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The handkerchief

Roch Carrier

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ROCH CARRIER

THE HANDKERCHIEF

On my seventh birthday, that summer, mother offered me as a gift a blue silk handkerchief embroidered with my initials right in the left corner. She had ordered it from Dupuis Frères' catalogue, a big store name in those days in the big city. I enjoyed, every washing monday, watching my handkerchief beside the sparkling white bed sheets and my father's grey wool socks, dangling on the backyard clothes line. I loved that handkerchief.

Then the first day of school came, in early September, and I was of age and I walked with anxiety towards the red brick building, erected behind Mr. Thomas' grocery store. When I got there the kids were already playing, and running, and fighting, but no one noticed me. I yelled. Nobody listened. So I got mad and I pulled my blue silk handkerchief out of my pocket and raised it and waved it yelling: «I have the nicest one! I have the nicest one...»

Two minutes later a big crowd had gathered around me, and then one bully tried to grab my handkerchief and an enormous fight broke out. Fists were bleeding, noses were cut, bruises blossomed like

flowers on our bare legs. Suddenly every one stopped. The school bell had rang. I looked everywhere in the dust for my handkerchief but I could not find it. The children fell in ranks, I followed, and we started singing the national anthem. But then, raising our eyes, every one turning his head towards the flag mast, we discovered that my blue silk handkerchief was flying high, attached to the rope, right over the Fleur-de-lys, so much higher than the Post Office Red Ensign! Tears of pride glittered in my eyes for I had the nicest handkerchief in the village and everyone was there to admire it.