by the prophet, nothing of the kind occurred. The four thousand years of religious growth, the spread of Gospel knowledge and counsel, the healing qualities of the Stream of Salvation flowing down the ages through a dark world of sin and affliction, the medicine for the soul of man and the spiritual food for his spiritual nature—these were the thoughts so warmly sketched and the lessons so skilfully drawn from the passage in question.

At the conclusion of the service, Ringfield was moving out quietly behind the others, with that sense of slight collapse upon him which frequently follows oratorical efforts, when Poussette and the architect, Desnoyers, turned back and shook hands with him.

Madame Poussette, standing irresolutely near the door, weak, vacant-eyed, badly dressed, was staring at another woman, the veiled and cloaked figure who had rustled in during the reading of Scripture, but the veil was lifted now and the cloak hanging over her arm. The face and form were undoubtedly those of a most attrac-

tive, youthful and well-dressed person, in fine, a lady, and Ringfield at once recollected her presence in the congregation. So mutual was their recognition, that, accustomed to being sought in this manner, he was about to inquire if she wished to speak with him, when Poussette came between them, taking his wife's arm, and the opportunity was lost. In a few moments they were driving along the road to Bois Clair, and the young minister, looking back, could discern no trace of the lady. So little did he connect her with the remote wildness of the place, so different did she appear even in a moment's glimpse from the natives and visitors alike, who had made up the morning assembly, that he did not ask M. Poussette for any information. As for the latter, no achievement had ever put him into such good humour with himself as the building of the new church; and the Sunday dinner at which M. Romeo Desnoyers and the Rev. Joshua Ringfield were guests of honour, was eaten with the utmost relish and hilarity. Cabbage soup, the French Canadian staple; young Beauport ducks, dressed plentifully with onions; deep pies in earthen bowls containing jointed chickens and liver cut in shapes; apples and pears baked in the oven with wine and cream; good butter, better bread, and indifferent ice cream, *crème d'office*, made up one of the characteristic meals for which "Poussette's" was famous, and it need not detract from Ringfield's high mental capacities to state that having partaken of this typical and satisfying fare, he was compelled, when he could escape the importunities of his French friends, to walk away by himself along the muddy highroad for the benefit of his health.

CHAPTER II

THE WHITE PEACOCK

"Nor shall the aerial powers
Dissolve that beauty – destined to endure
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Thro' all vicissitudes."

Rocky slabs and mounds of Laurentian gneiss, forest trees and a young wood interspersed with mats of juniper constituted the chief scenic attraction in the vicinity of the Fall, so that it might truly be said, all roads at St. Ignace lead to the Fall—it was so much more directly beautiful. But Ringfield from choice walked away from the river and struck inland by a miry sloppy path which was nevertheless beautiful too, bordered by splendid ferns, mossy trunks upholding miniature pines in their rich brown crevices, plants of aromatic teaberry, and at intervals shallow golden pools where the wild white arum bloomed alongside the pinkish purple of other water flowers.

His thoughts were not, however, upon all the lovely detail at his feet, for just at present he found himself more interesting than the landscape. A very unusual thing had occurred. Poussette, during the drive home, had anticipated a more serious proposal on the morrow by asking him briefly and to the point whether he would remain in the Province, at St. Ignace in fact, and become pastor of the new church. The small stipend which in all probability the Methodist Church would cheerfully pay was to be augmented by Poussette's own gift. Not content with presenting his favourite denomination with a building out of debt and ready for use, he proposed also to equip it with a pastor after his own heart, for he combined thoroughness with an impulsive nature in a manner peculiar to himself. This Poussette was indeed a character, an original. Very fat and with every indication of becoming fatter still, fond of tweed suits and white waistcoats, and quick at picking up English in a locality where the tongue was not prominent, he owed much of his progressive spirit to the teachings of a certain French Canadian named Magloire le Caron, born in the county of Yamachiche but latterly an American citizen. This Magloire or Murray Carson, as he was known in Topeka, Kansas, had numbered the young Poussette among his hearers some ten years before when on tour in his native country in the interests of a Socialistic order. The exodus of French Canadians to the neighbouring "States" is frequently followed by a change of name, so that, M. Lapierre or St. Pierre becomes Mr. Stone, M. Dupont Mr. Bridge, M. Leblanc Mr. White, M. Lenoir Mr. Black, Leroy, King, and so on.

