



Evangeline

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North American

Advanced
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The seizure by England of the country that soon afterward was rechristened Nova Scotia was one of the cruellest events in history. The land was occupied by a good and happy people who had much faith and few laws, plenty to eat and drink, no tax collectors nor magistrates, in brief, a people who were entitled to call themselves Acadians, for they made their land an Arcady. Upon them swooped the British ships, took them unarmed and unoffending, crowded them aboard their transports,—often separating husband and wife, parents and children,—scattered them far and wide, beyond hope of return, and set up the cross of St. George on the ruins of prosperity and peace. On the shore of the Basin of Minas can still be traced the foundations of many homes that were perforce deserted at that time, and among them are the ruins of Grand Pre.

Here lived Evangeline Bellefontaine and Gabriel Lajeunesse, who were betrothed with the usual rejoicings just before the coming of the English. They had expected, when their people were arrested, to be sent away together; but most of the men were kept under guard, and Gabriel was at sea, bound neither he nor she knew whither, when Evangeline found herself in her father's house alone, for grief and excitement had been more than her aged parent could bear, and he was buried at the shore just before the women of the place were crowded on board of a transport. As the ship set off her sorrowing passengers looked behind them to see their homes going up in flame and smoke, and Acadia knew them no more. The English had planned well to keep these people from coming together for conspiracy or revenge: they scattered them over all America, from

Newfoundland to the southern savannas.

Evangeline was not taken far away, only to New England; but without Gabriel all lands were drear, and she set off in the search for him, working here and there, sometimes looking timidly at the headstones on new graves, then travelling on. Once she heard that he was a coureur des bois on the prairies, again that he was a voyageur in the Louisiana lowlands; but those of his people who kept near her inclined to jest at her faith and urged her to marry Leblanc, the notary's son, who truly loved her. To these she only replied, "I cannot."

Down the Ohio and Mississippi she went—on a raft—with a little band of those who were seeking the French settlements, where the language, religion, and simplicity of life recalled Acadia. They found it on the banks of the Teche, and they reached the house of the herdsman Gabriel on the day that he had departed for the north to seek Evangeline. She and the good priest who had been her stay in a year of sorrow turned back in pursuit, and for weary months, over prairie and through forest, skirting mountain and morass, going freely among savages, they followed vain clues, and at last arrived in Philadelphia. Broken in spirit then, but not less sweet of nature for the suffering that she had known, she who had been named for the angels became a minister of mercy, and in the black robe of a nun went about with comforts to the sick and poor. A pestilence was sweeping through the city, and those who had no friends nor attendants were taken to the almshouse, whither, as her way was, Evangeline went on a soft Sabbath morning to calm the fevered and brighten the hearts of the dying.

Some of the patients of the day before had gone and new were in their places. Suddenly she turned white and sank on her knees at a bedside, with a cry of "Gabriel, my beloved!" breathed into the ears of a prematurely aged man who lay gasping in death before her. He came out of his stupor, slowly, and tried to speak her name. She drew his head to her bosom, kissed him, and for one moment they were happy. Then the light went out of his eyes and the warmth from his heart. She pressed his eyelids down and bowed her head, for her way was plainer now, and she thanked God that it was so.

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