Title: A Busy Year at the Old Squire's

Author: C. A. Stephens

Release date: November 29, 2006 [eBook #19968]
Most recently updated: June 8, 2016

Language: English

E-text prepared by
the Project Gutenberg Online Distributed Proofreading Team
(http://www.pgdp.net/)

A Busy Year at the Old Squire's

BY C. A. STEPHENS

PUBLISHED BY
THE OLD SQUIRE'S BOOKSTORE
NORWAY, MAINE

Electrotyped and Printed by
THE COLONIAL PRESS
Clinton, Mass., U. S. A.

DEDICATED WITH CORDIAL BEST WISHES
TO THE THOUSANDS OF READERS WHO HAVE REQUESTED THIS
Memorial Edition
OF THE
C. A. STEPHENS BOOKS

BEAR-TONE

Contents

A Busy Year at the Old Squire's

CHAPTER I

MASTER PIERSON COMES BACK

Master Joel Pierson arrived the following Sunday afternoon, as he had promised in his letter of Thanksgiving Day eve, and took up his abode with us at the old Squire's for the winter term of school.

Cousin Addison drove to the village with horse and pung to fetch him; and the pung, I remember, was filled with the master's belongings, including his school melodeon, books and seven large wall maps for teaching geography. For Master Pierson brought a complete outfit, even to the stack of school song-books which later were piled on the top of the melodeon that stood in front of the teacher's desk at the schoolhouse. Every space between the windows was covered by those wall maps. No other teacher had ever made the old schoolhouse so attractive. No other teacher had ever entered on the task of giving us instruction with such zeal and such enthusiasm. It was a zeal, too, and an enthusiasm which embraced every pupil in the room and stopped at nothing short of enlisting that pupil's best efforts to learn.

Master Pierson put life and hard work into everything that went on at school—even into the old schoolhouse itself. Every morning he would be off from the old Squire's at eight o'clock, to see that the schoolhouse was well warmed and ready to begin lessons at nine; and if there had been any neglect in sweeping or dusting, he would do it himself, and have every desk and bench clean and tidy before school time.

What was more, Master Pierson possessed the rare faculty of communicating his own zeal for learning to his pupils. We became so interested, as weeks passed, that of our own accord we brought our school books home with us at night, in order to study evenings; and we asked for longer lessons that we might progress faster.

My cousin Halstead was one of those boys (and their name is Legion) who dislike study and complain of their lessons that they are too long and too hard. But strange to say, Master Joel Pierson somehow led Halse to really like geography that winter. Those large wall maps in color were of great assistance to us all. In class we took turns going to them with a long pointer, to recite the lesson of the day. I remember just how the different countries looked and how they were bounded—though many of these boundaries are now, of course, considerably changed.

When lessons dragged and dullness settled on the room, Master Joel was wont to cry, "Halt!" then sit down at the melodeon and play some school song as lively as the instrument admitted of, and set us all singing for five or ten minutes, chanting the multiplication tables, the names of the states, the largest cities of the country, or even the Books of the Bible. At other times he would throw open the windows and set us shouting Patrick Henry's speech, or Byron's Apostrophe to the Ocean. In short, "old Joel" was what now would be called a "live wire." He was twenty-two then and a student working his own way through Bates College. After graduating he migrated to a far western state where he taught for a year or two, became supervisor of schools, then State Superintendent, and afterwards a Representative to Congress. He is an aged man now and no word of mine can add much to the honors which have worthily crowned his life. None the less I want to pay this tribute to him—even if he did rub my ears at times and cry, "Wake up, Round-head! Wake up and find out what you are in this world for." (More rubs!) "You don't seem to know yet. Wake up and find out about it. We have all come into the world to do something. Wake up and find out what you are here for!"—and then more rubs!

It wasn't his fault if I never fairly waked up to my vocation—if I really had one. For the life of me I could never feel sure what I was for! Cousin Addison seemed to know just what he was going to do, from earliest boyhood, and went straight to it. Much the same way, cousin Theodora's warm, generous heart led her directly to that labor of love which she has so faithfully performed. As for Halstead, he was perfectly sure, cock-sure, more than twenty times, what he was going to do in life; but always in the course of a few weeks or months, he discovered he was on the wrong trail. What can be said of us who either have no vocation at all, or too many? What are we here for?

In addition to our daily studies at the schoolhouse, we resumed Latin, in the old sitting-room, evenings, Thomas and Catherine Edwards coming over across the field to join us. To save her carpet, grandmother Ruth put down burlap to bear the brunt of our many restless feet—for there was a great deal of trampling and sometimes outbreaks of scuffling there.

Thomas and I, who had forgotten much we had learned the previous winter, were still delving in *Æsop's Fables*. But Addison, Theodora and Catherine were going on with the first book of Cæsar's *Gallic War*. Ellen, two years younger, was still occupied wholly by her English studies. Study hours were from seven till ten, with interludes for apples and pop-corn.

Halstead, who had now definitely abandoned Latin as something which would never do him any good, took up Comstock's *Natural Philosophy*, or made a feint of doing so, in order to have something of his own that was different from the rest of us. Natural philosophy, he declared, was far and away more important than Latin.

Memory goes back very fondly to those evenings in the old sitting-room, they were so illumined by great hopes ahead. Thomas and I, at a light-stand apart from the others, were usually puzzling

out a Fable—*The Lion, The Oxen, The Kid and the Wolf, The Fox and the Lion*, or some one of a dozen others—holding noisy arguments over it till Master Pierson from the large center table, called out, "Less noise over there among those Latin infants! Cæsar is building his bridge over the Rhine. You are disturbing him."

Addison, always very quiet when engrossed in study, scarcely noticed or looked up, unless perhaps to aid Catherine and Theodora for a moment, with some hard passage. It was Tom and I who made Latin noisy, aggravated at times by pranks from Halstead, whose studies in natural philosophy were by no means diligent. At intervals of assisting us with our translations of Cæsar and the Fables, Master Pierson himself was translating the Greek of Demosthenes' Orations, and also reviewing his Livy—to keep up with his Class at College. But, night or day, he was always ready to help or advise us, and push us on. "Go ahead!" was "old Joel's" motto, and "That's what we're here for." He appeared to be possessed by a profound conviction that the human race has a great destiny before it, and that we ought all to work hard to hurry it up and realize it.

It is quite wonderful what an influence for good a wide-awake teacher, like Master Pierson, can exert in a school of forty or fifty boys and girls like ours in the old Squire's district, particularly where many of them "don't know what they are in the world for," and have difficulty in deciding on a vocation in life.

At that time there was much being said about a Universal Language. As there are fifty or more diverse languages, spoken by mankind, to say nothing of hundreds of different dialects, and as people now travel freely to all parts of the earth, the advantages of one common language for all nations are apparent to all who reflect on the subject. At present, months and years of our short lives are spent learning foreign languages. A complete education demands that the American whose mother tongue is the English, must learn French, German, Spanish and Italian, to say nothing of the more difficult languages of eastern Europe and the Orient. Otherwise the traveler, without an interpreter, cannot make himself understood, and do business outside his own country.

The want of a common means of communication therefore has long been recognized; and about that time some one had invented a somewhat imperfect method of universal speech, with the idea of having everybody learn it, and so be able to converse with the inhabitants of all lands without the well-nigh impossible task of learning five, or ten, or fifty different languages.

The idea impressed everybody as a good one, and enjoyed a considerable popularity for a time. But practically this was soon found to be a clumsy and inadequate form of speech, also that many other drawbacks attended its adoption.

But the main idea held good; and since that time Volapuk, Bolak, Esperanto and Ido have appeared, but without meeting with great success. The same disadvantages attend them, each and all.

In thinking the matter over and talking of it, one night at the old Squire's, that winter, Master Pierson hit on the best, most practical plan for a universal language which I have ever heard put forward. "Latin is the foundation of all the modern languages of Christendom," he said. "Or if not the foundation, it enters largely into all of them. Law, theology, medicine and philosophy are dependent on Latin for their descriptive terms. Without Latin words, modern science would be a jargon which couldn't be taught at all. Without Latin, the English language, itself, would relapse to the crude, primitive Saxon speech of our ancestors. No one can claim to be well educated till he has studied Latin.

"Now as we have need to learn Latin anyway, why not kill two birds with one stone, and make Latin our universal language? Why not have a colloquial, every-day Latin, such as the Romans used to speak in Italy? In point of fact, Latin was the universal language with travelers and educated people all through the Middle Ages. We need to learn it anyhow, so why not make it our needed form of common speech?"

I remember just how earnest old Joel became as he set forth this new idea of his. He jumped up and tore round the old sitting-room. He rubbed my ears again, rumpled Tom's hair, caught Catherine by both her hands and went ring-round-the-rosy with her, nearly knocking down the table, lamp and all! "The greatest idea yet!" he shouted. "Just what's wanted for a Universal Language!" He went and drew in the old Squire to hear about it; and the old Squire admitted that it sounded reasonable. "For I can see," he said, "that it would keep Latin, and the derivation of words from it, fresh in our minds. It would prove a constant review of the words from which our language has been formed.

"But Latin always looked to me rather heavy and perhaps too clumsy for every-day talk," the old gentleman remarked. "Think you could talk it?"

"Sure!" Master Pierson cried. "The old Romans spoke it. So can we. And that's just what I will do. I will get up a book of conversational Latin—enough to make a Common Language for every-day use." And in point of fact that was what old Joel was doing, for four or five weeks afterwards. He had Theodora and Catherine copy out page after page of it—as many as twenty pages. He wanted us each to have a copy of it; and for a time at least, he intended to have it printed.

A few days ago I came upon some of those faded, yellow pages, folded up in an old text book of Æsop's Latin Fables—the one Tom and I were then using; and I will set down a few of the sentences here, to illustrate what Master Pierson thought might be done with Latin as a universal

language.

> Master Pierson's Universal Language in Latin, which he named *Dic* from *dico*, meaning to speak.

1 It is time to get up.	= Surgendi tempus est.
2 The sun is up already.	= Sol jamdudum ortus.
3 Put on your shoes.	= Indue tibi ocreas.
4 Comb your head.	= Pecte caput tuum.
5 Light a candle and build a fire.	= Accende lucernum, et fac ut luceat faculus.
6 Carry the lantern. We must water the horses.	= Vulcanum in cornu geras. Equi aquatum agenda sunt.
7 It is a very hot day.	= Dies est ingens æstus.
8 Let's go to the barn.	= Jam imus horreum.
9 Grind the axes.	= Acuste ascias.
10 It is near twelve o'clock.	= Instat hora duodecima.
11 It is time for dinner.	= Prandenti tempus adest.
12 Please take dinner with us.	= Quesso nobiscum hodie sumas prandiolum.
13 Make a good fire.	= Instruas optimum focum.
14 This chimney smokes.	= Male fumat hic caminus.
15 The wood is green.	= Viride est hoc lignum.
16 Fetch kindling wood.	= Affer fomitem.
17 Lay the table cloth.	= Sterne mappam.
18 Dinner is ready.	= Cibus est appositus.
19 Don't spoil it by delay.	= Ne corrumpatur mora vestra.
20 Sit down.	= Accumbe.
21 This is my place.	= Hic mihi locus.
22 Let him sit next me.	= Assideat mihi.
23 Say grace, or ask a blessing.	= Recita consecrationem.
24 Give me brown bread.	= Da mihi panem atrum.
25 I am going to school.	= Eo ad scholam.
26 What time is it?	= Quota est hora?
27 It is past seven.	= Præteriit hora septima.
28 The bell has rung.	= Sonuit tintinnabulum.
29 Go with me.	= Vade mecum.
30 The master will soon be here.	= Brevi præceptor aderit.
31 I am very cold.	= Valde frigeo.
32 My hands are numb.	= Obtorpent manus.
33 Mend the fire.	= Apta ignem.

I have copied out only a few of the shorter sentences. There were, as I have said, fully twenty pages of it, enough for quite a respectable "Universal Language," or at least the beginnings of one. Perhaps some ambitious linguist will yet take it up in earnest.

CHAPTER II

CUTTING ICE AT 14° BELOW ZERO

Generally speaking, young folks are glad when school is done. But it wasn't so with us that winter in the old Squire's district, when Master Pierson was teacher. We were really sad, in fact quite melancholy, and some of the girls shed tears, when the last day of school came and "old Joel" tied up the melodeon, took down the wall maps, packed up his books and went back to his Class in College. He was sad himself—he had taken such interest in our progress.

"Now don't forget what you have learned!" he exclaimed. "Hang on to it. Knowledge is your best friend. You must go on with your Latin, evenings."

"You will surely come back next winter!" we shouted after him as he drove away.

"Maybe," he said, and would not trust himself to look back.

The old sitting-room seemed wholly deserted that Friday night after he went away. "We are like sheep without a shepherd," Theodora said. Catherine and Tom came over. We opened our Latin books and tried to study awhile; but 'twas dreary without "old Joel."

Other things, however, other duties and other work at the farm immediately occupied our

attention. It was now mid-January and there was ice to be cut on the lake for our new creamery.

For three years the old Squire had been breeding a herd of Jerseys. There were sixteen of them: Jersey First, Canary, Jersey Second, Little Queen, Beauty, Buttercup, and all the rest. Each one had her own little book that hung from its nail on a beam of the tie-up behind her stall. In it were recorded her pedigree, dates, and the number of pounds of milk she gave at each milking. The scales for weighing the milk hung from the same beam. We weighed each milking, and jotted down the weight with the pencil tied to each little book. All this was to show which of the herd was most profitable, and which calves had better be kept for increase.

This was a new departure in Maine farming. Cream-separators were as yet undreamed of. A water-creamery with long cans and ice was then used for raising the cream; and that meant an ice-house and the cutting and hauling home of a year's stock of ice from the lake, nearly two miles distant.

We built a new ice-house near the east barn in November; and in December the old Squire drove to Portland and brought home a complete kit of tools—three ice-saws, an ice-plow or groover, ice-tongs, hooks, chisels, tackle and block.

Everything had to be bought new, but the old Squire had visions of great profits ahead from his growing herd of Jerseys. Grandmother, however, was less sanguine.

It was unusually cold in December that year, frequently ten degrees below zero, and there were many high winds. Consequently, the ice on the lake thickened early to twelve inches, and bade fair to go to two feet. For use in a water-creamery, ice is most conveniently cut and handled when not more than fifteen or sixteen inches thick. That thickness, too, when the cakes are cut twenty-six inches square, as usual, makes them quite heavy enough for hoisting and packing in an ice-house.

Half a mile from the head of the lake, over deep, clear water, we had been scraping and sweeping a large surface after every snow, in order to have clear ice. Two or three times a week Addison ran down and tested the thickness; and when it reached fifteen inches, we bestirred ourselves at our new work.

None of us knew much about cutting ice; but we laid off a straight base-line of a hundred feet, hitched old Sol to the new groover, and marked off five hundred cakes. Addison and I then set to work with two of our new ice-saws, and hauled out the cakes with the ice-tongs, while Halstead and the old Squire loaded them on the long horse-sled,—sixteen cakes to the load,—drew the ice home, and packed it away in the new ice-house.

Although at first the sawing seemed easy, we soon found it tiresome, and learned that two hundred cakes a day meant a hard day's work, particularly after the saws lost their keen edge—for even ice will dull a saw in a day or two. We had also to be pretty careful, for it was over deep black water, and a cake when nearly sawed across is likely to break off suddenly underfoot.

Hauling out the cakes with tongs, too, is somewhat hazardous on a slippery ice margin. We beveled off a kind of inclined "slip" at one end of the open water, and cut heel holes in the ice beside it, so that we might stand more securely as we pulled the cakes out of the water.

For those first few days we had bright, calm weather, not very cold; we got out five hundred cakes and drew them home to the ice-house without accident.

The hardship came the next week, when several of our neighbors—who always kept an eye on the old Squire's farming, and liked to follow his lead—were beset by an ambition to start ice-houses. None of them had either experience or tools. They wanted us to cut the ice for them.

We thought that was asking rather too much. Thereupon fourteen or fifteen of them offered us two cents a cake to cut a year's supply for each of them.

Now no one will ever get very rich cutting ice, sixteen inches thick, at two cents a cake. But Addison and I thought it over, and asked the old Squire's opinion. He said that we might take the new kit, and have all we could make.

On that, we notified them all to come and begin drawing home their cakes the following Monday morning, for the ice was growing thicker all the while; and the thicker it got, the harder our work would be.

They wanted about four thousand cakes; and as we would need help, we took in Thomas Edwards and Willis Murch as partners. Both were good workers, and we anticipated having a rather fine time at the lake.

In the woods on the west shore, nearly opposite where the ice was to be cut, there was an old "shook" camp, where we kept our food and slept at night, in order to avoid the long walk home to meals.

On Sunday it snowed, and cleared off cold and windy again. It was eight degrees below zero on Monday morning, when we took our outfit and went to work. Everything was frozen hard as a rock. The wind, sweeping down the lake, drove the fine, loose snow before it like smoke from a forest fire. There was no shelter. We had to stand out and saw ice in the bitter wind, which seemed to pierce to the very marrow of our bones. It was impossible to keep a fire; and it always seems colder when you are standing on ice.

It makes me shiver now to think of that week, for it grew colder instead of warmer. A veritable "cold snap" set in, and never for an hour, night or day, did that bitter wind let up.

We would have quit work and waited for calmer weather,—the old Squire advised us to do so,—but the ice was getting thicker every day. Every inch added to the thickness made the work of sawing harder—at two cents a cake. So we stuck to it, and worked away in that cruel wind.

On Thursday it got so cold that if we stopped the saws even for two seconds, they froze in hard and fast, and had to be cut out with an ax; thus two cakes would be spoiled. It was not easy to keep the saws going fast enough not to catch and freeze in; and the cakes had to be hauled out the moment they were sawed, or they would freeze on again. Moreover, the patch of open water that we uncovered froze over in a few minutes, and had to be cleared a dozen times a day. During those nights it froze five inches thick, and filled with snowdrift, all of which had to be cleared out every morning.

Although we had our caps pulled down over our ears and heavy mittens on, and wore all the clothes we could possibly work in, it yet seemed at times that freeze we must—especially toward night, when we grew tired from the hard work of sawing so long and so fast. We became so chilled that we could hardly speak; and at sunset, when we stopped work, we could hardly get across to the camp. The farmers, who were coming twice a day with their teams for ice, complained constantly of the cold; several of them stopped drawing altogether for the time. Willis also stopped work on Thursday at noon.

The people at home knew that we were having a hard time. Grandmother and the girls did all they could for us; and every day at noon and again at night the old Squire, bundled up in his buffalo-skin coat, drove down to the lake with horse and pung, and brought us a warm meal, packed in a large box with half a dozen hot bricks.

Only one who has been chilled through all day can imagine how glad we were to reach that warm camp at night. Indeed, except for the camp, we could never have worked there as we did. It was a log camp, or rather two camps, placed end to end, and you went through the first in order to get into the second, which had no outside door. The second camp had been built especially for cold weather. It was low, and the chinks between the logs were tamped with moss. At this time, too, snow lay on it, and had banked up against the walls. Inside the camp, across one end, there was a long bunk; at the opposite end stood an old cooking-stove, that seemed much too large for so small a camp.

At dusk we dropped work, made for the camp, shut all the doors, built the hottest fire we could make, and thawed ourselves out. It seemed as though we could never get warmed through. For an hour or more we hovered about the stove. The camp was as hot as an oven; I have no doubt that we kept the temperature at 110°; and yet we were not warm.

"Put in more wood!" Addison or Thomas would exclaim. "Cram that stove full again! Let's get warm!"

We thought so little of ventilation that we shut the camp door tight and stopped every aperture that we could find. We needed heat to counteract the effect of those long hours of cold and wind.

By the time we had eaten our supper and thawed out, we grew sleepy, and under all our bedclothing, curled up in the bunk. So fearful were we lest the fire should go out in the night that we gathered a huge heap of fuel, and we all agreed to get up and stuff the stove whenever we waked and found the fire abating.

Among the neighbors for whom we were cutting ice was Rufus Sylvester. He was not a very careful or prosperous farmer, and not likely to be successful at dairying. But because the old Squire and others were embarking in that business, Rufus wished to do so, too. He had no ice-house, but thought he could keep ice buried in sawdust, in the shade of a large apple-tree near his barn; and I may add here that he tried it with indifferent success for three years, and that it killed the apple-tree.

On Saturday of that cold week he came to the lake with his lame old horse and a rickety sled, and wanted us to cut a hundred cakes of ice for him. The prospect of our getting our pay was poor. Saturday, moreover, was the coldest, windiest day of the whole week; the temperature was down to fourteen degrees below.

Halse and Thomas said no; but he hung round, and teased us, while his half-starved old horse shivered in the wind; and we finally decided to oblige him, if he would take the tongs and haul out the cakes himself, as we sawed them. It would not do to stop the saws that day, even for a moment.

Rufus had on an old blue army overcoat, the cape of which was turned up over his head and ears, and a red woolen "comforter" round his neck. He wore long-legged, stiff cowhide boots, with his trousers tucked into the tops.

Addison, Thomas and I were sawing, with our backs turned to Rufus and to the wind, and Rufus was trying to haul out a cake of ice, when we heard a clatter and a muffled shout. Rufus had slipped in! We looked round just in time to see him go down into that black, icy water.

Addison let go the saw and sprang for one of the ice-hooks. I did the same. The hook I grabbed was frozen down; but Addison got his free, and stuck it into Rufus's blue overcoat. It tore out, and

down Rufus went again, head and ears under. His head, in fact, slid beneath the edge of the ice, but his back popped up.

Addison struck again with the hook—struck harder. He hooked it through all Rufus's clothes, and took a piece of his skin. It held that time, and we hauled him out.

He lay quite inert on the ice, choking and coughing.

"Get up! Get up!" we shouted to him. "Get up and run, or you'll freeze!"

He tried to rise, but failed to regain his feet, and collapsed. Thereupon Addison and Thomas laid hold of him, and lifted him to his feet by main strength.

"Now run!" they cried. "Run before your clothes freeze stiff!" The man seemed lethargic—I suppose from the deadly chill. He made an effort to move his feet, as they bade him, but fell flat again; and by that time his clothes were stiffening.

"He will freeze to death!" Addison cried. "We must put him on his sled and get him home!"

Thereupon we picked him up like a log of wood, and laid him on his horse-sled.

"But he will freeze before we can get this old lame horse home with him!" exclaimed Thomas. "Better take him to our camp over there."

Addison thought so, too, and seizing the reins and whip, started for the shore. The old horse was so chilled that we could hardly get him to hobble; but we did not spare the whip.

From the shore we had still fifteen or twenty rods to go, in order to reach the camp back in the woods. Rufus's clothes were frozen as stiff as boards; apparently he could not move. We feared that the man would die on our hands.

We snatched off one of the side boards of his sled, laid him on it, and, taking it up like a stretcher, started to carry him up through the woods to the camp.

By that time his long overcoat and all the rest of his clothes were frozen so stiff and hard that he rolled round more like a log than a human body.

The path was rough and snowy. In our haste we stumbled, and dropped him several times, but we rolled him on the board again, rushed on, and at last got him inside the camp. Our morning fire had gone out. Halse kindled it again, while Addison, Thomas and I tried to get off the frozen overcoat and long cowhide boots.

The coat was simply a sheet of ice; we could do nothing with it. At last we took our knives and cut it down the back, and after cutting open both sleeves, managed to peel it off. We had to cut open his boots in the same way. His under-coat and all his clothes were frozen. There appeared to be little warmth left in him; he was speechless.

But just then we heard some one coming in through the outside camp. It was the old Squire.

Our farmhouse, on the higher ground to the northwest, afforded a view of the lake; and the old gentleman had been keeping an eye on what went on down there, for he was quite far-sighted. He saw Sylvester arrive with his team, and a few minutes later saw us start for the shore, lashing the horse. He knew that something had gone wrong, and hitching up old Sol, he had driven down in haste.

"Hot water, quick!" he said. "Make some hot coffee!" And seizing a towel, he gave Sylvester such a rubbing as it is safe to say he had never undergone before.

Gradually signs of life and color appeared. The man began to speak, although rather thickly.

By this time the little camp was like an oven; but the old Squire kept up the friction. We gave Rufus two or three cups of hot coffee, and in the course of an hour he was quite himself again.

We kept him at the camp until the afternoon, however, and then started him home, wrapped in a horse-blanket instead of his army overcoat. He was none the worse for his misadventure, although he declared we tore off two inches of his skin!

On Sunday the weather began to moderate, and the last four days of our ice-cutting were much more comfortable. It had been a severe ordeal, however; the eighty-one dollars that we collected for it were but scanty recompense for the misery we had endured.

CHAPTER III

A BEAR'S "PIPE" IN WINTER

After ice-cutting came wood-cutting. It was now the latter part of January with weather still unusually cold. There were about three feet of snow on the ground, crusted over from a thaw which had occurred during the first of the month. In those days we burned from forty to fifty cords of wood in a year.

There was a wood-lot of a hundred acres along the brook on the east side of the farm, and other forest lots to the north of it. Only the best old-growth maple, birch and beech were cut for fuel—great trees two and three feet in diameter.

The trunks were cut into eight-foot lengths, rolled on the ox-sleds with levers, and then hauled home to the yard in front of the wood-house, where they lay in four huge piles till March, when all hands turned to, with axes and saws, and worked it up.

It was zero weather that week, but bright and clear, with spicules of frost glistening on every twig; and I recollect how sharply the tree trunks snapped—those frost snaps which make "shaky" lumber in Maine.

Addison, Halstead and I, with one of the old Squire's hired men, Asa Doane, went to the wood-lot at eight o'clock that morning and chopped smartly till near eleven. Indeed, we were obliged to work fast to keep warm.

Addison and I then stuck our axes in a log and went on the snow crust up to the foot of a mountain, about half a mile distant, where the hardwood growth gave place to spruce. We wanted to dig a pocketful of spruce gum. For several days Ellen and Theodora had been asking us to get them some nice "purple" gum.

As we were going from one spruce to another, Addison stopped suddenly and pointed to a little round hole with hard ice about it, near a large, overhanging rock across which a tree had fallen. "Sh!" he exclaimed. "I believe that's a bear's breath-hole!"

We reconnoitered the place at a safe distance. "That may be Old Three Paws himself," Addison said. "If it is, we must put an end to him." For "Old Three Paws" was a bear that had given trouble in the sheep pastures for years.

After a good look all round, we went home to dinner, and at table talked it over. The old Squire was a little incredulous, but admitted that there might be a bear there. "I will tell you how you can find out," he said. "Take a small looking-glass with you and hold it to the hole. If there is a bear down there, you will see just a little film of moisture on the glass from his breath."

We loaded two guns with buckshot. Our plan was to wake the bear up, and shoot him when he broke out through the snow. Bears killed a good many sheep at that time; the farmers did not regard them as desirable neighbors.

The ruse which Addison hit on for waking the bear was to blow black pepper down the hole through a hollow sunflower stalk. He had an idea that this would set the bear sneezing. In view of what happened, I laugh now when I remember our plans for waking that bear.

Directly after dinner we set off for the wood-lot with our guns and pepper. Cold as it was, Ellen and Theodora went with us, intending to stand at a very safe distance. Even grandmother Ruth would have gone, if it had not been quite so cold and snowy. Although minus one foot, Old Three Paws was known to be a savage bear, that had had more than one encounter with mankind.

While the rest stood back, Addison approached on tiptoe with the looking-glass, and held it to the hole for some moments. Then he examined it and looked back at us, nodding. There was moisture on it.

The girls climbed upon a large rock among the spruces. The old Squire, with one of the guns, took up a position beside a tree about fifty feet from the "hole." He posted Asa, who was a pretty good shot, beside another tree not far away. Halstead and I had to content ourselves with axes for weapons, and kept pretty well to the rear.

Addison was now getting his pepper ready. Expectancy ran high when at last he blew it down the hole and rushed back. We had little doubt that an angry bear would break out, sneezing and growling.

But nothing of the sort occurred. Some minutes passed. Addison could not even hear the faintest sneeze from below. He tiptoed up and blew in more pepper.

No response.

Cutting a pole, Addison then belabored the snow crust about the hole with resounding whacks—still with no result.

After this we approached less cautiously. Asa broke up the snow about the hole and cleared it away, uncovering a considerable cavity which extended back under the partially raised root of the fallen tree. Halstead brought a shovel from the wood-piles; and Addison and Asa cut away the roots of the old tree, and cleared out the frozen turf and leaves to a depth of four or five feet, gradually working down where they could look back beneath the root. We had begun to doubt whether we would find anything there larger than a woodchuck.

At last Addison got down on hands and knees, crept in under the root, and lighted several matches.

"There's something back in there," he said. "Looks black, but I cannot see that it moves."

Asa crawled in and struck a match or two, then backed out. "I believe it's a bear!" he exclaimed, and he wanted to creep in with a gun and fire; but the old Squire advised against that on account

of the heavy charge in so confined a space.

Addison had been peeling dry bark from a birch, and crawling in again, lighted a roll of it. The smoke drove him out, but he emerged in excitement. "Bears!" he cried. "Two bears in there! I saw them!"

Asa took a pole and poked the bears cautiously. "Dead, I guess," said he, at last. "They don't move."

Addison crept in again, and actually passed his hand over the bears, then backed out, laughing. "No, they are not dead!" he exclaimed. "They are warm. But they are awfully sound asleep."

"Let's haul them out!" cried Asa; and they now sent me to the wood-sled for two or three small trace-chains. Asa then crawled in and slipped a chain about the body of one of the bears. The other two chains were hooked on; and then they slowly hauled the bear out, the old Squire standing by with gun cocked—for we expected every moment that the animal would wake.

But even when out on the snow crust the creature lay as inert as a dead bear. It was small. "Only a yearling," the old Squire said. None of us were now much afraid of them, and the other one was drawn out in the same way. Their hair was glossy and as black as jet. Possibly they would have weighed seventy-five pounds each. Evidently they were young bears that had never been separated, and that accounted for their denning up together; old bears rarely do this.

We put them on the wood-sled and hauled them home. They lay in a pile of hay on the stable floor all night, without a sign of waking up; and the next morning we hauled them to the cellar of the west barn. Under this barn, which was used mainly for sheep and young cattle, there were several pigsties, now empty. The dormant young bears were rolled into one of these sties and the sty filled with dry leaves, such as we used for bedding in the barns.

About a fortnight afterward a young doctor named Truman, from the village, desired very much to see the bears in their winter sleep. He got into the sty, uncovered them, and repeatedly pricked one of them with a needle, or penknife, without fairly waking it. But salts of ammonia, held to the nostrils of the other one, produced an unexpected result. The creature struck out spasmodically with one paw and rolled suddenly over. Doctor Truman jumped out of the sty quite as suddenly. "He's alive, all right," said the doctor.

The bears were not disturbed again, and remained there so quietly that we nearly forgot them. It was now the second week of March, and up to this time the weather had continued cold; but a thaw set in, with rain for two or three days, the temperature rising to sixty degrees, and even higher.

On the third night of the thaw, or rather, in the early morning, a great commotion broke out at the west barn. It waked the girls first, their room being on that side of the farmhouse. At about two o'clock in the morning Ellen came to our door to rouse Addison and me.

"There's a fearful racket up at the west barn," she said, in low tones. "You had better see what's wrong."

Addison and I threw on our clothes, went down quietly, so as not to disturb the old Squire, and were getting our lanterns ready, when he came from his room; for he, too, had heard the disturbance. We then sallied forth and approached the end door of the barn. Inside, the young cattle were bellowing and bawling. Below, in the barn cellar, sheep were bleating, and a shoat was adding its raucous voice to the uproar. Above it all, however, we could hear eight old turkeys and a peacock that were wintering in the west barn, "quitting" and "quuttering" aloft, where they roosted on the high beams.

The young cattle, seventeen head, were tied facing the barn floor. All of them were on their feet, pulling back at their stanchions in a great state of alarm. But the real trouble seemed now to be aloft in the dark roof of the barn, among the turkeys. Addison held up the lantern. Nothing could be seen so far up there in the dark, but feathers came fluttering down, and the old peacock was squalling, "Tap-pee-yaw!" over and over.

We fixed a lantern on the end of a long bean-pole and thrust it high up. Its light revealed those two young bears on one of the high beams of the barn!

One of them had the head of a turkey in his mouth, and was apparently trying to bolt it; and we discovered later that they had had trouble with the shoat down in the cellar. The shoat was somewhat scratched, but had stood them off.

Several of the sheep had their fleeces torn, particularly one old Cotswold ram, which also had a bleeding nose. Evidently the barn had been the scene of a protracted fracas. The bears must have climbed for the turkeys as a last resort. How they reached the beam we did not know, unless by swarming up one of the bare posts of the barn.

To drive them down, Addison climbed on a scaffold and thrust the lantern close up to the one with the turkey's head in its mouth. The bear struck at the lantern with one paw, started back, but lost its claw-hold on the beam and fell, turkey and all, eighteen or twenty feet to the barn floor.

The old Squire and I sprang aside in great haste; but so far as we could see, the bear never stirred after it struck the floor. Either the fall broke its neck, or else the turkey's head choked it

to death.

When menaced with the lantern, the other bear slid down one of the barn posts, tail first, and was driven into a horse stall at the far end of the barn. There we succeeded in shutting it up, and in the morning gave it a breakfast of corn-meal dough and apples, which it devoured with great avidity.

We had no particular use for a bear, and a week later sold this youngster to Doctor Truman. He soon tired of his new pet, however, and parted with it to a friend who kept a summer hotel in the White Mountains.

The other bear—the one that fell from the high beam—had the handsomest black, glossy pelt I have ever seen. Grandmother Ruth insisted on having it tanned and made into a rug. She declared jocosely that it should be given to the first one of our girls who married. Ellen finally fell heir to it, and carried it with her to Dakota.

CHAPTER IV

WHITE MONKEY WEEK

Cutting and drawing the year's supply of firewood to the door occupied us for a week; and following this we boys had planned to take matters easy awhile, for the old Squire was to be away from home. Asa Doane had left us, too, for a visit to his folks. As it chanced, however, a strenuous emergency arose.

A year previously the old Squire had made an agreement with a New York factory, to furnish dowels and strips of clear white birch wood, for piano keys and *passementerie*.

At that time *passementerie* was coming into use for ladies' dresses. The fine white-birch dowels were first turned round on small lathes and afterwards into little bugle and bottle-shaped ornaments, then dyed a glistening black and strung on linen threads.

On our own forest lots we had no birch which quite met the requirements. But another lumberman, an acquaintance of the old Squire's, named John Lurvey (a brother of old Zachary Lurvey), who owned lots north of ours, had just what we needed to fill the order.

Lumbermen are often "neighborly" with each other in such matters, and with John Lurvey the old Squire made a kind of running contract for three hundred cords of white-birch "bolts" from a lakeside lot. Each one made a memorandum of the agreement in his pocket note-book; and as each trusted the other, nothing more exact or formal was thought necessary.

The white birch was known to be valuable lumber. We were to pay two thousand dollars for it on the stump,—one thousand down,—and have two "winters" in which to get it off and pay the balance of the money. And here it may be said that in the Maine woods a winter is supposed to mean the snowy season from November till April.

Meanwhile other ventures were pressing. In company with a Canadian partner, the old Squire was then getting spruce lumber down the St. Maurice River at Three Rivers, in the Province of Quebec. This New York birch contract was deferred a year, the plan being finally to get off the birch in March of the second winter, when the crews and teams from two other lumber-camps could conveniently be sent to the lake, and make a quick job of it.

But in December of that second winter John Lurvey died suddenly of pneumonia. His property passed into the hands of his wife, who was by no means easy-going. She overhauled this note-book agreement, took legal advice of a sharp lawyer, and on February 21st sent us legal notification that the agreement would expire on February 28th, the last day of winter, according to the calendar. The notification also demanded payment of the second thousand dollars. Her scheme, of course, was to get the money in full and cut us off, in default, from removing the birch lumber from the lot. The old Squire himself had gone to Canada.

The notification came by letter, and as usual when the old Squire was away, grandmother Ruth opened his mail to see what demanded our attention. We were all in the sitting-room, except Halstead, who was away that evening.

"What can this mean?" grandmother suddenly exclaimed, and handed the letter to Addison. He saw through it instantly, and jumped up in excitement.

"We're trapped!" he cried. "If we don't get that birch off next week we shall lose two thousand dollars!"

Grandmother was dismayed. "Oh, that wicked woman!" she cried. "Why, winter always means through sledding!"

"I'm afraid not, in law," said Addison, looking puzzled. "Winter ends either the first or the twenty-first of March. I think a good argument could be made in court for the twenty-first. But she may be right, and it's too late to take chances. The only thing to do is to get that lumber off right away."

Addison and I went out to the stable to talk the matter over; we did not want to excite grandmother any further. At best, she had a good deal to worry her that winter.

"Now what can we do?" Addison exclaimed. Five or six days would be required to get the old Squire home from Canada.

"And what could he do after he got here?" Addison asked. "The teams and the choppers are all off at the lumber-camps."

"Let's take our axes and go up there and cut what birch we can next week," said I, in desperation.

"Oh, we boys couldn't do much alone in so short a time," replied Addison.

Still, we could think of nothing else; and with the loss of two thousand dollars staring us in the face, we began planning desperately how much of that birch we could save in a week's time. In fact, we scarcely slept at all that night, and early the next morning started out to rally what help we could.

Willis Murch and Thomas Edwards volunteered to work for us, and take each a yoke of oxen. After much persuasion our neighbor Sylvester promised to go with a team, and to take his son Rufus, Jr. Going on to the post-office at the Corners, we succeeded in hiring two other young men.

But even with the help of these men we could account for scarcely a seventh part of the contract, since one chopper could cut not more than a cord and a half of birch bolts in a day; and moreover, the bolts had to be removed from the lot.

But as we rushed round that forenoon, it occurred to Addison to hire a horse-power and circular saw that was owned by a man named Morefield, who lived near the wood-sheds of the railway-station, six miles from the old Squire's. It was a rig used for sawing wood for the locomotives.

Hurrying home, we hitched up, drove to the station, and succeeded in engaging Morefield and his saw, with two spans of heavy horses.

But other cares had now loomed up, not the least among them being the problem of feeding our hastily collected crew of helpers and their teams sixteen miles off in the woods. Just across the lake from the lot where the birch grew there was a lumber-camp where we could set up a stove and do our cooking; and during the afternoon we packed up supplies of pork, beans and corned beef, while in the house grandmother and the girls were baking bread. I had also to go to the mill, to get corn ground for the teams.

Theodora and Ellen were eager to go and do the cooking at the camp; but grandmother knew that an older woman of greater experience was needed in such an emergency, and had that morning sent urgent word to Olive Witham,—"Aunt Olive," as we called her,—who was always our mainstay in times of trouble at the old farm.

She was about fifty-five years old, tall, austere, not wholly attractive, but of upright character and undaunted courage.

By nine that evening everything was ready for a start; and sunrise the next morning saw us on the way up to the birch lot, Aunt Olive riding in the "horse-power" on a sled, which bore also a firkin of butter, a cheese, a four-gallon can of milk, a bag of bread and a large basket of eggs.

One team did not get off so early, neighbor Sylvester's. He was to start two hours later and draw up to camp the heaviest part of our supplies, consisting of half a barrel of pork, two bushels of potatoes, a peck of dry beans, a hundredweight of corned beef and two gallons of molasses.

Twelve miles of our way that morning was by a trodden winter road, but the last four miles, after crossing Lurvey's Stream, had to be broken through three feet of snow in the woods, giving us four hours of tiresome tramping.

We reached the lot at one o'clock, and during the afternoon set up the horse-power on the lake shore, at the foot of the slope where the white birch grew. We also contrived a log slide, or slip, down which the long birch trunks could be slid to the saw and cut up into four-foot bolts. For our plan now was to fell the trees and "twitch" them down-hill with teams to the head of this slip. By rolling the bolts, as they fell from the saw, down an incline and out on the ice of the lake, we would remove them from Mrs. Lurvey's land, and thereby comply with the letter of the law, by aid of which she was endeavoring to rob us and escheat our rights to the birch.

There were ten of us. Each knew what was at stake, and all worked with such good-will that by five o'clock we had the saw running. The white birches there were from a foot up to twenty-two inches in diameter, having long, straight trunks, clear of limbs from thirty to forty feet in length. These clear trunks only were used for bolts.

Plying their axes, Halstead, Addison, Thomas and Willis felled upward of forty trees that night, and these were all sawn by dark. On an average, five trees were required for a cord of bolts; but with sharp axes such white-birch trees can be felled fast. Morefield tended the saw and drove the horses in the horse-power; the rest of us were kept busy sliding the birch trunks down the slip to the saw, and rolling away the bolts.

By dark we had made a beginning of our hard week's task, and in the gathering dusk plodded across the lake to the old lumber-camp, expecting to find Aunt Olive smiling and supper ready.

But here disappointment awaited us. Sylvester, with the sled-load of supplies, had not come, did not arrive, in fact, till half an hour later, and then with his oxen only. Disaster had befallen him on the way. While crossing Lurvey's Stream, the team had broken through the ice where the current beneath was swift. He had saved the oxen; but the sled, with our beef pork, beans and potatoes, had been drawn under and carried away, he knew not how far, under the ice.

A stare of dismay from the entire hungry party followed this announcement. It looked like no supper—after a hard day's work! Worse still, to Addison and myself it looked like the crippling of our whole program for the next five days; for a lumber crew is much like an army; it lives and works only by virtue of its commissariat.

But now Aunt Olive rose to the emergency. "Don't you be discouraged, boys!" she exclaimed. "Give me twenty minutes, and you shall have a supper fit for a king. You shall have *white monkey* on toast! Toast thirty or forty slices of this bread, boys," she added, laughing cheerily. "Toast it good and brown, while I dress the monkey!"

Addison, Thomas and I began toasting bread over the hot stove, but kept a curious eye out for that "white monkey."

Of course it was figurative monkey. Aunt Olive put six quarts of milk in a kettle on the stove, and as it warmed, thickened it slightly with about a pint of corn-meal.

As it grew hotter, she melted into it a square of butter about half the size of a brick, then chipped up fine as much as a pound of cheese, and added that slowly, so as to dissolve it.

Last, she rapidly broke, beat and added a dozen eggs, then finished off with salt and a tiny bit of Cayenne pepper, well stirred in.

For five minutes longer she allowed the kettleful to simmer on the stove, while we buttered three huge stacks of toast.

The monkey was then ready. All hands gathered round with their plates, and in turn had four slices of toast, one after another, each slice with a generous ladleful of white monkey poured over it.

It was delicious, very satisfying, too, and gave one the sense of being well fed, since it contained all the ingredients of substantial food. As made by Aunt Olive, this white monkey had the consistency of moderately thick cream. It slightly resembled Welsh rabbit, but we found it was much more palatable and whole-some, having more milk and egg in it, and far less cheese.

We liked it so well that we all wanted it for breakfast the next morning—and that was fortunate, since we had little else, and were exceedingly loath to lose a day's time sending teams down home, or elsewhere, for more meat, beans and potatoes.

There were several families of French-Canadians living at clearings on Lurvey's Stream, three miles below the lake; and since I was the youngest and least efficient axman of the party, they sent me down there every afternoon to buy milk and eggs, for more white monkey. Of cheese and butter we had a sufficient supply; and the yellow corn-meal which we had brought for the teams furnished sheetful after sheetful of johnny-cake, which Aunt Olive split, toasted, and buttered well, as a groundwork for the white monkey.

And for five days we ate it as we toiled twelve hours to the day, chopping, hauling and sawing birch!

We had a slight change of diet on the fourth day, when Aunt Olive cooked two old roosters and a chicken, which I had coaxed away from the reluctant French settlers down the stream.

But it was chiefly white monkey every day; and the amount of work which we did on it was a tribute to Aunt Olive's resourcefulness. The older men of the party declared that they had never slept so well as after those evening meals of white monkey on johnny-cake toast. Beyond doubt, it was much better for us than heavier meals of meat and beans after days of hard labor.

From half an hour before sunrise till an hour after sunset, during those entire five days, the tall white birches fell fast, the saw hummed, and the bolts went rolling out on the ice-clad lake.

I never saw a crew work with such good-will or felt such enthusiasm myself as during those five days. We had the exhilarating sensation that we were beating a malicious enemy. Every little while a long, cheery whoop of exultation would be raised and go echoing across the lake; and that last day of February we worked by the light of little bonfires of birch bark till near midnight.

Then we stopped—to clear the law. And I may state here, although it must sound like a large story, that during those five working days the ten of us felled, sawed and rolled out on the ice two hundred and eighty-six cords of white-birch bolts. Of course it was the saw and the two relieving spans of horses which did the greater part of the work, the four axmen doing little more than fell the tall birch-trees.

The next day, after a final breakfast of white monkey, we went home triumphant, leaving the bolts on the ice for the time being. All were tired, but in high spirits, for victory was ours.

Two days later the old Squire came home from Three Rivers, entirely unaware of what had occurred, having it now in mind to organize and begin what he supposed would be a month's work up at the birch lot for the choppers and teams from the two logging-camps farther north.

Neither grandmother Ruth nor the rest of us could resist having a little fun with him. After supper, when we had gathered in the sitting-room, grandmother quietly handed him Mrs. Lurvey's letter, with the notification about the birch.

"This came while you were away, Joseph," she said to him, while the rest of us, sitting very still, looked on, keenly interested to see how he would take it.

The old Squire unfolded the letter and began reading it, then started suddenly, and for some moments sat very still, pondering the notification. "This bids fair to be a serious matter for us," he said, at last. "We have lost that birch contract, I fear, and the money that went into it.

"And I have only my own carelessness to thank for it," he added, looking distressed.

Theodora could not stand that another minute. She stole round behind the old Squire's chair, put her arms about his neck, and whispered something in his ear.

