

"I cannot" — he mutters — "did he not save
My life from a cold and wintry grave,
When the storm came down from Agioochook,
And the north-wind howled, and the tree-tops
shook —

And I strove, in the drifts of the rushing snow,
Till my knees grew weak and I could not go,
And I felt the cold to my vitals creep,
And my heart's blood stiffen, and pulses sleep!
I cannot strike him — Ruth Bonython!
In the devil's name, tell me — what's to be done?"

Oh! when the soul, once pure and high,
Is stricken down from Virtue's sky,
As, with the downcast star of morn,
Some gems of light are with it drawn —
And, through its night of darkness, play
Some tokens of its primal day —
Some lofty feelings linger still —
The strength to dare, the nerve to meet
Whatever threatens with defeat
Its all-indomitable will! —
But lacks the mean of mind and heart,
Though eager for the gains of crime,
Oft, at this chosen place and time,
The strength to bear this evil part;
And, shielded by this very Vice,
Escapes from Crime by Cowardice.

Ruth starts erect — with bloodshot eye,
And lips drawn tight across her teeth,
Showing their locked embrace beneath,
In the red fire-light: — "Mogg must die!
Give me the knife!" — The outlaw turns,

Shuddering in heart and limb, away —
But, fitfully there, the hearth-fire burns,
And he sees on the wall strange shadows play.
A lifted arm, a tremulous blade,
Are dimly pictured, in light and shade,
Plunging down in the darkness. Hark, that cry!
Again — and again — he sees it fall —
That shadowy arm down the lighted wall!
He hears quick footsteps — a shape flits by! —
The door on its rusted hinges creaks: —
"Ruth — daughter Ruth!" the outlaw shrieks,
But no sound comes back — he is standing alone
By the mangled corse of Mogg Megone!

PART II.

'Tis morning over Norridgewock —
On tree and wigwam, wave and rock.
Bathed in the autumnal sunshine, stirred
At intervals by breeze and bird,
And wearing all the hues which glow
In heaven's own pure and perfect bow,
That glorious picture of the air,
Which summer's light-robed angel forms
On the dark ground of fading storms,
With pencil dipped in sunbeams there —
And, stretching out, on either hand,
O'er all that wide and unshorn land,
Till, weary of its gorgeousness,
The aching and the dazzled eye
Rests gladdened, on the calm blue sky —
Slumbers the mighty wilderness!

The oak, upon the windy hill,
 Its dark green burthen upward heaves —
 The hemlock broods above its rill,
 Its cone-like foliage darker still,
 While the white birch's graceful stem
 And the rough walnut bough receives
 The sun upon their crowded leaves,
 Each colored like a topaz gem;
 And the tall maple wears with them
 The coronal which autumn gives,
 The brief, bright sign of ruin near,
 The hectic of a dying year!

The hermit priest, who lingers now
 On the Bald Mountain's shrubless brow,
 The gray and thunder-smitten pile
 Which marks afar the Desert Isle,*
 While gazing on the scene below,
 May half forget the dreams of home,
 That nightly with his slumbers come, —
 The tranquil skies of sunny France,
 The peasant's harvest song and dance,
 The vines around the hill-sides wreathing,
 The soft airs midst their clusters breathing,
 The wings which dipped, the stars which shone
 Within thy bosom, blue Garonne!
 And round the Abbey's shadowed wall,
 At morning spring and even-fall,
 Sweet voices in the still air singing —
 The chant of many a holy hymn —
 The solemn bell of vespers ringing —

* Mt. Desert Island, the Bald Mountain which overlooks Frenchman's and Penobscot Bay. It was upon this island that the Jesuits made their earliest settlement.

And hallowed torch-light falling dim
 On pictured saint and seraphim!
 For here beneath him lies unrolled,
 Bathed deep in morning's flood of gold,
 A vision gorgeous as the dream
 Of the beatified may seem,
 When, as his Church's legends say,
 Borne upward in ecstatic bliss,
 The rapt enthusiast soars away
 Unto a brighter world than this:
 A mortal's glimpse beyond the pale —
 A moment's lifting of the veil!