Poussette was, to his credit, among those who gauged Le Caron's sentiments fairly correctly, and he had no wish either to leave his country or to change his name. Succeed he would—and did; make money above all, but make it just as well in St. Ignace or Bois Clair as in the States; learn English but not forget French, both were necessary; become "beeg man," "reech man," but marry and live where his name would be carried down most easily and quickly. As for his change of religion, it was a good evening's entertainment to "seet roun," in the bar and listen to Poussette's illustrated lecture entitled "How I became a Methodist"; the illustrations being repeated sips of whisky and water, imitations of different priests and anecdotes of indifferent preachers.

Most of this Ringfield was familiar with, but while Poussette as a sort of accepted "character," a chartered entertainer, was one thing, Poussette as a patron, importunate, slightly quarrelsome, and self-willed, was another. For a few months the arrangement might work well enough, but for the entire winter—he thought of the cold, of the empty church at service time, of the great snowdrifts lasting for weeks and weeks, and more than this too, he thought of his plans for self-improvement, the lectures he would miss, the professors and learned men he would not meet, the companionship of other students he must perforce renounce.

Reflections of this kind were continuing to occupy him when he suddenly saw through the trees on the right hand the gleam of open water. He had reached Five Mile Lake or Lac Calvaire, a spot he had heard of in connexion with fabulous catches of fish, and on the opposite side of the shining water he also discerned the roof of a large house, painted red, and somewhat unusual in shape. That is, unusual in the eyes of the person who saw it, for the steep, sloping roof, the pointed windows, the stone walls, and painted doors, are everyday objects in French Canada. The house at Lac Calvaire was a type of the superior farm-house built in the eighteenth century by thrifty and skilful fur-traders, manufacturers and lesser seigneurs, differing rather in appearance and construction from the larger chateaux or manoirs, a few of which at one time existed along the banks of the St. Laurent, but of which now only three well-preserved examples survive. As the size of the original grants of land or seigneuries varied, some eighteen, twenty and twenty-five

miles long by six, eight, twelve miles wide, others less, certainly few larger, so the lesser properties, accounts of which are rare among works dealing with the state of society at the time, varied also. While numerous collections of facts pertaining to the original fiefs or seigneuries (usually called *cadastres*) exist, it is not so common to meet with similar attempts to define and describe the exact position of others in the early colony beside the seigneurs. The large landholder figures prominently in colonial documents, but the rise of the trader, the merchant, the notary, the teacher, the journalist, is difficult to follow. Very often the seigneur was also the merchant; to be *grand marchand de Canada* in the new colony signified solid pecuniary success.

As far back as the year 1682 the *Sieur de la Chinay et autres marchands de Canada* equipped, it is presumed at their own expense, several ships, and proceeded to Port Nelson, raiding and burning the Hudson Bay Post, and carrying away sixteen subjects of His Majesty. The *Sieur de Caen* gave his name to the Society of Merchants still farther back, in 1627. Henry, in 1598, and Francis, in 1540, each granted letters patent and edicts confirming certain Court favourites and nobles in possession of the great fur-bearing districts of Hochelaga, Terres Neuves, and also of "*La Baye du Nord de Canada oui a été depuis appelle Hudson est comprise*". It is plain that commerce had as much to do with early colonization as the love of conquest, ecclesiastical ambition, or the desire on the part of jaded adventurers and needy nobles for pastures new. From the *Sieur de Roberval* to the merchant princes of Montreal is an unbroken line of resolute men of business enterprise, bearing in mind only that what the French began, the English, or rather the Scotch, "lifted" with increasing vigour. In 1677 royal permission was given to open mines in Canada in favour of the *Sieur de Lagny*. The "*Compagnie du Castor de Canada*," carried on what even at this day would be regarded as an immense trade in beaver skins. "*La Manon*," wrecked about 1700, carried beaver skins amounting to 107,000,587 livres. The *Sieur Guigne*, known as the Farmer of the Western Domain, paid at one time the sum of 75,000 livres per annum on account of beavers.