"What!" he exclaimed, incredulously.

"Yes!" she cried to him.

"Impossible, child!" said he.

"No, it isn't!" shouted Addison. "We've got that birch off, sir. It is all sawn up in bolts and out on the lake!"

"What, in a week?" exclaimed the old Squire.

"All in five days, sir!" cried Addison and I.

The old gentleman sat looking at us in blank surprise. He was an experienced lumberman, and knew exactly what such a statement as ours implied.

"Not three hundred cords?" said he, gravely.

"Close on to that, sir!" cried Addison.

Thereupon we all began to tell him about it at once. None of us could remain quiet. But it was not till we had related the whole story, and told him who had helped us, along with Addison's scheme of hiring the horse-power and saw, that he really believed it. He sprang up, walked twice across the sitting-room, then stopped short and looked at us.

"Boys, I'm proud of you!" he exclaimed. "Proud of you! I couldn't have done as well myself."

"Yes, Joseph, they're chips off the old block!" grandmother chimed in. "And we've beaten that wicked woman!"

Mrs. Lurvey, as I may add here, was far from sharing in our exultation. She was a person of violent temper. It was said that she shook with rage when she heard what we boys had done. But her lawyer advised her to keep quiet.

During the next two weeks the birch bolts were drawn to our mill, four miles down Lurvey's Stream, and sawn into thin strips and dowels, then shipped in bundles, by rail and schooner from Portland, to New York; and the contract netted the old Squire about twenty-five hundred dollars above the cost of the birch.

But as I look back on it, I am inclined to think that Aunt Olive was the real heroine of that strenuous week.

> NOTE. The following recipe will make a sufficient quantity of "white monkey" for three persons. Put over the fire one pint of new milk in a double boiler. As soon as the milk is warm, stir in one teaspoonful of flour mixed with two tablespoonfuls of cold water. As the milk gets hotter, add slowly, so as to dissolve it, two ounces of cheese, grated or chipped fine. Then add one ounce of butter, a teaspoonful of salt, a dash of Cayenne pepper, and one egg, well beaten and mixed with two tablespoonfuls of cold milk or water. Let the mixture simmer five minutes, then serve hot on wheat bread or brown-bread toast, well browned and buttered.

CHAPTER V

WHEN OLD ZACK WENT TO SCHOOL

This same week, I think, there was a commotion throughout the town on account of exciting incidents in what was known as the "Mills" school district, four miles from the old Squire's, where a "pupil" nearly sixty years old was bent on attending school—contrary to law!

For ten or fifteen years Zachary Lurvey had been the old Squire's rival in the lumber business. We had had more than one distracting contention with him. Yet we could not but feel a certain sympathy for him when, at the age of fifty-eight, he set out to get an education.

Old Zack would never tell any one where he came from, though there was a rumor that he hailed originally from Petitcodiac, New Brunswick. When, as a boy of about twenty, he had first appeared in our vicinity, he could neither read nor write; apparently he had never seen a schoolhouse. He did not even know there was such a place as Boston, or New York, and had never heard of George Washington!

But he had settled and gone to work at the place that was afterwards known as Lurvey's Mills; and he soon began to prosper, for he was possessed of keen mother wit and had energy and resolution enough for half a dozen ordinary men.

For years and years in all his many business transactions he had to make a mark for his signature; and he kept all his accounts on the attic floor of his house with beans and kernels of corn, even after they represented thousands of dollars. Then at last a disaster befell him; his house burned while he was away; and from the confusion that resulted the disadvantages of bookkeeping in cereals was so forcibly borne in upon him that he suddenly resolved to learn to read, write and reckon.

On the first day of the following winter term he appeared at the district schoolhouse with a primer, a spelling book, a Greenleaf's Arithmetic, a copy book, a pen and an ink bottle.

The schoolmaster was a young sophomore from Colby College named Marcus Cobb, a stranger in the place. When he entered the schoolhouse that morning he was visibly astonished to see a large, bony, formidable-looking old man sitting there among the children.

"Don't ye be scairt of me, young feller," old Zack said to him. "I guess ye can teach me, for I don't know my letters yit!"

Master Cobb called the school to order and proceeded to ask the names and ages of his pupils. When Zack's turn came, the old fellow replied promptly:

"Zack Lurvey, fifty-eight years, five months and eighteen days."

"Zack?" the master queried in some perplexity. "Does that stand for Zachary? How do you spell it?"

"I never spelled it," old Zack replied with a grin. "I'm here to larn how. Fact is, I'm jest a leetle backward."

The young master began to realize that he was in for something extraordinary. In truth, he had the time of his life there that winter. Not that old Zack misbehaved; on the contrary, he was a model of studiousness and was very anxious to learn. But education went hard with him at first; he was more than a week in learning his letters and sat by the hour, making them on a slate, muttering them aloud, sometimes vehemently, with painful groans. M and W gave him constant trouble; and so did B and R. He grew so wrathful over his mistakes at times that he thumped the desk with his fist, and once he hurled his primer at the stove.

"Why did they make the measly little things look so much alike!" he cried.

He wished to skip the letters altogether and to learn to read by the looks of the words; but the master assured him that he must learn the alphabet first if he wished to learn to write later, and finally he prevailed with the stubborn old man.

"Well, I do want to larn," old Zack replied. "I'm goin' the whole hog, ef it kills me!"

And apparently it did pretty near kill him; at any rate he perspired over his work and at times was near shedding tears.

Certain of the letters he drew on paper with a lead pencil and pasted on the back of his hands, so as to keep them in sight. One day he tore the alphabet out of his primer and put it into the crown of his cap—"to see ef it wouldn't soak in," he said. When, after a hard struggle, he was able to get three letters together and spell cat, c-a-t, he was so much pleased that he clapped his hands and shouted, "Scat!" at the top of his voice.

The effect of such performances on a roomful of small boys and girls was not conducive to good order. It was only with difficulty that the young master could hear lessons or induce his pupils to study. Old Zack was the center of attraction for every juvenile eye.

It was when the old fellow first began to write his name, or try to, in his copy book, that he caused the greatest commotion. Only with the most painful efforts did his wholly untrained fingers trace the copy that the master had set. His mouth, too, followed the struggles of his fingers; and the facial grimaces that resulted set the school into a gale of laughter. In fact, the master—a good deal amused himself—was wholly unable to calm the room so long as old Zack continued his exercise in writing.

The children of course carried home accounts of what went on at school; and certain of the parents complained to the school agent that their children were not learning properly. The complaints continued, and finally the agent—his name was Moss—visited the schoolroom and informed old Zack that he must leave.

"I don't think you have any right to be here," Moss said to him. "And you're giving trouble; you raise such a disturbance that the children can't attend to their studies."

Old Zack appealed to Master Cobb, "Have I broken any of your rules?" he asked. The master could not say that he had, intentionally.

"Haven't I studied?" old Zack asked.

"You certainly have," the master admitted, laughing.

But the school agent was firm. "You'll have to leave!" he exclaimed. "You're too old and too big to come here!"

"All the same, I'm comin' here," said old Zack.

"We'll see about that!" cried Moss angrily. "The law is on my side!"

That was the beginning of what is still remembered as "the war at the Mills schoolhouse." The agent appealed to the school board of the town, which consisted of three members,—two clergymen and a lawyer,—and the following day the board appeared at the schoolhouse. After conferring with the master, they proceeded formally to expel old Zack Lurvey from school.

Old Zack, however, hotly defended his right to get an education, and a wordy combat ensued.

"You're too old to draw school money," the lawyer informed him. "No money comes to you for schooling after you are twenty-one, and you look to be three times as old as that!"

Thereupon old Zack drew out his pocketbook and laid down twenty dollars. "There is your money," said he. "I can pay my way."

"But you are too old to attend a district school," the lawyer insisted. "You can't go after you are twenty-one."

"But I have never been," old Zack argued. "I never used up my right to go. I oughter have it now!"

"That isn't the point," declared the lawyer. "You're too old to go. Besides, we are informed that you are keeping the lawful pupils from properly attending to their studies. You must pick up your books and leave the schoolhouse."

Old Zack eyed him in silence. "I'm goin' to school, and I'm goin' here," he said at last.

That was defiance of the board's authority, and the lawyer—a young man—threw off his coat and tried to eject the unruly pupil from the room; but to his chagrin he was himself ejected, with considerable damage to his legal raiment. Returning from the door, old Zack offered opportunity for battle to the reverend gentlemen—which they prudently declined. The lawyer re-entered, covered with snow, for old Zack had dropped him into a drift outside.

Summoning his two colleagues and the schoolmaster to assist him in sustaining the constituted authority, the lawyer once more advanced upon old Zack, who retreated to the far corner of the room and bade them come on.

Many of the smaller pupils were now crying from fright; and the two clergymen, probably feeling that the proceedings had become scandalous, persuaded their colleague to cease hostilities; and in the end the board contented itself with putting a formal order of expulsion into writing. School was then dismissed for that afternoon, and they all went away, leaving old Zack backed into the corner of the room. But, regardless of his "expulsion," the next morning he came to school again and resumed his arduous studies.

The story had gone abroad, and the whole community was waiting to see what would follow. The school board appealed to the sheriff, who offered to arrest old Zack if the board would provide him with a warrant. It seemed simple enough, at first, to draw a warrant for old Zack's arrest, but legal difficulties arose. He could not well be taken for assault, for it was the lawyer that had attacked him; or for wanton mischief, for his intent in going to school was not mischievous; or yet for trespass, for he had offered to pay for his schooling.

There was no doubt that on account of his age he had no business in the school and that the board had the right to refuse him schooling; yet it was not easy to word his offense in such a way that it constituted a misdemeanor that could properly be stated in a warrant for his arrest. Several warrants were drawn, all of which, on the ground that they were legally dubious, the resident justice of the peace refused to sign.

"I am not going to get the town mixed up in a lawsuit for damages," said the justice. "Lurvey is a doughty fighter at law, as well as physically, and he has got the money to fight with."

The proceedings hung fire for a week or more. The school board sent an order to the master not to hear old Zack's lessons or to give him any instructions whatever. But the old fellow came to school just the same, and poor Cobb had to get along with him as best he could. The school board was not eager again to try putting him out by force, and it seemed that nothing less than the state militia could oust him from the schoolhouse; and that would need an order from the governor of the state! On the whole, public opinion rather favored his being allowed to pay his tuition and to go to school if he felt the need of it.

At any rate, he went to school there all winter and made remarkable progress. In the course of ten weeks he could read slowly, and he knew most of the short words in his primer and second reader by sight. Longer words he would not try to pronounce, but called them, each and all,

"jackass" as fast as he came to them.

In consequence his reading aloud was highly ambiguous. He could write his name slowly and with many grimaces.

Figures, for some reason, came much easier to him than the alphabet. He learned the numerals in a few days, and by the fifth or sixth week of school he could add and subtract on his slate. But the multiplication table gave him serious trouble. The only way he succeeded in learning it at all was by singing it. After he began to do sums in multiplication on his slate, he was likely to burst forth singing in school hours:

"Seven times eight are fifty-six
—and carry five.
Seven times nine are sixty-three
—and carry seven.
No, no, no, no, carry six!"

"But, Mr. Lurvey, you must keep quiet in school!" the afflicted master remonstrated for the hundredth time. "No one else can study."

"But I can't!" old Zack would reply. "'Twouldn't come to me 'less I sung it!"

Toward the last weeks of the term he was able to multiply with considerable accuracy and to divide in short division. Long division he did not attempt, but he rapidly learned to cast interest at six per cent. He had had a way of arriving at that with beans, before he came to school; and no one had ever succeeded in cheating him. He knew about interest money, he said, by "sense of feeling."

Grammar he saw no use for, and did not bother himself with it; but, curiously enough, he was delighted with geography and toward the end of the term bought a copy of Cornell's text-book, which was then used in Maine schools.

What most interested him was to trace rivers on the maps and to learn their names. Cities he cared nothing for; but he loved to learn about the mountain ranges where pine and spruce grew.

"What places them would be for sawmills!" he exclaimed.

Much as he liked his new geography, however, he had grown violently angry over the first lesson and declared with strong language that it was all a lie! The master had read aloud to him the first lesson, which describes the earth as one of the planets that revolve round the sun, and which says that it is a globe or sphere, turning on its axis once in twenty-four hours and so causing day and night.

Old Zack listened incredulously. "I don't believe a word of that!" he declared flatly.

The master labored with him for some time, trying to convince him that the earth is round and moves, but it was quite in vain.

"No such thing!" old Zack exclaimed. "I know better! That's the biggest lie that ever was told!"

He quite took it to heart and continued talking about it after school. He really seemed to believe that a great and dangerous delusion had gone abroad.

"It's wrong," he said, "puttin' sich stuff as that into young ones' heads. It didn't oughter be 'lowed!"

What old Zack was saying about the earth spread abroad and caused a great deal of amusement. Certain waggish persons began to "josh" him and others tried to argue with him, but all such attempts merely roused his native obstinacy. One Sunday evening he gave a somewhat wrong direction to the weekly prayer meeting by rising to warn the people that their children were being taught a pack of lies; and such was his vehemence that the regular Sabbath service resolved itself into a heated debate on the contour of the earth.

Perhaps old Zack believed that, as a recently educated man, it had become his duty to set things right in the public mind.

The day before school closed he went to his late antagonist, the lawyer on the school board, and again offered to pay the twenty dollars for his tuition. After formally expelling him from school, however, the board did not dare to accept the money, and old Zack gave it to the long-suffering Master Cobb.

CHAPTER VI

THE SAD ABUSE OF OLD MEHITABLE

About this time there occurred a domestic episode with which Halstead was imperishably connected in the family annals.

In those days the family butter was churned in the kitchen by hand power, and often laboriously, in an upright dasher churn which Addison and Theodora had christened Old Mehitable. The butter had been a long time coming one morning; but finally the cream which for an hour or more had been thick, white and mute beneath the dasher strokes began to swash in a peculiar way, giving forth after each stroke a sound that they thought resembled, *Mehitable—Mehitable—Mehitable*.

That old churn was said to be sixty-six years old even then. There was little to wear out in the old-fashioned dasher churns, made as they were of well-seasoned pine or spruce, with a "butter cup" turned from a solid block of birch or maple, and the dasher staff of strong white ash. One of them sometimes outlasted two generations of housewives; they were simple, durable and easily kept clean, but hard to operate.

Our acquaintance with Mehitable had begun very soon after our arrival at the old farm. I remember that one of the first things the old Squire said to us was, "Boys, now that our family is so largely increased, I think that you will have to assist your grandmother with the dairy work, particularly the churning, which comes twice a week."

Tuesdays and Fridays were the churning days, and on those mornings I remember that we were wont to peer into the kitchen as we came to breakfast and mutter the unwelcome tidings to one another that old Mehitable was out there waiting—tidings followed immediately by two gleeful shouts of, "It isn't my turn!"—and glum looks from the one of us whose unfortunate lot it was to ply the dasher.

Addison, I recollect, used to take his turn without much demur or complaint, and he had a knack of getting through with it quickly as a rule, especially in summer. None of us had much trouble during the warm season. It was in November, December and January, when cold cream did not properly "ripen" and the cows were long past their freshening, that those protracted, wearying sessions at the churn began. Then, indeed, our annual grievance against grandmother Ruth burst forth afresh. For, like many another veteran housewife, the dear old lady was very "set" on having her butter come hard, and hence averse to raising the temperature of the cream above fifty-six degrees. Often that meant two or three hours of hard, up-and-down work at the churn.

In cold weather, too, the cream sometimes "swelled" in the churn, becoming so stiff as to render it nearly impossible to force the dasher through it; and we would lift the entire churn from the floor in our efforts to work it up and down. At such times our toes suffered, and we were wont to call loudly for Theodora and Ellen to come and hold the churn down, a task that they undertook with misgivings.

What exasperated us always was the superb calmness with which grandmother Ruth viewed those struggles, going placidly on with her other duties as if our woes were all in the natural order of the universe. The butter, eggs and poultry were her perquisites in the matter of farm products, and we were apt to accuse her of hard-heartedness in her desire to make them yield income.

Addison, I remember, had a prop that he inserted and drove tight with a mallet between a beam overhead and the top of the churn when the cream "swelled"; but neither Halstead nor I was ever able to adjust the prop skillfully enough to keep it from falling down on our heads.

And we suspected Addison of pouring warm water into the churn when grandmother's back was turned, though we never actually caught him at it. Sometimes when he churned, the butter "came" suspiciously soft, to grandmother's great dissatisfaction, since she had special customers for her butter at the village and was proud of its uniform quality.

With the kindly aid of the girls, especially Ellen, I usually got through my turn after a fashion. I was crafty enough to keep their sympathy and good offices enlisted on my side.

But poor Halstead! There was pretty sure to be a rumpus every time his turn came. Nature, indeed, had but poorly fitted him for churning, or, in fact, for any form of domestic labor that required sustained effort and patience. He had a kind heart; but his temper was stormy. When informed that his turn had come to churn, he almost always disputed it hotly. Afterwards he was likely to fume a while and finally go about the task in so sullen a mood that the girls were much inclined to leave him to his own devices. Looking back at our youthful days, I see plainly now that we were often uncharitable toward Halstead. He was, I must admit, a rather difficult boy to get on with, hasty of temper and inclined to act recklessly. There were no doubt physical causes for those defects; but Addison and I thought he might do better if he pleased. He and Addison were about the same age, and I was two and a half years younger. Halstead, in fact, was slightly taller than Addison, but not so strong. His complexion was darker and not so clear; and I imagine that he was not so healthy. Once, I remember, when Dr. Green from the village was at the house, he cast a professional eye on us three boys and remarked, "That dark boy's blood isn't so good as that of the other two," a remark that Halstead appears to have overheard.

None the less, he was strong enough to work when he chose, though he complained constantly and shirked when he could.

On the Friday morning referred to, it had come Halstead's turn "to stand up with old Mehitable," as Ellen used to say; and after the usual heated argument he had set about it out in the kitchen in a particularly wrathy mood. It was snowing outside. The old Squire had driven to the village; and, after doing the barn chores, Addison had retired to the sitting-room to cipher out two or three

hard sums in complex fractions while I had seized the opportunity to read a book of Indian stories that Tom Edwards had lent me. After starting the churning, grandmother Ruth, assisted by the girls, was putting in order the bedrooms upstairs.

Through a crack of the unlatched door that led to the kitchen, we heard Halstead churning casually, muttering to himself and plumping the old churn about the kitchen floor. Several times he had shouted for the girls to come and help him hold it down; and presently we heard him ordering Nell to bid grandmother Ruth pour hot milk into the churn.

"It's as cold as ice!" he cried. "It never will come in the world till it is warmed up! Here I have churned for two hours, steady, and no signs of the butter's coming—and it isn't my turn either!"

We had heard Halstead run on so much in that same strain, however, that neither Addison nor I paid much attention to it.

Every few moments, however, he continued shouting for some one to come and help; and presently, when grandma Ruth came downstairs for a moment to see how matters were going on, we heard him pleading angrily with her to pour in hot milk.

"Make the other boys come and help!" he cried after her as she was calmly returning upstairs. "Make them come and churn a spell. Their blood is better'n mine!"

"Oh, I guess your blood is good enough," the old lady replied, laughing.

Silence for a time followed that last appeal. Halstead seemed to have resigned himself to his task. Addison's pencil ciphered away; and I grew absorbed in Colter's flight from the Indians.

Before long, however, a pungent odor, as of fat on a hot stove, began to pervade the house. Addison looked up and sniffed. Just then we heard Theodora race suddenly down the hall stairs, speed to the other door of the kitchen, then cry out and go flying back upstairs. An instant later she and Ellen rushed down, with grandmother Ruth hard after them. Evidently something was going wrong. Addison and I made for the kitchen door, for we heard grandmother exclaim in tones of deepest indignation, "O you Halstead! What have you done!"

Halstead had set the old churn on top of the hot stove, placed a chair close against it, and was standing on the chair, churning with might and main.

His head, as he plied the dasher, was almost touching the ceiling; his face was as red as a beet. He had filled the stove with dry wood, and the bottom of the churn was smoking; the chimes were warping out of their grooves, and cream was leaking on the stove. The kitchen reeked with the smoke and odor.

After one horrified glance, grandmother rushed in, snatched the churn off the stove and bore it to the sink. Her indignation was too great for "Christian words," as the old lady sometimes expressed it in moments of great domestic provocation. "Get the slop pails," she said in low tones to Ellen and Theodora. "'Tis spoiled. The whole churning is smoked and spoiled—and the churn, too!"

Halstead, meantime, was getting down from the chair, still very hot and red. "Well, I warmed the old thing up once!" he muttered defiantly. "'Twas coming, too. 'Twould have come in one minute more!"

But neither grandmother nor the girls vouchsafed him another look. After a glance round, Addison drew back, shutting the kitchen door, and resumed his pencil. He shook his head sapiently to me, but seemed to be rocked by internal mirth. "Now, wasn't that just like Halse?" he muttered at length.

"What do you think the old Squire will say to this?" I hazarded.

"Oh, not much, I guess," Addison replied, going on with his problem. "The old gentleman doesn't think it is of much use to talk to him. Halse, you know, flies all to pieces if he is reproved."

In point of fact I do not believe the old Squire took the matter up with Halstead at all. He did not come home until afternoon, and no one said much to him about what had happened during the morning.

But we had to procure a new churn immediately for the following Tuesday. Old Mehitable was totally ruined. The bottom and the lower ends of the chimes were warped and charred beyond repair.

Largely influenced by Addison's advice, grandmother Ruth consented to the purchase of one of the new crank churns. For a year or more he had been secretly cogitating a scheme to avoid so much tiresome work when churning; and a crank churn, he foresaw, would lend itself to such a project much more readily than a churn with an upright dasher. It was a plan that finally took the form of a revolving shaft overhead along the walk from the kitchen to the stable, where it was actuated by a light horse-power. Little belts descending from this shaft operated not only the churn but a washing machine, a wringer, a corn shelter, a lathe and several other machines with so much success and saving of labor that even grandmother herself smiled approvingly.

"And that's all due to me!" Halstead used to exclaim once in a while. "If I hadn't burnt up that old churn, we would be tugging away at it to this day!"

"Yes, Halse, you are a wonderful boy in the kitchen!" Ellen would remark roguishly.

CHAPTER VII

BEAR-TONE

One day about the first of February, Catherine Edwards made the rounds of the neighborhood with a subscription paper to get singers for a singing school. A veteran "singing master"—Seth Clark, well known throughout the country—had offered to give the young people of the place a course of twelve evening lessons or sessions in vocal music, at four dollars per evening; and Catherine was endeavoring to raise the sum of forty-eight dollars for this purpose.

Master Clark was to meet us at the district schoolhouse for song sessions of two hours, twice a week, on Tuesday and Friday evenings at seven o'clock. Among us at the old Squire's we signed eight dollars.

The singing school did not much interest me personally, for the reason that I did not expect to attend. As the Frenchman said when invited to join a fox hunt, I had been. Two winters previously there had been a singing school in an adjoining school district, known as "Bagdad," where along with others I had presented myself as a candidate for vocal culture, and had been rejected on the grounds that I lacked both "time" and "ear." What was even less to my credit, I had been censured as being concerned in a disturbance outside the schoolhouse. That was my first winter in Maine, and the teacher at that singing school was not Seth Clark, but an itinerant singing master widely known as "Bear-Tone."

As opportunities for musical instruction thereabouts were limited, the old Squire, who loved music and who was himself a fair singer, had advised us to go. Five of us, together with our two young neighbors, Kate and Thomas Edwards, drove over to Bagdad in a three-seated pung sleigh.

The old schoolhouse was crowded with young people when we arrived, and a babel of voices burst on us as we drew rein at the door. After helping the girls from the pung, Addison and I put up the horses at a farmer's barn near by. When we again reached the schoolhouse, a gigantic man in an immense, shaggy buffalo coat was just coming up. He entered the building a step behind us.

It was Bear-Tone; and a great hush fell on the young people as he appeared in the doorway. Squeezing hurriedly into seats with the others, Addison and I faced round. Bear-Tone stood in front of the teacher's desk, near the stovepipe, rubbing his huge hands together, for the night was cold. He was smiling, too—a friendly, genial smile that seemed actually to brighten the room.

If he had looked gigantic to us in the dim doorway, he now looked colossal. In fact, he was six feet five inches tall and three feet across the shoulders. He had legs like mill-posts and arms to match; he wore big mittens, because he could not buy gloves large enough for his hands. He was lean and bony rather than fat, and weighed three hundred and twenty pounds, it was said.

His face was big and broad, simple and yet strong; it was ringed round from ear to ear with a short but very thick sandy beard. His eyes were blue, his hair, like his beard, was sandy. He was almost forty years old and was still a bachelor.

"Wal, young ones," he said at last, "reckonin' trundle-bed trash, there's a lot of ye, ain't there?"

His voice surprised me. From such a massive man I had expected to hear a profound bass. Yet his voice was not distinctly bass, it was clear and flexible. He could sing bass, it is true, but he loved best to sing tenor, and in that part his voice was wonderfully sweet.

As his speech at once indicated, he was an ignorant man. He had never had musical instruction; he spoke of soprano as "tribble," of alto as "counter," and of baritone as "bear-tone"—a mispronunciation that had given him his nickname.

But he could sing! Melody was born in him, so to speak, full-fledged, ready to sing. Musical training would have done him no good, and it might have done him harm. He could not have sung a false note if he had tried; discord really pained him.

"Wal, we may's well begin," he said when he had thoroughly warmed his hands. "What ye got for singin' books here? Dulcimers, or Harps of Judah? All with Harps raise yer right hands. So. Now all with Dulcimers, left hands. So. Harps have it. Them with Dulcimers better get Harps, if ye can, 'cause we want to sing together. But to-night we'll try voices. I wouldn't wonder if there might be some of ye who might just as well go home and shell corn as try to sing." And he laughed. "So in the first place we'll see if you can sing, and then what part you can sing, whether it's tribble, or counter, or bass, or tenor. The best way for us to find out is to have you sing the scale—the notes of music. Now these are the notes of music." And without recourse to tuning fork he sang:

"Do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, do."

The old schoolhouse seemed to swell to the mellow harmony from his big throat. To me those

eight notes, as Bear-Tone sang them, were a sudden revelation of what music may be.

"I'll try you first, my boy," he then said, pointing to Newman Darnley, a young fellow about twenty years old who sat at the end of the front row of seats. "Step right out here."

Greatly embarrassed, Newman shambled forth and, turning, faced us.

"Now, sir," said the master, "catch the key-note from me. Do! Now re—mi," and so forth.

Bear-Tone had great difficulty in getting Newman through the scale. "'Fraid you never'll make a great singer, my boy," he said, "but you may be able to grumble bass a little, if you prove to have an ear that can follow. Next on that seat."

The pupil so designated was a Bagdad boy named Freeman Knights. He hoarsely rattled off, "Do, re, mi, fa, sol," all on the same tone. When Bear-Tone had spent some moments in trying to make him rise and fall on the notes, he exclaimed:

"My dear boy, you may be able to drive oxen, but you'll never sing. It wouldn't do you any good to stay here, and as the room is crowded the best thing you can do is to run home."

Opening the door, he gave Freeman a friendly pat on the shoulder and a push into better air outside.

Afterwards came Freeman's sister, Nellie Knights; she could discern no difference between do and la—at which Bear-Tone heaved a sigh.

"Wai, sis, you'll be able to call chickens, I guess, because that's all on one note, but 'twouldn't be worth while for you to try to sing, or torment a pianner. There are plenty of girls tormentin' pianners now. I guess you'd better go home, too; it may come on to snow."

Nellie departed angrily and slammed the door. Bear-Tone looked after her. "Yes," he said, "'tis kind of hard to say that to a girl. Don't wonder she's a little mad. And yet, that's the kindest thing I can do. Even in Scripter there was the sheep and the goats; the goats couldn't sing, and the sheep could; they had to be separated."

He went on testing voices and sending the "goats" home. Some of the "goats," however, lingered round outside, made remarks and peeped in at the windows. In an hour their number had grown to eighteen or twenty.

Dreading the ordeal, I slunk into a back seat. I saw my cousin, Addison, who had a fairly good voice, join the "sheep," and then Theodora, Ellen, Kate and Thomas; but I could not escape the ordeal forever, and at last my turn came. When Bear-Tone bade me sing the scale, fear so constricted my vocal cords that I squealed rather than sang.

"Sonny, there's lots of things a boy can do besides sing," Bear-Tone said as he laughingly consigned me to the outer darkness. "It's no great blessing, after all." He patted my shoulder. "I can sing a little, but I've never been good for much else. So don't you feel bad about it."

But I did feel bad, and, joining the "goats" outside, I helped to organize a hostile demonstration. We began to march round the schoolhouse, howling Yankee Doodle. Our discordant noise drew a prompt response. The door opened and Bear-Tone's huge form appeared.

"In about one harf of one minute more I'll be out there and give ye a lesson in Yankee Doodle!" he cried, laughing. His tone sounded good-natured; yet for some reason none of us thought it best to renew the disturbance.

Most of the "goats" dispersed, but, not wishing to walk home alone, I hung round waiting for the others. One window of the schoolroom had been raised, and through that I watched proceedings. Bear-Tone had now tested all the voices except one, and his face showed that he had not been having a very pleasant time. Up in the back seat there still remained one girl, Helen Thomas, who had, according to common report, a rather good voice; yet she was so modest that few had ever heard her either sing or recite.

I saw her come forward, when the master beckoned, and sing her do, re, mi. Bear-Tone, who had stood waiting somewhat apathetically, came suddenly to attention. "Sing that again, little girl," he said.

Encouraged by his kind glance, Helen again sang the scale in her clear voice. A radiant look overspread Bear-Tone's big face.

"Wal, wal!" he cried. "But you've a voice, little one! Sing that with me."

Big voice and girl's voice blended and chorded.

"Ah, but you will make a singer, little one!" Bear-Tone exclaimed. "Now sing Woodland with me. Never mind notes, sing by ear."

A really beautiful volume of sound came through the window at which I listened. Bear-Tone and his new-found treasure sang The Star-Spangled Banner and several of the songs of the Civil War, then just ended—ballads still popular with us and fraught with touching memories: Tenting To-night on the Old Camp Ground, Dearest Love, Do You Remember? and Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys Are Marching. Bear-Tone's rich voice chorded beautifully with Helen's sweet, high notes.

As we were getting into the pung to go home after the meeting, and Helen and her older sister, Elizabeth, were setting off, Bear-Tone dashed out, bareheaded, with his big face beaming.

"Be sure you come again," he said to her, in a tone that was almost imploring. "You can sing! Oh, you can sing! I'll teach you! I'll teach you!"

The singing school that winter served chiefly as a pretty background for Bear-Tone's delight in Helen Thomas's voice, the interest he took in it, and the untiring efforts he made to teach her.

"One of the rarest of voices!" he said to the old Squire one night when he had come to the farmhouse on one of his frequent visits. "Not once will you find one in fifty years. It's a deep tribble. Why, Squire, that girl's voice is a discovery! And it will grow in her, Squire! It is just starting now, but by the time she's twenty-five it will come out wonderful."

The soprano of the particular quality that Bear-Tone called "deep tribble" is that sometimes called a "falcon" soprano, or dramatic soprano, in distinction from light soprano. It is better known and more enthusiastically appreciated by those proficient in music than by the general public. Bear-Tone, however, recognized it in his new pupil, as if from instinct.

The other pupils were somewhat neglected that winter; but no one complained, for it was such a pleasure to hear Bear-Tone and Helen sing. Many visitors came; and once the old Squire attended a meeting, in order to hear Bear-Tone's remarkable pupil. In Days of Old when Knights were Bold, dear old Juanita, and Roll on, Silver Moon, were some of their favorite songs, Still a "goat," and always a "goat," I am not capable of describing music; but school and visitors sat enchanted when Helen and Bear-Tone sang.

Helen's parents were opposed to having their daughter become a professional singer. They were willing that she should sing in church and at funerals, but not in opera. For a long time Bear-Tone labored to convince them that a voice like Helen's has a divine mission in the world, to please, to touch and to ennoble the hearts of the people.

At last he induced them to let him take Helen to Portland, in order that a well-known teacher there might hear her sing and give an opinion. Bear-Tone was to pay the expenses of the trip himself.

The city teacher was enthusiastic over the girl and urged that she be given opportunity for further study; but in view of the opposition at home that was not easily managed. But Bear-Tone would not be denied. He sacrificed the scanty earnings of a whole winter's round of singing schools in country school districts to send her to the city for a course of lessons.

The next year the question of her studying abroad came up. If Helen were to make the most of her voice, she must have it trained by masters in Italy and Paris. Her parents were unwilling to assist her to cross the ocean.

Bear-Tone was a poor man; his singing schools never brought him more than a few hundred dollars a year. He owned a little house in a neighboring village, where he kept "bachelor's hall"; he had a piano, a cabinet organ, a bugle, a guitar and several other musical instruments, including one fairly valuable old violin from which he was wont of an evening to produce wonderfully sweet, sad strains.

No one except the officials of the local savings bank knew how Bear-Tone raised the money for Helen Thomas's first trip abroad, but he did it. Long afterwards people learned that he had mortgaged everything he possessed, even the old violin, in order to provide the necessary money.

Helen went to Europe and studied for two years. She made her début at Milan, sang in several of the great cities on the Continent, and at last, with a reputation as a great singer fully established, returned home four years later to sing in New York.

Bear-Tone meanwhile was teaching his singing schools, as usual, in the rural districts of Maine. Once or twice during those two years of study he had managed to send a little money to Helen, to help out with the expenses. Now he postponed his three bi-weekly schools for one week and made his first and only trip to New York—the journey of a lifetime. Perhaps he had at first hoped that he might meet her and be welcomed. If so, he changed his mind on reaching the metropolis. Aware of his uncouthness, he resolved not to shame her by claiming recognition. But he went three times to hear her sing, first in Aïda, then in Faust, and afterwards in Les Huguenots; heard her magic notes, saw her in all her queenly beauty—but saw her from the shelter of a pillar in the rear of the great opera house. On the fifth day he returned home as quietly as he had gone.

Perhaps a month after he came back, while driving to one of his singing schools on a bitter night in February, he took a severe cold. For lack of any proper care at his little lonesome, chilly house, his cold a day or two later turned into pneumonia, and from that he died.

The savings bank took the house and the musical instruments. The piano, the organ, the old violin and other things were sold at auction. And probably Helen Thomas, whose brilliant career he had made possible, never heard anything about the circumstances of his death.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN WE HUNTED THE STRIPED CATAMOUNT

The following week Tom Edwards and I had a somewhat exciting adventure which, however, by no means covered us with glory. During the previous winter and, indeed, for several winters before that, there had been rumors current of a strange, fierce animal which came down, from the "great woods" to devour dead lambs that were cast forth from the farmers' barns in February and March.

At that time nearly every farmer in the vicinity kept a flock of from fifty to a hundred sheep. During the warm season the animals got their own living in the back pastures; in winter they were fed on nothing better than hay. The animals usually came out in the spring thin and weak, with the ewes in poor condition to raise their lambs. In consequence, many of the lambs died soon after birth, and were thrown out on the snow for the crows and wild animals to dispose of.

The old Squire had begun to feed corn to his flock during the latter part of the winter, and urged his neighbors to do so; but many of them did not have the corn and preferred to let nature take its course.

The mysterious animal that the boys were talking about seemed to have formed the habit of visiting that region every spring. Not even the older people knew to what species it belonged. It came round the barns at night, and no one had ever seen it distinctly. Some believed it to be a catamount or panther; others who had caught glimpses of it said that it was a black creature with white stripes.

Traps had been set for it, but always without success. Mr. Wilbur, one of the neighbors, had watched from his barn and fired a charge of buckshot at it; but immediately the creature had disappeared in the darkness, carrying off a lamb. It visited one place or another nearly every night for a month or more—as long, indeed, as the supply of lambs held out. Then it would vanish until the following spring.

On the day above referred to I saw Tom coming across the snowy fields that lay between the Edwards' farm and the old Squire's. Guessing that he had something to tell me, I hastened forth to meet him.

"That old striped catamount has come round again!" Tom exclaimed. "He was at Batchelder's last night and got two dead lambs. And night before last he was at Wilbur's. I've got four dead lambs saved up. And old Hughy Glinds has told me a way to watch for him and shoot him."

Hughy Glinds was a rheumatic old man who lived in a small log house up in the edge of the great woods and made baskets for a living. In his younger days he had been a trapper and was therefore a high authority in such matters among the boys.

"We shall have to have a sleigh or a pung to watch from," Tom explained. "Old Hughy says to carry out a dead lamb and leave it near the bushes below our barn, and to haul a sleigh there and leave it a little way off, and do this for three or four nights till old Striped gets used to seeing the sleigh. Then, after he has come four nights, we're to go there early in the evening and hide in the sleigh, with a loaded gun. Old Striped will be used to seeing the sleigh there, and won't be suspicious.

"Pa don't want me to take our sleigh so long," Tom went on. "He wants to use it before we'd be through with it. But"—and I now began to see why Tom had been so willing to share with me the glory of killing the marauder—"there's an old sleigh out here behind your barn. Nobody uses it now. Couldn't we take that?"

I felt sure that the old Squire would not care, but I proposed to ask the opinion of Addison. Tom opposed our taking Addison into our confidence.

"He's older, and he'd get all the credit for it," he objected.

Addison, moreover, had driven to the village that morning; and after some discussion we decided to take the sleigh on our own responsibility. It was partly buried in a snowdrift; but we dug it out, and then drew it across the fields on the snow crust—lifting it over three stone walls—to a little knoll below the Edwards barn.

We concluded to lay the dead lamb on the top of the knoll at a little distance from the woods; the sleigh we left on the southeast side about fifteen paces away. Tom thought that he could shoot accurately at that distance, even at night.

For my own part I thought fifteen paces much too near. Misgivings had begun to beset me.

"What if you miss him, Tom?" I said.

"I shan't miss him," he declared firmly.

"But, Tom, what if you only wounded him and he came rushing straight at us?"

"Oh, I'll fix him!" Tom exclaimed. But I had become very apprehensive; and at last, Tom helped me to bring cedar rails and posts from a fence near by to construct a kind of fortress round the sleigh. We set the posts in the hard snow and made a fence, six rails high—to protect ourselves. Even then I was afraid it might jump the fence.

"He won't jump much with seven buckshot and a ball in him!" said Tom.

We left the empty sleigh there for three nights in succession; and every morning Tom came over to tell me that the lamb had been taken.

"The plan works just as old Hughy told me it would," he said; "but I've got only one lamb more, so we'll have to watch to-night. Don't tell anybody, but about bedtime you come over." Tom was full of eagerness.

I was in a feverish state of mind all day, especially as night drew on. If I had not been ashamed to fail Tom, I think I should have backed out. At eight o'clock I pretended to start for bed; then, stealing out at the back door, I hurried across the fields to the Edwards place. A new moon was shining faintly over the woods in the west.

Tom was in the wood-house, loading the gun, an old army rifle, bored out for shot. "I've got in six fingers of powder," he whispered.

We took a buffalo skin and a horse blanket from the stable, and armed with the gun, and an axe besides, proceeded cautiously out to the sleigh. Tom had laid the dead lamb on the knoll.

Climbing over the fence, we ensconced ourselves in the old sleigh. It was a chilly night, with gusts of wind from the northwest. We laid the axe where it would be at hand in case of need; and Tom trained the gun across the fence rail in the direction of the knoll.

"Like's not he won't come till toward morning," he whispered; "but we must stay awake and keep listening for him. Don't you go to sleep."

I thought that sleep was the last thing I was likely to be guilty of. I wished myself at home. The tales I had heard of the voracity and fierceness of the striped catamount were made much more terrible by the darkness. My position was so cramped and the old sleigh so hard that I had to squirm occasionally; but every time I did so, Tom whispered:

"Sh! Don't rattle round. He may hear us."

An hour or two, which seemed ages long, dragged by; the crescent moon sank behind the tree-tops and the night darkened. At last, in spite of myself, I grew drowsy, but every few moments I started broad awake and clutched the handle of the axe. Several times Tom whispered:

"I believe you're asleep."

"I'm not!" I protested.

"Well, you jump as if you were," he retorted.

By and by Tom himself started spasmodically, and I accused him of having slept; but he denied it in a most positive whisper. Suddenly, in an interval between two naps, I heard a sound different from the soughing of the wind, a sound like claws or toenails scratching on the snow crust. It came from the direction of the knoll, or beyond it.

"Tom, Tom, he's coming!" I whispered.

Tom, starting up from a nap, gripped the gunstock. "Yes, siree," he said. "He is." He cocked the gun, and the barrel squeaked faintly on the rail. "By jinks, I see him!"

I, too, discerned a shadowy, dark object at the top of the snow-crusted knoll. Tom was twisting round to get aim across the rail—and the next instant both of us were nearly kicked out of the sleigh by the recoil of the greatly overloaded gun. We both scrambled to our feet, for we heard an ugly snarl. I think the animal leaped upward; I was sure I saw something big and black rise six feet in the air, as if it were coming straight for the sleigh!

The instinct of self-preservation is a strong one. The first thing I realized I was over the fence rails, on the side toward the Edwards barn, running for dear life on the snow crust—and Tom was close behind me! We never stopped, even to look back, till we were at the barn and round the farther corner of it. There we pulled up to catch our breath. Nothing was pursuing us, nor could we hear anything.

After we had listened a while, Tom ran into the house and waked his father. Mr. Edwards, however, was slow to believe that we had hit the animal, and refused to dress and go out. It was now about two o'clock. I did not like to go home alone, and so went to bed with Tom. In consequence of our vigils we slept till sunrise. Meanwhile, on going out to milk, Tom's father had had the curiosity to visit the scene of our adventure. A trail of blood spots leading from the knoll into the woods convinced him that we had really damaged the prowler; and picking up the axe that I had dropped, he followed the trail. Large red stains at intervals showed that the animal had stopped frequently to grovel on the snow. About half a mile from the knoll, Mr. Edwards came upon the beast, in a fir thicket, making distressful sounds, and quite helpless to defend itself. A blow on the head from the poll of the axe finished the creature; and, taking it by the tail, Mr. Edwards dragged it to the house. The carcass was lying in the dooryard when Tom's mother waked us.

"Get up and see your striped catamount!" she called up the chamber stairs.

Hastily donning our clothes we rushed down. Truth to say, the "monster" of so many startling

stories was somewhat disappointing to contemplate. It was far from being so big as we had thought it in the night—indeed, it was no larger than a medium-sized dog. It had coarse black hair with two indistinct, yellowish-white stripes, or bands, along its sides. Its legs were short, but strong, its claws white, hooked and about an inch and a quarter long. The head was broad and flat, and the ears were low and wide apart. It was not in the least like a catamount. In short, it was, as the reader may have guessed, a wolverene, or glutton, an animal rarely seen in Maine even by the early settlers, for its habitat is much farther north.

As Tom and I stood looking the creature over, my cousin Theodora appeared, coming from the old Squire's to make inquiries for me. They had missed me and were uneasy about me.

During the day every boy in the neighborhood came to see the animal, and many of the older people, too. In fact, several people came from a considerable distance to look at the beast. The "glory" was Tom's for making so good a shot in the night, yet, in a way, I shared it with him.

"Don't you ever say a word about our running from the sleigh," Tom cautioned me many times that day, and added that he would never have run except for my bad example.

I was obliged to put up in silence with that reflection on my bravery.

CHAPTER IX

THE LOST OXEN

It was now approaching time to tap the maples again; but owing to the disaster which had befallen our effort to make maple syrup for profit the previous spring, neither Addison nor myself felt much inclination to undertake it. The matter was talked over at the breakfast table one morning and noting our lukewarmness on the subject, the old Squire remarked that as the sugar lot had been tapped steadily every spring for twenty years or more, it would be quite as well perhaps to give the maples a rest for one season.

That same morning, too, Tom Edwards came over in haste to tell us, with a very sober face, that their oxen had disappeared mysteriously, and ask us to join in the search to find them. They were a yoke of "sparked" oxen—red and white in contrasting patches. Each had wide-spread horns and a "star" in his face. Bright and Broad were their names, and they were eight years old.

Neighbor Jotham Edwards was one of those simpleminded, hard-working farmers who ought to prosper but who never do. It is not easy to say just what the reason was for much of his ill fortune. Born under an unlucky planet, some people said; but that, of course, is childish. The real reason doubtless was lack of good judgment in his business enterprises.

Whatever he undertook nearly always turned out badly. His carts and ploughs broke unaccountably, his horses were strangely prone to run away and smash things, and something was frequently the matter with his crops. Twice, I remember, he broke a leg, and each time he had to lie six weeks on his back for the bone to knit. Felons on his fingers tormented him; and it was a notable season that he did not have a big, painful boil or a bad cut from a scythe or from an axe. One mishap seemed to lead to another.

Jotham's constant ill fortune was the more noticeable among his neighbors because his father, Jonathan, had been a careful, prosperous farmer who kept his place in excellent order, raised good crops and had the best cattle of any one thereabouts. Within a few years after the place had passed under Jotham's control it was mortgaged, the buildings and the fences were in bad repair, and the fields were weedy. Yet that man worked summer and winter as hard and as steadily as ever a man did or could.

Two winters before he had contracted with old Zack Lurvey to cut three hundred thousand feet of hemlock logs and draw them to the bank of a small river where in the spring they could be floated down to Lurvey's Mills. For hauling the logs he had two yokes of oxen, the yoke of large eight-year-olds that I have already described, and another yoke of small, white-faced cattle. During the first winter the off ox of the smaller pair stepped into a hole between two roots, broke its leg and had to be killed. Afterwards Jotham worked the nigh ox in a crooked yoke in front of his larger oxen and went on with the job from December until March.