Far eastward o'er the lovely bay,
 Penobscot's clustered wigwams lay;
 And gently from that Indian town
 The verdant hill-side slopes adown,
 To where the sparkling waters play
 Upon the yellow sands below;
 And shooting round the winding shores
 Of narrow capes, and isles which lie
 Slumbering to ocean's lullaby —
 With birchen boat and glancing oars,
 The red men to their fishing go;
 While from their planting ground is borne
 The treasure of the golden corn,
 By laughing girls, whose dark eyes glow
 Wild through the locks which o'er them flow.
 The wrinkled squaw, whose toil is done,
 Sits on her bear-skin in the sun,
 Watching the huskers, with a smile
 For each full ear which swells the pile;
 And the old chief, who never more
 May bend the bow or pull the oar,

Smokes gravely in his wigwam door,
Or slowly shapes, with axe of stone
The arrow-head from flint and bone.

Beneath the westward-turning eye
A thousand wooded islands lie —
Gems of the waters! — with each hue
Of brightness set in ocean's blue.
Each bears aloft its tuft of trees
Touched by the pencil of the frost,
And, with the motion of each breeze,
A moment seen — a moment lost —
Changing and blent, confused and tossed,
The brighter with the darker crossed,
Their thousand tints of beauty glow
Down in the restless waves below,
And tremble in the sunny skies,
As if, from waving bough to bough,
Flitted the birds of paradise.
There sleep Placentia's group — and there
Père Breteaux marks the hour of prayer;
And there, beneath the sea-worn cliff,
On which the Father's hut is seen,
The Indian stays his rocking skiff,
And peers the hemlock boughs between,
Half trembling, as he seeks to look
Upon the Jesuit's Cross and Book.*
There, gloomily against the sky,
The Dark Isles rear their summits high;
And Desert Rock, abrupt and bare,

* Father Hennepin, a missionary among the Iroquois, mentions that the Indians believed him to be a conjurer, and that they were particularly afraid of a bright silver chalice which he had in his possession. "The Indians," says Père Jerome Lallamant, "fear us as the greatest sorcerers on earth."

Lifts its gray turrets in the air —
Seen from afar, like some strong hold
Built by the ocean kings of old;
And, faint as smoke-wreath white and thin,
Swells in the north vast Katadin:
And, wandering from its marshy feet,
The broad Penobscot comes to meet
And mingle with his own bright bay.
Slow sweep his dark and gathering floods,
Arched over by the ancient woods,
Which Time, in those dim solitudes,
Wielding the dull axe of Decay,
Alone hath ever shorn away.

Not thus, within the woods which hide
The beauty of thy azure tide,
And with their falling timbers block
Thy broken currents, Kennebeck!
Gazes the white man on the wreck
Of the down-trodden Norridgewock —
In one lone village hemmed at length,
In battle shorn of half their strength,
Turned, like the panther in his lair,
With his fast-flowing life-blood wet,
For one last struggle of despair,
Wounded and faint, but tameless yet!
Unreaped, upon the planting lands,
The scant, neglected harvest stands:
No shout is there — no dance — no song:
The aspect of the very child
Scowls with a meaning sad and wild
Of bitterness and wrong.
The almost infant Norridgewock
Essays to lift the tomahawk;

And plucks his father's knife away,
 To mimic, in his frightful play,
 The scalping of an English foe:
 Wreathes on his lip a horrid smile,
 Burns, like a snake's, his small eye, while
 Some bough or sapling meets his blow.
 The fisher, as he drops his line,
 Starts, when he sees the hazels quiver
 Along the margin of the river,
 Looks up and down the rippling tide,
 And grasps the firelock at his side.
 For Bomazeen * from Tacconock
 Has sent his runners to Norridgewock,
 With tidings that Moulton and Harmon of York
 Far up the river have come:
 They have left their boats — they have entered the
 wood,
 And filled the depths of the solitude
 With the sound of the ranger's drum.