In lesser degree the same was true of moose skins and of the finer furs for apparel and ornament, and thus for many a long year hon-

ourable names and well-descended families were found among those who bought and sold and quarrelled and went to law in the spacious marketplace of Le Bas Canada, with the wide and only partially known or understood Atlantic rolling between them and the final court of appeal—His Most Christian *Matie* in France.

Nothing, it is certain, of this was in Ringfield's mind as he looked at the steep roof and the stone walls of the house at Lac Calvaire. The dwelling, like the country surrounding it, held little attraction, still less what is called romance or glamour for him, for his was not a romantic nature. Yet neither was he dull, and therefore the aspect of the house moved him, out of curiosity alone, to skirt the banks of the reed-fringed lake and find a nearer view of what struck him as unusual. This was not difficult, as the lake was a short oval in shape, and before he walked five or six hundred yards he came to the low stone wall or fence which appeared to completely surround the manor and over which he soon was desultorily leaning. The garden grew in front of him somewhat fantastically, with irregular beds marked out with white stones, and directly facing him was a badly hewn, clumsily scooped fountain half filled with weeds and dirty water. Behind the house were trim rows of dark poplars, and there appeared to be a long chain of barns and other farm buildings extending into the very heart of a dense plantation of pine. As he looked, still leaning on the low wall, the place kindled into life and activity. Pigeons came from some point near and settled on the rim of the fountain. From a door at the side issued an old woman with a dish in her hand, followed by a couple of dogs and four cats. These all disappeared among the barns. A minute later a wagon came lazily along the road, driven by a dark-eyed, habitant-hatted man who turned in at a gate without taking much notice of the loiterer. Two plump, dark-eyed servant girls and a little boy came round the corner of the largest barn; they were apparently dressed in their best, carried prayer-books, and were evidently on their way to evening service at St. Ignace, in the handsome church designated by the heretic Poussette as a "big stone barn full of bad pictures". Finally there emerged upon the scene, proceeding in a deliberate, dainty, mincing manner along the garden walk, now rapidly drying in a burst of fierce August sunshine, the most wonderful, the most imposing, yet the most exquisite and delicate object Ringfield's eyes

had ever beheld. If a moment before he had thought of retracing his steps and turning away from a house too full of people on a hot Sunday afternoon to permit of further lingering in its vicinity, now, he found it impossible to move, fascinated by the beauty of the rare creature slowly coming towards him. For this was a white peacock, tempted by the sudden radiance out to take the air. It paused for an instant as if to consider the effect and stood, displaying a colossal fan of snowy feathers, tipped with glittering frost-like filaments. Perhaps it intuitively knew that Ringfield had never seen one of its kind before. It continued to stand, while he continued to gaze, and two or three times it shook that resplendent wheel of shining downy plumes, trembling in each sensitive fibre with pride and glorification in its beauty. With each shake, there fell upon the ear the tinkle as of some faint and far-distant fairy bell; it was the friction of the spear-shaped sparkling tips as they met in air.

Ringfield thought it the whitest thing he had ever seen. It was like snow, or sugar, so finely spun and glistening. Then its air of arrogance captivated him—the creature was so fully aware of its charms. He spoke to it and the bird came on nonchalantly; then gracefully executed a wide turn, carrying that shining palpitating tail with it and walked back to the house. At the same moment he old woman with the dish reappeared and commenced driving the bird before her.

"O don't do that!" exclaimed Ringfield, forgetting that probably she knew no English. "The rain is over for a while. Let it have its walk. I've never seen one like it before."

The old woman was smiling as if to encourage him, but he saw directly that she did not understand him. He was answered however, and by a voice from the doorway. The lady he had seen that morning at church was addressing him. Laughing lightly, she came out to the garden and Ringfield advanced to meet her. Thus they had the bird between them.

"I am speaking to the Reverend Mr. Ringfield?" said she pleasantly, and the young man was reassured. This new acquaintance, whether *châtelaine* of the curious house or stranger, spoke excellent English.