But, as all teamsters know, oxen that are worked hard all day in winter weather require corn meal or other equally nourishing provender in addition to hay. Now, Jotham had nothing for his team except hay of inferior quality. In consequence, as the winter advanced the cattle lost flesh and became very weak. By March they could scarcely walk with their loads, and at last there came a morning when Jotham could not get the older oxen even to rise to their feet. He was obliged to give up work with them, and finally came home after turning them loose to help themselves to what hay was left at the camp.

The old Squire did not often concern himself with the affairs of his neighbors, but he went up to the logging camp with Jotham; and when he saw the pitiful condition the cattle were in he remonstrated with him.

"This is too bad," he said. "You have worked these oxen nearly to death, and you haven't half fed

them!"

"Wal, my oxen don't have to work any harder than I do!" Jotham replied angrily. "I ain't able to buy corn for them. They must work without it."

"You only lose by such a foolish course," the old Squire said to him.

But Jotham was not a man who could easily be convinced of his errors. All his affairs were going badly; arguing with him only made him impatient.

The snow was now so soft that the oxen in their emaciated and weakened condition could not be driven home, and again Jotham left them at the camp to help themselves to fodder. He promised, however, to send better hay and some potatoes up to them the next day. But during the following night a great storm set in that carried off nearly all the snow and caused such a freshet in the streams and the brooks that it was impracticable to reach the camp for a week or longer. Then one night the small, white-faced ox made his appearance at the Edwards barn, having come home of his own accord.

The next morning Jotham went up on foot to see how his other cattle were faring. The flood had now largely subsided; but it was plain that during the storm the water had flowed back round the camp to a depth of several feet. The oxen were nowhere to be seen, nor could he discern their tracks round the camp or in the woods that surrounded it. He tried to track them with a dog, but without success.

Several of Jotham's neighbors assisted him in the search. Where the oxen had gone or what had become of them was a mystery; the party searched the forest in vain for a distance of five or six miles on all sides. Some of the men thought that the oxen had fallen into the stream and had drowned; it was not likely that they had been stolen. Jotham was at last obliged to buy another yoke of cattle in order to do his spring work on the farm.

Two years passed, and Jotham's oxen were almost forgotten. During the second winter, after school had closed in the old Squire's district, Willis Murch, a young friend of mine who lived near us, went on a trapping trip to the headwaters of Lurvey's Stream, where the oxen had disappeared and where he had a camp. One Saturday he came home for supplies and invited me to go back with him and spend Sunday. The distance was perhaps fourteen miles; and we had to travel on snowshoes, for at the time—it was February—the snow was nearly four feet deep in the woods. We had a fine time there in camp that night and the next morning went to look at Willis's traps.

That afternoon, after we had got back to camp and cooked our dinner, Willis said to me, "Now, if you will promise not to tell, I'll show you something that will make you laugh."

I promised readily enough, without thinking much about the matter.

"Come on, then," said he; and we put on our snowshoes again and prepared to start. But, though I questioned him with growing curiosity, he would not tell me what we were to see. "Oh, you'll find out soon enough," he said.

Willis led off, and I followed. I should think we went as much as five miles through the black growth to the north of Willis's camp and came finally to a frozen brook, which we followed for a mile round to the northeast.

"I was prospecting up this way a week ago," Willis said. "I had an idea of setting traps on this brook. It flows into a large pond a little way ahead of us, but just before we get to the pond it winds through a swamp of little spotted maple, moose bush and alder."

"I guess it's beaver you're going to show me," I remarked.

"Guess again," said Willis, "But keep still. Step in my tracks and don't make the brush crack."

The small growth was so thick that we could see only a little way ahead. Willis pushed slowly through it for some time; then, stopping short, he motioned to me over his shoulder to come forward. Not twenty yards away I distinguished the red-and-white hair of a large animal that was browsing on a clump of bushes. It stood in a pathway trodden so deep into the snow that its legs were completely hidden. In surprise I saw that it had broad horns.

"Why, that's an ox!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," said Willis, laughing. "His mate is round here, too."

"Willis," I almost shouted, "they must be the oxen Jotham lost two years ago!"

"Sure!" said Willis. "But don't make such a noise. There are moose here."

"Moose!" I whispered.

"There's a cow moose with two moose calves. When I was here last Thursday afternoon there were three deer with them. The snow's got so deep they are yarding here together. They get water at the brook, and I saw where they had dug down through the snow to get to the dry swamp grass underneath. They won't leave their yard if we don't scare them; they couldn't run in the deep snow."

We thought that probably the oxen had grown wild from being off in the woods so long. However,

Willis advanced slowly, calling, "Co-boss!" Seeing us coming and hearing human voices, the old ox lifted his muzzle toward us and snuffed genially. He did not appear to be afraid, but behaved as if he were glad to see us. The other one—old Broad—had been lying down near by out of sight in the deep pathway, but now he suddenly rose and stood staring at us. We approached to within ten feet of them. They appeared to be in fairly good flesh, and their hair seemed very thick. Evidently they had wandered off from the logging camp and had been living a free, wild life ever since. In the small open meadows along the upper course of the stream there was plenty of wild grass. And, like deer, cattle will subsist in winter on the twigs of freshly grown bushes. Even such food as that, with freedom, was better than the cruel servitude of Jotham!

On going round to the far side of the yard we spied the three deer, the cow moose and her two yearling calves. They appeared unwilling to run away in the deep snow, but would not let us approach near enough to see them clearly through the bushes.

"You could shoot one of those deer," I said to Willis; but he declared that he would never shoot a deer or a moose when it was snow-bound in a yard.

We lingered near the yard for an hour or more. By speaking kindly to the oxen I found that I could go very close to them; they had by no means forgotten human beings. On our way back to Willis's camp he reminded me of my promise. "Now, don't you tell where those oxen are; don't tell anybody!"

"But, Willis, don't you think Jotham ought to know?" I asked.

"No, I don't!" Willis exclaimed. "He has abused those oxen enough! They've got away from him, and I'm glad of it! I'll never tell him where they are!"

We argued the question all the way to camp, and at last Willis said bluntly that he should not have taken me to see them if he had thought that I would tell. "You promised not to," said he. That was true, and there the matter rested overnight.

When I started home the next morning Willis walked with me for two miles or more. We had not mentioned Jotham's oxen since the previous afternoon; but I plainly saw that Willis had been thinking the matter over, for, after we separated and had each gone a few steps on his way, he called after me:

"Are you going to tell about that?"

"No," said I, and walked on.

"Well, if you're not going to feel right about it, ask the old Squire what he thinks. If he says that Jotham ought to be told, perhaps you had better tell him." And Willis hastened away.

But on reaching home I found that the old Squire had set off for Portland early that morning to see about selling his lumber and was not to return for a week. So I said nothing to any one. The night after he got back I watched for a chance to speak with him alone. After supper he went into the sitting-room to look over his lumber accounts, and I stole in after him.

"You remember Jotham's oxen, gramp?" I began.

"Why, yes," said he, looking up.

"Well, I know where they are," I continued.

"Where?" he exclaimed in astonishment.

I then told him where Willis had found them and about the yard and the moose and deer we had seen with the oxen. "Willis doesn't want Jotham told," I added. "He says Jotham has abused those oxen enough, and that he is glad they got away from him. He made me promise not to tell any one at first, but finally he said that I might tell you, and that we should do as you think best."

The old Squire gave me an odd look. Then he laughed and resumed his accounts for what seemed to me a long while. I had the feeling that he wished I had not told him.

At last he looked up. "I suppose, now that we have found this out, Jotham will have to be told. They are his oxen, of course, and we should not feel right if we were to keep this from him. It wouldn't be quite the neighborly thing to do—to conceal it. So you had better go over and tell him."

Almost every one likes to carry news, whether good or bad; and within fifteen minutes I had reached the Edwards farmhouse. Jotham, who was taking a late supper, came to the door.

"What will you give to know where your lost oxen are?" I cried.

"Where are they? Do you know?" he exclaimed. Then I told him where Willis and I had seen them. "Wal, I vum!" said Jotham. "Left me and took to the woods! And I've lost two years' work from 'em!"

For a moment I was sorry I had told him.

The next day he journeyed up to Willis's camp with several neighbors; and from there they all snowshoed to the yard to see the oxen and the moose. The strangely assorted little herd was still there, and, so far as could be judged, no one else had discovered them.

Jotham had intended to drive the oxen home; but the party found the snow so deep that they thought it best to leave them where they were for a while. Since it was now the first week of March, the snow could be expected to settle considerably within a fortnight.

I think it was the eighteenth of the month when Jotham and four other men finally went to get the oxen. They took a gun, with the intention of shooting one or more of the deer. A disagreeable surprise awaited them at the yard.

At that time—it was before the days of game wardens—what were known as "meat-and-hide hunters" often came down over the boundary from Canada and slaughtered moose and deer while the animals were snow-bound. The lawless poachers frequently came in parties and sometimes searched the woods for twenty or thirty miles below the Line in quest of yards.

Apparently such a raiding party had found Willis's yard and had shot not only the six deer and moose but Jotham's oxen as well. Blood on the snow and refuse where the animals had been hung up for skinning and dressing, made what had happened only too plain.

Poor Jotham came home much cast down. "That's just my luck!" he lamented. "Everything always goes just that way with me!"

CHAPTER X

BETHESDA

If anything was missing at the old farmhouse—clothes-brush, soap, comb or other articles of daily use—some one almost always would exclaim, "Look in Bethesda!" or "I left it in Bethesda!" Bethesda was one of those household words that you use without thought of its original significance or of the amused query that it raises in the minds of strangers.

Like most New England houses built seventy-five years ago, the farmhouse at the old Squire's had been planned without thought of bathing facilities. The family washtub, brought to the kitchen of a Saturday night, and filled with well water tempered slightly by a few quarts from the teakettle, served the purpose. We were not so badly off as our ancestors had been, however, for in 1865, when we young folks went home to live at the old Squire's, stoves were fully in vogue and farmhouses were comfortably warmed. Bathing on winter nights was uncomfortable enough, we thought, but it was not the desperately chilly business that it must have been when farmhouses were heated by a single fireplace.

In the sitting-room we had both a fireplace and an "air-tight" for the coldest weather. In grandmother Ruth's room there was a "fireside companion," and in the front room a "soapstone comfort," with sides and top of a certain kind of variegated limestone that held heat through the winter nights.

So much heat rose from the lower rooms that the bedrooms on the floor above, where we young folks slept, were by no means uncomfortably cold, even in zero weather. Grandmother Ruth would open the hall doors an hour before it was time for us to go to bed, to let the superfluous heat rise for our benefit.

In the matter of bathing, however, a great deal was left to be desired at the old house. There were six of us to take turns at that one tub. Grandmother Ruth took charge: she saw to it that we did not take too long, and listened to the tearful complaints about the coldness of the water. On Saturday nights her lot was not a happy one. She used to sit just outside the kitchen door and call our names when our turns came; and as each of us went by she would hand us our change of underclothing.

Although the brass kettle was kept heating on the stove all the while, we had trouble in getting enough warm water to "take the chill off." More than once—unbeknown to grandmother Ruth—I followed Addison in the tub without changing the water. He had appreciably warmed it up. One night Halstead twitted me about it at the supper table, and I recollect that the lack of proper sensibility that I had shown scandalized the entire family.

"Oh, Joseph!" grandmother often exclaimed to the old Squire. "We must have some better way for these children to bathe. They are getting older and larger, and I certainly cannot manage it much longer."

Things went on in that way for the first two years of our sojourn at the old place—until after the old Squire had installed a hydraulic ram down at the brook, which forced plenty of water up to the house and the barns. Then, in October of the third year, the old gentleman bestirred himself.

He had been as anxious as any one to improve our bathing facilities, but it is not an easy job to add a bathroom to a farmhouse. He walked about at the back of the house for hours, and made several excursions to a hollow at a distance in the rear of the place, and also climbed to the attic, all the while whistling softly:

> "Roll on, Silver Moon,
> Guide the traveler on his way."

That was always a sure sign that he was getting interested in some scheme.

Then things began to move in earnest. Two carpenters appeared and laid the sills for an addition to the house, twenty feet long by eighteen feet wide, just behind the kitchen, which was in the L. The room that they built had a door opening directly into the kitchen. The floor, I remember, was of maple and the walls of matched spruce.

Meanwhile the old Squire had had a sewer dug about three hundred feet long; and to hold the water supply he built a tank of about a thousand gallons' capacity, made of pine planks; the tank was in the attic directly over the kitchen stove, so that in winter heat would rise under it through a little scuttle in the floor and prevent the water from freezing.

From the tank the pipes that led to the new bathroom ran down close to the chimney and the stove pipe. Those bathroom pipes gave the old Squire much anxiety; there was not a plumber in town; the old gentleman had to do the work himself, with the help of a hardware dealer from the village, six miles away.

But if the pipe gave him anxiety, the bathtub gave him more. When he inquired at Portland about their cost, he was somewhat staggered to learn that the price of a regular tub was fifty-eight dollars.

But the old Squire had an inventive brain. He drove up to the mill, selected a large, sound pine log about four feet in diameter and set old Davy Glinds, a brother of Hughy Glinds, to excavate a tub from it with an adze. In his younger days Davy Glinds had been a ship carpenter, and was skilled in the use of the broadaxe and the adze. He fashioned a good-looking tub, five feet long by two and a half wide, smooth hewn within and without. When painted white the tub presented a very creditable appearance.

The old Squire was so pleased with it that he had Glinds make another; and then, discovering how cheaply pine bathtubs could be made, he hit upon a new notion. The more he studied on a thing like that, the more the subject unfolded in his dear old head. Why, the old Squire asked himself, need the Saturday-night bath occupy a whole evening because the eight or ten members of the family had to take turns in one tub, when we could just as well have more tubs?

Before grandmother Ruth fairly realized what he was about, the old gentleman had five of these pine tubs ranged there in the new lean-to. He had the carpenters inclose each tub within a sealed partition of spruce boards. There was thus formed a little hall five feet wide in the center of the new bathroom, from which small doors opened to each tub.

"What do you mean, Joseph, by so many tubs?" grandmother cried in astonishment, when she discovered what he was doing.

"Well, Ruth," he said, "I thought we'd have a tub for the boys, a tub for the girls, then tubs for you and me, mother, and one for our hired help."

"Sakes alive, Joe! All those tubs to keep clean!"

"But didn't you want a large bathroom?" the old Squire rejoined, with twinkling eyes.

"Yes, yes," cried grandmother, "but I had no idea you were going to make a regular Bethesda!"

Bethesda! Sure enough, like the pool in Jerusalem, it had five porches! And that name, born of grandmother Ruth's indignant surprise, stuck to it ever afterwards.

When the old Squire began work on that bathroom he expected to have it finished in a month. But one difficulty after another arose: the tank leaked; the sewer clogged; nothing would work. If the hardware dealer from the village came once to help, he came fifty times! His own experience in bathrooms was limited. Then, to have hot water in abundance, it was necessary to send to Portland for a seventy-five-gallon copper heater; and six weeks passed before that order was filled.

November, December and January passed before Bethesda was ready to turn on the water; and then we found that the kitchen stove would not heat so large a heater, or at least would not do it and serve as a cook-stove at the same time. Nor would it sufficiently warm the bathroom in very cold weather even with the kitchen door open. Then one night in February the pipes at the far end froze and burst, and the hardware man had to make us another hasty visit.

To ward off such accidents in the future the old Squire now had recourse to what is known as the Granger furnace—a convenience that was then just coming into general favor among farmers. They are cosy, heat-holding contrivances, made of brick and lined either with fire brick or iron; they have an iron top with pot holes in which you can set kettles. The old Squire connected ours with the heater, and he placed it so that half of it projected into the new bathroom, through the partition wall of the kitchen. It served its purpose effectively and on winter nights diffused a genial glow both in the kitchen and in the bathroom.

But it was the middle of April before the bathroom was completed; and the cost was actually between eight and nine hundred dollars!

"My sakes, Joseph!" grandmother exclaimed. "Another bathroom like that would put us in the poor-house. And the neighbors all think we're crazy!"

The old Squire, however, rubbed his hands with a smile of satisfaction. "I call it rather fine. I

guess we are going to like it," he said.

Like it we did, certainly. Bathing was no longer an ordeal, but a delight. There was plenty of warm water; you had only to pick your tub, enter your cubicle and shut the door. Bethesda, with its Granger furnace and big water heater, was a veritable household joy.

"Ruth," the old Squire said, "all I'm sorry for is that I didn't do this thirty years ago. When I reflect on the cold, miserable baths we have taken and the other privations you and I have endured all these years it makes me heartsick to think what I've neglected."

"But nine hundred dollars, Joseph!" grandmother interposed with a scandalized expression. "That's an awful bill!"

"Yes," the old Squire admitted, "but we shall survive it."

Grandmother was right about our neighbors. What they said among themselves would no doubt have been illuminating if we had heard it; but they maintained complete silence when we were present. But we noticed that when they called at the farmhouse they cast curious and perhaps envious glances at the new lean-to.

Then an amusing thing happened. We had been enjoying Bethesda for a few weeks, but had not yet got past our daily pride in it, when one hot evening in the latter part of June who should come driving into the yard but David Barker, "the Burns of Maine," a poet and humorist of state-wide renown.

The old Squire had met him several times; but his visit that night was accidental. He had come into our part of the state to visit a kinsman, but had got off his proper route and had called at our house to ask how far away this relative lived.

"It is nine or ten miles up there," the old Squire said when they had shaken hands. "You are off your route. Better take out your horse and spend the night with us. You can find your way better by daylight."

After some further conversation Mr. Barker decided to accept the old Squire's invitation. While grandmother and Ellen got supper for our guest, the old Squire escorted him to the hand bowl that he had put in at the end of the bathroom hall. I imagine that the old Squire was just a little proud of our recent accommodations.

"And, David, if you would like a bath before retiring to-night, just step in here and make yourself at home," he said and opened several of the doors to the little cubicles.

David looked the tubs over, first one and then another.

"Wal, Squire," he said at last, in that peculiar voice of his, "I've sometimes wondered why our Maine folks had so few bathtubs, and sometimes been a little ashamed on't. But now I see how 'tis. You've got all the bathtubs there are cornered up here at your place!"

He continued joking about our bathrooms while he was eating supper; and later, before retiring, he said, "I know you are a neat woman, Aunt Ruth, and I guess before I go to bed I'll take a turn in your bathroom."

Ellen gave him a lamp; and he went in and shut the door. Fifteen minutes—half an hour—nearly an hour—passed, and still he was in there; and we heard him turning on and letting off water, apparently barrels of it! Occasionally, too, we heard a door open and shut.

At last, when nearly an hour and a half had elapsed, the old Squire, wondering whether anything were wrong, went to the bathroom door. He knocked, and on getting a response inquired whether there was any trouble.

"Doesn't the water run, David?" he asked. "Is it too cold for you? How are you getting on in there?"

"Getting on beautifully," came the muffled voice of the humorist above the splashing within. "Doing a great job. Only one tub more! Four off and one to come."

"But, David!" the old Squire began in considerable astonishment.

"Yes. Sure. It takes time. But I know Aunt Ruth is an awful neat woman, and I determined to do a full job!"

He had been taking a bath in each of the five tubs in succession. That was Barker humor.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN WE WALKED THE TOWN LINES

It was some time the following week, I think, that the old Squire looked across to us at the breakfast table and said, "Boys, don't you want to walk the town lines for me? I think I shall let you do it this time—and have the fee," he added, smiling.

The old gentleman was one of the selectmen of the town that year; and an old law, or municipal regulation, required that one or more of the selectmen should walk the town lines—follow round the town boundaries on foot—once a year, to see that the people of adjoining towns, or others, were not trespassing. The practice of walking the town lines is now almost or quite obsolete, but it was a needed precaution when inhabitants were few and when the thirty-six square miles of a township consisted mostly of forest. At this time the southern half of our town was already taken up in farms, but the northern part was still in forest lots. The selectmen usually walked the north lines only.

When the state domain, almost all dense forest, was first surveyed, the land was laid off in ranges, so-called, and tiers of lots. The various grants of land to persons for public services were also surveyed in a similar manner and the corners and lines established by means of stakes and stones, and of blazed trees. If a large rock happened to lie at the corner of a range or lot, the surveyor sometimes marked it with a drill. Such rocks made the best corners.

Usually the four corners of the town were established by means of low, square granite posts, set in the earth and with the initial letter of the township cut in it with a drill.

As if it were yesterday I remember that sharp, cold morning. Hard-frozen snow a foot deep still covered the cleared land, and in the woods it was much deeper. The first heavy rainstorm of spring had come two days before, but it had cleared off cold and windy the preceding evening, with snow squalls and zero weather again. Nevertheless, Addison and I were delighted at the old Squire's proposal, especially since the old gentleman had hinted that we could have the fee, which was usually four dollars when two of the selectmen walked the lines and were out all day.

"Go to the northeast corner of the town first," the old Squire said. "The corner post is three miles and a half from here; you will find it in the cleared land a hundred rods northeast of the barn on the Jotham Silver place. Start from there and go due west till you reach the wood-lot on the Silver farm. There the blazed trees begin, and you will have to go from one to another. It is forest nearly all the way after that for six miles, till you come to the northwest town corner.

"You can take my compass if you like," the old Squire added. "But it will not be of much use to you, for it will be easier to follow the blazed trees or corner stakes. Take our lightest axe with you and renew the old blazes on the trees." He apparently felt some misgivings that we might get lost, for he added, "If you want to ask Thomas to go with you, you may."

Tom was more accustomed to being in the woods than either of us; but Addison hesitated about inviting him, for of course if he went we should have to divide the fee with him. However, the old Squire seemed to wish to have him go with us, and at last, while Theodora was putting up a substantial luncheon for us, Ellen ran over to carry the invitation to Tom. He was willing enough to go and came back with her, carrying his shotgun.

"It will be a long jaunt," the old gentleman said as we started off. "But if you move on briskly and don't stop by the way, you can get back before dark."

The snow crust was so hard and the walking so good that we struck directly across the fields and pastures to the northeast and within an hour reached the town corner on the Silver farm. At that point our tramp along the north line of the town began, and we went from one blazed tree to another and freshened the blazes.

We went on rapidly, crossed Hedgehog Ridge and descended to Stoss Pond, which the town line crossed obliquely. We had expected to cross the pond on the ice; but the recent great rainstorm and thaw had flooded the ice to a depth of six or eight inches. New ice was already forming, but it would not quite bear our weight, and we had to make a detour of a mile through swamps round the south end of the pond and pick up the line again on the opposite shore.

Stoss Pond Mountain then confronted us, and it was almost noon when we neared Wild Brook; we heard it roaring as we approached and feared that we should find it very high.

"We may have to fell a tree over it to get across," Addison said.

So it seemed, for upon emerging on the bank we saw a yellow torrent twenty feet or more wide and four or five feet deep rushing tumultuously down the rocky channel.

Tom, however, who had come out on the bank a little way below, shouted to us, above the roar, to come that way, and we rejoined him at a bend where the opposite bank was high. He was in the act of crossing cautiously on a snow bridge. During the winter a great snowdrift, seven or eight feet deep, had lodged in the brook; and the recent freshet had merely cut a channel beneath it, leaving a frozen arch that spanned the torrent.

"Don't do it!" Addison shouted to him. "It will fall with you!"

But, extending one foot slowly ahead of the other, Tom safely crossed to the other side.

"Come on!" he shouted. "It will hold."

Addison, however, held back. The bridge looked dangerous; if it broke down, whoever was on it would be thrown into the water and carried downstream in the icy torrent.

"Oh, it's strong enough!" Tom exclaimed. "That will hold all right." And to show how firm it was, he came part way back across the frozen arch and stood still.

It was an unlucky action. The whole bridge suddenly collapsed under him, and down went Tom with it into the rushing water, which whirled him along toward a jam of ice and drift stuff twenty or thirty yards below. By flinging his arms across one of those great cakes of hard-frozen snow he managed to keep his head up; and he shouted lustily for us to help him. He bumped against the jam and hung there, fighting with both arms to keep from being carried under it.

Addison, who had the axe, ran down the bank and with a few strokes cut a moosewood sapling, which we thrust out to Tom. He caught hold of it, and then, by pulling hard, we hauled him to the bank and helped him out.

Oh, but wasn't he a wet boy, and didn't his teeth chatter! In fact, all three of us were wet, for, in our excitement, Addison and I had gone in knee-deep, and the water had splashed over us. In that bitter cold wind we felt it keenly. Tom was nearly torpid; he seemed unable to speak, and we could hardly make him take a step. His face and hands were blue.

"What shall we do with him?" Addison whispered to me in alarm. "It's five miles home. I'm afraid he'll freeze."

We then thought of the old Squire's logging camp on Papoose Pond, the outlet of which entered Wild Brook about half a mile above where we had tried to cross it. We knew that there was a cooking stove in the camp and decided that our best plan was to take Tom there and dry his clothes. Getting him between us, we tried to make him run, but he seemed unable to move his feet.

"Run, run, Tom!" we shouted to him. "Run, or you'll freeze!"

He seemed not to hear or care. In our desperation we slapped him and dragged him along between us. Finally his legs moved a little, and he began to step.

"Run, run with us!" Addison kept urging.

At last we got him going, although he shook so hard that he shook us with him. The exertion did him good. We hustled him along and, following the brook, came presently to a disused lumber road that led to the logging camp in the woods a few hundred yards from the shore of the pond. All three of us were panting hard when we reached it, but our wet clothes were frozen stiff.

We rushed Tom into the camp and, finding matches on a shelf behind the stovepipe, kindled a fire of such dry stuff as we found at hand. Then, as the place warmed up, we pulled off Tom's frozen outer coat and waistcoat, got the water out of his boots, and set him behind the stove.

Still he shook and could speak only with difficulty. We kept a hot fire and finally boiled water in a kettle and, gathering wintergreen leaves from a knoll outside the camp, made a hot tea for him.

At last we put him into the bunk and covered him as best we could with our own coats, which we did not miss, since the camp was now as hot as an oven. For more than an hour longer, however, his tremors continued in spite of the heat. Addison and I took turns rushing outside to cut wood from dry spruces to keep the stove hot. A little later, as I came in with an armful, I found Addison watching Tom.

"Sh!" he said. "He's asleep."

The afternoon was waning; a cold, windy night was coming on.

"What shall we do?" Addison whispered in perplexity. "I don't believe we ought to take him out; his clothes aren't dry yet. We shall have to stay here all night with him."

"But what will the folks at home think?" I exclaimed.

"Of course they will worry about us," Addison replied gloomily. "But I'm afraid Tom will get his death o' cold if we take him out. We ought to keep him warm."

Our own wet clothes had dried by that time, and, feeling hungry, we ate a part of our luncheon. Night came on with snow squalls; the wind roared in the forest. It was so bleak that we gave up all idea of going home; and, after bringing in ten or a dozen armfuls of wood, we settled down to spend the night there. Still Tom slept, but he breathed easier and had ceased to shiver. Suddenly he sat up and cried, "Help!"

"Don't you know where you are?" Addison asked. "Still dreaming?"

He stared round in the feeble light. "Oh, yes!" he said and laughed. "It's the old camp. I tumbled into the brook. But what makes it so dark?"

"It's night. You have been asleep two or three hours. We shall have to stay here till morning."

"With nothing to eat?" Tom exclaimed. "I'm hungry!"

In his haste to set off from home with Ellen he had neglected to take any luncheon. We divided with him what we had left; and he ate hungrily.

While he was eating, we heard a sound of squalling, indistinct above the roar of the wind in the woods.

"Bobcat!" Tom exclaimed. Then he added, "But it sounds more like an old gander."

"May be a flock of wild geese passing over," Addison said. "They sometimes fly by night."

"Not on such a cold night in such a wind," Tom replied.

Soon we heard the same sounds again.

"That's an old gander, sure," Tom admitted.

"Seems to come from the same place," Addison remarked. "Out on Papoose Pond, I guess."

"Yes, siree!" Tom exclaimed. "A flock of geese has come down on that pond. If I had my gun, I could get a goose. But my gun is in Wild Brook," he added regretfully. "I let go of it when I fell in."

The squalling continued at intervals. The night was so boisterous, however, that we did not leave the camp and after a time fell asleep in the old bunk.

The cold waked me soon after daybreak. Tom and Addison were still asleep, with their coats pulled snugly about their shoulders and their feet drawn up. I rekindled the fire and clattered round the stove. Still they snoozed on; and soon afterwards, hearing the same squalling sounds again, I stole forth in the bleak dawn to see what I could discover.

When I had pushed through the swamp of thick cedar that lay between the camp and the pond, I beheld a goose flapping its wings and squalling scarcely more than a stone's throw away. A second glance, in the increasing light, showed me the forms of other geese, great numbers of them on the newly formed ice. On this pond, as on the other, water had gathered over the winter ice and then frozen again.

With the exception of this one gander, the flock was sitting there very still and quiet. The gander waddled among the others, plucking at them with his pink beak, as if to stir them up. Now and then he straightened up, flapped his wings and squalled dolorously. None of the others I noticed flapped, stirred or made any movement whatever. They looked as if they were asleep, and many of them had their heads under their wings.

At last I went out toward them on the new ice, which had now frozen solid enough to bear me. The gander rose in the air and circled overhead, squalling fearfully. On going nearer, I saw that all those geese were frozen in, and that they were dead; the entire flock, except that one powerful old gander, had perished there. They were frozen in the ice so firmly that I could not pull them out; in fact, I could scarcely bend the necks of those that had tucked them under their wings. I counted forty-one of them besides the gander.

While I was looking them over, Tom and Addison appeared on the shore. They had waked and missed me, but, hearing the gander, had guessed that I had gone to the pond. Both were astonished and could hardly believe their eyes till they came out where I stood and tried to lift the geese.

"We shall have to chop them out with the axe!" Tom exclaimed. "By jingo, boys, here's goose feathers enough to make two feather beds and pillows to boot."

The gander, still squalling, circled over us again.

"The old fellow feels bad," Addison remarked. "He has lost his whole big family."

We decided that the geese on their way north had been out in the rainstorm, and that when the weather cleared and turned cold so suddenly, with snow squalls, they had become bewildered, perhaps, and had descended on the pond. The cold wave was so sharp that, being quite without food, they had frozen into the ice and perished there.

"Well, old boy," Tom said, addressing the gander that now stood flapping his wings at us a few hundred feet away, "you've lost your women-folks. We may as well have them as the bobcats."

He fetched the axe, and we cut away the ice round the geese and then carried six loads of them down to camp.

If we had had any proper means of preparing a goose we should certainly have put one to bake in the stove oven; for all three of us were hungry. As it was, Addison said we had better make a scoot, load the geese on it, and take the nearest way home. We had only the axe and our jackknives to work with, and it was nine o'clock before we had built a rude sled and loaded the geese on it.

As we were about to start we heard a familiar voice cry, "Well, well; there they are!" And who should come through the cedars but the old Squire! A little behind him was Tom's father.

On account of the severity of the weather both families had been much alarmed when we failed to come home the night before. Making an early start that morning, Mr. Edwards and the old Squire had driven to the Silver farm and, leaving their team there, had followed the town line in search of us. On reaching Wild Brook they had seen that the snow bridge had fallen, and at first they had been badly frightened. On looking round, however, they had found the marks of our boot heels on the frozen snow, heading up-stream, and had immediately guessed that we had gone to the old camp. So we had their company on the way home; and much astonished both of them were at the sight of so many geese.

The two households shared the goose feathers. The meat was in excellent condition for cooking, and our two families had many a good meal of roast goose. We sent six of the birds to the town farm, and we heard afterwards that the seventeen paupers there partook of a grand goose dinner, garnished with apple sauce. But I have often thought of that old gander flying north to the breeding grounds alone.

The following week we walked the remaining part of the town line and received the fee.

CHAPTER XII

THE ROSE-QUARTZ SPRING

Throughout that entire season the old Squire was much interested in a project for making a fortune from the sale of spring water. The water of the celebrated Poland Spring, twenty miles from our place—where the Poland Spring Hotel now stands—was already enjoying an enviable popularity; and up in our north pasture on the side of Nubble Hill, there was, and still is, a fine spring, the water of which did not differ in analysis from that of the Poland Spring. It is the "boiling" type of spring, and the water, which is stone-cold, bubbles up through white quartzose sand at the foot of a low granite ledge. It flows throughout the year at the rate of about eight gallons a minute.

It had always been called the Nubble Spring, but when the old Squire and Addison made their plans for selling the spring water they rechristened it the Rose-Quartz Spring on account of an outcrop of rose quartz in the ledges near by.

They had the water analyzed by a chemist in Boston, who pronounced it as pure as Poland water, and, indeed, so like it that he could detect no difference. All of us were soon enthusiastic about the project.

First we set to work to make the spring more attractive. We cleared up the site and formed a granite basin for the water, sheltered by a little kiosk with seats where visitors could sit as they drank. We also cleared up the slope round it and set out borders of young pine and balm-of-Gilead trees.

We sent samples of the water in bottles and kegs to dealers in spring waters, along with a descriptive circular—which Addison composed—and the statement of analysis. Addison embellished the circular with several pictures of the spring and its surroundings, and cited medical opinions on the value of pure waters of this class. We also invited our neighbors and fellow townsmen to come and drink at our spring.

Very soon orders began to come in. The name itself, the Rose-Quartz Spring, was fortunate, for it conveyed a suggestion of crystal purity; that with the analysis induced numbers of people in the great cities, especially in Chicago, to try it.

Less was known in 1868 than now of the precautions that it is necessary to take in sending spring water to distant places, in order to insure its keeping pure. Little was known of microbes or antisepsis.

The old Squire and Addison decided that they would have to send the water to their customers in kegs of various sizes and in barrels; but as kegs made of oak staves, or of spruce, would impart a woody taste to the water, they hit upon the expedient of making the staves of sugar-maple wood. The old Squire had a great quantity of staves sawed at his hardwood flooring mill, and at the cooper shop had them made into kegs and barrels of all sizes from five gallons' capacity up to fifty gallons'. After the kegs were set up we filled them with water and allowed them to soak for a week to take out all taste of the wood before we filled them from the spring and sent them away.

We believed that that precaution was sufficient, but now it is known that spring water can be kept safe only by putting it in glass bottles and glass carboys. No water will keep sweet in barrels for any great length of time, particularly when exported to hot climates.

The spring was nearly a mile from the farmhouse; and at a little distance below it we built a shed and set up a large kettle for boiling water to scald out the kegs and barrels that came back from customers and dealers to be refilled. We were careful not only to rinse them but also to soak them before we cleaned them with scalding water. As the business of sending off the water grew, the old Squire kept a hired man at the spring and the shed to look after the kegs and to draw the water. His name was James Doane. He had been with the old Squire six years and as a rule was a trustworthy man and a good worker. He had one failing: occasionally, although not very often, he would get drunk.

So firm was the old Squire's faith in the water that we drew a supply of it to the house every second morning. Addison fitted up a little "water room" in the farmhouse, and we kept water there in large bottles, cooled, for drinking. The water seemed to do us good, for we were all unusually healthy that summer. "Here's the true elixir of health," the old Squire often said as he drew a glass of it and sat down in the pleasant, cool "water room" to enjoy it.

Addison and he had fixed the price of the water at twenty-five cents a gallon, although we made

our neighbors and fellow townsmen welcome to all they cared to come and get. We first advertised the water in June, and sales increased slowly throughout the summer and fall. Apparently the water gave good satisfaction, for the kegs came back to be refilled. By the following May the success of the venture seemed assured. Those who were using the water spoke well of it, and the demand was growing. In April we received orders for more than nine hundred gallons, and in May for more than thirteen hundred gallons.

The old Squire was very happy over the success of the enterprise. "It's a fine, clean business," he said. "That water has done us good, and it will do others good; and if they drink that, they will drink less whiskey."

Addison spent the evenings in making out bills and attending to the correspondence; for there were other matters that had to be attended to besides the Rose-Quartz Spring. Besides the farm work we had to look after the hardwood flooring mill that summer and the white-birch dowel mill. For several days toward the end of June we did not even have time to go up to the spring for our usual supply of water. But we kept Jim Doane there under instructions to attend carefully to the putting up of the water. It was his sole business, and he seemed to be attending to it properly. He was at the spring every day and boarded at the house of a neighbor, named Murch, who lived nearer to Nubble Hill than we did. Every day, too, we noticed the smoke of the fire under the kettle in which he heated water for scalding out the casks.

The first hint we had that things were going wrong was when Willis Murch told Addison that Doane had been on a spree, and that for several days he had been so badly under the influence of liquor that he did not know what he was about.

On hearing that news Addison and the old Squire hastened to the spring. Jim was there, sober enough now, and working industriously. But he looked bad, and his account of how he had done his work for the last week was far from clear. The old Squire gave him another job at the dowel mill and stationed his brother, Asa Doane, a strictly temperate man, at the spring. We could not learn just what had happened during the past ten days, but we hoped that no serious neglect had occurred.

But there had.

Toward the middle of July a letter of complaint came—the first we had ever received. "This barrel of water from your spring is not keeping good," were the exact words of it. I remember them well, for we read them over and over again. Addison replied at once, and sent another barrel in its place.

Before another week had passed a second complaint came. "This last barrel of water from your spring is turning 'ropy,'" it said. Another customer sent his barrel back when half full, with a letter saying, "It isn't fit to drink. The barrel is slimy inside."

Addison examined the barrel carefully, and found that there was, indeed, an appreciable film of vegetable growth on the staves inside. The taste of the water also was quite different.

Within a fortnight four more barrels and kegs were returned to us, in at least two cases accompanied by sharp words of condemnation. "No better than pond water," one customer wrote.

We carefully examined the inside of all these barrels and kegs as soon as they came back. Besides invisible impurities in the water, there was in every one more or less visible dirt, even bits of grass and slivers of wood.

There was only one conclusion to reach: Jim Doane had not been careful in filling the kegs and had not properly cleansed and scalded them. As nearly as we could discover from bits of information that came out subsequently, there were days and days when he was too "hazy" to know whether he had cleansed the barrels or not. He had filled them and sent them off in foul condition.

Addison wrote more than fifty letters to customers, defending the purity of Rose-Quartz Spring water, relating the facts of this recent "accident" and asking for a continued trial of it. I suppose that people at a distance thought that if there had been carelessness once there might be again. Very likely, too, they suspected that the water had never been so pure as we had declared it to be. Owners of other springs who had put water on the market improved the opportunity to circulate reports that Rose-Quartz water would not "keep." We got possession of three circulars in which that damaging statement had been sent broadcast.

There is probably no commodity in the world that depends so much on a reputation for purity as spring water. By September the orders for water had fallen off to a most disheartening extent. Scarcely three hundred gallons were called for.

In the hope that this was merely a temporary set-back, and knowing that there was no fault in the water itself, the old Squire spent a thousand dollars in advertisements to stem the tide of adverse criticism. So far as we could discover, the effort produced little or no effect on sales. The opinion had gone abroad that the water would not keep pure for any great length of time. By the following spring sales had dwindled to such an extent that it was hardly worth while to continue the business. Considered as a commercial asset, the Rose-Quartz Spring was dead.

Regretfully we gave up the enterprise and let the spring fall into disuse. It was then, I remember, that the old Squire said, "It takes us one lifetime to learn how to do things."

CHAPTER XIII

FOX PILLS

ABOUT this time an affair which had long been worrying Addison and myself came to a final settlement.

Up in the great woods, three or four miles from the old Squire's farm, there was a clearing of thirty or forty acres in which stood an old house and barn, long unoccupied. A lonelier place can hardly be imagined. Sombre spruce and fir woods inclosed the clearing on all sides; and over the tree-tops on the east side loomed the three rugged dark peaks of the Stoss Pond mountains.

Thirty years before, Lumen Bartlett, a young man about twenty years old, had cleared the land with his own labor, built the house and barn, and a little later gone to live there with his wife, Althea, who was younger even than he.

Life in so remote a place must have been somewhat solitary; but they were very happy, it is said, for a year and a half. Then one morning they fell to quarreling bitterly over so trifling a thing as a cedar broom. In the anger of the moment Althea made a bundle of her clothing and without a word of farewell set off on foot to go home to her parents, who lived ten miles away.

Lumen, equally stubborn, took his axe and went out to his work of clearing land for a new field. No one saw him alive afterwards; but two weeks later some hunters found his body in the woods. Apparently the tops of several of the trees he had been trying to cut down had lodged together, and to bring them down he had cut another large tree on which they hung. This last tree must have started to fall suddenly. Lumen ran the wrong way and was caught under the top of one of the lodged trees as it came crashing down. The marks showed that he had tried, probably for hours, to cut off with his pocket knife one large branch that lay across his body. They found the knife with the blade broken. He had also tried to free himself by digging with his bare fingers into the hard, rocky earth. If Lumen had been to blame for the quarrel, he paid a fearful penalty.

Afterwards, however, Althea declared that she had been to blame; and if that were true, she also paid a sad penalty. During the few remaining years of her life she was never in her right mind. She used to imagine that she heard Lumen calling to her for help, and several times, eluding her parents, she made her way back to the clearing. Every time when they found her she was wandering about the place, stopping now and then as if to listen, then flitting on again, saying in a sad singsong, "I'm coming, Lumen! Oh, I'll come back!"

Naturally, persons of a superstitious nature began to imagine that they, too, heard strange cries at the deserted farm, for no one ever lived there subsequently. Very likely they did hear cries—the cries of wild animals; that old clearing in the woods was a great place for bears, foxes, raccoons and "lucivees."

A year or two before we young folks went home to live on the old farm the town sold this deserted lot at auction for unpaid taxes. Some years before, vagrant woodsmen had accidentally burned the old house; but the barn, a weathered, gray structure, was still intact. Since the land adjoined other timber lots that the old Squire owned, he bid it off and let it lie unoccupied except as a pasture where sheep, or young stock that needed little care, could be put away for the summer. The soil was good, and the grass was excellent in quality.

One year, in May, after we had repaired the brush fence, we turned into it our three Morgan colts along with two Percherons from a stock farm near the village, a Morgan three-year-old belonging to our neighbors, the Edwardses, three colts owned by other neighbors, and a beautiful sorrel three-year-old mare, the pet of young Mrs. Kennard, wife of the principal at the village academy. Her father, who had recently died, had given her the colt.

All four Morgans were dark-chestnut colts, lithe but strong and clear-eyed. And what chests and loins they had for their size! They were not so showy as the larger, dappled Percherons, perhaps, but they were better all-round horses. Lib, Brown and Joe were the names of our Morgans; Chet was the name that the Edwards young folks gave theirs. Yet none of them was so pretty as Mrs. Kennard's Sylph. She was, indeed, a blonde fairy of a mare, as graceful as a deer.

On the afternoon that we took Sylph up to the clearing, Mrs. Kennard walked all the way with us, because she wished to see for herself what the place was like. When she saw what a remote, wild region it was, she was loath to leave her pet there, and Mr. Kennard had some ado to reassure her. At last, after giving the colt many farewell pats and caresses, she came away with us. On the way home she said over and over to Addison and me, "Be sure to go up often and see that Sylph is all right." And, laughing a little, we promised that we would, and that we would also give the colt sugar lumps as well as her weekly salt.

"Salting" the sheep and young cattle that were out at pasture for the season was one of our weekly duties. When we were very busy we sometimes put it off until Sunday morning. Sometimes it slipped our minds altogether for a few days, or even for a week; but Mrs. Kennard's solicitude for her pet had touched our hearts, and we resolved that we should always be prompt in performing the task.

The colts had been turned out on Tuesday; and the following Sunday morning after breakfast Addison and I, with the girls accompanying us, set off with the salt and the sugar lumps. It was a long walk for the girls, but an inspiring one on such a bright morning. The songs of birds and the chatter of squirrels filled the woodland. Fresh green heads of bosky ferns and wake-robin were pushing up through the old mats of last year's foliage.

"How jealous the rest of them will be of Sylph!" said Ellen, who had the sugar lumps. "I believe I shall give each of them a lump, so that they won't be spiteful and kick her."

As we neared the bars in the brush fence we saw several of the colts at the upper side of the clearing beyond the old barn. At the first call from us, up went their pretty heads; there was a general whinny, and then they came racing to the bars to greet us. Perhaps they had been a little homesick so far from stables and barns.

"One—two—three—four—why, they are not all here!" Theodora said. "Here are only seven. Lib isn't here, or Mrs. Kennard's Sylph."

"Oh, I guess they're not far off," Addison said, and began calling, "Co' jack, co' jack!" He wanted them all there before he dropped the salt in little piles on the grassy greensward.

But the absent ones did not come. Ellen ventured the opinion that they might have jumped the fence and wandered off.

"Oh, they wouldn't separate up here in the woods," Addison said. "Colts keep together when off in a back pasture like this."

But when he went on calling and they still did not come, we began really to fear that they had got out and strayed.

"Let's go round the fence," Addison said at last, "and see if we find a gap, or hoofprints on the outside, where they have jumped over."

He and Theodora went one way, Ellen and I the other. We met halfway round the clearing without having discovered either gaps in the fence or tracks outside. Remembering that horses, when rolling, sometimes get cast in hollows between knolls, we searched the entire clearing, and even looked into the old barn, the door of which stood slightly ajar; but we found no trace of the missing animals and began to believe that they really had jumped out.

We gave the seven colts their salt and were about to start home to report to the old Squire when Ellen remarked that we had not actually looked among the alders down by the brook, where the colts went for water.

"Oh, but those colts would not stay down there by themselves all this time with us calling them!" Addison exclaimed.

"But let's just take a look, to be certain," Ellen replied, and she and I ran down there.

We had no more than pushed our way through the alder clumps when two crows rose silently and went flapping away; and then I caught sight of something that made me stop short: the body of one of the Morgan colts—our Lib—lying close to the brook!

"Oh!" gasped Ellen. "It's dead!"