On the brow of a hill, which slopes to meet
 The flowing river, and bathe its feet —
 The bare-washed rock, and the drooping grass,
 And the creeping vine, as the waters pass —
 A rude and unshapely chapel stands,
 Built up in that wild by unskilled hands;
 Yet the traveller knows it a place of prayer,
 For the holy sign of the cross is there:
 And should he chance at that place to be,
 Of a Sabbath morn, or some hallowed day,
 When prayers are made and masses are said,

* Bomazeen is spoken of by Penhallow as "the famous warrior and chieftain of Norridgewock." He was killed in the attack of the English upon Norridgewock, in 1724.

Some for the living and some for the dead,
 Well might that traveller start to see
 The tall dark forms, that take their way
 From the birch canoe, on the river-shore,
 And the forest paths, to that chapel door;
 And marvel to mark the naked knees
 And the dusky foreheads bending there,
 While, in coarse white vesture, over these
 In blessing or in prayer,
 Stretching abroad his thin pale hands,
 Like a shrouded ghost, the Jesuit * stands.

* Père Ralle, or Rasles, was one of the most zealous and indefatigable of that band of Jesuit missionaries who, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, penetrated the forests of America, with the avowed object of converting the heathen. The first religious mission of the Jesuits, to the savages in North America, was in 1611. The zeal of the fathers for the conversion of the Indians to the Catholic faith knew no bounds. For this, they plunged into the depths of the wilderness; habituated themselves to all the hardships and privations of the natives; suffered cold, hunger, and some of them death itself, by the extremest tortures. Père Brebeuf, after laboring in the cause of his mission for twenty years, together with his companion, Père Lallamant, was burned alive. To these might be added the names of those Jesuits who were put to death by the Iroquois — Daniel, Garnier, Buteaux, La Riborerde, Goupil, Constantin, and Liegeouis. "For bed," says Father Lallamant, in his *Relation de ce qui s'est dans le pays des Hurons*, 1640, c. 3, "we have nothing but a miserable piece of bark of a tree; for nourishment, a handful or two of corn, either roasted or soaked in water, which seldom satisfies our hunger; and after all, not venturing to perform even the ceremonies of our religion, without being considered as sorcerers." Their success among the natives, however, by no means equalled their exertions. Père Lallamant says — "With respect to adult persons, in good health, there is little apparent success; on the contrary, there have been nothing but storms and whirlwinds from that quarter."

Sebastien Ralle established himself, some time about the year 1670, at Norridgewock, where he continued more than forty

Two forms are now in that chapel dim,
 The Jesuit, silent and sad and pale,
 Anxiously heeding some fearful tale,
 Which a stranger is telling him.
 That stranger's garb is soiled and torn,
 And wet with dew and loosely worn;
 Her fair neglected hair falls down
 O'er cheeks with wind and sunshine brown;
 Yet still, in that disordered face,
 The Jesuit's cautious eye can trace
 Those elements of former grace,
 Which, half effaced, seem scarcely less,
 Even now, than perfect loveliness.

With drooping head, and voice so low
 That scarce it meets the Jesuit's ears —

years. He was accused, and perhaps not without justice, of exciting his praying Indians against the English, whom he looked upon as the enemies not only of his king, but also of the Catholic religion. He was killed by the English, in 1724, at the foot of the cross, which his own hands had planted. This Indian church was broken up, and its members either killed outright or dispersed.

In a letter written by Ralle to his nephew, he gives the following account of his church, and his own labors. "All my converts repair to the church regularly twice every day; first, very early in the morning, to attend mass, and again in the evening, to assist in the prayers at sunset. As it is necessary to fix the imagination of savages, whose attention is easily distracted, I have composed prayers, calculated to inspire them with just sentiments of the august sacrifice of our altars: they chant, or at least recite them aloud, during mass. Besides preaching to them on Sundays and Saints' days, I seldom let a working day pass, without making a concise exhortation, for the purpose of inspiring them with horror at those vices to which they are most addicted, or to confirm them in the practice of some particular virtue." *Vide Lettres Édifiantes et Cur.*, vol. vi., p. 127.

While through her clasp'd fingers flow,
 From the heart's fountain, hot and slow,
 Her penitential tears —
 She tells the story of the woe
 And evil of her years.

"Oh Father, bear with me; my heart
 Is sick and death-like, and my brain
 Seems girdled with a fiery chain,
 Whose scorching links will never part,
 And never cool again.
 Bear with me while I speak — but turn
 Away that gentle eye, the while —
 The fires of guilt more fiercely burn
 Beneath its holy smile;
 For half I fancy I can see
 My mother's sainted look in thee.

"My dear lost mother! sad and pale,
 Mournfully sinking day by day,
 And with a hold on life as frail
 As frosted leaves, that, thin and gray,
 Hang feebly on their parent spray,
 And tremble in the gale;
 Yet watching o'er my childishness
 With patient fondness — not the less
 For all the agony which kept
 Her blue eye wakeful, while I slept;
 And checking every tear and groan
 That haply might have waked my own;
 And bearing still, without offence,
 My idle words, and petulance;
 Reproving with a tear — and, while
 The tooth of pain was keenly preying

Upon her very heart, repaying
My brief repentance with a smile.

“Oh, in her meek, forgiving eye
There was a brightness not of mirth —
A light, whose clear intensity
Was borrowed not of earth.
Along her cheek a deepening red
Told where the feverish hectic fed;
And yet, each fatal token gave
To the mild beauty of her face
A newer and a dearer grace,
Unwarning of the grave.
'Twas like the hue which autumn gives
To yonder changed and dying leaves,
Breathed over by his frosty breath;
Scarce can the gazer feel that this
Is but the spoiler's treacherous kiss,
The mocking-smile of Death!

“Sweet were the tales she used to tell
When summer's eve was dear to us,
And, fading from the darkening dell,
The glory of the sunset fell
On wooded Agamenticus,—
When, sitting by our cottage wall,
The murmur of the Saco's fall,
And the south wind's expiring sighs
Came, softly blending, on my ear,
With the low tones I loved to hear:
Tales of the pure — the good — the wise —
The holy men and maids of old,
In the all-sacred pages told; —
Of Rachel, stooped at Haran's fountains,

Amid her father's thirsty flock,
Beautiful to her kinsman seeming
As the bright angels of his dreaming,
On Padan-aran's holy rock;
Of gentle Ruth — and her who kept
Her awful vigil on the mountains,
By Israel's virgin daughters wept;
Of Miriam, with her maidens, singing
The song for grateful Israel meet,
While every crimson wave was bringing
The spoils of Egypt at her feet;
Of her — Samaria's humble daughter,
Who paused to hear, beside her well,
Lessons of love and truth, which fell
Softly as Shiloh's flowing water;
And saw, beneath his pilgrim guise,
The Promised One, so long foretold
By holy seer and bard of old,
Revealed before her wondering eyes!

“Slowly she faded. Day by day
Her step grew weaker in our hall,
And fainter, at each even-fall,
Her sad voice died away.
Yet on her thin, pale lip, the while,
Sat Resignation's holy smile:
And even my father checked his tread,
And hushed his voice, beside her bed:
Beneath the calm and sad rebuke
Of her meek eye's imploring look,
The scowl of hate his brow forsook.
And, in his stern and gloomy eye,
At times, a few unwonted tears
Wet the dark lashes, which for years
Hatred and pride had kept so dry.

"Calm as a child to slumber soothed,
As if an angel's hand had smoothed
The still, white features into rest,
Silent and cold, without a breath
To stir the drapery on her breast,
Pain, with its keen and poisoned fang,
The horror of the mortal pang,
The suffering look her brow had worn,
The fear, the strife, the anguish gone —
She slept at last in death!

"Oh, tell me, father, *can* the dead
Walk on the earth, and look on us,
And lay upon the living's head
Their blessing or their curse?
For, oh, last night she stood by me,
As I lay beneath the woodland tree!"

The Jesuit crosses himself in awe —
"Jesu! what was it my daughter saw?"

"*She* came to me last night.
The dried leaves did not feel her tread;
She stood by me in the wan moonlight,
In the white robes of the dead!
Pale, and very mournfully
She bent her light form over me.
I heard no sound, I felt no breath
Breathe o'er me from that face of death:
Its blue eyes rested on my own,
Rayless and cold as eyes of stone;
Yet, in their fixed, unchanging gaze,
Something, which spoke of early days —
A sadness in their quiet glare,

As if love's smile were frozen there —
Came o'er me with an icy thrill;
Oh God! I feel its presence still!"