Pushing on through the alders, we saw one of the Percherons near the Morgan. The sight affected Ellen so much that she turned back; but I went on and a little farther up the brook found the sorrel lying stark and stiff.

A moment later Ellen returned, with Addison and Theodora. Both girls were moved to tears as they gazed at poor Sylph; they felt even worse about her than about our own Morgan.

"Oh, what will Mrs. Kennard say?" Ellen cried. "How dreadfully she will feel!"

Addison closely examined the bodies of the colts. "I cannot understand what did it!" he exclaimed. "No marks. No blood. It wasn't wild animals. It couldn't have been lightning, for there hasn't been a thundershower this season. Must be something they've eaten."

We looked all along the brook, but could see no Indian poke, the fresh growths of which will poison stock. Nor had we ever seen ground hemlock or poisonous ivy there. The clearing was nearly all good, grassy upland such as farmers consider a safe pasturage. Truly the shadow of tragedy seemed to hover there.

We bore our sorrowful tidings home, and the old Squire was as much astonished and mystified as every one else. None of us had the heart either to carry the sad news or even to send word of it to Mrs. Kennard; but we notified the owner of the Percherons at once. He came to look into the matter the next morning.

The affair made an unusual stir, and all that Monday a considerable number of persons walked up to the clearing to see if they could determine the cause of the colts' mysterious death. Many and various were the conjectures. Some professed to believe that the colts had been wantonly poisoned. "It's a state-prison offense to lay poison for domestic animals," we overheard several of them say; but no one could find any motive for such a deed.

The owner of the Percheron brought a horse doctor, who made a careful examination, but he was

unable to determine anything more than that the horses had died of a virulent poison. We buried them that afternoon.

Before night the news had reached Mrs. Kennard. In her grief she not only reproached herself bitterly for allowing Sylph to be turned out in so wild a place but held the old Squire and all of us as somehow to blame for her pet's death. The owner of the Percherons also intimated that he should hold us liable for his loss, although when a man turns his stock out in a neighbor's pasture it is generally on the understanding that it is at his own risk. He took away his other Percheron colt; and during the day all the other persons who had colts up there took their animals home. In all respects the occurrence was most disagreeable—a truly black Monday with us. The old Squire said little, except that he wanted the right thing done.

For an hour or more after we went to bed that night Addison and I lay talking about the affair, but we could think of no explanation of the strange occurrence and at last fell asleep. The next morning, however, the solution of the mystery flashed into Addison's mind. As we were dressing at five o'clock, he suddenly turned to me and exclaimed in a queer voice:

"I know what killed those colts!"

"What?" I asked.

"That fox bed!"

For a whole minute we stood there, half dressed, looking at each other in consternation. Without doubt, the blame for the loss of the colts was on us. What the consequences might be we hardly dared to think.

"What shall we do?" I exclaimed.

Addison looked alarmed as he answered in a low tone, "Keep quiet—till we think it over."

"We must tell the old Squire," I said.

"But there's Willis," Addison reminded me. "It was Willis who made the bed, you know."

The old clearing was, as I have said, a great place for foxes; and the preceding fall Addison and I, wishing to add to the fund we were accumulating for our expenses when we should go away to college, had entered into a kind of partnership with Willis Murch to do a little trapping up there. Addison and I were little more than silent partners, however; Willis actually tended the traps.

But there are years, as every trapper knows, when you cannot get a fox into a steel trap by any amount of artfulness. What the reason is, I do not know, unless some fox that has been trapped and that has escaped passes the word round among all the other foxes. There were plenty of foxes coming to the clearing; we never went up there without seeing fresh signs about the old barn. Yet Willis got no fox.

What is more strange, it was so all over New England that fall; foxes kept clear of steel traps. As the fur market was quick, certain city dealers began sending out offers of "fox pills" to trappers whom they had on their lists. Willis received one of those letters and showed it to us. The fox pills were, of course, poison and were to be inclosed in little balls of tallow and laid where foxes were known to come.

Trappers were advised to use them but were properly cautioned how and where to expose them. After picking up one of the pills, a fox would make for the nearest running water as fast as he could go; and that was the place for the trapper to look for him, for, after drinking, the fox soon expired. It has been argued that poison is more humane than the steel trap, since it brings a quick death; but both are cruel. There are also other considerations that weigh against the use of poison; but at that time there was no law against it.

The furrier who wrote to Willis offered to send him a box of those pills for seventy-five cents. We talked it over and agreed to try it, and Addison and I contributed the money.

A few days later Willis received the pills and proceeded to lay them out after a plan of his own. He cut several tallow candles into pieces about an inch long, and embedded a pill in each. When he had prepared twenty or more of those pieces of poisoned tallow, he put them in what he called a fox bed, of oat chaff, behind that old barn. The bed was about as large as the floor of a small room. At that time of year farmers were killing poultry, and Willis collected a basketful of chickens' and turkeys' heads to put into the bed along with the pieces of tallow. He thought that the foxes would smell the heads and dig the bed over.

We had said nothing to any one about it. The old Squire was away from home; but we knew pretty well that he would not approve of that method of getting foxes. Indeed, he had little sympathy with the use of traps. Willis was the only one who looked after the bed, or, indeed, who went up to the clearing at all.

During the next three or four weeks Willis gathered in not less than ten pelts, I think. They were mostly red foxes, but one was a large "crossed gray," the skin of which brought twenty-two dollars. After every few days Willis "doctored" the bed with more pills; he probably used more than a hundred.

What had happened to the colts was now clear. They had nuzzled that chaff for the oat grains that were left in it and had picked up some of those little balls of tallow. We wondered now that

we had not at once guessed the cause of their death, and we wondered, too, that we had not thought of the fox bed and the danger from it when we first turned the colts into the pasture. The fact remains, however, that it had never occurred to us that fox pills would poison colts as well as foxes.

All that day as we worked we brooded over it; and that evening, when we had done the chores, we stole off to the Murches' and, calling Willis out, told him about it and asked him what he thought we had better do. At first he was incredulous, then thoroughly alarmed. It was not so much the thought of having to settle for the loss of the horses that terrified him as it was the dread that he might be imprisoned for exposing poison to domestic animals.

"Don't say a word!" he exclaimed. "Nobody knows about that fox bed. If we keep still, it will never come out."

Addison and I both felt that such secrecy would leave us with a mighty mean feeling in our hearts; but Willis begged us never to say a word about it to any one. He was as penitent as we were, I think; but the thought that he might have to go to jail filled him with panic.

We went home in a very uncomfortable frame of mind, without having reached any decision.

"We've got to square this somehow," Addison said. "If I had the money, I'd settle for the colts and say nothing more to Willis about it."

"Money wouldn't make Mrs. Kennard feel much better," I said.

"That's so; but we might find a pretty sorrel colt somewhere, and make her a present of it in place, of Sylph—if we only had the money."

If it had not been for Willis, I rather think that we should have gone to the old Squire that very evening and told him the whole story; but the legal consequences of the affair troubled us, and since they affected Willis more than they affected us we did not like to say anything.

Week after week went by without our being able to bring ourselves to confess. The concealment was a source of daily uneasiness to us; although we rarely spoke of the affair to each other, it was always on our minds. Whenever we did speak of it together, Addison would say, "We've got to straighten that out," or, "I hate to have that colt scrape hanging on us in this way." We tried several times to get Willis's consent to our telling the old Squire; but he had brooded over the thing so long that he had convinced himself that if his act became known he would surely be sent to the penitentiary.

So there the matter lay covered up all summer until one afternoon in September, when the old Squire drove to the village to contract for his apple barrels, and I went with him to get a pair of boots. Just as we were starting for home we met Mrs. Kennard. Previously she had often visited us at the farm, but since the death of Sylph she had not come near us. The old Squire tried to-day to be more cordial than ever, but Mrs. Kennard answered him rather coldly. She started on, but turned suddenly and asked whether we had learned anything more about the death of those colts.

"And, oh, do you think that poor Sylph lay there, suffering, a long time?" she exclaimed, with tears in her eyes. "I keep thinking of it."

"No, we have learned nothing more," the old Squire said gently. "It was a mysterious affair; but I think all three of the colts died suddenly, within a few minutes."

That was all he could say to comfort her, and Mrs. Kennard walked slowly away with her handkerchief at her eyes. It was painful, and I sat there in the wagon feeling like a mean little malefactor.

"Very singular about those colts," the old Squire remarked partly to me, partly to himself, as we drove on. "A strange thing."

Sudden resolution nerved me. I was sick of skulking. "Sir," said I, swallowing hard several times, "I know what killed those colts!"

The old Squire glanced quickly at me, started to speak, but, seeing how greatly agitated I was, kindly refrained from questioning me.

"It was fox pills!" I blurted out. "Willis Murch and Ad and I had a fox bed up there last winter. We never thought of it when the colts were put in. They ate the poison pills."

The old Squire made no comment, and I plunged into further details.

"That accounts for it, then," he said at last.

I had expected him to speak plainly to me about those fox pills, but he merely asked me what I thought of using poison in trapping.

"I never would use it again!" I exclaimed hotly. "I've had enough of it!"

"I am glad you see it so," he remarked. "It is a bad method. You never know what may come of it. Hounds or deer may get it, or sheep, or young cattle, or even children."

We drove on in silence for some minutes. Clearly the old Squire was having me do my own thinking; for he now asked me what I thought should be done next.

"Ad thinks we ought to square it up somehow," I replied.

The old Squire nodded. "I am glad to hear that," he said. "What does Addison think we ought to do?"

"Pay Mr. Cutter for that Percheron colt."

"Yes, and Mrs. Kennard?"

"He thinks we could find another sorrel colt somewhere and make her a present of it."

The old Squire nodded again. "I see. Perhaps we can." Then, after a minute, "And what about letting this be known?"

"Willis is scared," I said. "Addison thinks it would be about as well now to settle up if we can and say nothing."

The old Squire did not reply to that for some moments. I thought he was not so well pleased. "I do not believe that, in the circumstances, Willis need fear being imprisoned," he said finally, "and I see no reason for further concealment. True, several months have passed and people have mostly forgotten it; perhaps not much good would come from publishing the facts abroad. We'll think it over."

After a minute he said, "I'm glad you told me this," and, turning, shook hands with me gravely.

"Ad and I don't want you to think that we expect you to square this up for us!" I exclaimed. "We want to do something to pay the bill ourselves, and to pay you for Lib, too."

The old Squire laughed. "Yes, I see how you feel," he said. "Would you like me to give you and Addison a job on shares this fall or winter, so that you could straighten this out?"

"Yes, sir, we would," said I earnestly. "And make Willis help, too!"

"Yes, yes," the old Squire said and laughed again. "I agree with you that Willis should do his part. Nothing like square dealing, is there, my son?" he went on. "It makes us all feel better, doesn't it?"

And he gave me a brisk little pat on the shoulder that made me feel quite like a man.

How much better I felt after that talk with the old Squire! I felt as blithe as a bird; and when we got home I ran and frisked and whistled all the way to the pasture, where I went to drive home the Jersey herd. The only qualm I felt was that I had acted without Addison's consent; but his first words when I had told him relieved me on that score.

"I'm glad of it!" he said. "We've been in that fox bed long enough. Now let Willis squirm." And when I told him of the old Squire's arrangement for our paying off the debt, he said, "That suits me. But we'll make Willis work!"

We went over to tell Willis that evening. He was, I think, even more relieved than we were; in the weeks of anxiety that he had passed he had determined that nothing would ever induce him to use poison again for trapping animals.

At that time many new telegraph lines were being put up in Maine; and the old Squire had recently accepted a contract for three thousand cedar poles, twenty feet long, at the rate of twenty-five cents a pole. Up in lot "No. 5," near Lurvey's Stream, there was plenty of cedar suitable for the purpose; the poles could be floated down to the point of delivery. The old Squire let us furnish a thousand of those poles, putting in our own labor at cutting and hauling. And in that way we earned the money to pay for the damage done by our fox pills.

Mr. Cutter, the owner of the Percheron, was willing to settle his loss for one hundred dollars; and during the winter, by dint of many inquiries, we heard of another sorrel, a three-year-old, which we purchased for a hundred and fifteen dollars. We took Mr. Kennard into our confidence and with his connivance planned a pleasant surprise for his wife. While Theodora and Ellen, who had accompanied us to the village, were entertaining Mrs. Kennard indoors, the old Squire and Addison and I smuggled the colt into the little stable and put her in the same stall where Sylph had once stood. When all was ready, Mr. Kennard went in and said:

"Louise, Sylph's got back! Come out to the stable!"

Wonderingly Mrs. Kennard followed him out to the stable. For a moment she gazed, astonished; then, of course, she guessed the ruse. "Oh, but it isn't Sylph!" she cried. "It isn't half so pretty!" And out came her pocket handkerchief again.

The old Squire took her gently by the hand. "It's the best we could do," he said. "We hope you will accept her with our best wishes."

Truth to say, Mrs. Kennard's tears were soon dried; and before long the new colt became almost as great a pet as the lost Sylph.

"Don't you ever forget, and don't you ever let me forget, how the old Squire has helped us out of this scrape," Ad said to me that night after we had gone upstairs. "He's an old Christian. If he ever needs a friend in his old age and I fail him, let my name be Ichabod!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

During the first week in May the old Squire and grandmother Ruth made a trip to Portland, and when they came back, they brought, among other presents to us young folks at home, a glass jar of goldfish for Ellen.

In Ellen's early home, before the Civil War and before she came to the old Squire's to live, there had always been a jar of goldfish in the window, and afterwards at the old farm the girl had often remarked that she missed it. Well I remember the cry of joy she gave that day when grandmother stepped down from the wagon at the farmhouse door and, turning, took a glass jar of goldfish from under the seat.

"O grandmother!" she cried and fairly flew to take it from the old lady's hands.

Ellen had eyes for nothing else that evening, and as it grew dark she went time and again with a lamp to look at the fish and to drop in crumbs of cracker.

During the four days the old folks were away we had run free; games and jokes had been in full swing. There was still mischief in us, for the next morning when we came down to do the chores before any one else was up, Addison said:

"Let's have some fun with Nell; she'll be down here pretty quick. Get some fish poles and strings and bend up some pins for hooks and we'll pretend to be fishing in the jar!"

In a few minutes we each had rigged up a semblance of fishing tackle and were ready. When Ellen opened the sitting-room door a little later the sight that met her astonished eyes took her breath away. Addison was calmly fishing in the jar!

"What are you doing?" she cried. "My goldfish!"

Addison fled out of the room with Ellen in hot pursuit; she finally caught him, seized the rod and broke it. But when she turned back to see what damages her adored fish had suffered, she beheld Halstead, perched over the jar, also fishing in it.

"My senses! You here, too!" she cried. "Can't a boy see a fish without wanting to catch it?"

When she hurried back in a flurry of anxiety after chasing him to the carriage house, she found me there, too, pretending to yank one out. But by this time she saw that it was a joke, and the box on the ear that she gave me was not a very hard one.

"Seems to me, young folks, I heard quite too much noise down here for Sunday morning," grandmother said severely when she appeared a little later. "Such racing and running! You really must have better regard for the day."

Preparations for breakfast went on in a subdued manner, and we were sitting at table rather quietly when a caller appeared at the door—Mrs. Rufus Sylvester, who lived about a mile from us. Her face wore a look of anxiety.

"Squire," she exclaimed, "I implore you to come over and say something to Rufus! He's terrible downcast this morning. He went out to the barn, but he hasn't milked, nor done his chores. He's settin' out there with his face in his hands, groanin'. I'm afraid, Squire, he may try to take his own life!"

The old Squire rose from the table and led Mrs. Sylvester into the sitting-room; grandmother followed them and carefully shut the door behind her. We heard them speaking in low tones for some moments; then they came out, and both the old Squire and grandmother Ruth set off with Mrs. Sylvester.

"Is he ill?" Theodora whispered to grandmother as the old lady passed her.

"No, child; he is melancholy this spring," the old lady replied. "He is afraid he has committed the unpardonable sin."

The old folks and our caller left us finishing our breakfast, and I recollect that for some time none of us spoke. Our recent unseemly hilarity had vanished.

"What do you suppose Sylvester's done?" Halstead asked at last, with a glance at Theodora; then, as she did not seem inclined to hazard conjectures on that subject, he addressed himself to Addison, who was trying to extract a second cup of coffee from the big coffeepot.

"You know everything, Addison, or think you do. What is this unpardonable sin?"

"Cousin Halstead," Addison replied, not relishing the manner in which he had put the question, "you are likely enough to find that out for yourself if you don't mend some of your bad ways here."

Halstead flamed up and muttered something about the self-righteousness of a certain member of the family; but Theodora then remarked tactfully that, as nearly as she could understand it, the

unpardonable sin is something we do that can never be forgiven.

Some months before Elder Witham had preached a sermon in which he had set forth the doctrine of predestination and the unpardonable sin, but I have to confess that none of us could remember what he had said.

"I think it's in the Bible," Theodora added, and, going into the sitting-room, she fetched forth grandmother Ruth's concordance Bible and asked Addison to help her find the references. Turning first to one text, then to another, for some minutes they read the passages aloud, but did not find anything conclusive. The discussion had put me in a rather disturbed state of mind in regard to several things I had done at one time and another, and I suppose I looked sober, for I saw Addison regarding me curiously. He continued to glance at me, clearly with intention, and shook his head gloomily several times until Ellen noticed it and exclaimed in my behalf, "Well, I guess he stands as good a chance as you do!"

Two hours or so later the old Squire and grandmother returned, thoughtfully silent; they did not tell us what had occurred, and it was not until a good many years later, when Theodora, Halstead and Addison had left the old farm, that I learned what had happened that morning at the Sylvester place. The old Squire and I were driving home from the village when something brought the incident to his mind, and, since I was now old enough to understand, he related what had occurred.

When they reached the Sylvester farm that morning grandmother went indoors with Mrs. Sylvester, and the old Squire proceeded to the barn. All was very dark and still there, and it was some moments before he discovered Rufus; the man was sitting on a heckling block at the far dark end of the barn, huddled down, with his head bowed in his hands.

"Good morning, neighbor!" the old Squire said cheerily. "A fine Sabbath morning. Spring never looked more promising for us."

Rufus neither stirred nor answered. The old Squire drew near and laid his hand gently on his shoulder.

"Is it something you could tell me about?" he asked.

Rufus groaned and raised two dreary eyes from his hands. "Oh, I can't! I'm 'shamed. It's nothin' I can tell!" he cried out miserably and then burst into fearful sobs.

"Don't let me ask, then, unless you think it might do you good," the old Squire said.

"Nothin'll ever do me any good again!" Rufus cried. "I'm beyond it, Squire. I'm a lost soul. The door of mercy is closed on me, Squire. I've committed the unpardonable sin!"

The old Squire saw that no effort to cheer Rufus that did not go to the root of his misery would avail. Sitting down beside him, he said:

"A great many of us sometimes fear that we have committed the unpardonable sin. But there is one sure way of knowing whether a person has committed it or not. I once knew a man who in a drunken brawl had killed another. He was convicted of manslaughter, served his term in prison, then went back to his farm and worked hard and well for ten years. One spring that former crime began to weigh on his mind. He brooded on it and finally became convinced that he had committed the sin for which there can be no forgiveness. He wanted desperately to atone for what he had done, and the idea got possession of his mind that since he had taken a human life the only way for him was to take his own life—a life for a life. The next morning they found that he had hanged himself in his barn.

"The young minister who was asked to officiate at the funeral declined to do so on doctrinal grounds; and the burial was about to take place without even a prayer at the grave when a stranger hurriedly approached. He was a celebrated divine who had heard the circumstances of the man's death and who had journeyed a hundred miles to offer his services at the burial.

"'My good friends,' the stranger began, 'I have come to rectify a great mistake. This poor fellow mortal whose body you are committing to its last resting place mistook the full measure of God's compassion. He believed that he had committed that sin for which there is no forgiveness. In his extreme anxiety to atone for his former crime, he was led to commit another, for God requires no man to commit suicide, and his Word expressly forbids it. My friends, I am here to-day to tell you that there is *only one sin for which there is no forgiveness, and that is the sin which we do not repent. That alone is the unpardonable sin.* This man was sincerely sorry for his sin, and I am as certain that God has forgiven him as I am that I am standing here by his grave.'"

As the old Squire spoke, Rufus raised his head, and a ray of hope broke across his woebegone face.

"Now the question is," the old Squire continued, "are you sorry for what you did?"

"Oh, yes, Squire, yes! I'm terribly sorry!" he cried eagerly. "I do repent of it! I never in the world would do such a thing again!"

"Then what you have done was not the unpardonable sin at all!" the old Squire exclaimed confidently.

"Do you think so?" Rufus cried imploringly.

"I know so!" the old Squire declared authoritatively. "Now let's feed those cows and your horse. Then we will go out and take a look at the fields where you are going to put in a crop this spring."

When the old Squire and grandmother Ruth came away the shadows at the Sylvester farm had visibly lifted, and life was resuming its normal course there. They had proceeded only a short distance on their homeward way, however, when they heard footsteps behind, and saw Rufus hastening after them bareheaded.

"Tell me, Squire, what d'ye think I ought to do about that—what I done once?" he cried.

"Well, Rufus," the old Squire replied, "that is a matter you must settle with your own conscience. Since you ask me, I should say that, if the wrong you did can be righted in any way, you had better try to right it."

"I will. I can. That's what I will do!" he exclaimed.

"I feel sure you will," the old Squire said; and Rufus went back, looking much relieved.

"Did you ever find out just what it was that Sylvester had done?" I asked.

"Well, never exactly," the old Squire replied, smiling. "But I made certain surmises. Less than a fortnight after my talk with Rufus our neighbors, the Wilburs, were astonished one morning to find that during the night a full barrel of salt pork had been set on their porch by the kitchen door. Every mark had been carefully scraped off the barrel, but on the top head were the words, printed with a lead pencil, 'This is yourn and I am sorry.'

"Fourteen years before, the Wilburs had lost a large hog very mysteriously. At that time domestic animals were allowed to run about much more freely than at present, and they often strayed along the highway. Sylvester was always in poor circumstances; and I believe that Wilbur's hog came along the road by night and that Rufus was tempted to make way with it privately and to conceal all traces of the theft.

"In spite of the words on the head of the barrel, Mr. Wilbur was in some doubt what to do with the pork and asked my advice. I told him that if I were in his place I should keep it and say nothing. But I didn't tell him of my talk with Sylvester about the unpardonable sin," the old gentleman added, smiling. "That was hardly a proper subject for gossip."

CHAPTER XV

THE CANTALOUPE COAXER

Every spring at the old farm we used to put in a row of hills for cantaloupes and another for watermelons. But, truth to say, our planting melons, like our efforts to raise peaches and grapes, was always more or less of a joke, for frosts usually killed the vines before the melons were half grown. Nevertheless, spring always filled us with fresh hope that the summer would prove warm, and that frosts would hold off until October. But we never really raised a melon fit for the table until the old Squire and Addison invented the "haymaker."

To make hay properly we thought we needed two successive days of sun. When rain falls nearly every day haying comes to a standstill, for if the mown grass is left in the field it blackens and rots; if it is drawn to the barn, it turns musty in the mow. Usually the sun does its duty, but once in a while there comes a summer in Maine when there is so much wet weather that it is nearly impossible to harvest the hay crop. Such a summer was that of 1868.

At the old farm our rule was to begin haying the day after the Fourth of July and to push the work as fast as possible, so as to get in most of the crop before dog-days. That summer I remember we had mowed four acres of grass on the morning of the fifth. But in the afternoon the sky clouded, the night turned wet, and the sun scarcely showed again for a week. A day and a half of clear weather followed; but showers came before the sodden swaths could be shaken up and the moisture dried out, and then dull or wet days followed for a week longer; that is, to the twenty-first of the month. Not a hundredweight of hay had we put into the barn, and the first hay we had mown had spoiled in the field.

At such times the northeastern farmer must keep his patience—if he can. The old Squire had seen Maine weather for many years and had learned the uselessness of fretting. He looked depressed, but merely said that Halstead and I might as well begin going to the district school with the girls.

In the summer we usually had to work on the farm during good weather, as boys of our age usually did in those days; but it was now too wet to hoe corn or to do other work in the field. We could do little except to wait for fair weather. Addison, who was older than I, did not go back to school and spent much of the time poring over a pile of old magazines up in the attic.

Halstead and I had been going to school for four or five days when on coming home one afternoon we found a great stir of activity round the west barn. Timbers and boards had been fetched from an old shed on the "Aunt Hannah lot"—a family appurtenance of the home farm—and lay heaped on the ground. Two of the hired men were laying foundation stones along the side

of the barn. Addison, who had just driven in with a load of long rafters from the old Squire's mill on Lurvey's Stream, called to us to help him unload them.

"Why, what's going to be built?" we exclaimed.

"Haymaker," he replied shortly.

The answer did not enlighten us.

"'Haymaker'?" repeated Halstead wonderingly.

"Yes, haymaker," said Addison. "So bear a hand here. We've got to hurry, too, if we are to make any hay this year." He then told us that the old Squire had driven to the village six miles away, to get a load of hothouse glass. While we stood pondering that bit of puzzling information, a third hired man drove into the yard on a heavy wagon drawn by a span of work horses. On the wagon was the old fire box and the boiler of a stationary steam engine that we had had for some time in the shook shop a mile down the road.

We learned at supper that Addison and the old Squire, having little to do that day except watch the weather, had put their heads together and hatched a plan to make hay from freshly mown grass without the aid of the sun. I have always understood that the plan originated in something that Addison had read, or in some picture that he had seen in one of the magazines in the garret. But the old Squire, who had a spice of Yankee inventiveness in him, had improved on Addison's first notion by suggesting a glass roof, set aslant to a south exposure, so as to utilize the rays of the sun when it did shine.

The haymaker was simply a long shed built against the south side of the barn. The front and the ends were boarded up to a height of eight feet from the ground. At that height strong cedar cross poles were laid, six inches apart, so as to form a kind of rack, on which the freshly mown grass could be pitched from a cart.

The glass roof was put on as soon as the glass arrived; it slanted at an angle of perhaps forty degrees from the front of the shed up to the eaves of the barn. The rafters, which were twenty-six feet in length, were hemlock scantlings eight inches wide and two inches thick, set edgewise; the panes of glass, which were eighteen inches wide by twenty-four inches long, were laid in rows upon the rafters like shingles. The space between the rack of poles and the glass roof was of course pervious to the sun rays and often became very warm. Three scuttles, four feet square, set low in the glass roof and guarded by a framework, enabled us to pitch the grass from the cart directly into the loft; and I may add here that the dried hay could be pitched into the haymow through apertures in the side of the barn.

That season the sun scarcely shone at all. The old fire box and boiler were needed most of the time. We installed the antiquated apparatus under the open floor virtually in the middle of the long space beneath, where it served as a hot-air furnace. The tall smoke pipe rose to a considerable height above the roof of the barn; and to guard against fire we carefully protected with sheet iron everything round it and round the fire box. As the boiler was already worn out and unsafe for steam, we put no water into it and made no effort to prevent the tubes from shrinking. For fuel we used slabs from the sawmill. The fire box and boiler gave forth a great deal of heat, which rose through the layer of grass on the poles.

The entire length of the loft was seventy-four feet, and the width was nineteen feet. We threw the grass in at the scuttles and spread it round in a layer about eighteen inches thick. As thus charged, the loft would hold about as much hay as grew on an acre. From four to seven hours were needed to make the grass into hay, but the time varied according as the grass was dry or green and damp when mown. Once in the haymaker it dried so fast that you could often see a cloud of steam rising from the scuttles in the glass roof, which had to be left partly open to make a draft from below.

Of course, we used artificial heat only in wet or cloudy weather. When the sun came out brightly we depended on solar heat. Perhaps half a day served to make a "charge" of grass into hay, if we turned it and shook it well in the loft. Passing the grass through the haymaker required no more work than making hay in the field in good weather.

In subsequent seasons when the sun shone nearly every day during haying time we used it less. But when thundershowers or occasional fogs or heavy dew came it was always open to us to put the grass through the haymaker. In a wet season it gave us a delightful feeling of independence. "Let it rain," the old Squire used to say with a smile. "We've got the haymaker."

Late in September the first fall after we built the haymaker, there came a heavy gale that blew off fully one half the apple crop—Baldwins, Greenings, Blue Pearmains and Spitzenburgs. Since we could barrel none of the windfalls as number one fruit, that part of our harvest, more than a thousand bushels, seemed likely to prove a loss. The old Squire would never make cider to sell; and we young folks at the farm, particularly Theodora and Ellen, disliked exceedingly to dry apples by hand.

But there lay all those fair apples. It seemed such a shame to let them go to waste that the matter was on all our minds. At the breakfast table one morning Ellen remarked that we might use the haymaker for drying apples if we only had some one to pare and slice them.

"But I cannot think of any one," she added hastily, fearful lest she be asked to do the work

evenings.

"Nor can I," Theodora added with equal haste, "unless some of those paupers at the town farm could be set about it."

"Poor paupers!" Addison exclaimed, laughing. "Too bad!"

"Lazy things, I say!" grandmother exclaimed. "There's seventeen on the farm, and eight of them are abundantly able to work and earn their keep."

"Yes, if they only had the wit," the old Squire said; he was one of the selectmen that year, and he felt much solicitude for the town poor.

"Perhaps they've wit enough to pare apples," Theodora remarked hopefully.

"Maybe," the old Squire said in doubt. "So far as they are able they ought to work, just as those who have to support them must work."

The old Squire, after consulting with the two other selectmen, finally offered five of the paupers fifty cents a day and their board if they would come to our place and dry apples. Three of the five were women, one was an elderly man, and the fifth was a not over-bright youngster of eighteen. So far from disliking the project all five hailed it with delight.

Having paupers round the place was by no means an unmixed pleasure. We equipped them with apple parers, corers and slicers and set them to work in the basement of the haymaker. Large trays of woven wire were prepared to be set in rows on the rack overhead. It was then October; the fire necessary to keep the workers warm was enough to dry the trays of sliced apples almost as fast as they could be filled.

For more than a month the five paupers worked there, sometimes well, sometimes badly. They dried nearly two tons of apples, which, if I remember right, brought six cents a pound that year. The profit from that venture alone nearly paid for the haymaker.

The weather was bright the next haying time, so bright indeed that it was scarcely worth while to dry grass in the haymaker; and the next summer was just as sunny. It was in the spring of that second year that Theodora and Ellen asked whether they might not put their boxes of flower seeds and tomato seeds into the haymaker to give them an earlier start, for the spring suns warmed the ground under the glass roof while the snow still lay on the ground outside. In Maine it is never safe to plant a garden much before the middle of May; but we sometimes tried to get an earlier start by means of hotbeds on the south side of the farm buildings. In that way we used to start tomatoes, radishes, lettuce and even sweet corn, early potatoes, carrots and other vegetables, and then transplanted them to the open garden when settled warm weather came.

The girls' suggestion gave us the idea of using the haymaker as a big hothouse. The large area under glass made the scheme attractive. On the 2d of April we prepared the ground and planted enough garden seeds of all kinds to produce plants enough for an acre of land. The plants came up quickly and thrived and were successfully transplanted. A great victory was thus won over adverse nature and climate. We had sweet corn, green peas and everything else that a large garden yields a fortnight or three weeks earlier than we ever had had them before, and in such abundance that we were able to sell the surplus profitably at the neighboring village.

The sweet corn, tomatoes and other vegetables were transplanted to the outer garden early in June. Addison then suggested that we plant the ground under the haymaker to cantaloupes, and on the 4th of June we planted forty-five hills with seed.

The venture proved the most successful of all. The melon plants came up as well as they could have done in Colorado or Arizona. It is astonishing how many cantaloupes will grow on a plot of ground seventy-four feet long by nineteen feet wide. On the 16th of September we counted nine hundred and fifty-four melons, many of them large and nearly all of them yellow and finely ripened! They had matured in ninety days.

In fact, the crop proved an "embarrassment of riches." We feasted on them ourselves and gave to our neighbors, and yet our store did not visibly diminish. The county fair occurred on September 22 that fall; and Addison suggested loading a farm wagon—one with a body fifteen feet long—with about eight hundred of the cantaloupes and tempting the public appetite—at ten cents a melon. The girls helped us to decorate the wagon attractively with asters, dahlias, goldenrod and other autumn flowers, and they lined the wagon body with paper. It really did look fine, with all those yellow melons in it. We hired our neighbor, Tom Edwards, who had a remarkably resonant voice, to act as a "barker" for us.

The second day of the fair—the day on which the greatest crowd usually attends—we arrived with our load at eight o'clock in the morning, took up a favorable position on the grounds and cut a couple of melons in halves to show how yellow and luscious they were.

"All ready, now, Tom!" Addison exclaimed when our preparations were made. "Let's hear you earn that two dollars we've got to pay you."

Walking round in circles, Tom began:

"Muskmelons! Muskmelons grown under glass! Home-grown muskmelons! Maine muskmelons grown under a glass roof! Sweet and luscious! Only ten cents! Walk up, ladies and gentlemen,

and see what your old native state can do—under glass! Walk up, young fellows, and treat your girls! Don't be stingy! Only ten cents apiece—and one of these luscious melons will treat three big girls or five little ones! A paper napkin with every melon! Don't wait! They are going fast! All be gone before ten o'clock! Try one and see what the old Pine Tree State will do—under glass!"

That is far from being the whole of Tom's "ballyhoo." Walking round and round in ever larger circles, he constantly varied his praises and his jokes. But the melons were their own best advertisement. All who bought them pronounced them delicious; and frequently they bought one or two more to prove to their friends how good they were.

At ten o'clock we still had a good many melons; but toward noon business became very brisk, and at one o'clock only six melons were left.

In honor of this crop we rechristened the old haymaker the "cantaloupe coaxer."

CHAPTER XVI

THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF GRANDPA EDWARDS

There was so much to do at the old farm that we rarely found time to play games. But we had a croquet set that Theodora, Ellen and their girl neighbor, Catherine Edwards, occasionally carried out to a little wicketed court just east of the apple house in the rear of the farm buildings.

Halstead rather disdained the game as too tame for boys and Addison so easily outplayed the rest of us that there was not much fun in it for him, unless, as Theodora used to say, he played with one hand in his pocket. But as we were knocking the balls about one evening while we decided which of us should play, we saw Catherine crossing the west field. She had heard our voices and was making haste to reach us. As she approached, we saw that she looked anxious.

"Has grandpa been over here to-day?" her first words were. "He's gone. He went out right after breakfast this morning, and he hasn't come back.

"After he went out, Tom saw him down by the line wall," she continued hurriedly. "We thought perhaps he had gone to the Corners by the meadow-brook path. But he didn't come to dinner. We are beginning to wonder where he is. Tom's just gone to the Corners to see if he is there."

"Why, no," we said. "He hasn't been here to-day."

The two back windows at the rear of the kitchen were down, and Ellen, who was washing dishes there, overheard what Catherine had said, and spoke to grandmother Ruth, who called the old Squire.

"That's a little strange," he said when Catherine had repeated her tidings to him. "But I rather think it is nothing serious. He may have gone on from the Corners to the village. I shouldn't worry."

Grandpa Jonathan Edwards—distantly related to the stern New England divine of that name—was a sturdy, strong old man sixty-seven years of age, two years older than our old Squire, and a friend and neighbor of his from boyhood. With this youthful friend, Jock, the old Squire—who then of course was young—had journeyed to Connecticut to buy merino sheep: that memorable trip when they met with Anice and Ruth Pepperill, the two girls whom they subsequently married and brought home.

For the last seventeen years matters had not been going prosperously or happily at the Edwards farm. Jonathan's only son, Jotham (Catherine and Tom's father), had married at the age of twenty and come home to live. The old folks gave him the deed of the farm and accepted only a "maintenance" on it—not an uncommon mode of procedure. Quite naturally, no doubt, after taking the farm off his father's hands, marrying and having a family of his own, this son, Jotham, wished to manage the farm as he saw fit. He was a fairly kind, well-meaning man, but he had a hasty temper and was a poor manager. His plans seemed never to prosper, and the farm ran down, to the great sorrow and dissatisfaction of his father, Jonathan, whose good advice was wholly disregarded. The farm lapsed under a mortgage; the buildings went unrepaired, unpainted; and the older man experienced the constant grief of seeing the place that had been so dear to him going wrong and getting into worse condition every year.

Of course we young folks did not at that time know or understand much about all this; but I have learned since that Jonathan often unbosomed his troubles to the old Squire, who sympathized with him, but who could do little to improve matters.

Jotham's wife was a worthy woman, and I never heard that she did not treat the old folks well. It was the bad management and the constantly growing stress of straitened circumstances that so worried Jonathan.

Then, two years before we young folks came home to live at the old Squire's, Aunt Anice, as the neighbors called her, died suddenly of a sharp attack of pleurisy. That left Jonathan alone in the household of his son and family. He seemed, so the old Squire told me later, to lose heart entirely

after that, and sat about or wandered over the farm in a state of constant discontent.

I fear, too, that his grandson, Tom, was not an unmixed comfort to him. Tom did not mean to hurt his grandfather's feelings. He was a good-hearted boy, but impetuous and somewhat hasty. More than once we heard him go on to tell what great things he meant to do at home, "after grandpa dies." Grandpa, indeed, may sometimes have heard him say that; and it is the saddest, most hopeless thing in life for elderly people to come to see that the younger generation is only waiting for them to die. If Grandpa Edwards had been very infirm, he might not have cared greatly; but, as I have said, at sixty-seven he was still hale and, except for a little rheumatism, apparently well.

Tom came home from the Corners that night without having learned anything of Grandpa Edwards's whereabouts. In the course of the evening his disappearance became known throughout the vicinity. The first conjectures were that he had set off on a visit somewhere and would soon return. Paying visits was not much after his manner of life; yet his family half believed that he had gone off to cheer himself up a bit. Jotham and his wife, and Catherine, too, now remembered that he had been unusually silent for a week. A search of the room he occupied showed that he had gone away wearing his every-day clothes. I remember that the old Squire and grandmother Ruth looked grave but said very little. Grandpa Edwards was not the kind of man to get lost. Of course he might have had a fall while tramping about and injured himself seriously or even fatally; but neither was that likely.

For several days, therefore, his family and his neighbors waited for him to return of his own accord. But when a week or more passed and he did not come anxiety deepened; and his son and the neighbors bestirred themselves to make wider inquiries. Tardily, at last, a considerable party searched the woods and the lake shores; and finally as many as fifty persons turned out and spent a day and a night looking for him.

"They will not find him," the old Squire remarked with a kind of sad certainty; and he did not join the searchers himself or encourage us boys to do so. I think that both he and grandmother Ruth partly feared that, as the old lady quaintly expressed it, "Jonathan had been left to take his own life," in a fit of despondency.

The disappearance was so mysterious, indeed, and some people thought so suspicious, that the town authorities took it up. The selectmen came to the Edwards farm and made careful inquiries into all the circumstances in order to make sure there had been nothing like wrongdoing. There was not, however, the least circumstance to indicate anything of that kind. Grandfather Jonathan had walked away no one knew where; Jotham and his wife knew no more than their neighbors. They did not know what to think. Perhaps they feared they had not treated their father well. They said little, but Catherine and Tom talked of it in all innocence. Supposed clues were reported, but they led to nothing and were soon abandoned. The baffling mystery of it remained and throughout that entire season cast its shadow on the community. It passed from the minds of us young people much sooner than from the minds of our elders. In the rush of life we largely ceased to think of it; but I am sure it was often in the thoughts of the old Squire and grandmother. With them months and even years made little difference in their sense of loss, for no tidings came—none at least that were ever made public; but thereby hangs the strangest part of this story.

The old Squire, as I have often said, was a lumberman as well as a farmer. For a number of years he was in company with a Canadian at Three Rivers in the Province of Quebec, and had lumber camps on the St. Maurice River as well as nearer home in Maine. After the age of seventy-three he gave up active participation in the Quebec branch of the business, but still retained an interest in it; and this went on for ten years or more. The former partner in Canada then died, and the business had to be wound up.

Long before that time Theodora, Halstead and finally Ellen had left home and gone out into the world for themselves, and as the old Squire was now past eighty we did not quite like to have him journey to Canada. He was still alert, but after an attack of rheumatic fever in the winter of 1869 his heart had disclosed slight defects; it was safer for him not to exert himself so vigorously as formerly; and as the partnership had to be terminated legally he gave me the power of attorney to go to Three Rivers and act for him.

I was at a sawmill fifteen miles out of Three Rivers for a week or more; but the day I left I came back to that place on a buckboard driven by a French *habitant* of the locality. On our way we passed a little stumpy clearing where there was a small, new, very tidy house, neatly shingled and clapboarded, with plots of bright asters and marigolds about the door. Adjoining was an equally tidy barn, and in front one of the best-kept, most luxuriant gardens I had ever seen in Canada. Farther away was an acre of ripening oats and another of potatoes. A Jersey cow with her tinkling bell was feeding at the borders of the clearing. Such evidences of care and thrift were so unusual in that northerly region that I spoke of it to my driver.

"Ah, heem ole Yarnkee man," the *habitant* said. "Heem work all time."

As if in confirmation of this remark an aged man, hearing our wheels, rose suddenly in the garden where he was weeding, with his face toward us. Something strangely familiar in his looks at once riveted my attention. I bade the driver stop and, jumping out, climbed the log fence inclosing the garden and approached the old man.

"Isn't your name Edwards—Jonathan Edwards?" I exclaimed.

He stood for some moments regarding me without speaking. "Wal, they don't call me that here," he said at last, still regarding me fixedly.

I told him then who I was and how I had come to be there. I was not absolutely certain that it was Grandpa Edwards, yet I felt pretty sure. His hair was a little whiter and his face somewhat more wrinkled; yet he had changed surprisingly little. His hearing, too, did not appear to be much impaired, and he was doing a pretty good job of weeding without glasses.

I could see that he was in doubt about admitting his identity to me. "It is only by accident I saw you," I said. "I did not come to find you."

Still he did not speak and seemed disinclined to do so, or to admit anything about himself. I was sorry that I had stopped to accost him, but now that I had done so I went on quite as a matter of course to give him tidings of the old Squire and of grandmother Ruth. "They are both living and well; they speak of you at times," I said. "Your disappearance grieved them. I don't think they ever blamed you."

His face worked strangely; his hands, grasping the hoe handle, shook; but still he said nothing.

"Have you ever had word from your folks at the old farm?" I asked him at length. "Have you had any news of them at all?"

He shook his head. I then informed him that his son Jotham had died four years before; that Tom had gone abroad as an engineer; that Catherine was living at home, managing the old place and doing it well; that she had paid off the mortgage and was prospering.

He listened in silence; but his face worked painfully at times.

As I was speaking an elderly woman came to the door of the house and stood looking toward us.

"That is my wife," he said, noticing that I saw her. "She is a good woman. She takes good care of me."

I felt that it would be unkind to press him further and turned to go.

"Would you like to send any word to your folks or to grandmother and the old Squire?" I asked.

"Better not," said he with a kind of solemn sullenness. "I am out of all that. I'm the same's dead."

I could see that he wished it so. He had not really and in so many words acknowledged his identity; but when I turned to go he followed me to the log fence round the garden and as I got over grasped my hand and held on for the longest time! I thought he would never let go. His hand felt rather cold. I suppose the sight of me and the home speech brought his early life vividly back to him. He swallowed hard several times without speaking, and again I saw his wrinkled face working. He let go at last, went heavily back and picked up his hoe; and as we drove on I saw him hoeing stolidly.

The driver said that he had cleared up the little farm and built the log house and barn all by his own labor. For five years he had lived alone, but later he had married the widow of a Scotch immigrant. I noticed that this French-Canadian driver called him "M'sieur Andrews." It would seem that he had changed his name and begun anew in the world—or had tried to. How far he had succeeded I am unable to say.

I could not help feeling puzzled as well as depressed. The proper course under such circumstances is not wholly clear. Had his former friends a right to know what I had discovered? Right or wrong, what I decided on was to say nothing so long as the old man lived. Three years afterwards I wrote to a person whose acquaintance I had made at Three Rivers, asking him whether an old American, residing at a place I described, were still living, and received a reply saying that he was and apparently in good health. But two years later this same Canadian acquaintance, remembering my inquiry, wrote to say that the old man I had once asked about had just died, but that his widow was still living at their little farm and getting along as well as could be expected.

Then one day as the old Squire and I were driving home from a grange meeting I told him what I had learned five years before concerning the fate of his old friend. It was news to him, and yet he did not appear to be wholly surprised.

"I don't know, sir, whether I have done right or not, keeping this from you so long," I said after a moment of silence.

"I think you did perfectly right," the old Squire said after a pause. "You did what I myself, I am sure, would have done under the circumstances."

"Shall you tell grandmother Ruth?" I asked.

The old Squire considered it for several moments before he ventured to speak again. At last he lifted his head.

"On the whole I think it will be better if we do not," he replied. "It will give her a great shock, particularly Jonathan's second marriage up there in Canada. His disappearance has now largely faded from her mind. It is best so.

"Not that I justify it," he continued. "I think really that he did a shocking thing. But I understand

it and overlook it in him. He bore his life there with Jotham just as long as he could. Jock had that kind of temperament. After Anice died there was nothing to keep him there.

"The fault was not all with Jotham," the old Squire continued reflectively. "Jotham was just what he was, hasty, willful and a poor head for management. No, the real fault was in the mistake in giving up the farm and all the rest of the property to Jotham when he came home to live. Jonathan should have kept his farm in his own hands and managed it himself as long as he was well and retained his faculties. True, Jotham was an only child and very likely would have left home if he couldn't have had his own way; but that would have been better, a thousand times better, than all the unhappiness that followed.

"No," the old Squire said again with conviction, "I don't much believe in elderly people's deeding away their farms or other businesses to their sons as long as they are able to manage them for themselves. It is a very bad method and has led to a world of trouble."