The Jesuit makes the holy sign —
"How passed the vision, daughter mine?"

"All dimly in the wan moonshine,
As a wreath of mist will twist and twine,
And scatter, and melt into the light —
So scattering — melting on my sight,
The pale, cold vision passed;
But those sad eyes were fixed on mine
Mournfully to the last."

"God help thee, daughter, tell me why
That spirit passed before thine eye!"

"Father, I know not, save it be
That deeds of mine have summoned her
From the unbreathing sepulchre,
To leave her last rebuke with me.
Ah, woe for me! my mother died
Just at the moment when I stood
Close on the verge of womanhood,
A child in every thing beside;
And when my wild heart needed most
Her gentle counsels, they were lost.

"My father lived a stormy life,
Of frequent change and daily strife;
And — God forgive him! left his child
To feel, like him, a freedom wild;
To love the red man's dwelling place,

The birch boat on his shaded floods,
 The wild excitement of the chase
 Sweeping the ancient woods,
 The camp-fire, blazing on the shore
 Of the still lakes, the clear stream, where
 The idle fisher sets his wear,
 Or angles in the shade, far more
 Than that restraining awe I felt
 Beneath my gentle mother's care,
 When nightly at her knee I knelt,
 With childhood's simple prayer.

"There came a change. The wild, glad mood
 Of unchecked freedom passed.
 Amid the ancient solitude
 Of unshorn grass and waving wood,
 And waters glancing bright and fast,
 A softened voice was in my ear,
 Sweet as those lulling sounds and fine
 The hunter lifts his head to hear,
 Now far and faint, now full and near —
 The murmur of the wind-swept pine.
 A manly form was ever nigh,
 A bold, free hunter, with an eye
 Whose dark, keen glance had power to wake
 Both fear and love — to awe and charm;
 'Twas as the wizard rattlesnake,
 Whose evil glances lure to harm —
 Whose cold and small and glittering eye,
 And brilliant coil, and changing dye,
 Draw, step by step, the gazer near,
 With drooping wing and cry of fear,
 Yet powerless all to turn away,
 A conscious, but a willing prey!

"Fear, doubt, thought, life itself, ere long
 Merged in one feeling deep and strong.
 Faded the world which I had known,
 A poor vain shadow, cold and waste,
 In the warm present bliss alone
 Seemed I of actual life to taste.
 Fond longings dimly understood,
 The glow of passion's quickening blood,
 And cherished fantasies which press
 The young lip with a dream's caress, —
 The heart's forecast and prophecy
 Took form and life before my eye,
 Seen in the glance which met my own,
 Heard in the soft and pleading tone,
 Felt in the arms around me cast,
 And warm heart-pulses beating fast.
 Ah! scarcely yet to God above
 With deeper trust, with stronger love
 Has prayerful saint his meek heart lent,
 Or cloistered nun at twilight bent,
 Than I, before a human shrine,
 As mortal and as frail as mine,
 With heart, and soul, and mind, and form,
 Knelt madly to a fellow worm.

"Full soon, upon that dream of sin,
 An awful light came bursting in.
 The shrine was cold, at which I knelt;
 The idol of that shrine was gone;
 A humbled thing of shame and guilt,
 Outcast, and spurned and lone,
 Wrapt in the shadows of my crime,
 With withering heart and burning brain,
 And tears that fell like fiery rain,
 I passed a fearful time.

“There came a voice — it checked the tear —
 In heart and soul it wrought a change; —
 My father’s voice was in my ear;
 It whispered of revenge!
 A new and fiercer feeling swept
 All lingering tenderness away;
 And tiger passions, which had slept
 In childhood’s better day,
 Unknown, unfelt, arose at length
 In all their own demoniac strength.