The old gentleman stopped suddenly and glanced at me.

"My boy, I quite forgot that you are still living at home with me and perhaps are beginning to think that it is time you had a deed of the old farm," he said in an apologetic voice.

"No, sir!" I exclaimed vehemently, for I had learned my lesson from what I had seen up in Canada. "You keep your property in your own hands as long as you live. If you ever see symptoms in me of wanting to play the Jotham, I hope that you will put me outside the house door and shut it on me!"

The old Squire laughed and patted my shoulder affectionately.

"Well, I'm eighty-three now, you know," he said slowly. "It can hardly be such a very great while."

I shook my head by way of protest, for the thought was an exceedingly unpleasant one.

However, the old gentleman only laughed again.

"No, it can hardly be such a very great while," he repeated.

But he lived to be ninety-eight, and I can truly say that those last years with him at the old farm, going about or driving round together, were the happiest of my life.

CHAPTER XVII

OUR FOURTH OF JULY AT THE DEN

Farm work as usual occupied us quite closely during May and June that year; and ere long we began to think of what we would do on the approaching Fourth of July. So far as we could hear, no public celebration was being planned either at the village in our own town, or in any of the towns immediately adjoining. Apparently we would have to organize our own celebration, if we had one; and after talking the matter over with the other young folks of the school district, we decided to celebrate the day by making a picnic excursion to the "Den," and carrying out a long contemplated plan for exploring it.

The Den was a pokerish cavern near Overset Pond, nine or ten miles to the northeast of the old Squire's place, about which clung many legends.

In the spring of 1839 a large female panther is said to have been trapped there, and an end made of her young family. Several bears, too, had been surprised inside the Den, for the place presented great attractions as a secure retreat from winter cold. But the story that most interested us was a tradition that somewhere in the recesses of the cave the notorious Androscoggin Indian Adwanko had hidden a bag of silver money that he had received from the French for the scalps of white settlers.

The entrance to the cave fronts the pond near the foot of a precipitous mountain, called the Fall-off. A wilder locality, or one of more sinister aspect, can hardly be imagined. The cave is not spacious within; it is merely a dark hole among great granite rocks. By means of a lantern or torch you can penetrate to a distance of seventy feet or more.

One day when three of us boys had gone to Overset Pond to fish for trout we plucked up our courage and crawled into it. We crept along for what seemed to us a great distance till we found the passage obstructed by a rock that had apparently fallen from overhead. We could move the stone a little, but we did not dare to tamper with it much, for fear that other stones from above would fall. We believed that Adwanko's bag of silver was surely in some recess beyond the rock and at once began to lay plans for blasting out the stone with powder. By using a long fuse, the person that fired the charge would have time to get out before the explosion.

Our party drove there in five double-seated wagons as far as Moose-Yard Brook, where we left the teams and walked the remaining two miles through the woods to Overset Pond. Besides five of us from the old Squire's, there were our two young neighbors, Thomas and Catherine Edwards, Willis Murch and his older brother, Ben, the two Darnley boys, Newman and Rufus,

their sister, Adriana, and ten or twelve other young people.

Besides luncheon baskets and materials to make lemonade, we had taken along axes, two crowbars, two lanterns, four pounds of blasting powder and three feet of safety fuse. My cousin Addison had also brought a hammer, drill and "spoon." The girls were chiefly interested in the picnic; but we boys were resolved to see what was in the depths of the cave, and immediately on reaching the place several of us lighted the lanterns and went in.

At no place could we stand upright. Apparently some animal had wintered there, for the interior had a rank odor; but we crawled on over rocks until we came to the obstructing stone sixty or seventy feet from the entrance.

We had planned to drill a hole in the rock, blast it into pieces, and thus clear a passage to what lay beyond it. On closer inspection, however, we found that it was almost impossible to set the drill and deal blows with the hammer. But the stone rested on another rock, and we believed that we could push powder in beneath it and so get an upward blast that would heave the stone either forward or backward, or perhaps even break it in halves. We therefore set to work, thrusting the powder far under the stone with a blunt stick, until we had a charge of about four pounds. When we had connected the fuse we heaped sand about the base of the stone, to confine the powder.

The blast was finally ready; and then the question who should fire it arose. The three feet of fuse would, we believed, give two full minutes for whoever lighted it to get out of the Den; but fuse sometimes burns faster than is expected, and the safety fuse made in those days was not so uniform in quality as that of present times. At first no one seemed greatly to desire the honor of touching it off. The boys stood and joked one another about it, while the girls looked on from a safe distance.

"I shan't feel offended if any one gets ahead of me," Addison remarked carelessly.

"I'd just as soon have some one else do it," Ben said, smiling.

I had no idea of claiming the honor myself. Finally, after more bantering, Rufus Darnley cried, "Who's afraid? I'll light it. Two minutes is time enough to get out."

Rufus was not largely endowed with mother wit, or prudence. His brother Newman and his sister Adriana did not like the idea of his setting off the blast—in fact, none of us did; but Rufus wanted to show off a bit, and he insisted upon going in. Thereupon Ben, the oldest of the young fellows present, said quietly that he would go in with Rufus and light the fuse himself while Rufus held the lantern.

"I'll shout when I touch the match to the fuse," he said, "so that you can get away from the mouth of the cave."

They crept in, and the rest of us stood round, listening for the signal. Several minutes passed, and we wondered what could be taking them so long. At last there came a muffled shout, and all of us, retreating twenty or thirty yards, watched for Ben and Rufus to emerge. Some of us were counting off the seconds. We could hear Ben and Rufus coming, climbing over the rocks. Then suddenly there was an outcry and the sound of tinkling glass. At the same instant Ben emerged, but immediately turned and went back into the cave.

"Hurry, Rufe!" we heard him call out. "What's the matter? Hurry, or it will go off!"

Consternation fell on us, and some of us started for the mouth of the cave; but before we had gone more than five paces Ben sprang forth. He had not dared to remain an instant longer—and, indeed, he was scarcely outside when the explosion came. It sounded like a heavy jolt deep inside the mountain.

To our horror a huge slab of rock, thirty or forty feet up the side of the Fall-off, started to slide with a great crunching and grinding; then, gathering momentum, it plunged down between us and the mouth of the cave and completely shut the opening from view. Powder smoke floated up from behind the slab.

There was something so terrible in the suddenness of the catastrophe that the whole party seemed crazed. The boys, shouting wildly, swarmed about the fallen rock; the girls ran round, imploring us to get Rufus out. Rufus's sister Adriana, beside herself with terror, was screaming; and we could hardly keep Newman Darnley from attacking Ben Murch, who, he declared, should have brought Rufus out!

At first we were afraid that the explosion had killed Rufus; but almost immediately we heard muffled cries for help from the cave. He was still alive, but we had no way of knowing how badly he was hurt. Adriana fairly flew from one to another, beseeching us to save him.

"He's dying! He's under the rocks!" she screamed. "Oh, why don't you get him out?"

With grave faces Willis, Ben, Addison and Thomas peered round the fallen rock and cast about for some means of moving it.

"We must pry it away!" Thomas exclaimed. "Let's get a big pry!"

"We can't move that rock!" Ben declared. "We shall have to drill it and blast it."

But we had used all the powder and fuse, and it would take several hours to get more. Ben

insisted, however, on sending Alfred Batchelder for the powder, and then, seizing the hammer and drill, he began to drill a hole in the side of the rock.

Thomas, however, still believed that we could move the rock by throwing our united weight on a long pry; and many of the boys agreed with him. We felled a spruce tree seven inches in diameter, trimmed it and cut a pry twenty feet long from it. Carrying it to the rock, we set a stone for a fulcrum, and then threw our weight repeatedly on the long end. The rock, which must have weighed ten tons or more, scarcely stirred. Ben laughed at us scornfully and went on drilling.

All the while Adriana stood weeping, and the other girls were shedding tears in sympathy. Rufus's distressed cries came to our ears, entreating us to help him and saying something that we could not understand about his leg.

As Addison stood racking his brain for some quicker way of moving the rock he remembered a contrivance, called a "giant purchase," that he had heard of lumbermen's using to break jams of logs on the Androscoggin River. He had never seen one and had only the vaguest idea how it worked. All he knew was that it consisted of an immense lever, forty feet long, laid on a log support and hauled laterally to and fro by horses. He knew that you could thus get a titanic application of power, for if the long arm of the lever were forty feet long and the short arm four feet, the strength of three horses pulling on the long arm would be increased tenfold—that is, the power of thirty horses would be applied against the object to be moved.

Addison explained his plan to the rest of us. He sent Thomas and me to lead several of our horses up through the woods to the pond. We ran all the way; and we took the whippletrees off the double wagons, and brought all the spare rope halters. Within an hour we were back there with four of the strongest horses.

Meanwhile the others had been busy; even Ben had been persuaded to drop his drilling and to help the other boys cut the great lever—a straight spruce tree forty or forty-five feet tall. The girls, too, had worked; they had even helped us drag the two spruce logs for the lever to slide on. In fact, every one had worked with might and main in a kind of breathless anxiety, for Rufus's very life seemed to be hanging on the success of our exertions.

A few feet to the left of the fallen rock was another boulder that served admirably for a fulcrum, and before long we had the big lever in place with the end of the short arm bearing against the fallen slab. When we had attached the horses to the farther end, Addison gave the word to start. As the horses gathered themselves for the pull we watched anxiously. The great log lever, which was more than a foot in diameter, bent visibly as they lunged forward.

Every eye was now on the rock, and when it moved,—for move it did,—such a cry of joy rose as the shores of that little pond had never echoed before! The great slab ground heavily against the other rocks, but moved for three or four feet, exposing in part the mouth of the cave—the same little dark chink that affords entrance to the Den to-day.

Other boulders prevented the rock from moving farther, and, although the horses surged at the lever, and we boys added our strength, the slab stuck fast; but an aperture twenty inches wide had been uncovered, wide enough to enable any one to enter the Den.

Ben, Willis and Edgar Wilbur crept in, followed by Thomas with a lantern; and after a time they brought Rufus out. We learned then that in his haste after the fuse was lighted he had fallen over one of the large rocks and, striking his leg on another stone, had broken the bone above the knee. He suffered not a little when the boys were drawing him out at the narrow chink beside the rock; but he was alive, and that was a matter for thankfulness.

Thomas went back to get the lantern that Rufus had dropped. It had fallen into a crevice between two large rocks, and while searching for it Thomas found another lantern there, of antique pattern. It was made of tin and was perforated with holes to emit the light; it seemed very old. Underneath where it lay Thomas also discovered a man's waistcoat, caked and sodden by the damp. In one pocket was a pipe, a rusted jackknife and what had once been a piece of tobacco. In the other pocket were sixteen large, old, red copper cents, one of which was a "boobyhead" cent.

We never discovered to whom that treasure-trove belonged. It could hardly have been Adwanko's, for one of the copper cents bore the date of 1830. Perhaps the owner of it had been searching for Adwanko's money; but why he left his lantern and waistcoat behind him remains a mystery. Our chief care was now for Rufus. We made a litter of poles and spruce boughs, and as gently as we could carried the sufferer through the woods down to the wagons, and slowly drove him home. Seven or eight weeks passed before he was able to walk again, even with the aid of a crutch.

Our plan of exploring the Den had been wholly overshadowed. We even forgot the luncheon baskets; and no one thought of ascertaining what the blast had accomplished. When we went up to the cave some months later we found that the blast had done very little; it had moved the rock slightly, but not enough to open the passage; and so it remains to this day. Old Adwanko's scalp money is still there—if it ever was there; but it is my surmise that the cruel redskin is much more likely to have spent his blood money for rum than to have left it behind him in the Den.

CHAPTER XVIII

JIM DOANE'S BANK BOOK

During the month of June that summer there was a very ambiguous affair at our old place.

Nowadays, if you lose your savings-bank book all you have to do is to notify the bank to stop payment on it. In many other ways, too, depositors are now safeguarded from loss. Forty years ago, however, when savings banks were newer and more autocratic, it was different. The bank book was then something tremendously important, or at least depositors thought so.

When the savings bank at the village, six miles from the old home farm in Maine, first opened for business, Mr. Burns, the treasurer, gave each new depositor a sharp lecture. He was a large man with a heavy black beard; as he handed the new bank book to the depositor, he would say in a dictatorial tone:

"Now here is your *bank book*." What emphasis he put on those words! "It shows you what you have at the bank. Don't fold it. Don't crumple it. Don't get it dirty. But above all things don't lose it, or let it be stolen from you. If you do, you may lose your entire deposit. We cannot remember you all. Whoever brings your book here may draw out your money. So put this book in a safe place, and keep a sharp eye on it. Remember every word I have told you, or we will not be responsible."

The old Squire encouraged us to have a nest egg at the bank, and by the end of the year there were seven bank books at the farm, all carefully put away under lock and key, in fact there were nine, counting the two that belonged to our hired men, Asa and Jim Doane. Acting on the old Squire's exhortation to practise thrift, they vowed that they would lay up a hundred dollars a year from their wages. The Doanes had worked for us for three or four years. Asa was a sturdy fellow of good habits; but Jim, his younger brother, had a besetting sin. About once a month, sometimes oftener, he wanted a playday; we always knew that he would come home from it drunk, and that we should have to put him away in some sequestered place and give him a day in which to recover.

For two or three days afterwards Jim would be the meekest, saddest, most shamefaced of human beings. At table he would scarcely look up; and there is not the least doubt that his grief and shame were genuine. Yet as surely as the months passed the same feverish restlessness would again show itself in him.

We came to recognize Jim's symptoms only too well, and knew, when we saw them, that he would soon have to have another playday. In fact, if the old Squire refused to let him off on such occasions, Jim would get more and more restless and two or three nights afterwards would steal away surreptitiously.

"Jim's a fool!" his brother, Asa, often said impatiently. "He isn't fit to be round here."

But the Squire steadily refused to turn Jim off. Many a time the old gentleman sat up half the night with the returned and noisy prodigal. A word from the Squire would calm Jim for the time and would occasionally call forth a burst of repentant tears. Jim's case, indeed, was one of the causes that led us at the old farm so bitterly to hate intoxicants.

That, however, is the dark side of Jim's infirmity; one of its more amusing sides was his bank book. When Jim was himself, as we used to say of him, he wanted to do well and to thrive like Asa, and he asked the old Squire to hold back ten dollars from his wages every month and to deposit it for him in the new savings bank. Mindful of his infirmity, Jim gave his bank book to grandmother to keep for him.

"Hide it," he used to say to her. "Even if I come and want it, don't you let me have it."

That was when Jim was himself; but when he had gone for a playday, he came rip-roariously home, time and again, and demanded his book, to get more money for drink. The scrimmages that grandmother had with him about that book would have been highly ludicrous if a vein of tragedy had not run underneath them.

One cause of Jim's inconsistent behavior about his bank account was the bad company he fell into on his playdays. After he had imbibed somewhat, those boon companions would urge him to go home and get his bank book; for under the influence of drink Jim was a noisy talker and likely to boast of his savings.

None of us, except grandmother, knew where Jim's bank book was, and after one memorable experience with him the old lady always disappeared when she saw him drive in. The second time, Jim actually searched the house for his book; but grandmother had taken it and stolen away to a neighbor's house. Once or twice afterwards Jim came and searched for his book; and I remember that the old Squire had doubts whether it was best for us to withhold it from him. Grandmother, however, had no such scruples.

"He shan't have it! Those rum sellers shan't get it from him!" she exclaimed.

When he had recovered from the effects of his playday Jim was always fervently glad that he had not spent his savings.

But his bad habits rapidly grew on him, and we fully expected that his savings, which, thanks to grandmother's resolute efforts, now amounted to nearly four hundred dollars, would eventually be squandered on drink.

"It's no use," Addison often said. "It will all go that way in the end, and the more there is of it the worse will be the final crash."

Others thought so, too—among them Miss Wilma Emmons, who taught the district school that summer. Miss Emmons was tall, slight and pale, with dark hair and large light-blue eyes. She would have been very pretty except for her very high, narrow forehead that not even her hair, combed low, could prevent from being noticeable. She made you feel that she was constantly intent on something that worried her.

As time passed, we came to learn the cause of her anxiety. She had two brothers, younger than herself, bright, promising boys whom she was trying to help through college. The three were orphans, without means; and Wilma was working hard, summer and winter, at anything and everything that offered profit, in an effort to give those boys a liberal education; besides teaching school, she went round the countryside in all weathers selling books, maps and sewing machines. Her devotion to those brothers was of course splendid, yet I now think that Wilma, temperamental and overworked, had let it become a kind of monomania with her.

A few days after she came to board at the old Squire's—all the school-teachers boarded there—Addison said to me that he wondered what that girl had on her mind.

As the summer passed, Wilma Emmons came to know our affairs at the old farm very well, and of course heard about Jim and his bank book. Jim, in fact, had taken one of his playdays soon after she came; and grandmother asked Wilma to lock the book up in the drawer of her desk at the schoolhouse for a few days.

It was quite like Jim Doane's impulsive nature, already somewhat unbalanced by intoxicants, to be greatly attracted to the reserved Miss Emmons. Out by the garden gate one morning he rather foolishly made his admiration known to her. Addison and I were weeding a strawberry bed just inside the fence and could not avoid overhearing something of what passed.

Astonished and a little indignant, too, perhaps, Miss Emmons told Jim that a young man of his habits had no right to address himself in such a manner to any young woman.

"But I can reform!" Jim said.

"Let folks see that you have done so, then," Miss Emmons replied, and added that a young man who could not be trusted with his own bank book could hardly be depended on to make a home.

It is quite likely that Jim brooded over the rebuff; he was surly for a week afterwards. Then, like the weakling that he had become, he stole away for another playday; and again grandmother, with Theodora's and Miss Emmons's connivance, hid the book, this time somewhere in the wagon-house cellar.

Jim did not come home to demand his book, however; in fact, he did not come back at all. Shame perhaps restrained him. When on the third day the old Squire drove down to the village to get him, he found that Jim had gone to Bangor with two disreputable cronies.

A week or two passed, and then came a somewhat curt letter from Jim, asking grandmother to send his bank book to him at Oldtown, Maine. The letter put grandmother in a great state of mind, and she declared indignantly that she would not send it. In truth, we were all certain that now Jim would squander his savings in the worst possible way; but when another letter came, again demanding the book, the old Squire decided that we must send it.

"The poor fellow needs a guardian," he said. "But he hasn't one; he is his own man and has a right to his property."

With hot tears of resentment grandmother, accompanied by Theodora, went to the wagon-house cellar to get the book. After some minutes they returned, exclaiming that they could not find it!

No little stir ensued; what had become of it? For the moment Addison and I actually suspected that grandmother and Theodora had hidden the book again, in order to avoid sending it; but a few words with Theodora, aside, convinced us that the book had really disappeared from the cellar.

The old Squire was greatly disturbed. "Ruth," he said to grandmother, "are you sure you have not put it somewhere else?"

Grandmother declared that she had not. None the less, they searched in all the previous hiding places of the book and continued looking for it until after ten o'clock that night. We were in a very uncomfortable position.

Long after we had gone to bed Addison and I lay awake, talking of it in low tones; we tried to recollect everything that had gone on at home since the book was last seen. I dropped asleep at last, and probably slept for two hours or more, when Addison shook me gently.

"Sh!" he whispered. "Don't speak. Some one is going downstairs."

Listening, I heard a stair creak, as if under a stealthy tread. Addison slipped softly out of bed, and

I followed him. Hastily donning some clothes, we went into the hall on tiptoe and descended the stairs. The door from the hall to the sitting-room was open, and also the door to the kitchen. It was not a dark night; and without striking a light we went out through the wood-house to the wagon-house, for we felt sure that some one was astir out there. Just then we heard the outer door of the wagon-house move very slowly and, stealing forward, discovered that it was open about a foot. Still on tiptoe we drew near and were just in time to see a person go out of sight down the lane that led to the road.

"Now who can that be?" Addison whispered. "Looks like a woman, bareheaded."

We followed cautiously, and at the gate caught another glimpse of the mysterious pedestrian some distance down the road. We were quite sure now that it was a woman. We kept her in sight as far as the schoolhouse; there she opened the door—the schoolhouse was rarely locked by night or day—and disappeared inside.

Opposite the schoolhouse was a little copse of chokecherry bushes, and we stepped in among them to watch. Some moments passed. Twice we heard slight sounds inside. Then the dim figure in long clothes came slowly out and returned up the road toward the old Squire's.

"Who was it?" Addison said to me.

"Miss Emmons," I replied.

"Yes," Addison assented reluctantly.

We went into the schoolhouse, struck matches, and at last lighted a pine splint. The drawer to the teacher's desk was locked, but it was a worn old lock, and by inserting the little blade of his knife Addison at last pushed the bolt back.

Inside were the teacher's books and records. A Fifth Reader that we took up opened readily to Jim Doane's bank book.

"She brought that here to hide it!" I exclaimed.

Addison did not reply for a moment. "Perhaps she did," he admitted. "She was walking in her sleep."

"I don't believe it!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, she was," said Addison. "She was walking in her sleep. She must have been."

I was far from convinced, but, seeing that Addison was determined to have it so, I said no more. Taking the book, we returned home. The house was all quiet.

The next morning at the breakfast table Ellen, Theodora and grandmother began to speak of the lost bank book again. I think that Addison had already said something in private to the old Squire, and that they had come to an agreement as to the best course to pursue.

"Don't fret, grandmother!" Addison cried, laughing. "The book's found! We found it late last night, after all the rest were in bed."

There was a general exclamation of surprise. I stole a glance at Miss Emmons. She looked amazed, and I thought that she turned pale; but she was always pale.

"Yes," Addison continued, "'twas great fun. Wilma," he cried familiarly, "did you know that you walk in your sleep?"

Miss Emmons uttered some sort of protest.

"Well, but you do!" Addison exclaimed. "Of course you don't remember it. Somnambulists never do. You walked as if you were walking a chalk line. 'Twas the fuss we made, searching for Jim's book last night, that set you off, I suppose."

Grandmother and the girls burst in with a hundred questions; but the old Squire said in a matter-of-fact tone:

"I used to walk in my sleep myself, when anything had excited me the previous evening. Sometimes, too, when I was a little ill of a cold."

Then the old gentleman went on to relate odd stories of persons who had walked in their sleep and hidden articles, particularly money, and of the efforts that had been made to find the misplaced articles afterwards. In fact, before we rose from the table he had more than half convinced us that Addison's view of the matter—if it were his view—was the right one.

Miss Emmons said very little and did not afterwards speak of the matter, although Addison, to keep up the illusion, sometimes asked her jocosely whether she had rested well, adding:

"I thought I heard you up walking again last night."

The incident was thus charitably passed over. I should not wish to say positively that it was not a case of sleepwalking, but I think every one of us feared that this devoted sister had made herself believe that, since Jim would squander his money in drink, it was right for her to use it for educating her brothers. She probably supposed that she could draw the money herself.

And what became of the hapless bank book? It was sent to Jim as he had demanded; and we may suppose that he drew the money and spent it. At any rate, when he next made his appearance at the old Squire's, two years later, he had neither book nor money.

CHAPTER XIX

GRANDMOTHER RUTH'S LAST LOAD OF HAY

Haying time at the old farm generally began on the Monday after the Fourth of July and lasted from four to six weeks, according to the weather, which is often fitful in Maine. We usually harvested from seventy to seventy-five tons, and in the days of scythes and hand rakes that meant that we had to do a good deal of hard, hot, sweaty work.

Besides Addison, Halstead and me, the old Squire had the two hired men, Jim and Asa Doane, to help him; and sometimes Elder Witham, who was quite as good with a scythe as with a sermon, worked for us a few days.

First we would cut the grass in the upland fields nearest the farm buildings, then the grass in the "Aunt Hannah lot" out beyond the sugar-maple orchard and last the grass in the south field, which, since it was on low, wet ground where there were several long swales, was the slowest to ripen. Often there were jolly times when we cut the south field. Our enjoyment was owing partly to the fact that we were getting toward the end of the hard work, and partly to the bumblebees' nests we found in the swales. Moreover, when we reached that field grandmother Ruth was wont to come out to lay the last load of hay and ride to the barn on it.

In former days when she and the old Squire were young she had helped him a great deal with the haying. Nearly every day she finished her own work early—the cooking, the butter making, the cheese making—and came out to the field to help rake and load the hay. The old Squire has often told me that, except at scythe work, grandmother Ruth was the best helper he had ever had, for at that time she was quick, lithe and strong and understood the work as well as any man. Later when they were in prosperous circumstances she gave up doing so much work out of doors; but still she enjoyed going to the hayfield, and even after we young folks had gone home to live she made it her custom to lay the last load of hay and ride to the barn on it just to show that she could do it still. She was now sixty-four years old, however, and had grown stout, so stout indeed that to us youngsters she looked rather venturesome on a load of hay. On the day of my narrative, we had the last of the grass in the south field "mown and making" on the ground. There were four or five tons of it, all of which we wanted to put into the barn before night, for, though the forenoon was bright and clear, we could hear distant rumblings; and there were other signs that foul weather was coming. The old Squire sent Ellen over to summon Elder Witham to help us; if the rain held off until nightfall, we hoped to have the hay inside the barn.

At noon, while we were having luncheon, grandmother Ruth asked at what time we expected to have the last load ready to go in.

"Not before five o'clock," Asa replied. "It has all to be raked yet."

"Well, I shall be down there by that time," she said in a very matter-of-fact tone. "I'll bring the girls with me."

"Don't you think, Ruth, that perhaps you had better give it up this year?" the old Squire said persuasively.

"But why?" grandmother Ruth exclaimed, not at all pleased.

"Well, you know, Ruth, that neither of us is quite so young as we once were—" the old Squire began apologetically.

"Speak for yourself, Joseph, not for me!" she interrupted. "I'm young enough to lay a load of hay yet!"

"Yes, yes," the old Squire said soothingly, "I know you are, but the loads are rather high, and you know that you are getting quite heavy—"

"Then I can tread down hay all the better!" grandmother Ruth cried, turning visibly pink with vexation.

"All right, all right, Ruth!" the old Squire said with a smile, prudently abandoning the argument.

Then Elder Witham put in his word. "The Lord has appointed to each of us our three-score years and ten, and it behooves us to be mindful that the end of all things is drawing nigh," he remarked soberly.

"Look here, Elder Witham," the old lady exclaimed with growing impatience, "you are here haying to-day, not preaching! I'm going to lay that load of hay if there are men enough here to pitch it on the cart to me."

Jim and Asa snorted; Theodora's efforts to keep a grave face were amusing; and with queer little

wrinkles gathering round the corners of his mouth the old Squire, who had finished his luncheon, rose hastily to go out.

We went back to the south field and plied our seven rakes vigorously for an hour and a half. Then Asa went to get the horses and the long rack cart. That day, I remember, Jim laid the loads. Halstead helped him to tread down the hay, and Elder Witham and Asa pitched it on the cart. The old Squire had mounted the driver's seat and taken the reins; and Addison and I raked up the scatterings from the "tumbles."

In the course of two hours four loads of the hay had gone into the barn, and we thought that the thirty-three tumbles that remained could be drawn at the fifth and last load. It was then that grandmother Ruth appeared. She had been watching proceedings from the house and followed the cart down from the barn to the south field, resolutely bent on laying the last load. Theodora and Ellen came with her to help tread down the hay on the cart.

"Here I am!" she cried cheerily. She tossed her hayfork into the empty rack and climbed in after it. Her sun hat was tied under her chin, and she had donned a white waist and a blue denim skirt. "Come on now with your hay!"

Elder Witham moistened his hands, but made no comment. Jim was grinning. The old Squire drove the cart between two tumbles, and the work of pitching on and laying the load began. No one knew better than grandmother Ruth how a load should be laid. She first filled the opposite ends of the rack and kept the middle low; then when the load was high as the rails of the rack she began prudently to lay the hay out on and over them, so as to have room to build a large, wide load.

But in this instance there was a hindrance to good loading that even grandmother's skill could not wholly overcome. Much of the hay for that last load was from the swales at the lower side of the field, where the grass was wild and short and sedgy, a kind that when dry is difficult to pitch with forks and that, since the forkfuls have little cohesion and tend to drop apart, does not lie well on the rails of the rack. Such hay farmers sometimes call "podgum."

Fully aware of the fact, the old Squire now said in an undertone to the elder and to Jim that they had better make two loads of the thirty-three tumbles. But grandmother Ruth overheard the remark and mistook it to mean that the old Squire did not believe she could lay the load. It mortified her.

"No, sir-ee!" she shouted down to the old Squire. "I hear your talk about two loads, and it's because I'm on the cart! I won't have it so! You give me that hay! I'll load it; see if I don't!"

"Bully for you, Gram!" shouted Halstead.

It was no use to try to dissuade her now, as the old Squire well knew from long experience. When her pride was touched no arguments would move her.

With the elder heaving up great forkfuls and grandmother Ruth valiantly laying them at the front and at the back of the rack, they continued loading the hay. Jim tried to place his forkfuls where they need not be moved and where the girls could tread them down.

The load grew higher, for now that we were in the swales the hay could not be laid out widely. It would be a big load, or at least a lofty one. Grandmother Ruth began to fear lest the girls should fall off, and, calling on Elder Witham to catch them, she bade them slide down cautiously to the ground at the rear end of the cart. She then went on laying the load alone. As a consequence it was not so firmly trodden and became higher and higher until Jim and the elder could hardly heave their forkfuls high enough for her to take them. But they got the last tumble up to her and shouted, "All on!" to the old Squire, who now was nearly invisible on his seat in front. Grandmother Ruth settled herself midway on the load to ride it to the barn, thrusting her fork deep into the hay so as to have something to hold on by. We could just see her sun hat and her face over the hay; she looked very pink and triumphant.

Carefully avoiding stones and all the inequalities in the field, the old Squire drove at a slow walk. I surmise that he had his fears. It was certainly the highest load we had hauled to the barn that summer.

The rest of us followed after, glad indeed that the long task of haying was now done, and that the last load would soon be in the barn. Halfway to the farm buildings the cart road led through a gap in the stone wall where two posts with bars separated the south field from the middle field. There was scanty space for the load to pass through, and in his anxiety not to foul either of the posts the old Squire, who could not see well because of the overhanging hay, drove a few inches too close to one of them, and a wheel passed over a small stone beside the wheel track. The jolt was slight, but it proved sufficient to loosen the unstable "podgum." The load had barely cleared the posts when the entire side of it came sliding down—and grandmother Ruth with it! We heard her cry out as she fell, and then all of us who were behind scaled the wall and rushed to her rescue. The old Squire stopped the horses, jumped from his seat over the off horse's back and was ahead of us all, crying, "Ruth, Ruth!"

There was a huge heap of loose hay on the ground, fully ten feet high, but she was nowhere to be seen in it. Nor did she speak or stir.

"Great Lord, I'm afraid it's killed her!" Elder Witham exclaimed. Jim and Asa stood horrified, and

the girls burst out crying.

The old Squire had turned white. "Ruth! Ruth!" he cried. "Are you badly hurt? Do you hear? Can't you answer?" Not a sound came from the hay, not a movement; and, falling on his knees, he began digging it away with his hands. None of us dared use our hay-forks, and now, following his example, we began tearing away armfuls of hay. A moment later, Addison, who was burrowing nearly out of sight, got hold of one of her hands. It frightened him, and he cried out; but he pulled at it. Instantly there was a laugh from somewhere underneath, then a scramble that continued until at last grandmother Ruth emerged without aid of any sort and stood up, a good deal rumpled and covered with hay but laughing.

"It didn't hurt me a mite!" she protested. "I came down light as a feather!"

"But why didn't you answer when we called to you?" the elder exclaimed reprovingly. "You kept so still we were scared half to death about you!"

"Oh, I just wanted to see what you would all do," she replied airily and still laughing. "I was a little afraid you would stick your forks into the hay, but I was watching for that."

The old Squire was so relieved, so overjoyed, to see her on her feet unhurt that he had not a word of reproach for her. All he said was, "Ruth Ann, I'm afraid you are growing too young for your age!"

The truth is that grandmother Ruth was dreadfully chagrined that the load she had laid had not held together as far as the barn; and it was partly mortification, I think, that led her to lie so still under the hay.

She wanted to remount the cart and have the hay pitched up to her; but as it was getting late in the afternoon, and as there was no ladder at hand, Jim and Asa hoisted Addison up, and he succeeded in rebuilding the load so that we were able to take it into the barn without further incident.

We could hardly believe that the fall had not injured grandmother Ruth, and as a matter of fact Theodora afterwards told us that she had several large black-and-blue spots as a result of her adventure. The old lady herself, however, scouted the idea that she had been in the least injured and did not like to have us show any solicitude about her.

The following year, as haying drew to a close, we young folks waited curiously to see whether she would speak of going out to lay the last load. Not a word came from her; but I think it was less because she felt unable to go than it was that she feared we would refer to her mishap of the previous summer.

CHAPTER XX

WHEN UNCLE HANNIBAL SPOKE AT THE CHAPEL

For a month or more the old Squire had looked perplexed. Two of his lifelong friends were rival candidates for the senatorship from Maine, and each had expressed the hope that the old Squire would aid him in his canvass. Both candidates knew that many of the old Squire's friends and neighbors looked to him for guidance in political matters. Without seeming to express personal preference, the old Squire could not choose between them, for both were statesmen of wide experience and in every way good men for the office.

The first was Hannibal Hamlin, who had been Vice-President with Abraham Lincoln in 1861-1865: "Uncle Hannibal," as we young people at the farm always called him after that memorable visit of his, when we ate "fried pies" together. He had been Senator before the Civil War, and also Governor of Maine; now, after the war, in 1868, he had again been nominated for the senatorship under the auspices of the Republican party.

The other candidate, the Hon. Lot M. Morrill, had been Governor of Maine in 1858, and had also been United States Senator. I cherished a warm feeling for him, for he was the man who had so opportunely helped me to capture the runaway calf, Little Dagon.

Politically, we young folks were much divided in our sympathies that fall. My cousins Addison and Theodora were ardent supporters of Uncle Hannibal, whereas I, thinking of that calf, could not help feeling loyal to Senator Morrill. Hot debates we had! Halstead alone was indifferent. At last Ellen declared herself on my side and thus made a tie at table. I never knew whom the old Squire favored; he never told us and was always reluctant to speak of the matter.

It was a very close contest, and in the legislature was finally decided by a plurality of one in favor of Mr. Hamlin. Seventy-five votes were cast for him, seventy-four for Mr. Morrill, and there was one blank vote, over which a dispute later arose.

Earlier in the season, when the legislators who were to decide the matter at Augusta were being elected, both candidates made personal efforts to win popular support. Thus it happened that Uncle Hannibal on one of his visits to his native town that year, promised to give us a little talk.

Since there was no public hall in the neighborhood, the gathering was to be held at the capacious old Methodist chapel.

There had been no regular preaching there of late, and the house had fallen into lamentable disrepair. The roof was getting leaky; the wind had blown off several of the clapboards; and a large patch of the plaster, directly over the pulpit, had fallen from the ceiling.

Fall was now drawing on, with colder weather, and so, on the day of Uncle Hannibal's talk, the old Squire sent Addison and me over to the chapel to kindle a fire in the big box stove and also to sweep out the place.

We drove over in the morning—the meeting was to begin at two o'clock—and set to work at once. While we were sweeping up the débris we noticed insects flying round overhead. For a while, however, we gave them little heed; Addison merely remarked that there was probably a hornets' nest up in the loft, but that hornets would not molest any one if they were left alone. But after we had kindled a fire in the stove and the long funnel had begun to heat the upper part of the room, they began to fly in still greater numbers. Soon one of them darted down at us, and Addison pulled off his hat to drive it away.

"I say!" he cried, as his eyes followed the insect where it alighted on the ceiling. "That's no hornet! That's a honeybee—and an Egyptian, too!"

We quickly made sure that they were indeed Egyptian bees. They were coming down through the cracks between the laths at the place where the plaster had fallen from the ceiling.

"Do you suppose there's a swarm of bees up there in the loft?" Addison exclaimed. "I'll bet there is," he added, "a runaway swarm that's gone in at the gable end outside, where the clapboards are off."

He climbed up on the high pulpit and with the handle of the broom rapped on the ceiling. We immediately heard a deep humming sound overhead, and so many bees flew down through the cracks that Addison descended in haste. We retreated toward the door.

"What are we going to do when Senator Hamlin and all the people come?" I asked.

"I don't know!" Addison muttered, perplexed. "That old loft is roaring full of bees. We've got to do something with them, or there won't be any speaking here to-day."

We thought of stopping up the cracks, but there were too many of them to make that practicable. To dislodge the swarm from the loft, too, would be equally difficult, for the more we disturbed the bees the more furious they would become.

At last we thought of the old Squire's bee smoker with which he had sometimes subdued angry swarms that were bent on stinging.

"You drive home as fast as you can and get the smoker and a ladder," Addison said, "and I'll stay here to watch the fire in the stove."

So I drove old Nance home at her best pace. When I got there I looked for the old Squire to tell him of our trouble, but found that he had already driven to the village to meet Senator Hamlin and the other speakers of the afternoon. Grandmother and the girls were too busy getting ready for the distinguished guests, who were to have supper with us, to give much heed to my story of the bees. So I got the smoker, the box of elm-wood punk and a ladder about fourteen feet long, and with this load drove back at top speed to the meetinghouse.

Addison had eaten his share of the luncheon that we had brought, and while I devoured mine he pottered with the smoker; neither of us understood very well how it worked. There are now several kinds of bee smokers on the market; but the old Squire had contrived this one by making use of an old-fashioned bellows to puff the smoke from out of a two-quart tin can in which the punk wood was fired by means of a live coal. The nose of the bellows was inserted at one end of the can; and into a hole at the other end the old gentleman had soldered a short tin tube through which he could blow the smoke in any direction he desired. In order not to burn his fingers he had inclosed both bellows and can in supporting strips of wood; thus he could hold the contrivance in one hand and squeeze the bellows with the other.

As we were unfamiliar with the contrivance, we both had to climb the ladder—one to hold the can and the other to pump the bellows. We lost so much time in getting started that when at last we were ready to begin operations people had already begun to arrive. They asked us all sorts of questions and bothered us a good deal, but we kept right on at our task. The smoker was working well, and we felt greatly encouraged. Those rings of black vapor drove the bees back and, as the smoke rose through the cracks, prevented them from coming down again.

We were still up that ladder by the pulpit, puffing smoke at those cracks, when the old Squire and Uncle Hannibal arrived, with Judge Peters and the Hon. Hiram Bliss. The house was now full of people, and they cheered the newcomers; there was not a little laughter and joking when some one told the visiting statesmen that a swarm of bees was overhead.

"Boys," Uncle Hannibal cried, "do you suppose there's much honey up there?"

He asked the Squire whether Egyptian bees were good honey gatherers, and laughed heartily when the old gentleman told him what robbers they were and how savagely they stung.

"Judge!" Uncle Hannibal cried to Judge Peters. "That's what's the matter with our Maine politics. The Egyptians are robbing us of our liberties!"

That idea seemed to stick in his mind, for later, when he began his address, he referred humorously to several prominent leaders of the opposing party as bold, bad Egyptians. "We shall have to smoke them out," he said, laughing. "And I guess that the voters of this district are going to do it, and the boys, too," he continued, pointing up to us on the ladder.

He had refused to speak from the pulpit, and so stood on the floor of the house—in what he described as his proper place; the pulpit, he said, was no place for politics.

After so many years I cannot pretend to remember all that Uncle Hannibal said; besides, my attention was largely engrossed in directing the nozzle of the smoker at those cracks between the laths. Addison and I were badly crowded on the ladder, and the small rungs were not comfortable to stand on. Now and then, in spite of our efforts, an Egyptian got through the cracks and dived down near Uncle Hannibal's head.

"A little more smoke up there, boys!" he would cry, pretending to dodge the insect. "I thought I heard an Egyptian then, and it sounded a little like Brother Morrill's voice!"

The great buzzing that was going on up in the loft was plainly audible below. Now and again Uncle Hannibal cocked his ear to listen, and once he cried, "The Egyptians are rallying! We are going to have a hard fight with them this year. Don't let them rob us!"

When the old Squire introduced the next speaker, Judge Peters, Senator Hamlin remarked that Peters was a hard stinger himself, as many a criminal had learned to his cost. And when the Hon. Hiram Bliss was introduced, Uncle Hannibal cut in with the remark that we need make no mistake on account of Mr. Bliss's name, for when he got after the Egyptians they would be in anything except a blissful state of mind. He also jocosely bade Mr. Bliss not to talk too long.

"We must get that honey," he said, laughing heartily. "I'd much rather have some honey than hear one of your old dry speeches!"

During Mr. Bliss's address we boys were wondering whether Senator Hamlin really intended to try to get that honey. We were inclined to think that he had merely been joking; but Mr. Bliss had no sooner sat down than Uncle Hannibal was on his feet.

"Now for that honey!" he cried with twinkling eyes. "I feel sure there's enough up there for every one to have a bite."

"How are you going to get it?" some one said.

"Why, go right up and take it!" he exclaimed. "You know, my friends, that all through the Civil War I had the misfortune to be Vice-President, which is about the most useless, sit-still-and-do-nothing office in this country. All those four years I wanted to go to the front and do something. I wanted to be a general or a private with a gun. The war is past, thank God, but I haven't got over that feeling yet, and now I want to lead an attack on those Egyptians! Back there over the singers' gallery I think I see a scuttle that leads up into the loft. Come on, boys, and fetch a bucket or two, or some baskets. Let's storm the fort!"

The crowd was laughing now, and men were shouting advice of all sorts. Uncle Hannibal was already on his way to the singers' gallery, and Addison, hastily thrusting the smoker into my hands, got down from the ladder and ran to help our distinguished visitor. Others followed them up the back stairs to the gallery; but the old Squire, seeing what was likely to happen, came to my assistance on the ladder. Taking the smoker into his own hands, he worked it vigorously in order to send as much smoke as possible up into the loft.

But on pushing up the scuttle the opening was found to be no more than fifteen inches square; and Uncle Hannibal was a two-hundred-pound man with broad shoulders. He mounted the singers' bench, but he could barely get his large black head up through the hole.

"Ah!" he cried in disgust. "Why didn't they make it larger? Just my luck. I never can get to the front!"

Grabbing Addison playfully by the shoulder he said, "I will put you up."

But at first Addison held back. "They'll sting me to death!" he protested.

"Wait!" Uncle Hannibal cried. "We will rig you up for it!" And leaning over the front rail of the gallery, he shouted, "Has any lady got a veil—two or three veils?"

Several women gave their veils, which Uncle Hannibal tied over Addison's hat; then the Senator put his own large gloves on Addison's hands. By that time the gallery was full of people—all laughing and giving advice. A man produced some string, and with it they tied Addison's trouser legs down and fastened his jacket sleeves tight round the wrists. Then Uncle Hannibal lifted him up as if he had been a child and at one boost shoved him up through the scuttle hole. When Addison had got to his feet in the loft, the Senator passed him a wicker lunch basket and a tin pail.

Tiptoeing his way perilously over the scantlings, laths and plaster, Addison made his way back to the rear end of the meetinghouse. The honeycombs were mostly on a beam against the boards of the outer wall. The punk smoke was so dense up there that he could hardly get his breath. The

bees, nearly torpid from the smoke, were crawling sluggishly along on the underside of the roof, and offered no resistance when Addison broke off the combs.

With his basket and pail well filled, he tiptoed back to the scuttle and handed the spoils to Uncle Hannibal, who instantly led the way down the back stairs and outdoors.

"We have despoiled the Egyptians!" he cried. "I didn't do much myself, but a younger hero has appeared. Now for a sweet time!" And he passed the pail and basket round.

There was as much as twenty pounds of honey, and every one got at least a taste. The old Squire and I had now stopped puffing smoke, and we joined the others outside. To this day I remember just how Uncle Hannibal looked as he stood there on the meetinghouse platform, with a chunk of white, dripping comb in his hand. He took a big bite from it; and I said to myself that, if he took many more bites like that one, there would not be much honey left for the old Squire and me. But we got a taste of it, and very good honey it was.

Our victory over the Egyptians, however, was not yet complete. Either because the smoke was now clearing up, or because they smelled the honey that we were eating, they began to come round to the front end of the house, where they hovered over the people and darted down savagely at them. Outcries arose; men and women tried frantically to brush the insects away. Horses out at the sheds began to squeal. More bees were coming round every moment—the angriest bees I have ever seen! They stung wherever they touched. Judge Peters and Mr. Bliss were fighting the insects with both hands; and Uncle Hannibal, too, was pawing the air, with guffaws of laughter.

"The Egyptians are getting the best of us!" he cried. "We had better retire in as good order as we can—or it will be another Bull Run!"

Retreat was clearly the part of discretion, and so the whole gathering streamed away down the road to a safe distance. In fact, there was a pretty lively time before all of the people had unhitched their teams and got away. But in spite of many bee stings it had been a very hilarious meeting; and it is safe to say that all who were at the Methodist chapel that afternoon wanted Uncle Hannibal for Senator.

The old Squire drove home with his guests to supper; Addison and I gathered up our brooms and bee smoker and followed them.

At supper Uncle Hannibal asked us to tell him more about those Egyptian bees, of which he had never heard before; and after the meal he went out to see the colonies in the garden. He walked up to a hive and boldly caught one of the bees between his thumb and forefinger. Holding it fast, he picked up a pea pod for it to sting, so that he could see how long a stinger it had.

"Ah, but that is a cruel chap!" he said. "You'll have to use brimstone, I guess, to get those Egyptians out of the meetinghouse."

In point of fact, brimstone was what two of the church stewards did use, a few weeks later, before there were services at the chapel again; but they did not find much honey left.

CHAPTER XXI

THAT MYSTERIOUS DAGUERREOTYPE SALOON

For two years our young neighbor Catherine had been carrying on a little industry that had proved fairly lucrative—namely, gathering and curing wild herbs and selling them to drug stores in Portland. Her grandmother had taught her how to cure and press the herbs. One season she sold seventy dollars' worth.

Catherine took many long jaunts to gather her herbs—thoroughwort, goldthread, catnip, comfrey, skullcap, pennyroyal, lobelia, peppermint, old-man's-root, snakehead and others of greater or less medicinal value. She soon came to know where all those various wild plants grew for miles round. Naturally she wished to keep her business for herself and was rather chary about telling others where the herbs she collected grew.

She had heard that thoroughwort was growing in considerable quantity in the old pastures at "Dresser's Lonesome." She did not like to go up there alone, however, for the place was ten or eleven miles away, and the road that led to it ran for most of the distance through deep woods; a road that once proceeded straight through to Canada, but had long since been abandoned. Years before, a young man named Abner Dresser had cleared a hundred acres of land up there and built a house and a large barn; but his wife had been so lonely—there was no neighbor within ten miles—that he had at last abandoned the place.

Finally Catherine asked my cousin Theodora to go up to "Dresser's Lonesome" with her and offered to share the profits of the trip. No one enjoyed such a jaunt better than Theodora, and one day early the previous August, they persuaded me to harness one of the work horses to the double-seated buckboard and to take them up there for the day.

It was a long, hard drive, for the old road was badly overgrown; indeed we were more than two hours in reaching the place. What was our amazement when we drew near the deserted old farmhouse to see a "daguerreotype saloon" standing before it: one of those peripatetic studios on wheels, in which "artists" used to journey about the country taking photographs. Of course, card photographs had not come into vogue then; but there were the daguerreotypes, and later the tintypes, and finally the ambrotypes in little black-and-gilt cases.

Those "saloons" were picturesque little contrivances, not much more than five feet wide by fifteen feet long, and mounted on wheels. On each side was a little window, and overhead was a larger skylight; a flight of three steps led up to a narrow door at the rear. The door opened into the "saloon" proper, where the camera and the visitor's chair stood; forward of that was the cuddy under the skylight, in which the photographer did his developing.

The photographer was usually some ambitious young fellow who, after learning his trade, often made and painted his "saloon" himself. Frequently he slept in it, and sometimes cooked his meals in it. If he did not own a horse, he usually made a bargain with some farmer to haul him to his next stopping place in exchange for taking his picture. When business grew dull in one neighborhood, he moved to another. He was the true Bohemian of his trade—the gypsy of early photography.

The forward wheels of this one were gone, and its front end was propped up level on a short piece of timber; but otherwise the "saloon" looked as if the "artist" might at that moment be developing a plate inside.

On closer inspection, however, we saw that weeds had sprung up beneath and about it, and I guessed that the wagon had been standing there for at least a month or two; and on peeping in at the little end door we saw that birds or squirrels had been in and out of the place. All that we could make of it was that the photographer, whoever he was, had come there, left his "saloon" and gone away—with the forward wheels.

We gathered a load of herbs and drove home again, much puzzled by our discovery. The story of the "daguerreotype saloon" at Dresser's Lonesome soon spread abroad, but no one was able to furnish a clue to its history. Of course all manner of rumors began to circulate; some people declared that the owner of the "saloon" must be a naturalist who had journeyed up there to take pictures of wild animal life; others thought that the photographer had lost his way and perished in the woods.

When Willis Murch passed along the old road in October that fall, the mysterious "saloon" was still standing there; and lumbermen spoke of seeing it there during the winter. That next August, a year after we had first discovered it, Catherine and Theodora again went up to Dresser's Lonesome to gather herbs; and still the "daguerreotype saloon" was there.

It was Halstead who carried the girls up on that trip. The weather had been threatening when they started, and showers soon set in; rain fell pretty much all the afternoon, so that the girls were badly delayed in gathering their herbs. When Halstead declared that it was high time to start for home, Catherine proposed that they stay there overnight and finish their task the next day. The roof of the old farmhouse was now so leaky that they could find no shelter there from the rain; but Catherine suggested that the deserted "daguerreotype saloon" would be a cosy place to camp in.

Theodora did not like the idea very well, for the region was wild and lonely, and Halstead thought he ought to return to the farm.

"Why, this old saloon is just as good as a house!" Catherine said. "We can fasten the door, and then nothing can get in. And we have plenty of lunch left for our supper."

At last Theodora reluctantly agreed to stay. Promising to return for them by noon the next day, Halstead then started for home. After he had gone, the girls gathered a quart or more of raspberries, to eat with their supper. When they had finished the meal, they made, with the sacks of herbs, a couch on the floor of the "saloon," and Catherine fastened the door securely by leaning a narrow plank from the floor of the old barn against it.

For a while the girls lay and talked in low tones. Outside everything was very quiet, and scarcely a sound came to their ears. All nature seemed to have gone to rest; not a whippoorwill chanted nor an owl hooted about the old buildings. Before long Catherine fell peacefully asleep. Theodora, however, who was rather ill at ease in these wild surroundings, had determined to stay awake, and lay listening to the crickets in the grass under the "saloon." But crickets make drowsy music, and at last she, too, dropped asleep.

Not very much later something bumped lightly against the front end of the "saloon" outside; the noise was repeated several times. Oddly enough, it was not Theodora who waked, but Catherine. She sat up and, remembering instantly where she was, listened without stirring or speaking. Her first thought was that a deer had come round and was rubbing itself against the "saloon."

"It will soon go away," she said to herself, and did not rouse her companion.

The queer, bumping, jarring sounds continued, however, and presently were followed by a heavy jolt. Then for some moments Catherine heard footsteps in the weeds outside, and told herself that there must be two or three deer. She was not alarmed, for she knew that the animals would not harm them; but she hoped that they would not waken Theodora, who might be needlessly

frightened.

But presently she heard a sound that she could not explain; it was like the jingling of a small chain. Rising quietly, she peeped out of one of the little side windows, and then out of the other. The clouds had cleared away, and bright moonlight flooded the place, but she could not see anywhere the cause of the disturbance. Whatever had made the sounds was out of sight in front; there was no window at that end of the "saloon."

Still not much alarmed, Catherine stepped up on the one old chair of the studio and cautiously raised the hinged skylight. At that very instant, however, the "saloon" started as if of its own accord and moved slowly across the yard and down the road!

The wagon started so suddenly that Catherine fell off the chair. Theodora woke, but before she could speak or cry out Catherine was beside her.

"Hush! Hush!" she whispered, and put her hand over her companion's mouth. "Don't be scared! Keep quiet. Some one is drawing the old saloon away!"

That was far from reassuring to Theodora. "Oh, what shall we do?" she whispered in terror.

Catherine was still begging her to be silent, when a terrific jolt nearly threw her off her feet. In great alarm the girls sprang to the little rear door to get out and escape.

But as a result probably of the rocking and straining of the frail structure, the plank that Catherine set against the door had settled down and stuck fast. Again and again she tried to pull it away, but she could not move it. Theodora also tugged at it—in vain. They were imprisoned; they could not get out; and meanwhile the old "saloon" was bumping over the rough road.

"Oh, who do you suppose it is?" Theodora whispered, weak from fear. "Where do you suppose he is going with us?"

"We must find out. Hold the chair steady, Doad, if you can, while I get up and look out."

She set the chair under the skylight again, and then, while Theodora held it steady, climbed upon it—no easy matter with the vehicle rocking so violently—and tried to raise the skylight. But that, too, had jammed. At last, by pushing hard against it, she succeeded in raising it far enough to let her peer out over the flat roof.

There, in the moonlight, she saw a strange-looking creature,—a man,—who rolled and ambled rather than walked; he was leading a white horse by the bit, and the horse was dragging the "saloon" down the road. The man was a truly terrifying spectacle. He seemed to be a giant; his head projected far forward between his shoulders, and on his back was what looked like a camel's hump! His feet were not like human feet, but rather like huge hoofs; and the man, if he was one, wabbled forward on them in a way that turned Catherine quite sick with apprehension. All she could think of was the picture of Giant Despair in her grandmother's copy of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

Unable to imagine who or what he could be, Catherine stood for some moments and stared at him, fascinated. All the while Theodora was anxiously whispering:

"Who is it? Who is it? Oh, let me see!"

"Don't try to look," Catherine answered earnestly, as she leaped to the floor. "Doad, we must get out if we can."

She threw herself at the door again and tried to pull it open; Theodora joined her, but even together they could not stir it.

Meanwhile the "saloon" swayed and jolted over the rough road; to keep from pitching headlong from side to side the girls had to sit down on the sacks. Their one consoling thought was that, if they could not get out, their captor, whoever he was, could not get in.

They were a little cheered, too, when they realized that the wagon was apparently following the road that led toward home. But when they had gone about three or four miles and had come to the branch road that led to Lurvey's Mills, they felt the old "saloon" turn off from the main road. With sinking hearts they struggled again to open the door, until, weak and exhausted, they gave up.

Theodora was limp with terror at their plight. Catherine, more resolute, tried to encourage her companion; but as they jogged and jolted over the deserted road for what seemed hours, even her own courage began to weaken.

At last they came to a ford that led across a muddy brook. As the horse entered the water, the forward end of the rickety old "saloon" pitched sharply downward. The prop that had held the door fast loosened and the door flew open!

Needless to say, the girls lost little time in getting out of their prison. Before the "saloon" had topped the other bank, they jumped out and ran into the alder bushes that bordered the stream.

Their captor was evidently not aware of their escape, for the "saloon" kept on its course. As soon as it was out of sight the girls waded the brook and, hastening back to the fork of the road, took the homeward trail.

About four o'clock in the morning grandmother Ruth heard them knocking at the door. They were still much excited, and told so wild and curious a story of their adventure that after breakfast the old Squire and Addison drove over to Lurvey's Mills to investigate.

Almost the first thing they saw when they reached the Mills was that old "daguerreotype saloon," standing beside the road near the post office, and pottering about it a large, ungainly man—a hunchback with club feet.

A few minutes' conversation with him cleared up the mystery. This was the first he had heard that two girls had ridden in his "saloon" the night before! His name, he told them, was Duchaine, and he said that he came from Lewiston, Maine.

"Maybe you've heard of me," he said to Addison, with a somewhat painful smile. "The boys down there call me Big Pumplefoot."

Unable to do ordinary work, he had learned to take ambrotypes and set up as an itinerant photographer. But ere long his mother, who was a French Canadian, had gone back to live at Megantic in the Province of Quebec; and in June the year before he set off to visit her. Thinking that he might find customers at Megantic, he had taken his "saloon" along with him; but when he got to Dresser's Lonesome he found the road so much obstructed that he left the "saloon" behind, and went on with his horse and the forward wheels.

An accident had laid him up at Megantic during the winter and spring, but later in the season he started for Maine. On the way down the old road from Canada he got belated, and had not reached Dresser's Lonesome with his horse and wheels until late at night; but as there was no place where he could put up, and as the moon was shining, he had decided to hitch up to his "saloon" and continue on his way to the Mills.

Thus the mystery was cleared up; but although the explanation was simple enough, Theodora and Catherine were little inclined to laugh over their adventure.

CHAPTER XXII

"RAINBOW IN THE MORNING"

That was the year noted for a celestial phenomenon of great interest to astronomers.

We were taking breakfast rather earlier than usual that morning in August, for a party of us had planned to go blackberrying up at the "burnt lots."

Three or four years before, forest fires had burned over a large tract up in the great woods to the north of the old Squire's farm. We had heard that blackberries were very plentiful there that season; and now that haying was over, Addison and I had planned to drive up there with the girls, and Catherine and Thomas Edwards, who wished to go with us.

So far as Addison and I were concerned, the trip was not wholly for blackberries; we had another motive for going—one that we were keeping a profound secret. One afternoon late in the preceding fall we had gone up there to shoot partridges; and Addison, who was much interested in mineralogy, had come across what he believed to be silver in a ledge.

Every one knows that there is silver in Maine. Not a few know it to their sorrow; for there is nothing more discouraging than a mine that yields just a little less than enough to pay running expenses. But to us boys Addison's discovery suggested the possibilities of vast fortunes.

Addison felt very sure that it was silver, but we decided to say nothing to any one until we were certain. All that winter, however, we cherished rosy hopes of soon being wealthy. At the first opportunity we meant to make a quiet trip up there with hammer and drill to obtain specimens for assay, but for one reason or another we did not get round to it until August, when we planned the blackberrying excursion.

While we were at the breakfast table that morning there came a thundershower, and a thundershower in the early morning is unusual in Maine. The sun had risen clear, but a black cloud rose in the west, the sky darkened suddenly, and so heavy a shower fell that at first we thought we should have to give up the trip.

But the shower ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and the sun shone out again. Ellen, who had gone to the pantry for something, called to us that there was a bright rainbow in the northwest.

"Do come here to the back window!" she cried. "It's a lovely one!"

Sure enough, there was a vivid rainbow; the bright arch spanned the whole northwestern sky over the great woods.

> "Rainbow in the morning,
> Good sailors take warning,"

the old Squire remarked, smiling. "Better take your coats and umbrellas with you to-day."

We did not know then how many times during that day our thoughts would go back to the rainbow and the old superstition.

After breakfast we hitched up Old Sol, drove round by the Edwardses' to pick up Tom and Kate, and from there followed the lumber road into the great woods, to Otter Brook. The "burnt lots" were perhaps a mile beyond the brook.

Addison and I picked blackberries for a while with the others; then, watching our chance, we stole away and made for the ledges, a mile or two to the northeast.

I had managed to bring a drill hammer along in my basket, wrapped up in my jacket; and Addison had brought a short drill in his pocket. We found the ledge where Addison had made his discovery and had no great trouble in chipping off some specimens. I may add here that the specimens later proved to contain silver—in small quantities. I still have a few of them—mementos of youthful hopes that faded early in the light of greater knowledge.

We followed the ledges off to the northeast over several craggy hills. At one place we found many exfoliating lumps of mica; we cleaved out sheets of it nearly a foot square, which Addison believed might prove valuable for stove doors.

While pottering with the mica, I accidentally broke into a kind of cavity, or pocket, in the ledge, partly filled with disintegrated rock; and on clearing out the loose stuff from this pocket we came upon a beautiful three-sided crystal about two inches long, like a prism, green in color, except at one end, where it shaded to pink.

It was a tourmaline crystal, similar to certain fine ones that have been found some miles to the eastward, at the now world-famous Mount Mica. At that time we did not know what it was, but, thinking that it might be valuable, we searched the pocket for other crystals, but found no more.

We had both become so much interested in searching for minerals that we had quite forgotten our luncheon. The sky, I remember, was overcast and the sun obscured; it was also very smoky from forest fires, which in those days were nearly always burning somewhere to the north of us during the summer.

But presently, as Addison was thumping away with the hammer, I noticed that it was growing dark. At first I thought that it was merely a darker cloud above the smoke that had drifted over the sun, and said nothing; but the sky continued to darken, and soon Addison noticed it.

"Another shower coming, I guess," he said, looking up. "Don't see any particular clouds, though. I wonder what makes it so dark?"

"It seems just like night coming on," said I. "But it isn't so late as all that, is it?"

"No!" exclaimed Addison. "It isn't night yet, I know!" And he hastily took out Theodora's watch, which she had intrusted to him to carry that day, so that we should know when to start for home. "It's only half past three, and the sun doesn't set now till after seven o'clock."

We hammered at the ledge again for a while; but still it grew darker.

"Well, this beats me!" Addison exclaimed; and again he surveyed the sky.

"That watch hasn't stopped, has it?" I said; for night was plainly falling.

Addison hastily looked again.

"No, it's ticking all right," he said. "Theodora's watch never stops, you know." It was a fine watch that her father had left to her.

By that time it was so dark that we could hardly see the hands on the watch; and although the day had been warm, I noticed a distinct change in the temperature—a chill. Somewhere in the woods an owl began to hoot dismally, as owls do at night; and from a ledge a little distance from the one on which we stood a whippoorwill began to chant.

Night was evidently descending on the earth—at four o'clock of an August afternoon! We stared round and then looked at each other, bewildered.

"Addison, what do you make of this!" I cried.

Thoughts of that rainbow in the morning had flashed through my mind; and with it came a cold touch of superstitious fear, such as I had never felt in my life before. In that moment I realized what the fears of the ignorant must have been through all the past ages of the world. It is a fear that takes away your reason. I could have cried out, or run, or done any other foolish thing.

Without saying a word, Addison put the tourmaline crystal into his pocket and picked up the drill and the little bundle of silver-ore specimens, which to carry the more easily he had tied up in his handkerchief.

"Come on," he said in a queer, low tone. "Let's go find Theodora and Nell. I guess we'd better go home—if it's coming on night in the middle of the afternoon."

He tried to laugh, for Addison had always prided himself on being free from all superstition. But I saw that he was startled; and he admitted afterwards that he, too, had remembered about that rainbow in the morning, and had also thought of the comet that had appeared a few years before

and that many people believed to presage the end of the world.

We started to run back, but it had already grown so dark that we had to pay special heed to our steps. We could not walk fast. To this day I remember how strange and solemn the chanting of the whippoorwills and the hoarse *skook*! of the nighthawks sounded to me. No doubt I was frightened. It was exactly like evening; the same chill was in the air.

At last we reached the place where we had left the others, but they were not there. Addison called to Theodora and Ellen several times in low, suppressed tones; I, too, felt a great disinclination to shout or speak aloud.

"I guess they've all gone back where we left the wagon," Addison said at last.

We made our way through the tangled bushes, brush and woods, down to Otter Brook. In the darkness we went a little astray from the place where we had unharnessed the horse; but presently, as we were moving about in the brushwood, we heard a low voice say:

"Is that you, Ad?"

It was Theodora; and immediately we came upon them all, sitting together forlornly there in the wagon. They had hitched up Old Sol and were anxiously waiting for us in order to start for home. The strange phenomenon seemed to have dazed them; they sat there in the dark as silent as so many mice.

"Hello, girls!" Addison exclaimed. "Are you all there? Quite dark, isn't it?"

"Oh, Ad, what do you think this is?" Theodora asked, still in the same hushed voice.

"Well, I think it is *dark*," replied Addison, trying to appear unconcerned.

"Don't laugh, Ad," said Theodora solemnly. "Something awful has happened."

"And where have you two been so long?" asked Catherine. "We thought you were lost. We thought you would never come. What time is it?"

We struck a match and looked. It was nearly half past four.

"Oh, get in, Ad, and take the reins! Let's go home!" Ellen pleaded.

"Yes, Ad, let's go home, if we can get there," said Tom Edwards. "What d'ye suppose it is, anyhow?"

"*Dark!*" exclaimed Addison hardily. "Just plain dark!"

"Oh, Addison!" exclaimed Theodora reprovingly. "Don't try to joke about a thing like this."

"It may be the end of the world," Ellen murmured.

"The world has had a good many ends to it," said Addison. "Which end do you think this is, Nell?"

But neither Ellen nor Theodora cared to reply to him. Their low, frightened voices increased my uneasiness. I could think of nothing except that rainbow in the morning; "morning," "warning," seemed to ring in my ears.

We climbed into the wagon and started homeward, but it was so dark that we had to plod along slowly. Old Sol was unusually torpid, as if the ominous obscurity had dazed him, too. After a time he stopped short and snorted; we heard the brush crackle and caught a glimpse of a large animal crossing the road ahead of us.

"That's a bear," Thomas said. "Bears are out, just as if it were night."

Some minutes passed before we could make Old Sol go on; and again we heard owls hooting in the woods.

Long before we got down to the cleared land, however, the sky began gradually to grow lighter. We all noticed it, and a feeling of relief stole over us. In the course of twenty minutes it became so light that we could discern objects round us quite plainly. The night chill, too, seemed to go from the air.

Suddenly, as we rattled along, Addison jumped up from his seat and turned to us. "I know now what this is!" he cried. "Why didn't I think of it before?"

"What is it—if you know?" cried Catherine and Theodora at once.

"The eclipse! The total eclipse of the sun!" exclaimed Addison. "I remember now reading something about it in the *Maine Farmer* a fortnight ago. It was to be on the 7th—and this is it!"

At that time advance notices of such phenomena were not so widely published as they are now; at the old farm, too, we did not take a daily newspaper. So one of the great astronomical events of the last century had come and gone, and we had not known what it was until it was over.

Except for the dun canopy of smoke and clouds over the sun we should have guessed at once, of course, the cause of the darkness; but as it was, the eclipse had given us an anxious afternoon; and although the rainbow in the morning had probably not the slightest connection with the eclipse,—indeed, could not have had,—it had greatly heightened the feeling of awe and

superstitious dread with which we had beheld night fall in the middle of the afternoon!

By the time we got home it was light again. As we drove into the yard, the old Squire came out, smiling. "Was it a little dark up where you were blackberrying a while ago?" he asked.

"Well, *just* a little dark, sir," Addison replied, with a smile as droll as his own. "But I suppose it was all because of that rainbow in the morning that you told us to look out for."

CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN I WENT AFTER THE EYESTONE

A few evenings ago, I read in a Boston newspaper that, as the result of a close contest, Isaac Kane Woodbridge had been elected mayor of one of the largest and most progressive cities of the Northwest.

Little Ike Woodbridge! Yes, it was surely he. How strangely events work round in this world of ours! Memories of a strange adventure that befell him years ago when he was a little fellow came to my mind, and I thought of the slender thread by which his life hung that afternoon.

The selectmen of our town had taken Ike Woodbridge from the poor-house and "bound him out" to a farmer named Darius Dole. He was to have food, such as Dole and his wife ate, ten weeks' schooling a year, and if he did well and remained with the Doles until he was of legal age, a "liberty suit" of new clothes and fifty dollars.

That was the written agreement; and Farmer Dole, who was a severe, hard-working man, began early to see to it that little Ike earned all that came to him. The boy, who was a little over seven years old, had to be up and dressed at five o'clock in the morning, fetch wood and water to the kitchen, help do chores at the barn, run on errands, pull weeds in the garden, spread the hay swathes in the field with a little fork, and do a hundred other things, up to the full measure of his strength.

The neighbors soon began to say that little Ike was being worked too hard. When the old Squire was one of the selectmen, he remonstrated with Dole, and wrung a promise from him that the boy should have more hours for sleep, warmer clothes for winter, and three playdays a year; but Dole did not keep his promise very strictly.

The fall that little Ike was in his eighth year, the threshers, as we called the men who journeyed from farm to farm to thresh the grain, came to the old Squire's as usual. While my cousin Halstead was helping to tend the machine, he got a bit of wheat beard in his right eye.

First Theodora, then Addison, and finally the old Squire, tried to wipe it out of his eye with a silk handkerchief; but they could not get it out, and by the next morning Halstead was suffering so much that Addison went to summon Doctor Green from the village, six miles away. But the doctor had gone to Portland, and Addison came back without him. Meanwhile a neighbor, Mrs. Wilbur, suggested putting an eyestone into Halstead's eye to get out the irritating substance. Mrs. Wilbur told them that Prudent Bedell, a queer old fellow who lived at Lurvey's Mills, four miles away, had an eyestone that he would lend to any one for ten cents.

Bedell was generally known as "the old sin-smeller," because he pretended to be able, through his sense of smell, to detect a criminal. Indeed, the old Squire had once employed him to settle a dispute for some superstitious lumbermen at one of his logging camps.

Anxious to try anything that might relieve Halstead's suffering, the old Squire sent me to borrow the eyestone. Although I was fourteen, that was the first time I had ever heard of an eyestone; from what Mrs. Wilbur had said about it, I supposed that it was something very mysterious.

"It will creep all round, inside the lid of his eye," she had said, "and find the dirt, and draw it along to the outer corner and push it out."

Physicians and oculists still have some faith in eyestones, I believe, although, on account of the progress that has been made in methods of treating the eye, they are not as much in use as formerly. Most eyestones are a calcareous deposit, found in the shell of the common European crawfish. They are frequently pale yellow or light gray in color.

Usually you put the eyestone under the eyelid at the inner canthus of the eye, and the automatic action of the eye moves it slowly over the eyeball; thus it is likely to carry along with it any foreign body that has accidentally lodged in the eye. When the stone has reached the outer canthus you can remove it, along with any foreign substance it may have collected on its journey over the eye.

Halstead's sufferings had aroused my sympathy, and I set off at top speed; by running wherever the road was not uphill, I reached Lurvey's Mills in considerably less than an hour. Several mill hands were piling logs by the stream bank, and I stopped to inquire for Prudent Bedell. Resting on their peavies, the men glanced at me curiously.

"D'ye mean the old sin-smeller?" one of them asked me. "What is it you want?"

"I want to borrow his eyestone," I replied.

"Well," the man said, "he lives just across the bridge yonder, in that little green house."

It was a veritable bandbox of a house, boarded, battened, and painted bright green; the door was a vivid yellow. In response to my knock, a short, elderly man opened the door. His hair came to his shoulders; he wore a green coat and bright yellow trousers; and his arms were so long that his large brown hands hung down almost to his knees.

It was his nose, however, that especially caught my attention, for it was tipped back almost as if the end had been cut off. I am afraid I stared at him.

"And what does this little gentleman want?" he said in a soft, silky voice that filled me with fresh wonder.

I recalled my wits sufficiently to ask whether he had an eyestone, and if he had, whether he would lend it to us. Whereupon in the same soft voice he told me that he had the day before lent his eyestone to a man who lived a mile or more from the mills.

"You can have it if you will go and get it," he said.

I paid him the usual fee of ten cents, and turned to hasten away; but he called me back. "It must be refreshed," he said.

He gave me a little glass vial half full of some liquid and told me to drop the eyestone into it when I should get it. Before using the eyestone it should be warmed in warm water, he said; then it should be put very gently under the lid at the corner of the eye. The eye should be bandaged with a handkerchief; and it was very desirable, he said, to have the sufferer lie down, and if possible, go to sleep.

With those directions in mind, I hurried away in quest of the eyestone; but at the house of the man to whom Bedell had sent me I found that the eyestone had done its work and had already been lent to another afflicted household, a mile away, where a woman had a sty in her eye. At that place I overtook it.

The woman, whose sty had been cured, opened a drawer and took out the eyestone, carefully wrapped in a piece of linen cloth. She handled it gingerly, and as I gazed at the small gray piece of chalky secretion, something of her own awe of it communicated itself to me. We dropped it into the vial, to be "refreshed"; and then, buttoning it safe in the pocket of my coat, I set off for home. Since I was now two or three miles north of Lurvey's Mills, I took another and shorter road than that by which I had come.

As it chanced, that road took me by the Dole farm, where little Ike lived. I saw no one about the old, unpainted house or the long, weathered barn, which with its sheds stood alongside the road. But as I hurried by I heard some hogs making a great noise—apparently under the barn. They were grunting, squealing, and "barking" gruffly, as if they were angry.

As I stopped for an instant to listen, I heard a low, faint cry, almost a moan, which seemed to come from under the barn. It was so unmistakably a cry of distress that, in spite of my haste, I went up to the barn door. Again I heard above the roars of the hogs that pitiful cry. The great door of the barn stood partly open, and entering the dark, evil-smelling old building, I walked slowly along toward that end of it from which the sounds came.

Presently I came upon a rickety trapdoor, which opened into the hogpen; the cover of the trapdoor was turned askew and hung down into the dark hole. Beside the hole lay a heap of freshly pulled turnips, with the green tops still on them.

The hogs were making a terrible noise below, but above their squealing I heard those faint moans.

"Who's down there?" I called. "What's the matter?"

From the dark, foul hole there came up the plaintive voice of a child. "Oh, oh, take me out! The hogs are eating me up! They've bit me and bit me!"

It was little Ike. Dole and his wife, I learned later, had gone away for the day on a visit, and had left the boy alone to do the chores—among other things to feed the hogs at noon; but as Ike had tugged at the heavy trapdoor to raise it, he had slipped and fallen down through the hole.

The four gaunt, savage old hogs that were in the pen were hungry and fierce. Even a grown person would have been in danger from the beasts. The pen, too, was knee-deep in soft muck and was as dark as a dungeon. In his efforts to escape the hogs, the boy had wallowed round in the muck. The hole was out of his reach, and the sty was strongly planked up to the barn floor on all sides.

At last he had got hold of a dirty piece of broken board; backing into one corner of the pen, he had tried, as the hogs came "barking" up to him, to defend himself by striking them on their noses. They had bitten his arms and almost torn his clothes off him.

The little fellow had been in the pen for almost two hours, and plainly could not hold out much longer. Prompt action was necessary.

At first I was at a loss to know how to reach him. I was afraid of those hogs myself, and did not dare to climb down into the pen. I could see their ugly little eyes gleaming in the dark, as they roared up at me. At last I hit upon a plan. I threw the turnips down to them; then I got an axe from the woodshed, and hurried round by way of the cart door to the cellar. While the hogs were ravenously devouring the turnips, I chopped a hole in the side of the pen, through which I pulled out little Ike. He was a sorry sight. His thin little arms were bleeding where the hogs had bitten him, and he was so dirty that I could hardly recognize him. When I attempted to lead him out of the cellar, he tottered and fell repeatedly.

At last I got him round to the house door—only to find it locked. Dole and his wife had locked up the house and left little Ike's dinner—a piece of corn bread and some cheese—in a tin pail on the doorstep; the cat had already eaten most of it. I had intended to take him indoors and wash him, for he was in a wretched condition. Finally I put him on Dole's wheelbarrow, which I found by the door of the shed, and wheeled him to the nearest neighbors, the Frosts, who lived about a quarter of a mile away. Mrs. Frost had long been indignant as to the way the Doles were treating the boy; she gladly took him in and cared for him, while I hurried on with the eyestone.

I reached home about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the old Squire thought that, in view of my errand, I had been gone an unreasonably long time.

Halstead's eye was so much inflamed that we had no little trouble in getting the eyestone under the lid. Finally, however, the old Squire, with Addison's help, slipped it in. Halstead cried out, but the old Squire made him keep his eye closed; then the old gentleman bandaged it, and made him lie down.

But after all, I am unable to report definitely as to the efficacy of the eyestone, for shortly after five o'clock, when the stone had been in Halstead's eye a little more than an hour, Doctor Green came. He had returned on the afternoon train from Portland, and learning that we had sent for him earlier in the day, hurried out to the farm. When he examined Halstead's eye, he found the eyestone near the outer canthus, and near it the irritating bit of wheat beard. He removed both together. Whether or not the eyestone had started the piece of wheat beard moving toward the outer corner of the eye was doubtful; but Doctor Green said, laughingly, that we could give the good old panacea the benefit of the doubt.

It was not until we were at the supper table that evening—with Halstead sitting at his place, his eye still bandaged—that I found a chance to explain fully why I had been gone so long on my errand.

Theodora and grandmother actually shed tears over my account of poor little Ike. The old Squire was so indignant at the treatment the boy had received that he set off early the next morning to interview the selectmen. As a result, they took little Ike from the Doles and put him into another family, the Winslows, who were very kind to him. Mrs. Winslow, indeed, gave him a mother's care and affection.

The boy soon began to grow properly. Within a year you would hardly have recognized him as the pinched and skinny little fellow that once had lived at the Dole farm. He grew in mind as well as body, and before long showed so much promise that the Winslows sent him first to the village academy, and afterward to Westbrook Seminary, near Portland. When he was about twenty-one he went West as a teacher; and from that day on his career has been upward.

CHAPTER XXIV

BORROWED FOR A BEE HUNT

We were eating breakfast one morning late in August that summer when through an open window a queer, cracked voice addressed the old Squire:

"Don't want to disturb ye at your meals, Squire, but I've come over to see if I can't borry a boy to hark fer me."

It was old Hughy Glinds, who lived alone in a little cabin at the edge of the great woods, and who gained a livelihood by making baskets and snowshoes, lining bees and turning oxbows. In his younger days he had been a noted trapper, bear hunter and moose hunter, but now he was too infirm and rheumatic to take long tramps in the woods.

The old Squire went to the door. "Come in, Glinds," he said.

"No, Squire, I don't believe I will while ye're eatin'. I jest wanted to see if I could borry one of yer boys this forenoon. I've got a swarm of bees lined over to whar the old-growth woods begin, and if I'm to git 'em I've got to foller my line on amongst tall trees and knock; and lately, Squire, I'm gettin' so blamed deaf I snum I can't hear a bee buzz if he's right close to my head! So I come over to see if I could git a boy to go with me and hark when I knock on the trees."

"Why, yes, Glinds," said the old Squire, "one of the boys may go with you. That is, he may if he wants to," he added, turning to us.

Addison said that he had something else he wished to do that forenoon. Halstead and I both offered our services; but for some reason old Glinds decided that I had better go. Grandmother Ruth objected at first and went out to talk with the old fellow. "I'm afraid you'll let him get stung or let a tree fall on him!" she said.

Old Hughy tried to reassure her. "I'll be keerful of him, marm. I promise ye, marm, the boy shan't be hurt. I'm a-goin' to stifle them bees, marm, and pull out all their stingers." And the old man laughed uproariously.

Grandmother Ruth shook her head doubtfully; old Hughy's reputation for care and strict veracity was not of the best.

When I went to get ready for the jaunt grandmother charged me to be cautious and not to go into any dangerous places, and before I left the house she gave me a pair of gloves and an old green veil to protect my head.

Before starting for the woods we had to go to old Hughy's cabin to get two pails for carrying the honey and a kettle and a roll of brimstone for "stifling" the bees. As we passed the Murch farm the old man told me that he had tried to get Willis, who stood watching us in the dooryard, to go with him to listen for the bees. "But what do you think!" he exclaimed with assumed indignation. "That covetous little whelp wouldn't stir a step to help me unless I'd agree to give him half the honey! So I came to git you, for of course I knowed that as noble a boy as I've heered you be wouldn't act so pesky covetous as that."

Getting the tin pails, the kettle and the brimstone together with an axe and a compass at the old man's cabin, we went out across the fields and the pastures north of the Wilbur farm to the borders of the woods through which old Hughy wanted to follow the bees.

A line of stakes that old Hughy had set up across the open land marked the direction in which the bees had flown to the forest. After taking our bearings from them by compass we entered the woods and went on from one large tree to another. Now and again we came to an old tree that looked as if it were hollow near the top. On every such tree old Hughy knocked loudly with the axe, crying, "Hark, boy! Hark! D'ye hear 'em? D'ye see any come out up thar?" At times he drew forth his "specs" and, having adjusted them, peeped and peered upward. Like his ears, the old man's eyes were becoming too defective for bee hunting.

In that manner we went on for at least a mile, until at last we came to Swift Brook, a turbulent little stream in a deep, rocky gully. Our course led across the ravine, and while we were hunting for an easy place to descend I espied bees flying in and out of a woodpecker's hole far up toward the broken top of a partly decayed basswood tree.

"Here they are!" I shouted, much elated.

Old Hughy couldn't see them even with his glasses on, they were so high and looked so small. He knocked on the trunk of the tree, and when I told him that I could see bees pouring out and distinctly hear the hum of those in the tree he was satisfied that I had made no mistake.

When bee hunters trace a swarm to a high tree they usually fell the tree; to that task the old man and I now set ourselves. The basswood was fully three feet in diameter, and leaned slightly toward the brook. In spite of the slant, old Hughy thought that by proper cutting the tree could be made to fall on our side of the gully instead of across it. He threw off his old coat and set to work, but soon stopped short and began rubbing his shoulder and groaning, "Oh, my rheumatiz, my rheumatiz! O-o-oh, how it pains me!"

That may have been partly pretense, intended to make me take the axe; for he was a wily old fellow. However that may be, I took it and did a borrowed boy's best to cut the scarfs as he directed, but hardly succeeded. I toiled a long time and blistered my palms.

Basswood is not a hard wood, however, and at last the tree started to fall; but instead of coming down on our side of the gully it fell diagonally across it and crashed into the top of a great hemlock that stood near the stream below. The impact was so tremendous that many of the brittle branches of both trees were broken off. At first we thought that the basswood was going to break clear, but it finally hung precariously against the hemlock at a height of thirty feet or more above the bed of the brook. From the stump the long trunk extended out across the brook in a gentle, upward slant to the hemlock. The bees came out in force. Though in felling the tree I had disturbed them considerably, none of them had come down to sting us, but now they filled the air. Apparently the swarm was a large one.

Old Hughy was a good deal disappointed. "I snum, that 'ere's a bad mess," he grumbled.

At last he concluded that we should have to fell the hemlock. Judging from the ticklish way the basswood hung on it, the task looked dangerous. We climbed down into the gully, however, and, with many an apprehensive glance aloft where the top of the basswood hung threateningly over our heads, approached the foot of the hemlock and began to chop it. The bees immediately descended about our heads. Soon one of them stung old Hughy on the ear. We had to beat a retreat down the gully and wait for the enraged insects to go back into their nest.

The hole they went into was in plain sight and appeared to be the only entrance to the cavity in which they had stored their honey. It was a round hole and did not look more than two inches in diameter. While we waited for the bees to return to it old Hughy, still rubbing his sore ear,

changed his plan of attack.

"We've got to shet the stingin' varmints in!" he exclaimed. "One of us has got to walk out with a plug, 'long that 'ere tree trunk, and stop 'em in."

We climbed back up the side of the gully to the stump of the basswood. There the old man, taking out his knife, whittled a plug and wrapped round it his old red handkerchief.

"Now this 'ere has got to be stuck in that thar hole," he said, glancing first along the log that projected out over the gully and then at me. "When I was a boy o' your age I'd wanted no better fun than to walk out on that log; but my old head is gittin' a leetle giddy. So I guess you'd better go and stick in this 'ere plug. A smart boy like you can do it jest as easy as not."

"But I am afraid the bees will sting me!" I objected.

"Oh, you can put on them gloves and tie that 'ere veil over your head," the old man said. "I'll tie it on fer ye."

I had misgivings, but, not liking to fail old Hughy at a pinch, I let him rig me up for the feat and at last, taking the plug, started to walk up the slightly inclined tree trunk to the woodpecker's hole, which was close to the point where the basswood rested against the hemlock. I found it was not hard to walk up the sloping trunk if I did not look down into the gully. With stray bees whizzing round me, I slowly took one step after another. Once, I felt the trunk settle slightly, and I almost decided to go back; but finally I went on and, reaching the hole, grasped a strong, green limb of the hemlock to steady myself. Then I inserted the plug, which fitted pretty well, and drove it in with the heel of my boot.

Perhaps it was the jar of the blow, perhaps it was my added weight, but almost instantly I felt the trunk slip again—and then down into the gully it went with a crash!

Luckily I still had hold of the hemlock limb and clung to it instinctively. For a moment I dangled there; then with a few convulsive efforts I succeeded in drawing myself to the trunk of the hemlock and getting my feet on a limb. Breathless, I now glanced downward and was terrified to see that in falling the basswood had carried away the lower branches of the hemlock and left no means of climbing down. If the trunk of the hemlock had been smaller I could have clasped my arms about it and slid down; but it was far too big round for that. In fact, to get down unassisted was impossible, and I was badly frightened. I suppose I was perched not more than thirty-five feet above the ground; but to me, glancing fearfully down on the rocks in the bed of the brook, the distance looked a hundred!

Moreover, the trunk of the basswood had split open when it struck, and all the bees were out. Clouds of them, rising as high as my legs, began paying their respects to me as the cause of their trouble. Luckily the veil kept them from my face and neck.

I could see old Hughy on the brink of the gully, staring across at me, open-mouthed, and in my alarm I called aloud to him to rescue me. He did not reply and seemed at a loss what to do.

I had started to climb higher into the shaggy top of the hemlock, to avoid the bees, when I heard some one call out, "Hello!" The voice sounded familiar and, glancing across the gully, I saw Willis Murch coming through the woods. Seeing us pass his house and knowing what we were in quest of, Willis, curious to know what success we would have, had followed us. He had lost track of us in the woods for a time, but had finally heard the basswood fall and then had found us.

Even at that distance across the gully I saw Willis's face break into a grin when he saw me perched in the hemlock. For the present, however, I was too much worried to be proud and implored his aid. He looked round a while, exchanged a few words with old Hughy and then hailed me.

"I guess we shall have to fell that hemlock to get you down," he shouted, laughing.

Naturally, I did not want that done.

"I shall have to go home for a long rope," he went on, becoming serious. "If we can get the end of a rope up there, you can tie it to a limb and then come down hand over hand. But I don't think our folks have a rope long enough; I may have to go round to the old Squire's for one."

Since old Hughy had no better plan to suggest, Willis set off on the run. As the distance was fully two miles, I had a long wait before me, and so I made myself as comfortable as I could on the limb and settled down to wait.

Old Hughy hobbled down into the gully with his kettle and tried to smother the bees by putting the brimstone close to the cleft in the tree trunk and setting it afire; but, although the fumes rose so pungently that I was obliged to hold my nose to keep from being smothered, the effect on the bees was not noticeable. Old Hughy then tried throwing water on them. The water was more efficacious than the brimstone, and before Willis returned the old man was able to cut out a section of the tree trunk and fill his two pails with the dripping combs—all of which I viewed not any too happily from aloft.

Willis appeared at last with the coil of rope. With him came Addison and Halstead, much out of breath, and a few minutes later the old Squire himself arrived. They said that grandmother Ruth also was on the way. Willis, it seems, had spread alarming reports of my predicament.

Willis and Addison tied numerous knots in the rope so that it should not slip through my hands and knotted a flat stone into the end of it. Then they took turns in throwing it up toward me until at length I caught it and tied it firmly to the limb on which I was sitting. Then I ventured to trust my weight to it and amid much laughter but without any difficulty lowered myself to the ground.

In fact, I was not exactly the hero. The hero, I think, was Willis. But for his appearance I hardly know how I should have fared.

Old Hughy, I remember, was rather loath to share the honey with us; but we all took enough to satisfy us. The old man, indeed, was hardly the hero of the occasion either—a fact that he became aware of when on our way home we met grandmother Ruth, anxious and red in the face from her long walk. She expressed herself to him with great frankness. "Didn't you promise to be careful where you sent that boy!" she exclaimed. "Hugh Glinds, you are a palavering old humbug!"

Old Hughy had little enough to say; but he tried to smooth matters over by offering her a piece of honey-comb.

"No, sir," said she. "I want none of your honey!"

All that the old Squire had said when he saw me up in the hemlock was, "Be calm, my son; you will get down safe." And when they threw the rope up to me he added, "Now, first tie a square knot and then take good hold of the rope with both hands."

CHAPTER XXV

WHEN THE LION ROARED

At daybreak on September 26, if I remember aright, we started to drive from the old farm to Portland with eighteen live hogs. There was a crisp frost that morning, so white that till the sun rose you might have thought there had been a slight fall of snow in the night.

We put eight of the largest hogs into one long farm wagon with high sideboards, drawn by a span of Percheron work horses, which I drove; the ten smaller hogs we put into another wagon that Willis Murch drove. By making an early start we hoped to cover forty miles of our journey before sundown, pass the night at a tavern in the town of Gray where the old Squire was acquainted, and reach Portland the next noon. Since we wished to avoid unloading the hogs, we took dry corn and troughs for feeding them in the wagons and buckets for fetching water to them. The old Squire went along with us for the first fifteen miles to see us well on our way, then left us and walked to a railroad station a mile or two off the wagon road, where he took the morning train into Portland, in order to make arrangements for marketing the hogs.

Everything went well during the morning, although the hogs diffused a bad odor along the highway. Toward noon we stopped by the wayside, near the Upper Village of the New Gloucester Shakers, to rest and feed the horses, and to give the hogs water. About one o'clock we went on down the hill to Sabbath Day Pond and into the woods beyond it. The loads were heavy and the horses were plodding on slowly, when, just round a turn of the road in the woods ahead, we heard a deep, awful sound, like nothing that had ever come to our ears before. For an instant I thought it was thunder, it rumbled so portentously: *Hough—hough—hough—hough-er-er-er-er-hhh!* It reverberated through the woods till it seemed to me that the earth actually trembled.

Willis's horses stopped short. Willis himself rose to his feet, and it seemed to me his cap rose up on his head. Other indistinct sounds also came to our ears from along the road ahead, though nothing was as yet in sight. Then again that awful, prolonged *Hough—hough—hough!* broke forth.

Close by, lumbermen had been hauling timber from the forest into the highway and had made a distinct trail across the road ditch. While Willis stood up, staring, the horses suddenly whirled half round and bolted for the lumber trail, hogs and all. They did it so abruptly that Willis had no time to control them, and when the wagon went across the ditch, he was pitched off headlong into the brush. Before I could set my feet, my span followed them across the ditch; but I managed to rein them up to a tree trunk, which the wagon tongue struck heavily. There I held them, though they still plunged and snorted in their terror.

Willis's team was running away along the lumber trail, but before it had gone fifty yards we heard a crash, and then a horrible squealing. The wagon had gone over a log or a stump and, upsetting, had spilled all ten hogs into the brushwood.

Willis now jumped to his feet and ran to help me master my team, which was still plunging violently, and I kept it headed to the tree while he got the halters and tied the horses. Just then we heard that terrible *Hough—hough!* again, nearer now. Looking out toward the road, we saw four teams dragging large, gaudily painted cages that contained animals. The drivers, who wore a kind of red uniform, pulled up and sat looking in our direction, laughing and shouting derisively. That exasperated us so greatly that, checking our first impulse to run in pursuit of the horses and hogs, we rushed to the road to remonstrate.

It was not a full-fledged circus and menagerie, but merely a show on its way from one county fair

to another. In one cage there was a boa constrictor, untruthfully advertised to be thirty feet long, which a Fat Lady exhibited at each performance, the monster coiled round her neck. In another cage were six performing monkeys and four educated dogs.