“A youthful warrior of the wild,
 By words deceived, by smiles beguiled,
 Of crime the cheated instrument,
 Upon our fatal errands went.
 Through camp and town and wilderness
 He tracked his victim; and, at last,
 Just when the tide of hate had passed,
 And milder thoughts came warm and fast,
 Exulting, at my feet he cast
 The bloody token of success.

“Oh God! with what an awful power
 I saw the buried past arise,
 And gather, in a single hour,
 Its ghost-like memories!
 And then I felt — alas! too late —
 That underneath the mask of hate,
 That shame and guilt and wrong had thrown
 O’er feelings which they might not own,
 The heart’s wild love had known no change;
 And still, that deep and hidden love,
 With its first fondness, wept above

The victim of its own revenge!
 There lay the fearful scalp, and there
 The blood was on its pale brown hair!
 I thought not of the victim’s scorn,
 I thought not of his baleful guile,
 My deadly wrong, my outcast name,
 The characters of sin and shame
 On heart and forehead drawn;
 I only saw that victim’s smile —
 The still, green places where we met —
 The moon-lit branches, dewy wet;
 I only felt, I only heard
 The greeting and the parting word —
 The smile — the embrace — the tone, which made
 An Eden of the forest shade.

“And oh, with what a loathing eye,
 With what a deadly hate, and deep,
 I saw that Indian murderer lie
 Before me, in his drunken sleep!
 What though for me the deed was done,
 And words of mine had sped him on!
 Yet when he murmured, as he slept,
 The horrors of that deed of blood,
 The tide of utter madness swept
 O’er brain and bosom, like a flood.
 And, father, with this hand of mine ” —
 “Ha! what didst thou?” the Jesuit cries,
 Shuddering, as smitten with sudden pain,
 And shading, with one thin hand, his eyes,
 With the other he makes the holy sign —
 “I smote him as I would a worm; —
 With heart as steeled — with nerves as firm:
 He never woke again!”

"Woman of sin and blood and shame,
Speak — I would know that victim's name."

"Father," she gasped, "a chieftain, known
As Saco's Sachem — MOGG MEGONE!"

Pale priest! What proud and lofty dreams,
What keen desires, what cherished schemes,
What hopes, that time may not recall,
Are darkened by that chieftain's fall!
Was he not pledged, by cross and vow,
To lift the hatchet of his sire,
And, round his own, the Church's foe,
To light the avenging fire?
Who now the Tarrantine shall wake,
For thine and for the Church's sake?
Who summon to the scene
Of conquest and unsparing strife,
And vengeance dearer than his life,
The fiery-souled Castine?*

Three backward steps the Jesuit takes —
His long, thin frame as ague shakes:
And loathing hate is in his eye,
As from his lips these words of fear
Fall hoarsely on the maiden's ear —
"The soul that sinneth shall surely die!"

* The character of Ralle has probably never been correctly delineated. By his brethren of the Romish Church, he has been nearly apotheosized. On the other hand, our Puritan historians have represented him as a demon in human form. He was undoubtedly sincere in his devotion to the interests of his church, and not over-scrupulous as to the means of advancing those interests. "The French," says the author of the History of Saco and Biddeford, "after the peace of 1713, secretly promised to supply the Indians with arms and ammunition, if they would renew hostilities. Their principal agent was the celebrated Ralle, the French Jesuit." — p. 215.

She stands, as stands the stricken deer,
Checked midway in the fearful chase,
When bursts, upon his eye and ear,
The gaunt, gray robber, baying near,
Between him and his hiding place;
While still behind, with yell and blow,
Sweeps, like a storm, the coming foe.
"Save me, O holy man!" — her cry
Fills all the void, as if a tongue,
Unseen, from rib and rafter hung,
Thrilling with mortal agony;
Her hands are clasping the Jesuit's knee,
And her eye looks fearfully into his own; —
"Off, woman of sin! — nay, touch not me
With those fingers of blood; — begone!"
With a gesture of horror, he spurns the form
That writhes at his feet like a trodden worm.

Ever thus the spirit must,
Guilty in the sight of Heaven,
With a keener woe be riven,
For its weak and sinful trust
In the strength of human dust;
And its anguish thrill afresh,
For each vain reliance given
To the failing arm of flesh.