When we saw them that day on the road, the Fat Lady, said to weigh four hundred pounds, was journeying in a double-seated carriage behind the cages. Squeezed on the seat beside her, rode a queer-looking little old man, with a long white beard, whose specialty was to eat glass tumblers, or at least chew them up. He also fought on his hands and knees with one of the dogs. His barking, growling and worrying were so true to life that the spectators could scarcely tell which was the dog and which the man. On the back seat was a gypsy fortune teller and a Wild Man, alleged to hail from the jungles of Borneo and to be so dangerous that two armed keepers had to guard him in order to prevent him from destroying the local population. As we first saw him, divested of his "get-up," he looked tame enough. He was conversing sociably with the gypsy fortune teller.

But for the moment our attention and our indignation were directed mainly at the lion. He was not such a very large lion, but he certainly had a full-sized roar, and the driver of the cage sat and grinned at us.

"You've no right to be on the road with a lion roaring like that!" Willis shouted severely.

"Wal, young feller, you've no right to be on the road with such a hog smell as that!" the driver retorted. "Our lion is the best-behaved in the world; he wouldn't ha' roared ef he hadn't smelt them hogs so strong."

"But you have damaged us!" I cried. "Our horses have run away and smashed things! You'll have to pay for this!"

Another man, who appeared to be the proprietor, now came from a wagon in the rear of the cavalcade.

"What's that about damages?" he cried. "I'll pay nothing! I have a permit to travel on the highway!"

"You have no right to scare horses!" Willis retorted. "Your lion made a horrible noise."

"His noise wasn't worse than your hog stench!" the showman rejoined hotly. "My lion has as good a right to roar as your hogs have to squeal. Drive on!" he shouted to his drivers.

The show moved forward. The Fat Lady looked back and laughed, and the Wild Man pretended to squeal like a pig; but the gypsy fortune teller smiled and said, "Too bad!"

Having got no satisfaction, we returned hastily to chase our runaway team. We came upon it less than a hundred yards away, jammed fast between two pine trees. Parts of the harness were broken, the wagon body was shattered, and ten hogs were at large.

For some minutes we were at a loss to know what to do. How to catch the hogs and put them back into the wagon was a difficult matter, for many of them weighed three hundred pounds, and moreover a live hog is a disagreeable animal to lay hands on. But, taking an axe, we cut young pine trees and constructed a fence round the wagon to serve as a hogpen. Leaving a gap at one end that could be stopped when the hogs were inside, we then set near the wagon the troughs we had brought, poured the dry corn into them and called the hogs as if it were feeding time. Most of them, it seemed, were not far away. As soon as they heard the corn rattling into the troughs all except three came crowding in. Presently we drove two of the missing ones to the pen, but one we could not find.

None of the wagon wheels was broken, and in the course of an hour or two, Willis and I succeeded in patching up the shattered body sufficiently to hold the hogs. But how to get the heavy brutes off the ground and up into the wagon was a task beyond our resources. When you try to take a live hog off its feet, he is likely to bite as well as to squeal. We had no tackle for lifting them.

At last Willis set off to get help. He was gone till dusk and came back without any one; but he had persuaded two Shakers to come and help us early the next morning—they could not come that night on account of their evening prayer meeting. One of the Shaker women had sent a loaf of bread and a piggin half full of Shaker apple sauce to us.

The lantern and bucket that went with Willis's wagon had been smashed; but I had a similar outfit with mine. So we tied the horses to trees near our improvised hog pound, and fed and blanketed them by lantern light. Afterwards we brought water for them from a brook not far away.

It was nine o'clock before we were ready to eat our own supper of bread and Shaker apple sauce. The night was chilly; our lantern went out for lack of oil; we had only light overcoats for covering; and as we had used our last two matches in lighting the lantern, we could not kindle a fire.

The night was so cold that we frequently had to jump up and run round to get warm. We slept scarcely at all. The hogs squealed. They, too, were cold as well as hungry, and toward morning they quarreled, bit one another and made piercing outcries.

"Oh, don't I wish 'twas morning!" Willis exclaimed again and again.

Fortunately, the Shakers were early risers, and long before sunrise three of them, clad in gray homespun frocks and broad-brimmed hats, appeared. They greeted us solemnly.

"Thee has met with trouble," said one of them, who was the elder of the village. "But I think we can give thee aid."

They proved to be past masters at handling hogs. From one of the halters they contrived a muzzle to prevent the hogs from biting us, and then with their help we caught and muzzled the hogs one by one and boosted them into the wagon. The good men stayed by us till the horses were hitched up and we were out of the woods and on the highway again. I had a little money with me and offered to pay them for their kind services, but the elder said:

"Nay, friend, thee has had trouble enough already with the lion." And at parting all three said "Fare thee well" very gravely.

We fared on, but not altogether well, for those hungry hogs were now making a terrible uproar. We drove as far as Gray Corners, where there was a country store, and there I bought a bushel of oats for the horses and a hundred-pound bag of corn for the hogs. The hogs were so ravenous that it was hard to be sure that each got his proper share; but we did the best we could and somewhat reduced their squealing.

The hastily repaired wagon body had also given us trouble, for it had threatened to shake to pieces as it jolted over the frozen ruts of the road; but we bought a pound of nails, borrowed a hammer and set to work to repair it better, with the hogs still aboard—much to the amusement of a crowd of boys who had collected. It was almost noon when we left Gray Corners, and it was after three o'clock before we reached Westbrook, five miles out of Portland. Here whom should we see but the old Squire, who, growing anxious over our failure to appear, had driven out to meet us. He could not help smiling when he heard Willis's indignant account of what had delayed us.

He thought it likely that we could recover the missing hog, and that evening he inserted a notice of the loss in the *Eastern Argus*. But nothing came of the notice or of the many inquiries that we made on our way home the next day. The animal had wandered off, and whoever captured it apparently kept quiet. Instead of blaming us, however, the old Squire praised us.

"You did well, boys, in trying circumstances," he said. "You do not meet a lion every day."

After what had happened, Willis and I felt much interest the following week in seeing the show that had discomfited us. It had established itself at the county fair in its big tent and apparently was doing a rushing business. Buying admission tickets, Willis and I went in and approached the lion's cage for a nearer view of the king of beasts. We hoped he would spring up and roar as he had done in the woods below the Shaker village; but he kept quiet. After all, he did not look very formidable, and he seemed sadly oppressed and bored.

I think the proprietor of the show recognized us, for we saw him regarding us suspiciously; and we moved on to the cage in which the Wild Man sat, with a big brass chain attached to his leg—ostensibly to prevent him from running amuck among the spectators. Two of his keepers were guarding him, with axes in their hands. He was loosely arrayed in a tiger's skin, and his limbs appeared to be very hairy. His skin was dark brown and rough with warts. His hair, which was really a wig, hung in tangled snarls over his eyes. He gnashed his teeth, clenched his fists, and every few moments he uttered a terrific yell at which timid patrons of the show promptly retired to the far side of the tent.

When Willis and I approached the cage, a smile suddenly broke across the Wild Man's face, and he nodded to us. "You were the fellows with the hogs, weren't you?" he said in very good English. I can hardly describe what a shock that gave us.

"Why, why—aren't you from the wilds of Borneo?" Willis asked him in low tones.

"Thunder, no!" the Wild Man replied confidentially. "I don't even know where it is. I'm from over in Vermont—Bellows Falls."

"But—but—you do look pretty savage!" stammered Willis in much astonishment.

"You bet!" said the Wild Man. "Ain't this a dandy rig? It gets 'em, too. But don't give me away; I get a good living out of this."

Just then a group of spectators came crowding forward, and the Wild Man let out a howl that brought them to an appalled halt. The keepers brandished their axes.

"Well, did you ever?" Willis muttered as we moved on. "Doesn't that beat everything?"

The Fat Lady was ponderously unwinding the coils of the boa constrictor from round her neck as we paused in front of her cage, but presently she recognized us and smiled. We asked her whether she wasn't afraid to let the snake coil itself round her neck.

"No, not when he has had his powders," she replied. "Sometimes, when he is waking up, I have to be a little careful not to let him get clean round me, or he'd give me a squeeze."

The old man and the educated dogs had just finished their performance when we came in, and so we went over to the platform on the other side of the tent, where the gypsy fortune teller was plying her vocation.

"Cross me palm, young gentlemen," she droned. "Cross me palm wi' siller, and I'll tell your fortunes and all that's going to happen to you." Then she, too, recognized us and smiled. "Did you find your hogs?" she asked.

"All but one," Willis told her.

"It was too bad," she said, "but you never will get anything out of the boss of this show. He's a brute! He cheats me out of half my contract money right along."

"Where do you come from?" Willis said with a knowing air. "You are no gypsy."

"No, indeed!" the girl replied, laughing, and, rubbing a place on the back of her left hand, she showed us that her skin was white under the walnut stain. "I'm from Albany. I live with my mother there, and I'm sending my brother to the Troy Polytechnic School."

"Well, did you ever!" Willis said again as, now completely disillusioned, we left the tent.

CHAPTER XXVI

UNCLE SOLON CHASE COMES ALONG

There was what the farmers and indeed the whole country deemed "hard times" that fall, and the "hard times" grew harder. Again we young folks had been obliged to put off attending school at the village Academy—much to the disappointment of Addison and Theodora.

Money was scarce, and all business ventures seemed to turn out badly. Everything appeared to be going wrong, or at least people imagined so. Uncle Solon Chase from Chase's Mills—afterward the Greenback candidate for the Presidency—was driving about the country with his famous steers and rack-cart, haranguing the farmers and advocating unlimited greenback money.

To add to our other troubles at the old Squire's that fall, our twelve Jersey cows began giving bitter milk, so bitter that the cream was affected and the butter rendered unusable. Yet the pasture was an excellent one, consisting of sweet uplands, fringed round with sugar-maples, oaks and beeches, where the cleared land extended up the hillsides into the borders of the great woods.

For some time we were wholly at a loss to know what caused all those cows to give bitter milk.

A strange freak also manifested itself in our other herd that summer; first one of our Black Dutch belted heifers, and then several others took to gnawing the bark from young trees in their pasture and along the lanes to the barn. Before we noticed what they were doing, the bark from twenty or more young maples, elms and other trees had been gnawed and stripped off as high as the heifers could reach. It was not from lack of food; there was grass enough in the pasture, and provender and hay at the barn; but an abnormal appetite had beset them; they would even pull off the tough bark of cedars, in the swamp by the brook, and stand for hours, trying to masticate long, stringy strips of it.

In consequence, probably, of eating so much indigestible bark, first one, then another, "lost her cud," that is, was unable to raise her food for rumination at night; and as cattle must ruminate, we soon had several sick animals to care for.

In such cases, if the animal can only be started chewing an artificially prepared cud she will often, on swallowing it, "raise" again; and rumination, thus started, will proceed once more, and the congestion be relieved.

For a week or more we were kept busy, night and morning, furnishing the bark-eaters with cuds, prepared from the macerated inner bark of sweet elder, impregnated with rennet. These had to be put in the mouths of the cows by main strength, and held there till from force of habit the animal began chewing, swallowing and "raising" again.

What was stranger, this unnatural appetite for gnawing bark was not confined wholly to cows that fall; the shoats out in the orchard took to gnawing apple-trees, and spoiled several valuable Sweetings and Gravensteins before the damage was discovered. It was an "off year." Every living thing seemed to require a tonic.

The bitter milk proved the most difficult problem. No bitter weed or foul grass grew in the pasture. The herd had grazed there for years; nothing of the sort had been noticed before.

The village apothecary, who styled himself a chemist, was asked to give an opinion on a specimen of the cream; but he failed to throw much light on the subject. "There seems to be tannic acid in this milk," he said.

At about that time uncle Solon Chase came along one afternoon, and gave one of his harangues at our schoolhouse. I well remember the old fellow and his high-pitched voice. Addison, I recall, refused to go to hear him; but Willis Murch and I went. We were late and had difficulty in squeezing inside the room. Uncle Solon, as everybody called him, stood at the teacher's desk, and was talking in his quaint, homely way: a lean man in farmer's garb, with a kind of Abraham

Lincoln face, honest but humorous, droll yet practical; a face afterwards well known from Maine to Iowa.

"We farmers are bearin' the brunt of the hard times," Uncle Solon said. "'Tain't fair. Them rich fellers in New York, and them rich railroad men that's running things at Washington have got us down. 'Tis time we got up and did something about it. 'Tis time them chaps down there heard the tramp o' the farmers' cowhide boots, comin' to inquire into this. And they'll soon hear 'em. They'll soon hear the tramp o' them old cowhides from Maine to Texas.

"Over in our town we have got a big stone mortar. It will hold a bushel of corn. When the first settlers came there and planted a crop, they hadn't any gristmill. So they got together and made that 'ere mortar out of a block of granite. They pecked that big, deep hole in it with a hammer and hand-drill. That hole is more'n two feet deep, but they pecked it out, and then made a big stone pestle nearly as heavy as a man could lift, to pound their corn.

"They used to haul that mortar and pestle round from one log house to another, and pounded all their corn-meal in it.

"Now d'ye know what I would do if I was President? I'd get out that old stone mortar and pestle, and I'd put all the hard money in this country in it, all the rich man's hard money, and I'd pound it all up fine. I'd make meal on't!"

"And what would you do with the meal?" some one cried.

Uncle Solon banged his fist on the desk. "I'd make greenbacks on't!" he shouted, and then there was great applause.

That solution of the financial problem sounded simple enough; and yet it was not quite so clear as it might be.

Uncle Solon went on to picture what a bright day would dawn if only the national government would be reasonable and issue plenty of greenbacks; and when he had finished his speech, he invited every one who was in doubt, or had anything on his mind, to ask questions.

"Ask me everything you want to!" he cried. "Ask me about anything that's troublin' your mind, and I'll answer if I can, and the best I can."

There was something about Uncle Solon which naturally invited confidence, and for fully half an hour the people asked questions, to all of which he replied after his quaint, honest fashion.

"You might ask him what makes cows give bitter milk," Willis whispered to me, and laughed. "He's an old farmer."

"I should like to," said I, but I had no thoughts of doing so—when suddenly Willis spoke up:

"Uncle Solon, there is a young fellow here who would like to ask you what makes his cows give bitter milk this fall, but he is bashful."

"Haw! haw!" laughed Uncle Solon. "Wal, now, he needn't be bashful with me, for like's not I can tell him. Like's not 'tis the bitterness in the hearts o' people, that's got into the dumb critters."

Uncle Solon's eyes twinkled, and he laughed, as did everybody else.

"Or, like's not," he went on, "'tis something the critters has et. Shouldn't wonder ef 'twas. What kind of a parster are them cows runnin' in?"

Somewhat abashed, I explained, and described the pasture at the old Squire's.

"How long ago did the milk begin to be bitter?"

"About three weeks ago."

"Any red oak in that parster?" asked Uncle Solon.

"Yes," I said. "Lots of red oaks, all round the borders of the woods."

"Wal, now, 'tis an acorn year," said Uncle Solon, reflectively. "I dunno, but ye all know how bitter a red-oak acorn is. I shouldn't wonder a mite ef your cows had taken to eatin' them oak acorns. Critters will, sometimes. Mine did, once. Fust one will take it up, then the rest will foller."

An approving chuckle at Uncle Solon's sagacity ran round, and some one asked what could be done in such a case to stop the cows from eating the acorns.

"Wal, I'll tell ye what I did," said Uncle Solon, his homely face puckering in a reminiscent smile. "I went out airly in the mornin', before I turned my cows to parster, and picked up the acorns under all the oak-trees. I sot down on a rock, took a hammer and cracked them green acorns, cracked 'em 'bout halfway open at the butt end. With my left-hand thumb and forefinger, I held the cracked acorn open by squeezing it, and with my right I dropped a pinch o' Cayenne pepper into each acorn, then let 'em close up again.

"It took me as much as an hour to fix up all them acorns. Then I laid them in little piles round under the trees, and turned out my cows. They started for the oaks fust thing, for they had got a habit of going there as soon as they were turned to parster in the morning. I stood by the bars and watched to see what would happen."

Here a still broader smile overspread Uncle Solon's face. "Within ten minutes I saw all them cows going lickety-split for the brook on the lower side o' the parster, and some of 'em were in such a hurry that they had their tails right up straight in the air!

"Ef you will believe it," Uncle Solon concluded, "not one of them cows teched an oak acorn afterward."

Another laugh went round; but an interruption occurred. A good lady from the city, who was spending the summer at a farmhouse near by, rose in indignation and made herself heard.

"I think that was a very cruel thing to do!" she cried. "I think it was shameful to treat your animals so!"

"Wal, now, ma'am, I'm glad you spoke as you did. I'm glad to know that you've got a kind heart," said Uncle Solon. "Kind-heartedness to man and beast is one of the best things in life. It's what holds this world together. Anybody that uses Cayenne pepper to torture an animal, or play tricks on it, is no friend of mine, I can tell ye.

"But you see, ma'am, it is this way. Country folks who keep dumb animals of all kinds know a good many things about them that city folks don't. Like human beings, dumb animals sometimes go all wrong, and have to be corrected. Of course, we can't reason with them. So we have to do the next best thing, and correct them as we can.

"I had a little dog once that I was tremendous fond of," Uncle Solon continued. "His name was Spot. He was a bird-dog, and so bright it seemed as if he could almost talk. But he took to suckin' eggs, and began to steal eggs at my neighbors' barns and hen-houses. He would fetch home eggs without crackin' the shells, and hold 'em in his mouth so cunning you wouldn't know he had anything there. He used to bury them eggs in the garden and all about.

"Of course that made trouble with the neighbors. It looked as if I'd have to kill Spot, and I hated to do it, for I loved that little dog. But I happened to think of Cayenne. So I took and blowed an egg—made a hole at each end and blowed out the white and the yelk. I mixed the white with Cayenne pepper and put it back through the hole. Then I stuck little pieces of white paper over both holes, and laid the egg where I knew Spot would find it.

"He found it, and about three minutes after that I saw him going to the brook in a hurry. He had quite a time on't, sloshin' water, coolin' off his mouth—and I never knew him to touch an egg afterward.

"But I see, ma'am, that you have got quite a robustious prejudice against Cayenne. It isn't such bad stuff, after all. It's fiery, but it never does any permanent harm. It's a good medicine, too, for a lot of things that ail us. Why, Cayenne pepper saved my life once. I really think so. It was when I was a boy, and boy-like, I had et a lot of green artichokes. A terrible pain took hold of me. I couldn't breathe. I thought I was surely going to die; but my mother gave me a dose of Cayenne and molasses, and in ten minutes I was feeling better.

"And even now, old as I am, when I get cold and feel pretty bad, I go and take a good stiff dose of Cayenne and molasses, and get to bed. In fifteen minutes I will be in a perspiration; pretty soon I'll go to sleep; and next morning I'll feel quite smart again.

"Just you try that, ma'am, the next time you get a cold. You will find it will do good. It is better than so much of that quinin that they are givin' us nowadays. That quinin raises Cain with folks' ears. It permanently injures the hearin'.

"When I advise any one to use Cayenne, either to cure a dog that sucks eggs or cows that eat acorns, I advise it as a medicine, just as I would ef the animal was sick. And you mustn't think, ma'am, that we farmers are so hard-hearted and cruel as all that, for our hearts are just as tender and compassionate to animals as if we lived in a great city."

Uncle Solon may not have been a safe guide for the nation's finances, but he possessed a valuable knowledge of farm life and farm affairs.

I went home; and the next morning we tried the quaint old Greenbacker's "cure" for bitter milk; it "worked" as he said it would.

We also made a sticky wash, of which Cayenne was the chief ingredient, for the trunks of the young trees along the lanes and in the orchard, and after getting a taste of it, neither the Black Dutch belted heifers nor the hogs did any further damage. A young neighbor of ours has also cured her pet cat of slyly pilfering eggs at the stable, in much the way Uncle Solon cured his dog.

CHAPTER XXVII

ON THE DARK OF THE MOON

In a little walled inclosure near the roadside at the old Squire's stood two very large pear-trees that at a distance looked like Lombardy poplars; they had straight, upright branches and were fully fifty feet tall. One was called the Eastern Belle and the other the Indian Queen. They had

come as little shoots from grandmother Ruth's people in Connecticut when she and the old Squire were first married. Grandmother always spoke of them as "Joe's pear-trees"; Joseph was the old Squire's given name. Some joke connected with their early married life was in her mind when she spoke thus, for she always laughed roguishly when she said "Joe's pears," but she would never explain the joke to us young folks. She insisted that those were the old Squire's pears, and told us not to pick them.

In the orchard behind the house were numerous other pear-trees. There were no restrictions on those or on the early apples or plums; but every year grandmother half jokingly told us not to go to those two trees in the walled inclosure, and she never went there herself.

I must confess, however, that we young folks knew pretty well how those pears tasted. The Eastern Belle bore a large, long pear that turned yellow when ripe and had a fine rosy cheek on one side. The Indian Queen was a thick-bodied pear with specks under the skin, a deep-sunk nose and a long stem. It had a tendency to crack on one side; but it ripened at about the same time as the Belle, and its flavor was even finer.

The little walled pen that inclosed the two pear-trees had a history of its own. The town had built it as a "pound" for stray animals in 1822, shortly after the neighborhood was settled. The walls were six or seven feet high, and on one side was a gateway. The inclosure was only twenty feet wide by thirty feet long. It had not been used long as a pound, for a pound that was larger and more centrally situated became necessary soon after it was built. When those two little pear-trees came from Connecticut the old Squire set them out inside this walled pen; he thought they would be protected by the high pound wall. A curious circumstance about those pear-trees was that they did not begin bearing when they were nine or ten years old, as pear-trees usually do. Year after year passed, until they had stood there twenty-seven years, with never blossom or fruit appearing on them.

The old Squire tried various methods of making the trees bear. At the suggestion of neighbors he drove rusty nails into the trunks, and buried bags of pear seeds at the foot of them, and he fertilized the inclosure richly. But all to no purpose. Finally grandmother advised the old Squire to spread the leached ashes from her leach tub—after she had made soap and hulled corn in the spring—on the ground inside the pen. The old Squire did so, and the next spring both trees blossomed. They bore bountifully that summer and every season afterward, until they died.

We had a young neighbor, Alfred Batchelder, who was fond of foraging by night for plums, grapes, and pears in the orchards of his neighbors. His own family did not raise fruit; they thought it too much trouble to cultivate the trees. But Alfred openly boasted of having the best fruit that the neighborhood afforded. One of Alfred's cronies in these nocturnal raids was a boy, named Harvey Yeatton, who lived at the village, six or seven miles away; almost every year he came to visit Alfred for a week or more in September.

It was a good-natured community. To early apples, indeed, the rogues were welcome; but garden pears, plums, and grapes were more highly prized, for in Maine it requires some little care to raise them. At the farm of our nearest neighbors, the Edwardses, there were five greengage trees that bore delicious plums. For three summers in succession Alfred and Harvey stole nearly every plum on those trees—at least, there was little doubt that it was they who took them.

They also took the old Squire's pears in the walled pen. Twice Addison and I tracked them home the next morning in the dewy grass, across the fields. Time and again, too, they took our Bartlett pears and plums. Addison wanted the old Squire to send the sheriff after them and put a stop to their raids, but he only laughed. "Oh, I suppose those boys love pears and plums," he said, forbearingly. But we of the younger generation were indignant.

One day, when the old Squire and I were driving to the village, we met Alfred; the old gentleman stopped, and said to him:

"My son, hadn't you better leave me just a few of those pears in the old pound this year?"

"I never touched a pear there!" Alfred shouted. "You can't prove I did, and you'd better not accuse me."

The old Squire only laughed, and drove on.

A few nights afterward both pear-trees were robbed and nearly stripped of fruit. We found several broken twigs on the top branches, and guessed that Alfred had used a long pole with a hook at the end with which to shake down the fruit. After what had passed on the road this action looked so much like defiance that the old Squire was nettled. He did nothing about it at the time, however.

Another year passed. Then at table one night Ellen remarked that Harvey Yeatton had come to visit Alfred again. "Alfred brought him up from the village this afternoon," she said. "I saw them drive by together."

"Now the pears and plums will have to suffer again!" said I.

"Yes," said Ellen. "They stopped down at the foot of the hill, and looked up at those two pear-trees in the old pound; then they glanced at the house, to see if any one had noticed that they were passing."

"Those pears are just getting ripe," said Addison. "It wouldn't astonish me if they disappeared to-night. There's no moon, is there?"

"No," said grandmother Ruth. "It's the dark of the moon. Joseph, you had better look out for your pears to-night," she added, laughing.

The old Squire went on eating his supper for some minutes without comment; but just as we finished, he said, "Boys, where did we put our skunk fence last fall?"

"Rolled it up and put it in the wagon-house chamber," said I.

"About a hundred and fifty feet of it, isn't there?"

"A hundred and sixty," said Addison. "Enough, you know, to go round that patch of sweet corn in the garden."

"That wire fence worked well with four-footed robbers," the old Squire remarked, with a twinkle in his eye. "Perhaps it might serve for the two-footed kind. You fetch that down, boys; I've an idea we may use it to-night."

For several summers the garden had been ravaged by skunks. Although carnivorous by nature, the little pests seem to have a great liking for sweet corn when in the milk.

Wire fence, woven in meshes, such as is now used everywhere for poultry yards, had then recently been advertised. We had sent for a roll of it, two yards in width, and thereafter every summer we had put it up round the corn patch. None of the pests ever scaled the wire fence; and thereafter we had enjoyed our sweet corn in peace.

That night, just after dusk, we reared the skunk fence on top of the old pound wall, and fastened it securely in an upright position all round the inclosure. The wall was what Maine farmers call a "double wall"; it was built of medium-sized stones, and was three or four feet wide at the top. It was about six feet high, and when topped with the wire made a fence fully twelve feet in height.

The old pound gate had long ago disappeared; in its place were two or three little bars that could easily be let down. The trespassers would naturally enter by that gap, and on a moonless night would not see the wire fence on top of the wall. They would have more trouble in getting out of the place than they had had in getting into it if the gap were to be stopped.

At the farm that season were two hired men, brothers named James and Asa Doane, strong, active young fellows; and since it was warm September weather, the old Squire asked them to make a shake-down of hay for themselves that night behind the orchard wall, near the old pound, and to sleep there "with one eye open." If the rogues did not come for the pears, we would take down the skunk fence early the next morning, and set it again for them the following night.

Nothing suited Asa and Jim better than a lark of that sort. About eight o'clock they ensconced themselves in the orchard, thirty or forty feet from the old pound gateway. Addison also lay in wait with them. If the rogues came and began to shake the trees, all three were to make a rush for the gap, keep them in there, and shout for the old Squire to come down from the house.

Addison's surmise that Alfred and his crony would begin operations that very night proved a shrewd one. Shortly after eleven o'clock he heard a noise at the entrance of the old pound. Asa and Jim were asleep. Addison lay still, and a few minutes later heard the rogues put up their poles with the hooks on them, and begin gently to shake the high limbs.

The sound of the pears dropping on the ground waked Asa and Jim, and at a whispered word from Addison all three bounded over the orchard wall and rushed to the gateway, shouting, "We've got ye! We've got ye now! Surrender! Surrender and go to jail!"

Surprised though they were, Alfred and Harvey had no intention of surrendering. Dropping their poles, they sprang for the pound wall. In a moment they had scrambled to the top. Then they jumped for the ground on the other side; but the yielding meshes of the skunk fence brought them up short. It was too dark for them to see what the obstruction was, and they bounced and jumped against the wire meshes like fish in a net.

"Cut it with your jackknife!" Harvey whispered to Alfred; and then both boys got out their knives and sawed away at the meshes—with no success whatever!

By that time Jim and Asa had entered the pound, and shouting with laughter, each grabbed a boy by the ankle and hauled him down from the wall. At about that time, too, the old Squire arrived on the scene, bringing a rope and a new horsewhip. I myself had been sleeping soundly, and was slow to wake. Even grandmother Ruth and the girls were ahead of me, and when I rushed out, they were standing at the orchard gate, listening in considerable excitement to the commotion at the old pound. When I reached the place Jim and Asa—with Addison looking on—had tied the rogues together, and were haling them up through the orchard.

"Take 'em to the barn, Squire!" Jim shouted. "Shut the big doors, so the neighbors can't hear 'em holler, and then give it to 'em good!"

"Yes, give it to 'em, Squire!" Asa exclaimed. "They need it."

The old Squire was following after them, cracking his whip, for I suppose he thought it well to frighten the scamps thoroughly. It was too dark for me to see Alfred's face or Harvey's, but they

had little to say. The procession moved on to the barn; I rolled the doors open, while Addison ran to get a lantern. Grandmother and the girls had retired hastily to the ell piazza, where they stood listening apprehensively.

"Now I am going to give you your choice," the old Squire said. "Shall I send for the sheriff, or will you take a whipping and promise to stop stealing fruit?"

Neither Alfred nor Harvey would reply; and the old Squire told Addison to hitch up Old Sol and fetch Hawkes, the sheriff. The prospect of jail frightened the boys so much that they said they would take the whipping, and promise not to steal any more fruit.

"I am sorry to say, Alfred, that I don't wholly trust your word," the old Squire said. "You have told me falsehoods before. We must have your promise in writing."

He sent me into the house for paper and pencil, and then set Addison to write a pledge for the boys to sign. As nearly as I remember, it ran like this:

"We, the undersigned, Harvey Yeatton and Alfred Batchelder, confess that we have been robbing gardens and stealing our neighbors' fruit for four years. We have been caught to-night stealing pears at the old pound. We have been given our choice of going to jail or taking a whipping and promising to steal no more in the future. We choose the whipping and the promise, and we engage to make no complaint and no further trouble about this for any one."

The old Squire read it over to them and bade them to take notice of what they were signing. "For if I hear of your stealing fruit again," said he, "I shall get a warrant and have you arrested for what you have done to-night. Here are four witnesses ready to testify against you."

Alfred and Harvey put their names to the paper while I held the lantern.

"Now give it to 'em, Squire!" said Jim, when the boys had signed.

From the first Addison and I had had little idea that the old Squire would whip the boys. It was never easy to induce him to whip even a refractory horse or ox. Now he took the paper, read their names, then folded it and put it into his pocket.

"I guess this will hold you straight, boys," he said. "Now you can go home."

"What, ain't ye goin' to lick 'em?" Jim exclaimed.

"Not this time," said the old gentleman. "Untie them and let them go."

Jim and Asa were greatly disappointed. "Let me give 'em jest a few licks," Jim begged, with a longing glance at the whip.

"Not this time," the old Squire replied. "If we catch them at this again, I'll see about it. And, boys," he said to them, as Jim and Asa very reluctantly untied the knots of their bonds, "any time you want a pocketful of pears to eat just come and ask me. But mind, don't you steal another pear or plum in this neighborhood!"

Addison opened the barn doors, and Alfred and Harvey took themselves off without ceremony.

Apparently they kept their promise with us, for we heard of no further losses of fruit in that neighborhood.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HALSTEAD'S GOBBLER

At that time a flock of twenty or thirty turkeys was usually raised at the old farm every fall—fine, great glossy birds. Nearly every farmhouse had its flock; and by October that entire upland county resounded to the plaintive *Yeap-yeap, yop-yop-yop!* and the noisy *Gobble-gobble-gobble!* of the stupid yet much-prized "national bird." At present you may drive the whole length of our county and neither hear nor see a turkey.

In their young days the old Squire and Judge Fessenden of Portland, later in life Senator Fessenden, had been warm friends; and after the old Squire chose farming for a vocation and went to live at the family homestead, he was wont to send the judge a fine turkey for Thanksgiving—purely as a token of friendship and remembrance. The judge usually acknowledged the gift by sending in return an interesting book, or other souvenir, sometimes a new five-dollar greenback—when he could not think of an appropriate present.

The old Squire did not like to accept money from an old friend, and after we young people went home to Maine to live he transferred to us the privilege of sending Senator Fessenden a turkey for Thanksgiving, and allowed us to have the return present.

By September we began to look the flock over and pick out the one that bade fair to be the largest and handsomest in November. There was much "hefting" and sometimes weighing of birds on the barn scales. We carefully inspected their skins under their feathers, for we sent the

judge a "yellow skin," and never a "blue skin," however heavy.

That autumn there was considerable difference of opinion among us which young gobbler, out of twenty or more, was the best and promised to "dress off" finest by Thanksgiving. Addison chose a dark, burnished bird with a yellow skin; at that time our flock was made up of a mixture of breeds—white, speckled, bronze and golden. Halstead chose a large speckled gobbler with heavy purple wattles and a long "quitter" that bothered him in picking up his food.

Theodora and Ellen also selected two, and I had my eye on one with golden markings, but of that I need say no more here; as weeks passed, it proved inferior to Addison's and to Theodora's.

Even as late as October 20, it was not easy to say which was the best one out of five; at about that time I also discovered that Addison was secretly feeding his bronze turkey, out at the west barn, with rations of warm dough. Theodora and I exchanged confidences and began feeding ours on dough mixed with boiled squash, for we had been told that this was good diet for fattening turkeys.

When Halstead found out what we were doing, he was indignant and declared we were not playing fair; but we rejoined that he had the same chance to "feed up," if he desired to take the trouble.

At the Corners, about a mile from the old Squire's, there lived a person who had far too great an influence over Halstead. His name was Tibbetts; he was post-master and kept a grocery; also he sold intoxicants covertly, in violation of the state law, and was a gambler in a small, mean way. Claiming to know something of farming and of poultry, he told Halstead that the best way to fatten a turkey speedily was to shut it up and not allow it to run with the rest of the flock. He said, too, that if a turkey were shut up in a well-lighted place, it would fret itself, running to and fro, particularly if it heard other turkeys calling to it.

The food for fattening turkeys, said Tibbetts, should consist of a warm dough, made from two parts corn meal and one part wheat bran. To a quart of such dough he asserted that a tablespoonful of powdered eggshells should be added, also a dust of Cayenne pepper. And if a really perfect food for fattening poultry were desired, Tibbetts declared that a tablespoonful of new rum should be added to the water with which the quart of dough was mixed. A wonderful turkey food, no doubt!

Tibbetts also told Halstead to take a pair of sharp shears and cut off an inch and a half of his turkey's "quitter," if it were too long and bothered him about eating. If the turkey grew "dainty," as Tibbetts expressed it, Halstead was to make the dough into rolls about the size of his thumb, then open the bird's beak, shove the rolls in, and make him swallow them—three or four of them, three times a day.

Halstead came home from the Corners and made a quart of dough according to the Tibbetts formula. I do not know certainly about the spoonful of rum. If Tibbetts gave him the rum, Halstead kept quiet about it; the old Squire was a strict observer of the Maine law.

None of us found out what Halstead was doing for four or five days, and then only by accident. For he had caught his speckled gobbler and put him down at the foot of the stairs in the wagon-house cellar; and he got a sheet of hemlock bark, four feet long by two or three feet wide, such as are peeled off hemlock logs, and sold at tanneries, for the turkey to stand on.

It was dark as Egypt down in that cellar, when the door at the head of the stairs was shut; and turkeys, as is well-known, are very timid about moving in the dark. That poor gobbler just stood there, stock-still, on that sheet of bark and did not dare step off it. Three times a day Halstead used to go down there, on the sly, with a lantern, and feed him.

This went on for some time; Addison and I learned of it from hearing a little faint gobble in the cellar one morning when the flock was out in the farm lane, just behind the wagon-house. The young gobblers were gobbling and the hen turkeys yeaping; and from down cellar came a faint, answering gobble. We wondered how a turkey had got into that cellar, and on opening the door and peering down the stairs, we discovered Halstead's speckled gobbler standing on the curved sheet of hemlock bark.

While Addison and I were wondering about it, Halstead came out, and roughly told us to let his turkey alone! In reply to our questions he at last gave us some information about his project and boasted that within three weeks he would have a turkey four pounds heavier than any other in the flock; but he would not tell us how to make his kind of dough.

Addison scoffed at the scheme; but to show how well it was working, Halstead took us downstairs and had us "heft" the turkey. It did seem to be getting heavy. Halstead also got his dough dish and showed us how he fed his bird. After the second roll of dough had been shoved down his throat, the poor gobbler opened his bill and gave a queer little gasp of repletion, like *Ca-r-r-r!* None the less, Halstead made him swallow four rolls of dough!

Addison was disgusted. "Halse, I call that nasty!" he said. "I wouldn't care to eat a turkey fattened that way. I've a good notion to tell the old Squire about this."

Halstead was angry. "Oh, yes!" he exclaimed. "After I raise the biggest turkey, I suppose you will go and tell everybody that it isn't fit to eat!"

So Addison and I went about our business, but we used to peep down there once in a while, to see that poor bird standing, humped up, on his sheet of bark. Sometimes, too, when we saw Halstead going down with the lantern to feed him, we went along to see the performance and hear the turkey groan, *Ca-r-r-r!* "Halstead, that's wicked!" Addison said several times; and Halstead retorted that we were both trying to make out a story against him, so as to sneak our own turkeys in ahead of his.

Nine or ten days passed. Halstead was nearly always behindhand when we turned out to do the farm chores. As we went through the wagon-house one morning Addison stopped to take another peep at the captive; I went on, but a moment later heard him calling to me softly. When I joined him at the foot of the stairs he lighted a match for me to see. Halstead's gobbler lay dead with both feet up in the air. We wondered what Halstead would say when he went to feed his turkey. As we left, we heard him coming down from upstairs. He did not join us, to help do the chores, for half an hour. When he did appear, he looked glum; he had carried the poor victim of forced feeding out behind the west barn and buried him in the bean field—without ceremonies.

We said nothing—except now and then, as days passed, to ask him how the speckled gobbler was coming on. Halstead would look hard at us, but vouchsafed no replies.

The judge's turkey was sent to Portland on November 15; at that period each state appointed its own Thanksgiving Day, and in Maine the 17th had been set. Addison's choice had proved the best turkey: I think it weighed nearly seventeen pounds; he divided the five dollars with Theodora. The old Squire never learned of Halstead's bootless experiment in forced feeding.

CHAPTER XXIX

MITCHELLA JARS

Cold weather was again approaching. October had been very wet; but bright, calm days of Indian summer followed in November. And about that time Catherine, Theodora and Ellen had an odd adventure while out in the woods gathering partridge berries.

At the old farm we called the vivid green creeping vine that bears those coral-red berries in November, "partridge berry," because partridge feed on the berries and dig them from under the snow. Botanists, however, call the vine *Mitchella repens*. In our tramps through the woods we boys never gave it more than a passing glance, for the berries are not good to eat. The girls, however, thought that the vine was very pretty. Every fall Theodora and Ellen, with Kate Edwards, and sometimes the Wilbur girls, went into the woods to gather lion's-paw and mitchella with which to decorate the old farmhouse at Thanksgiving and Christmas. But it was one of their girl friends, named Lucia Scribner, or rather Lucia's mother, at Portland, who invented mitchella jars, and started a new industry in our neighborhood.

Lucia, who was attending the village Academy, often came up to the old farm on a Friday night to visit our girls over Saturday and Sunday. On one visit they gathered a basketful of mitchella, and when Lucia went home to Portland for Thanksgiving, she carried a small boxful of the vines and berries to her mother. Mrs. Scribner was an artist of some ability, and she made several little sketches of the vine on whitewood paper cutters as gifts to her friends. In order to keep the vine moist and fresh while she was making the sketches, she put it in a little glass jar with a piece of glass over the top.

The vine was so pretty in the jar that Mrs. Scribner was loath to throw it away; and after a while she saw that the berries were increasing in size. She had put nothing except a few spoonfuls of water into the jar with the vine; but the berries grew slowly all winter, until they were twice as big as in the fall.

Mrs. Scribner was delighted with the success of her chance experiment. The jar with the vine in it made a very pretty ornament for her work table. Moreover, the plant needed little care. To keep it fresh she had only to moisten it with a spoonful of water every two or three weeks. And cold weather—even zero weather—did not injure it at all. Friends who called on Mrs. Scribner admired her jar, and said that they should like to get some of them. Mrs. Scribner wrote to Theodora and suggested that she and her girl friends make up some mitchella jars, and sell them in the city.

That was the way the little industry began. The girls, however, did not really go into the business until the next fall. Then Theodora, Ellen, and Catherine prepared over a hundred jarfuls of the green vine and berries. Those they sent to Portland and Boston during Christmas week under the name of Mitchella Jars, and Christmas Bouquets. The jars, which were globular in shape and which ranged from a quart in capacity up to three and four quarts, cost from fifteen to thirty-five cents apiece. When filled with mitchella vines, they brought from a dollar and a quarter to two dollars.

On the day above referred to they set out to gather more vines, and they told the people at home that they were going to "Dunham's open"—an old clearing beyond our farther pasture, where once a settler named Dunham had begun to clear a farm. The place was nearly two miles from the old Squire's, and as the girls did not expect to get home until four o'clock, they took their

luncheon with them.

They hoped to get enough mitchella at the "open" to fill fifteen jars, and so took two bushel baskets. Four or five inches of hard-frozen snow was on the ground; but in the shelter of the young pine and fir thickets that were now encroaching on the borders of the "open" the "cradle knolls" were partly bare.

However, they found less mitchella at Dunham's open than they had hoped. After going completely round the borders of the clearing they had gathered only half a basketful. Kate then proposed that they should go on to another opening at Adger's lumber camp, on a brook near the foot of Stoss Pond. She had been there the winter before with Theodora, and both of them remembered having seen mitchella growing there.

The old lumber road was not hard to follow, and they reached the camp in a little less than an hour. They found several plats of mitchella, and began industriously to gather the vine.

They had such a good time at their work that they almost forgot their luncheon. When at last they opened the pasteboard box in which it was packed, they found the sandwiches and the mince pie frozen hard. Kate suggested that they go down to the lumber camp and kindle a fire.

"There's a stove in it that the loggers left three years ago," she said. "We'll make a fire and thaw our lunch."

"We have no matches!" Ellen exclaimed, when they reached the camp.

Inside the old cabin, however, they found three or four matches in a little tin box that was nailed to a log behind the stovepipe. Hunters had occupied the camp not long before; but they had left scarcely a sliver of anything dry or combustible inside it; they had even whittled and shaved the old bunk beam and plank table in order to get kindlings. After a glance round, Kate went out to gather dry brush along the brook.

Running on a little way, she picked up dry twigs here and there. At last, by a clump of white birches, she found a fallen spruce. As she was breaking off some of the twigs a strange noise caused her to pause suddenly. It was, indeed, an odd sound—not a snarl or a growl, or yet a bark like that of a dog, but a querulous low "yapping." At the same instant she heard the snow crust break, as if an animal were approaching through the thicket of young firs.

More curious than frightened, Kate listened intently. A moment later she saw a large gray fox emerge from among the firs and come toward her. Supposing that it had not seen or scented her, and thinking to frighten it, she cried out suddenly, "Hi, Mr. Fox!"

To her surprise the fox, instead of bounding away, came directly toward her, and now she saw that its head moved to and fro as it ran, and that clots of froth were dropping from its jaws. Kate had heard that foxes, as well as dogs and wolves, sometimes run mad. She realized that if this beast were mad, it would attack her blindly and bite her if it could. Still clutching her armful of dry twigs, she turned and sped back toward the camp. As she drew near the cabin, she called to the other girls to open the door. They heard her cries, and Ellen flung the door open. As Kate darted into the room, she cried, "Shut it, quick!"

Startled, the other two girls slammed the door shut, and hastily set the heavy old camp table against it.

"It's only a fox!" Kate cried. "But it has gone mad, I think. I was afraid it would bite me."

Peering out of the one little window and the cracks between the logs, they saw the animal run past the camp. It was still yapping weirdly, and it snapped at bushes and twigs as it passed. Suddenly it turned back and ran by the camp door again. Afterward they heard its cries first up the slope behind the camp, and then down by the brook.

"We mustn't go out," Kate whispered. "If it were to bite us, we, too, should go mad."

There was no danger of the beast's breaking into the camp, and after a while the girls kindled a fire, thawed out their luncheon and ate it. The December sun was sinking low, and soon set behind the tree tops. It was a long way home, and they had their baskets of mitchella to carry. Hoping that the distressed creature had gone its way, they listened for a while at the door, and at last ventured forth; but when they drew near the place where Kate had gathered the dry spruce branches they heard the creature yapping in the thickets ahead. In a panic they ran back to the camp.

Their situation was not pleasant. They dared not venture out again. Darkness had already set in; the camp was cold and they had little fuel. The prospect that any one from home would come to their aid was small, for they were now a long way from Dunham's open, where they had said they were going, and where, of course, search parties would look for them. Kate, however, remained cheerful.

"It's nothing!" she exclaimed. "I can soon get wood for a fire." Under the bunk she had found an old axe, and with it she proceeded to chop up the camp table.

"The only thing I'm afraid of," she said, "is that the boys will start out to look for us, and that if they find our tracks in the snow, they'll come on up here and run afoul of that fox before they know it."

"We can shout to them," Ellen suggested.

Not much later, in fact, they began to make the forest resound with loud, clear calls. For a long while the only answer to their cries came from two owls; but Kate was right in thinking that we boys would set out to find them.

Addison, Halstead and I had been up in Lot 32 that day with the old Squire, making an estimate of timber, and we did not reach home until after dark. Grandmother met us with the news that the girls had gone to Dunham's open for partridge-berry vines, and had not returned. She was very uneasy about them; but we were hungry and, grumbling a little that the girls could not come home at night as they were expected to, sat down to supper.

"I am afraid they've lost their way," grandmother said, after a few minutes. "It's going to be very cold. You must go to look for them!" And the old Squire agreed with her.

Just as we finished supper Thomas Edwards, Kate's brother, came in with a lantern, to ask whether Kate was there; and without much further delay we four boys set off. Addison took his gun and Halstead another lantern. We were not much worried about the girls; indeed, we expected to meet them on their way home. When we reached Dunham's open, however, and got no answer to our shouts, we became anxious.

At last we found their tracks leading up the winter road to Adger's camp, and we hurried along the old trail.

We had not gone more than half a mile when Tom, who was ahead, suddenly cried, "Hark! I heard some one calling!"

We stopped to listen; and after a moment or two we all heard a distant cry.

"That's Kate!" Tom muttered. "Something's the matter with them, sure!"

We started to run, but soon heard the same cry again, followed by indistinct words.

"What's the matter?" Tom shouted.

Again we heard their calls, but could not make out what they were trying to say. We were pretty sure now that the girls were at the old lumber camp; and hastening on to the top of the ridge that sloped down toward the brook, we all shouted loudly. Immediately a reply came back in hasty, anxious tones:

"Take care! There's a mad fox down here!"

"A what?" Addison cried.

"A fox that has run mad!" Kate repeated.

"Where is he?" Halstead cried.

"Running round in the thickets," Kate answered. "Look out, boys, or he'll bite you. That's the reason we didn't come home. We didn't dare leave the camp."

This was such a new kind of danger that for a few moments we were at a loss how to meet it. Tom looked about for a club.

"It's only a fox," he said. "I guess we can knock him over before he can bite us."

He and Addison went ahead with the club and the gun; Halstead and I, following close behind, held the lanterns high so that they could see what was in front of them. In this manner we moved down the brushy slope to the camp. The girls, who were peering out of the door, were certainly glad to see us.

"But where's your 'mad' fox?" we asked.

"He's round here somewhere. He really is," Kate protested earnestly. "We heard him only a little while ago."

Thereupon, while the girls implored us to be careful, we began to search about by lantern light. At last we heard a low wheezing noise near the old dam. On bringing the lantern nearer we finally caught sight of an animal behind the logs. It was a fox surely enough, and it acted as if it were disabled or dying. While Halstead and I held the lanterns, Addison took aim and shot the beast. Tom found a stick with a projecting knot that he could use as a hook, and with it he hauled the body out into plain view. It was a large cross-gray fox.

"Boys, that skin's worth thirty dollars!" Tom exclaimed.

"But I shouldn't like to be the one to skin it," Addison said. "Don't touch it with your hands, Tom."

While the girls were telling us of the fox's strange actions we warmed ourselves at the fire in the camp stove, and then all set off for home, for by this time it was getting late and the night was growing colder.

Halstead led the way with the two lanterns; Addison and I, each shouldering a basket of mitchella, followed; Tom, dragging the body of the fox with his hooked stick, came behind the girls. It was nearly midnight when we reached home.

Tom still thought that the fox's silvery pelt ought to be saved; but the old Squire persuaded him not to run the risk of skinning the creature.

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN BEARS WERE DENNING UP

Despite the hard times and low prices, the old Squire determined to go on with his lumber business that winter; and as more teams were needed for work at his logging camp in the woods, he bought sixteen work-horses, from Prince Edward Island. They had come by steamer to Portland; and the old Squire, with two hired men, went down to get them. He and the men drove six of them home, hitched to a new express wagon, and led the other ten behind.

The horses were great, docile creatures, with shaggy, clumsy legs, hoofs as big as dinner plates, and fetlocks six inches long. Later we had to shear their legs, because the long hair loaded up so badly with snow. Several of them were light red in color, and had crinkly manes and tails; and three or four weighed as much as sixteen hundred pounds apiece. Each horse had its name, age, and weight on a tag. I still remember some of the names. There was Duncan, Ducie, Trube, Lill, Skibo, Sally, Prince, and one called William-le-Bon.

They reached us in October, but we were several weeks getting them paired in spans and ready to go up into the woods for the winter's work.

The first snow that fall caught us in the midst of "housing-time," but fine weather followed it, so that we were able to finish our farmwork and get ready for winter.

Housing-time! How many memories of late fall at the old farm cling to that word! It is one of those homely words that dictionary makers have overlooked, and refers to those two or three weeks when you are making everything snug at the farm for freezing weather and winter snow; when you bring the sheep and young cattle home from the pasture, do the last fall ploughing, and dig the last rows of potatoes; when you bank sawdust, dead leaves or boughs round the barns and the farmhouse; when you get firewood under cover, and screw on storm windows and hang storm doors. It is a busy time in Maine, where you must prepare for a long winter and for twenty degrees below zero.

At last we were ready to start up to the logging camp with the sixteen horses. We hitched three spans of them to a scoot that had wide, wooden shoes, and that was loaded high with bags of grain, harnesses, peavies, shovels, axes, and chains. The other ten horses we led behind by halters.

Asa Doane, one of our hired men at the farm, drove the three spans on the scoot; Addison and I sat on the load behind and held the halters of the led horses. We had often taken horses into the woods in that way, and expected to have no trouble this time; although these horses were young, they were not high-spirited or mettlesome. We started at daybreak, and expected, if all went well, to reach the first of the two lumber camps by nine o'clock that evening.

We had a passenger with us—an eccentric old hunter named Tommy Goss, with his traps and gun. He had come to the farm the previous night, on his way up to his trapping grounds beyond the logging camps, and as his pack was heavy, he was glad of a lift on the scoot. Tommy was a queer, reticent old man; I wanted him to tell me about his trapping, but could get scarcely a word from him. We were pretty busy with our horses, however, for it is not easy to manage so many halters.

The air was very frosty and sharp in the early morning; but when the sun came up from a mild, yellow, eastern sky, we felt a little warmer. Not a breath of wind stirred the tree tops. The leaves had already fallen, and lay in a dense, damp carpet throughout the forest; the song birds had gone, and the woods seemed utterly quiet. When a red squirrel "chickered" at a distance, or when a partridge whirred up, the sound fell startlingly loud on the air.

There was, indeed, something almost ominous in the stillness of the morning. As we entered the spruce woods beyond the bushy clearing of the Old Slave's Farm, Addison cast his eye southward, and remarked that there was a "snow bank" rising in the sky. Turning, we saw a long, leaden, indeterminate cloud. It was then about nine o'clock in the morning.

By ten o'clock the cloud had hidden the sun, and by noon the entire sky had grown dark. The first breath of the oncoming storm stirred the trees, and we felt a piercing chill in the air. Then fine "spits" of snow began to fall.

"It's coming," Addison said; "but I guess we can get up to camp. We can follow the trail if it does storm."

At the touch of the snow, the coats of the horses ruffled up, and they stepped sluggishly. Asa had to chirrup constantly to the six ahead, and those behind lagged at their halters. The storm increased and we got on slowly. By four o'clock it had grown dark.

Suddenly the horses pricked their ears uneasily, and one of them snorted. We were ascending a

rocky, wooded valley between Saddleback Mountain and the White Birch Hills. The horses continued to show signs of uneasiness, and presently sounds of a tremendous commotion came from the side of the hills a little way ahead. It sounded as if a terrific fight between wild animals was in progress. The horses had stopped short, snorting.

"What's broke loose?" Addison exclaimed. "Must be bears."

"Uh-huh!" old Tommy assented. "Tham's b'ars. Sounds like as if one b'ar had come along to another b'ar's den and was tryin' to git in and drive tother one out. B'ars is dennin' to-night, and tham as has put off lookin' up a den till now is runnin' round in a hurry to get in somewhars out of the snow.

"A b'ar's allus ugly when he's out late, lookin' for a den," the old trapper went on. "A b'ar hates snow on his toes. Only time of year when I'm afraid of a b'ar is when he is jest out of his den in the spring, and when he's huntin' fer a den in a snowstorm."

Addison and I were crying, "Whoa!" and trying to hold those ten horses. Asa was similarly engaged with his six on the scoot. Every instant, too, the sounds were coming nearer, and a moment later two large animals appeared ahead of us in the stormy obscurity. One was chasing the other, and was striking him with his paw; their snarls and roars were terrific.

We caught only a glimpse of them. Then all sixteen of the horses bolted at once. Asa could not hold his six. They whirled off the trail and ran down among the trees toward a brook that we could hear brawling in the bed of the ravine. They took the scoot with them, and in wild confusion our ten led horses followed madly after them. Bags, harnesses, axes, and shovels flew off the scoot. Halters crossed and crisscrossed. I was pulled off the load, and came near being trodden on by the horses behind. I could not see what had become of old Tommy or the bears.

Still hanging to his reins, Asa had jumped from the scoot. Addison, too, still clinging to his five halters, had leaped off. Before I got clear, two horses bounded over me. The three spans on the scoot dashed down the slope, but brought up abruptly on different sides of a tree. Some of them were thrown down, and the others floundered over them. Two broke away and ran with the led horses. It was a rough place, littered with large rocks and fallen trees. In their panic the horses floundered over those, but a little farther down came on a bare, shelving ledge that overhung the brook. Probably they could not see where they were going, or else those behind shoved the foremost off the brink; at any rate, six of the horses went headlong down into the rocky bed of the torrent, whence instantly arose heart-rending squeals of pain.

It had all happened so suddenly that we could not possibly have prevented it. In fact, we had no more than picked ourselves up from among the snowy logs and stones when they were down in the brook. Those that had not gone over the ledge were galloping away down the valley.

"Goodness! What will the old Squire say to this?" were Addison's first words.

After a search, we found a lantern under a heap of bags and harness. It was cracked, but Asa succeeded in lighting it; and about the first object I saw with any distinctness was old Tommy, doubled up behind a tree.

"Are you hurt?" Addison called to him.

"Wal, I vum, I dunno!" the old man grunted. "Wa'n't that a rib-h'ister!"

Concluding that there was not much the matter with him, we hastened down to the brook. There hung one horse—William-le-Bon—head downward, pawing on the stones in the brook with his fore hoofs. He had caught his left hind leg in the crotch of a yellow birch-tree that grew at the foot of the ledges. In the brook lay Sally, with a broken foreleg. Beyond her was Duncan, dead; he had broken his neck. Lill was cast between two big stones; and she, too, had broken her leg. Moaning dolefully, Prince floundered near by. Another horse had got to his feet; he was dragging one leg, which seemed to be out of joint or broken.

Meanwhile the storm swirled and eddied. We did not know what to do. Asa declared that it was useless to try to save Prince, and with a blow of the axe he put him out of his misery. Then, while I held the lantern, he and Addison cut the birch-tree in which William-le-Bon hung. The poor animal struggled so violently at times that they had no easy task of it; but at last the tree fell over, and we got the horse's leg free. It was broken, however, and he could not get up.

As to the others, it was hard to say, there in the night and storm, what we ought to do for them. In the woods a horse with a broken leg is little better than dead, and in mercy is usually put out of its misery. We knew that the four horses lying there were very seriously injured, and Asa thought that we ought to put an end to their sufferings. But Addison and I could not bring ourselves to kill them, and we went to ask Tommy's advice.

The old man was pottering about the scoot, trying to recover his traps and gun. He hobbled down to the brink of the chasm and peered over at the disabled animals; but "I vum, I dunno," was all that we could get from him in the way of advice.

At last we brought the horse blankets from the scoot and put them over the suffering creatures to protect them from the storm. In their efforts to get up, however, the animals thrashed about constantly, and the blankets did not shelter them much. We had no idea where the horses were that had run away.

At last, about midnight, we set off afoot up the trail to the nearest lumber camp. Asa led the way with the lantern, and old Tommy followed behind us with his precious traps. The camp was nearly six miles away; it proved a hard, dismal tramp, for now the snow was seven or eight inches deep. We reached the camp between two and three o'clock in the morning, and roused Andrews, the foreman, and his crew of loggers. Never was warm shelter more welcome to us.

At daybreak the next morning it was still snowing, but Andrews and eight of his men went back with us. The horses still lay there in the snow in a pitiful plight; we all agreed that it was better to end their sufferings as quickly as possible.

We then went in search of the runaways, and after some time found them huddled together in a swamp of thick firs about two miles down the trail. We captured them without trouble and led them back to the scoot, which we reloaded and sent on up to camp with Asa. Addison and I put bridles on two of the horses,—Ducie and Skibo,—and rode home to the farm.

It was dark when we got home, and no one heard us arrive. After we had put up the horses, we went into the house with our dismal tidings. The old Squire was at his little desk in the sitting-room, looking over his season's accounts.

"You go in and tell him," Addison said to me.

I dreaded to do it, but at last opened the door and stole in.

"Ah, my son," the old gentleman said, looking up, "so you are back."

"Yes, sir," said I, "but—but we've had trouble, sir, terrible trouble."

"What!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"We've had a dreadful time. Some bears came out ahead of us and scared the horses!" I blurted out. "And we've lost six of them! They ran off the ledges into Saddleback brook and broke their legs. We had to kill them."

The old Squire jumped to his feet with a look of distress on his face. Addison now came into the room, and helped me to give a more coherent account of what had happened.

After his first exclamation of dismay, the old Squire sat down and heard our story to the end. Naturally, he felt very badly, for the accident had cost him at least a thousand dollars. He did not reproach us, however.

"I have only myself to blame," he said. "It is a bad way of taking horses into the woods—leading so many of them together. I have always felt that it was risky. They ought to go separate, with a driver for every span. This must be a lesson for the future."

"It is an ill wind that blows no one any good," says the proverb. Our disaster proved a bonanza to old Tommy Goss; he set his traps there all winter, near the frozen bodies of the horses, and caught marten, fishers, mink, "lucivees," and foxes by the dozen.

CHAPTER XXXI

CZAR BRENCH

The loss of Master Joel Pierson as our teacher at the district school the following winter, was the greatest disappointment of the year. We had anticipated all along that he was coming back, and I think he had intended to do so; but an offer of seventy-five dollars a month—more than double what our small district could pay—to teach a village school in an adjoining county, robbed us of his invaluable services; for Pierson was at that time working his way through college and could not afford to lose so good an opportunity to add to his resources during the winter vacation.

We did not learn this till the week before school was to begin; and when his letter to Addison reached us, explaining why he could not come, there were heart-felt lamentations at the old Squire's and at the Edwards farm.

I really think that the old Squire would have made up the difference in wages to Master Pierson from his own purse; but the offer to go to the larger school had already been accepted.

As several of the older boys of our own district school had become somewhat unruly—including Newman Darnley, Alf Batchelder and, I grieve to say, our cousin Halstead—the impression prevailed that the school needed a "straightener." Looking about therefore at such short notice, the school agent was led to hire a master, widely noted as a disciplinarian, named Nathaniel Brench, who for years had borne the nickname of "Czar" Brench, owing to his autocratic and cruel methods of school government.

I remember vividly that morning in November, the first day of school, when Czar Brench walked into the old schoolhouse, glanced smilingly round, and laid his package of books and his ruler, a heavy one, on the master's desk; then, coming forward to the box stove in the middle of the floor, he warmed his hands at the stovepipe. Such a big man! Six feet three in his socks, bony, broad-shouldered, with long arms and big hands.

He wore a rather high-crowned, buff-colored felt hat. Light buff, indeed, seemed to be his chosen color, for he wore a buff coat, buff vest and buff trousers. Moreover, his hair, his bushy eyebrows and his short, thin moustache were sandy.

Beaming on us with his smiling blue eyes, he rubbed his hands gently as he warmed them.

"I hope we are going to have a pleasant term of school together," he said, in a tone as soft as silk. "And it will not be my fault if we don't have a real quiet, nice time."

We learned later that it was his custom always to begin school with a beautiful speech of honeyed words—the calm before the storm.

"Of course we have to have order in the schoolroom," he said apologetically. "I confess that I like to have the room orderly, and that I do not like to hear whispering in study hours. When the scholars go out and come in at recess time, too, it sort of disturbs me to have crowding and noise. I never wish to be hard or unreasonable with my scholars—I never am, if I can avoid it. But these little things, as you all know, have to be mentioned sometimes, if we are going to have a really pleasant and profitable term.

"There is another thing that always make me feel nervous in school hours, and that is buzzing with the lips while you are getting your lessons, I don't like to speak about it, and there may be no need for it, but lips buzzing in study hours always make me feel queer. It's just as easy to get your lessons with your eyes as with your lips, and for the sake of my feelings I hope you will try to do so.

"Speaking of lessons," he went on, "I don't believe in giving long ones. I always liked short, easy lessons myself, and I suppose you do."

In point of fact he gave the longest, hardest lessons of any teacher we ever had! We had to put in three or four hours of hard study every evening in order to keep up; and if we failed—

By this time some of the larger boys—Newman Darnley, Ben Murch, Absum Glinds and Melzar Tibbetts—were smiling broadly and winking at one another. The new master, they thought, was "dead easy."

Later in the morning, when the bell rang for the boys to come in from their recess, Newman and many of the others pushed in at the doorway, pell-mell, as usual. Before they were fairly inside the room the new master, calm and smiling, stood before them. One of his long arms shot out; he collared Newman and, with a trip of the foot, flung him on the floor. Ben Murch, coming next, landed on top of Newman. Alfred Batchelder, Ephraim Darnley, Absum Glinds, Melzar Tibbetts and my cousin, Halstead, followed Ben, till with incredible suddenness nine of the boys, all almost men-grown, were piled in a squirming heap on the floor!

Filled with awe, we smaller boys stole in to our seats, casting frightened glances at the teacher, who stood beaming genially at the heap of boys on the floor.

"Lie still, lie still," he said, as some of the boys at the bottom of the pile struggled to get out. "Lie still. I suppose you forgot that it disturbs me to have crowding and loud trampling. Try and remember that it disturbs me."

Turning away, he said, "The girls may now have their recess."

To this day I remember just how those terrified girls stole out from the schoolroom. Not until they had come in from their recess and had taken their seats did Master Brench again turn his attention to the pile of boys. He walked round it with his face wreathed in smiles.

"Like as not that floor is hard," he remarked. "It has just come into my mind. I'm afraid you're not wholly comfortable. Rise quietly, brush one another, and take your seats. It grieves me to think how hard that floor must be."

There were at that time about sixty-five pupils in our district, ranging in size and age from little four-year-olds, just learning the alphabet, to young men and women twenty years of age. It was impossible that so many young persons could be gathered in a room without some shuffling of feet and some noise with books and slates. Moreover, boys and girls unused to study for nine months of the year are not always able at first to con lessons without unconsciously and audibly moving their lips.

Buzzing lips, however, were among the seven "deadly sins" under the régime of Czar Brench. Dropping a book or a slate, wriggling about in your seat, whispering to a seatmate, sitting idly without seeming to study and not knowing your lesson reasonably well were other grave offenses.

Because of the length of the lessons, there were frequently failures in class; the punishment for that was to stand facing the school, and study the lesson diligently, feverishly, until you knew it. There were few afternoons that term when three or four pupils were not out there, madly studying to avoid remaining after school. For no one knew what would happen if you were left there alone with Czar Brench!

He seemed to care for little except order and strict discipline. He used to take off his boots and, putting on an old pair of carpet slippers, walk softly up and down the room, leisurely swinging his ruler. First and last that winter he feruled nearly all of us boys and several of the girls. "Little

love pats to assist memory," he used to say, as he brought his ruler down on the palms of our hands.

Feruling with the ruler was for ordinary, miscellaneous offenses; but Czar Brench had more picturesque punishments for the six or seven "deadly sins." If you dropped a book, he would instantly cry, "Pick up that book and fetch it to me!" Then, when you came forward, he would say, "Take it in your right hand. Face the school. Hold it out straight, full stretch, and keep it there till I tell you to lower it."

Oh, how heavy that book soon got to be! And when Czar Brench calmly went on hearing lessons and apparently forgot you there, the discomfort soon became torture. Your arm would droop lower and lower, until Czar Brench's eye would fall on you, and he would say quietly, "Straight out, there!"

There were many terribly tired arms at our school that winter!

But holding books at arm's length was a far milder penalty than "sitting on nothing," which was Czar Brench's specially devised punishment for those who shuffled uneasily on those hard old benches during study hours.

"Aha, there, my boy!" he would cry. "If you cannot sit still on that bench, come right out here and sit on nothing."

Setting a stool against the wall, he would order the pupil to sit down on it with his back pressing against the wall. Then he would remove the stool, leaving the offender in a sitting posture, with his back to the wall and his knees flexed. By the time the victim had been there ten minutes, he wished never to repeat the experience. I know whereof I speak, for I "sat on nothing" three times that winter.

Czar Brench's most picturesque, not to say bizarre, punishment was for buzzing lips. Many of us, studying hard to get our lessons, were very likely to make sounds with our lips, and in the silence of that schoolroom the least little lisp was sure to reach the master's ear.

"Didn't I hear a buzzer then?" he would ask in his softest tone, raising his finger to point to the offender. "Ah, yes. It is—it is *you*! Come out here. Those lips need a lesson."

The lesson consisted in your standing, facing the school, with your mouth propped open. The props were of wood, and were one or two inches long, for small or large "buzzers."

I remember one day when six boys—and I believe one girl—stood facing the school with their mouths propped open at full stretch, each gripping a book and trying to study! Inveterate "buzzers"—those who had been called out two or three times—had not only to face the school with props in their mouths but to mount and stand on top of the master's desk.

If Czar Brench had not been so big and strong, the older boys would no doubt have rebelled and perhaps carried him out of the schoolhouse, which was the early New England method of getting rid of an unpopular schoolmaster. None of the boys, however, dared raise a finger against him, and he ruled his little kingdom as an absolute monarch. At last, however, towards the close of the term, some one dared to defy him—and it was not one of the big boys, but our youthful neighbor Catherine Edwards.

That afternoon Czar Brench had put a prop in Rufus Darnley, Jr.'s mouth. Rufus was only twelve years old and by no means one of the bright boys of the school. He stuttered in speech, and, being dull, had to study very hard to get his lessons. Every day or two he forgot his lips and "buzzed." I think he had stood on the master's desk four or five times that term.

It was a high desk; and that afternoon Rufus, trying to study up there, with his mouth propped open, lost his balance and fell to the floor in front of the desk. In falling, the prop was knocked out of his mouth.

At the crash Czar Brench, who had been hearing the grammar class with his back to Rufus, turned. I think he thought that Rufus had jumped down; for, fearing the teacher's wrath, the frightened boy scrambled to his feet and, with a cry, started to run out of school.

With one long stride the master had him by the arm. "I don't quite know what I shall do to you," he said, as he brought the boy back.

He shook Rufus until the little fellow's teeth chattered and his eyes rolled; and while he shook him, he seemed to be reflecting what new punishment he could devise for this rebellious attempt.

To the utter amazement of us all, Catherine, who was sitting directly in front of them, suddenly spoke out.

"Mr. Brench," she cried, "you are a hard, cruel man!"

The master was so astounded that he let go of Rufus and stared down at her. "Stand up!" he commanded, no longer in his soft tone, but in a terrible voice.

Catherine stood up promptly, unflinching; her eyes, blazing with indignation, looked squarely into his.

"Let me see your hand," he said.

Instead of one hand, Catherine instantly thrust out both, under his very nose.

"Ferule me!" she cried. "Ferule both my hands, Mr. Brench! Ferule me all you want to! I don't care how hard you strike! But you are a bad, cruel man, and I hate you!"

Still holding the ruler, Czar Brench gazed at her for some moments in silence; he seemed almost dazed.

"You are the first scholar that ever spoke to me like that," he said at last. A singular expression had come into his face; he was having a new experience. For another full minute he stared down at the girl, but he apparently had no longer any thought of feruling her.

"Take your seat," he said to her at last; and, after sending the still trembling Rufus to his seat, he dismissed the grammar class.

Nothing out of the ordinary happened afterwards. There were but three weeks more of school, and the term ended about as usual.

The school agent and certain of the parents in the district who believed in the importance of rigid discipline wished to have Czar Brench teach there another winter; but for some reason he declined to return. At the old Squire's we thought that it was, perhaps, because he had failed to conquer Catherine.

CHAPTER XXXII

WHEN OLD PEG LED THE FLOCK

During the fifth week of school there was an enforced vacation of three or four days, over Sunday, while the school committee were investigating certain complaints of abusive punishment, against Master Brench.

The complaints were from numbers of the parents, and concerned putting those props in pupils' mouths to abolish "buzzing" of the lips, while studying their lessons; and also complaints about "sitting on nothing," said to be injurious to the spine. The affair did not much concern us young folks at the old Squire's. Indeed, we did not much care for the school that winter. Master Brench's attention was chiefly directed to keeping order and devising punishments for violations of school discipline. School studies appeared to be of minor importance with him.

It was on Tuesday of that week, while we were at home, that the following incident occurred.

Owing to our long winters, sheep raising, in Maine, has often been an uncertain business. But at the old Squire's we usually kept a flock of eighty or a hundred. They often brought us no real profit, but grandmother Ruth was an old-fashioned housewife who would have felt herself bereaved if she had had no woolen yarn for socks and bed blankets.

The sheep were already at the barn for the winter; it was the 12th of December, though as yet we had had no snow that remained long on the ground. We were cutting firewood out in the lot that day and came in at noon with good appetites, for the air was sharp.

While we sat at table a stranger drove up. He said that his name was Morey, and that he was stocking a farm which he had recently bought in the town of Lovell, nineteen or twenty miles west of our place.

"I want to buy a flock of sheep," he said. "I have called to see if you have any to sell."

"Well, perhaps," the old Squire replied, for that was one of the years when wool was low priced. As he and Morey went out to the west barn where the sheep were kept, grandmother Ruth looked disturbed.

"You go out and tell your grandfather not to sell those sheep," she said after a few minutes to Addison and me. "Tell him not to price them."

Addison and I went out, but we arrived too late. Mr. Morey and the old Squire were standing by the yard bars, looking at the sheep, and as we came up the stranger said:

"Now, about how much would you take for this flock—you to drive them over to my place in Lovell?"

Before either Addison or I could pass on grandmother Ruth's admonition, the old Squire had replied smilingly, "Well, I'd take five dollars a head for them."

As a matter of fact, the old gentleman had not really intended to sell the sheep; he had not thought that the man would pay that price for them, because it was now only the beginning of winter, and the sheep would have to be fed at the barn for nearly six months.

But to the old Squire's surprise Mr. Morey, with as little ado as if he were buying a pair of shoes, said, "Very well. I will take them."

Drawing out his pocketbook, he handed the old Squire ten new fifty-dollar bills and asked

whether we could conveniently drive the sheep over to his farm on the following day. In fact, before the old Squire had more than counted the money, Mr. Morey had said good-day and had driven off.

Just what grandmother Ruth said when the old gentleman went in to put the bills away in his desk, we boys never knew; but for a long time thereafter the sale of the sheep was a sore subject at the old farm.

The transaction was not yet complete, however, for we still had to deliver the sheep to their new owner. At six o'clock the following morning Halstead, Addison and I set out to drive them to Lovell. The old Squire had been up since three o'clock, feeding the flock with hay and provender for the drive; he told us that he would follow later in the day with a team to bring us home after our long walk. The girls put us up luncheons in little packages, which we stowed in our pockets.

It was still dark when we started. The previous day had been clear, but the sky had clouded during the night. It was raw and chilly, with a feel of snow in the air. The sheep felt it; they were sluggish and unwilling to leave the barn. Finally, however, we got them down the lane and out on the hard-frozen highway; Halstead ran ahead, shaking the salt dish; Addison and I, following after, hustled the laggards along.

The leader of our flock was a large brock-faced ewe called Old Peg. She was known to be at least eleven years old, which is a venerable age for a sheep. She raised twin lambs every spring and was, indeed, a kind of flock mother, for many of the sheep were either her children or her grandchildren. Wherever the flock went, she took the lead and set the pace.

So long as we kept Old Peg following Halstead and the salt dish, the rest of the sheep scampered after, and we got on well.

We had gone scarcely more than a mile when, owing to a too hasty breakfast, or the morning chill, Halstead was taken with cramps. He was never a very strong boy and had always been subject to such ailments. We had to leave him at a wayside farmhouse—the Sylvester place—to be dosed with hot ginger tea. At last, after losing half an hour there, we went on without him; Addison now shook the salt dish ahead, and I, brandishing a long stick, kept stragglers from lagging in the rear.

Three persons are needed to drive a flock of a hundred sheep; but we saw no way except to go on and do the best we could. Now that it was light, the sky looked as if a storm were at hand.

The storm did not reach us until nearly eleven o'clock, however; we had got as far as the town of Albany before the first flakes began to fall. Then Old Peg made trouble. Leaving the barn and going off so far was against all her ideas of propriety, and now that a snowstorm had set in she was certain that something or other was wrong. She looked this way and that, sometimes turning completely round to look at the road. Presently she made a bolt off to the left and, jumping a stone wall, tried to circle back through a field. Part of the flock immediately followed, and we had a lively race to head her off and start her along the road again.

Addison abandoned the salt dish,—it was no longer attractive to the sheep,—and helped me to drive the flock. At every cross road Peg seemed bent on taking the wrong turn. In spite of the cold she kept us in a perspiration, and we did not have time even to eat the luncheon that we had brought in our pockets. Old Peg's one idea was to lead the flock home to the old farm.

By hard work we kept the sheep going in the right direction until after three o'clock in the afternoon. By that time four or five inches of snow had fallen. It whitened the whole country and loaded the fleeces of the sheep. The flock had begun to lag, and the younger sheep were bleating plaintively. We were getting worried, for the storm was increasing, and as nearly as Addison could remember we had six miles farther to go. It would soon be night; the forests that here bordered the road were darkening already. We had no idea how we should get the flock on after dark.

Old Peg soon took the matter out of our hands. She had been plodding on moodily at the head of her large family for half an hour or more, and coming at length to a dim cross road that entered the highway from the woods on the north side, she turned and started up it at a headlong run.

How she ran! And how the flock streamed after her! How we ran, too, to head her off and turn her back! Addison dashed out to one side of the narrow forest road and I to the other. But there was brush and swamp on both sides. Neither of us could catch up with Old Peg. Stumbling through the snowy thickets, we tried to get past her half a dozen times, but she still kept ahead.

She must have gone a mile. When she at last emerged into an opening, we saw, looming dimly through the storm and the fast-gathering dusk, a large, weathered barn, with its great doors standing open.

"Well, let her go, confound her!" Addison exclaimed, panting.

Quite out of breath, we gave up the chase and fell behind. Old Peg never stopped until she was inside that barn. When we caught up with the rout, she had her flock about her on the barn floor.

"Perhaps it's just as well to let them stay overnight here," Addison said after we had looked round.

Thirty or forty yards farther along the road stood a low, dark house, with the door hanging awry

and half the glass in the two front windows broken. Evidently it was a deserted farm. From appearances, no one had lived there for years. But some one had stored a quantity of hay in the mow beside the barn floor; the sheep were already nibbling at it.

"I don't know whose hay this is," Addison said, "but the sheep must be fed. The old Squire or Mr. Morey can look up the owners and settle for it afterwards."

We strewed armfuls of the hay over the barn floor and let the hungry creatures help themselves. Then we shut the barn doors and went to the old house.

Every one knows what a cheerless, forbidding place a deserted house is by night. The partly open door stuck fast; but we squeezed in, and Addison struck a match. One low room occupied most of the interior; there was a fireplace, but so much snow had come down the large chimney that the prospect of having a fire there was poor. As in many old farmhouses, there was a brick oven close beside the fireplace.

"Maybe we can light a fire in the oven," Addison said, and after breaking up several old boards we did succeed in kindling a blaze there. The dreary place was not a little enlivened by the firelight. We stood before it, warmed our fingers and munched the cold meat, doughnuts and cheese that the girls had put up for us.

But the smoke had disturbed a family of owls in the chimney. Their dismal whooping and chortling, heard in the gloom of the night and the storm, were uncanny to say the least. I wanted to go back to the barn, with the sheep; but Addison was more matter-of-fact.

"Oh, let them hoot!" he said. "I am going to stay here and have a fire, if I can find anything to burn."

While poking about at the far end of the room for more boards to break up, he found a battered old wardrobe with double doors and called to me to help him drag it in front of the oven.

"Going to smash that?" I asked.

"No, going to sleep in it," said he. "We'll set it up slantwise before the fire, open the doors and lie down in it. I've a notion that it will keep us warm, even if it isn't very soft."

The wardrobe was about four feet wide, and, after propping up the top end at an easy slant, we lay down in it, and took turns getting up to replenish the blaze in the oven. It was not wholly uncomfortable; but any sense of ease that I had begun to feel was banished by a suspicion that Addison now confided to me.

"I don't certainly know what place this is," he said, "but I'm beginning to think that it must be the old Jim Cronin farm. I've heard that it's over in this vicinity, away off in the woods by itself. If that's so," Addison went on, "nobody has lived here for eight or nine years. Cronin, you know, kept his wife shut up down cellar for a year or two, because she tried to run away from him. Finally she disappeared, and a good many thought that Cronin murdered her. Folks say the old house is haunted, but that's all moonshine. Cronin himself enlisted and was killed in the Civil War. By the way those owls carry on up the chimney I guess nobody ever comes here."

That account quite destroyed my peace of mind. I would much rather have gone out with the sheep, but I did not like to leave Addison. I got up and searched for more fuel, for I could not bear to think of letting the fire go out. No loose boards remained except an old cleated door partly off its hinges, which opened on a flight of dark stairs that led into the cellar. We broke up the door and took turns again tending the fire.

"Oh, well, this isn't so bad," Addison said. "But I wonder what the old Squire will think when he gets to Morey's place with the team and finds that we haven't come. Hope he isn't out looking for us in the storm."

That thought was disquieting; but there was nothing we could do about it, and so we resigned ourselves to pass the night as best we could. The owls still hooted and chortled at times, but their noise did not greatly disturb us now. After a while I dropped off to sleep, and I guess Addison did, too.

It was probably well toward morning when a cry like a loud shriek brought me to my feet outside the old wardrobe! A single dying ember flickered in the oven. Addison, too, was on his feet, with his eyes very wide and round.

"I say!" he whispered. "What was that?"

Before I could speak we heard it again; but this time, now that we were awake, it sounded less like a human shriek than the shrill yelp of an animal. The sounds came from directly under us; and for the instant all I could think of was Cronin's murdered wife!

Addison had turned to stare at the dark cellar doorway, when we heard it yet again—a wild staccato yelp, prolonged and quavering.

"There must be a wolf or a fox down there!" Addison muttered and picked up a loose brick from the fireplace.

He started to throw it down the cellar stairs, when three or four yelps burst forth at once, followed by a rumble and clatter below, as if a number of animals were running madly round, and

then by the ugliest, most savage growl that ever came to my ears!

Addison stopped short. "Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "That's some big beast. Sounds like a bear! He'll be up here in a minute! Quick, help me stand this wardrobe in front of the doorway!"

He seized it on one side, I on the other, and between us we quickly stood that heavy piece of furniture up against the dark opening. Then, while I held it in place, Addison propped it fast with the door from the foot of the chamber stairs, which with one wrench he tore from its hinges.

It was evidently foxes, or bears, or both; but how they had got into the cellar was not clear. We started the fire blazing again and, standing in front of it, listened to the uproar. At times we heard yelps in the storm outside, at the back of the house, and decided that there must be some other way than the stairs of getting into the cellar.

After a while it began to grow light. Snow was still falling, but not so fast. The commotion below had quieted, but we heard a fox barking outside and from the back window caught sight of the animal moving about in the snow, holding up first one foot then another. Farther away, among the bushes of the clearing, stood another fox; and, still farther off in the woods, a third was barking querulously. Tracks in the snow led to a large hole under the sill of the house where a part of the cellar wall had caved in.

"But there's a bear or some other large animal down cellar," Addison said. "You watch here at the window."

He got a brick and, pulling the old wardrobe aside, flung it down the stairs and yelled. Instantly there was a clatter below, and out from the hole under the sill bounded a big black animal, evidently a bear, and loped away through the snow.

We could now pretty well account for the nocturnal uproar. Bears hibernate in winter, but are often out until the first snows come. The storm had probably surprised this one while he was still roaming about, and he had hastily searched for a den.

The storm had abated, and we decided to start for Lovell at once. We gave the sheep a foddering of hay and then got the flock outdoors. Old Peg was very loath to leave the barn, and we had to drag her out by main strength. Addison went ahead and tramped a path in the deep snow. Finding that there was no help for it, Old Peg followed, and the flock trailed after her in a woolly file several hundred feet long. Flourishing my stick and shouting loudly, I urged on the rear of the procession.

In less than half an hour we met the old Squire with the team and two men from the Morey farm. The old gentleman had arrived there about six o'clock the night before and had been worried as to what had become of us. He must have passed the place where Old Peg had bolted up the road not long after we were there; but it was already so dark that he had not seen our snow-covered tracks.

"Well, well, boys, you must have had a hard time of it!" were his first words. "Where did you pass the night?"

"At the old Cronin farm, I guess," Addison replied.

"That lonesome place!" the old Squire exclaimed.

"It *was* slightly lonesome," Addison admitted dryly.

"Did you see a ghost?" one of the men asked with a grin.

"Not a white one," Addison replied. "But we saw something pretty big and black. There were owls in the chimney and foxes in the cellar—also a bear. I guess that's all the ghost there is. But there's a hay bill for somebody to pay; about three hundredweight, I think."

From there on, with the men to help us, we made better progress, and before noon we had delivered the flock to its new owner. The warm dinner that we ate at the Morey farm tasted mighty good to Addison and me.

We never saw Peg again; but before the winter had passed, the old Squire bought another small flock of sheep from a neighbor.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WITCHES' BROOMS

The school committee finally decided that Master Brench's curious methods of punishment were not actually dangerous. He was advised, however, to discontinue them; and school went on again Monday morning. Six or seven of the older boys refused to come back; but the old Squire thought we would better attend, for example's sake, if for no other reason, and we did so. During Christmas week, however, we were out several days, on account of an order for Christmas trees which had come up to us from Portland. I still remember that order distinctly. It ran as follows:

"Bring us one large Christmas tree, a balsam fir, fifteen feet tall, at least, and wide-spreading. Do not allow the tips of the boughs or the end buds to get broken or rubbed off.

"Bring six smaller firs, ten feet tall, to set in a half circle on each side of the large tree.

"Bring us also a large box of 'lion's-paw,' as much as four or five bushels of the trailing vines. And another large box of holly, carefully packed in more of the same soft vines, so that the berries shall not be shaken off.

"And, if you can find them, bring a dozen witches' brooms."

The order was from the superintendent of a Sunday school at Portland. This was the winter after our first memorable venture in selling Christmas trees in the city, when we had left the two large firs that we could not sell on the steps of two churches. The *Eastern Argus* had printed an item the next day, saying that the Sunday-school children wished to thank the unknown Santa Claus who had so kindly remembered them.

I suppose we should hardly have given away those two trees if we could have sold them; and my cousin Addison, who was always on the lookout to earn a dollar, sent a note afterward to the Sunday schools of both churches, informing them that we should be very glad to furnish them with Christmas trees in future, at fair rates. Not less than five profitable orders came from that one gift, which did not really cost us anything.

"What in the world are 'witches' brooms'?" Addison exclaimed, after reading the order. Theodora echoed the query. We had heard of witches' broom-sticks, but witches' brooms were clearly something new in the way of Christmas decorations. But what? We looked in the dictionary; no help there. We asked questions of older people, and got no help from them. Finally we went to the old Squire, who repeated the query absently, "Witches' brooms? Witches' brooms? Why, let me see. Aren't they those great dense masses of twigs you sometimes see in the tops of fir trees? It is a kind of tree disease, some say tree cancer. At first they are green, but they turn dead and dry by the second year, and may kill that part of the tree. Often they are as large as a bushel basket. I saw one once fully six feet in diameter, a dry globe of closely packed twigs."

We knew what he meant now, but we had never heard those singular growths called "witches' brooms" before. Unlike mistletoe, the broom is not a plant parasite, but a growth from the fir itself, like an oak gall, or a gnarl on a maple or a yellow birch; but instead of being a solid growth on the tree trunk, it is a dense, abnormal growth of little twigs on a small bough of the fir, generally high up in the top.

The next day we went out along the borders of the farm wood lot and cut the seven firs; then, thinking that there might be a sale for others, we got enough more to make up a load for our trip to Portland.

While we were thus employed, Theodora and Ellen gathered the "lion's-paw," on the knolls by the border of the pasture woods; and in the afternoon we cut an immense bundle of holly along the wall by the upper field.

Holly is a word of many meanings; but in Maine what is called holly is the winterberry, a deciduous shrub that botanists rank as a species of alder. The vivid red berries are very beautiful, and resemble coral.

All the while we had been on the lookout for witches' brooms. In the swamp beyond the brook we found six, only two of which were perfect enough to use as decorations; at first we were a little doubtful of being able to fill this part of the order. There was one place, however, where we knew they could be found, and that was in the great fir swamp along Lurvey's Stream, on the way up to the hay meadows. Addison mentioned it at the supper table that evening; but the distance was fully thirteen miles; and at first we thought it hardly worth while to go so far for a dozen witches' brooms, for which the Sunday school would probably be unwilling to pay more than fifty cents apiece.

"And yet," Addison remarked, "if this Sunday school wants a dozen, other schools may want some after they see them. What if we go up and get seventy-five or a hundred, and take them along with the rest of our load? They may sell pretty well. Listen: 'Witches' brooms for your Christmas tree! Very sylvan! Very odd! Something new and unique! Only fifty cents apiece! Buy a broom! Buy a witches' broom!'"

The girls laughed. "What a peddler you would make, Ad!" Ellen cried; and we began to think that the venture might be worth trying.

It snowed hard that night, and instead of going up the stream on the ice with two hand sleds, as we had at first planned, Addison and I set a hayrack on two traverse sleds, and with two of the work-horses drove up the winter road. Axes and ropes were taken, feed for the team, and food enough for two days.

The sun had come out bright and warm; there was enough snow to make the sleds run easily, and we got on well until past three in the afternoon, when we were made aware of a very unusual change of temperature, for Maine in December. It grew warm rapidly; clouds overspread the sky; a thunderpeal rumbled suddenly. Within ten minutes a thundershower was falling, and almost as if by magic, all that snow melted away. We were left with our rack and traverse sleds, scraping and bumping over logs and stones. Never before or since have I seen six inches of snow go out of

sight so suddenly. When we started, the earth was white on every hand, and the firs and spruces were like huge white umbrellas. In a single hour earth and forest were black again.

But matters more practical than scenery engaged our attention. It was eight miles farther to the fir swamp. The good sledding had vanished with the snow; every hole and hollow was full of water; it was hard to get on with our team; and for a time we hardly knew what course to follow.

On a branch trail, about half a mile off the winter road, there was another camp, known to us as Brown's Camp, which had been occupied by loggers the winter before. Addison thought that we had better go there and look for witches' brooms the next day. We reached the camp just at dusk, after a hard scramble over a very rough bit of trail.

Brown's Camp consisted of two low log houses, the man camp and the ox camp, and dreary they looked, standing there silent and deserted in the dark, wet wilderness of firs.

The heavy door of the ox camp stood ajar, and I think a bear must recently have been inside, for it was only with the greatest difficulty that we could lead or pull the horses in. Buckskin snorted constantly, and would not touch his corn; and the sweat drops came out on Jim's hair. We left them the lantern, to reassure them, and closing the door, went to the man camp, kindled a fire in the rusted stove, then warmed our food, and tried to make ourselves comfortable in the damp hut, with the blankets and sleigh robes that we had brought on the sleds.

Tired as we were, neither of us felt like falling asleep that night. It was a dismal place. We wished ourselves at home. Judging by the outcries, all the wild denizens of the wilderness were abroad. For a long time we lay, whispering now and then, instead of speaking aloud. A noise at the ox camp startled us, and, fearful lest one of the horses had thrown himself, Addison went hastily to the door to listen. "Come here," he whispered, in a strange tone.

I peeped forth over his shoulder, and was as much bewildered as he by what I saw. Cloudy as was the night, glimpses of something white appeared everywhere, going and coming, or flopping fitfully about. There were odd sounds, too, as of soft footfalls, and now and then low, petulant cries.

"What in the world are they?" Addison muttered.

Soon one of the mysterious white objects nearly bounced in at the door, and we discovered it was a hare in its white winter coat. The whole swamp was full of hares, all on the leap, going in one direction.

Seizing a pole, Addison knocked over three or four of them; still they came by; there must have been hundreds, perhaps thousands of them, all going one way.

At a distance we heard occasionally loud, sharp squealings, as of distress, and presently a lynx that seemed to be on the roof of the ox camp squalled hideously. Addison took the gun that we had brought, and while the hares were still flopping past, tried to get a shot at the lynx. But he was unable to make it out in the darkness, and it escaped.

I brought in one of the hares. I had an idea that we might add a bunch of them to our load for Portland; but it and the others that we had knocked over were too lank and light to be salable.

For an hour or more hares by the dozen continued to leap past the camp. We repeatedly heard lynxes, or other beasts of prey, snarling at a distance, as if following the mob of hares. Where all those hares came from, or where they went, or why they were traveling by night, we never knew. That is a question for naturalists. The next morning, when we went out to look for witches' brooms, there was not a hare in sight, except those that Addison had killed.

The witches' brooms were plentiful in the fir swamp along the stream; and as they were usually high up in the tree tops and not easily reached by climbing, we began to cut down such firs as had them. At that time and in that remote place, a fir-tree was of no value whatever.

Firs are easy trees to fell, for the wood is very soft, but they are bad to climb or handle on account of the pitch. We cut down about fifty trees that day, and left them as they fell, after getting the one or more witches' brooms in the top. Of those, we got eighty-two, all told; with the green fir boughs that went with them, they pretty nearly filled the rack. All were sear and dry, for they were just a densely interwoven mass of little twigs, but they contained a great many yellow flakes of dried pitch. In two of them we found the nests of flying squirrels; but in both cases the squirrels "flew" before the tree fell, and sailed away to other firs, standing near.

Altogether, it was a day of hard work. We were very tired—all the more so because we had slept hardly ten minutes the preceding night. But again we were much disturbed by the snarling of lynxes and the uneasiness of our horses at the ox camp. In fact, it was another dismal night for us; we hitched up at daybreak, and after a fearfully rough drive over bare logs and stones, and several breakages of harness, we reached the old Squire's, thoroughly tired out, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

The girls, however, were delighted with our lofty load of witches' brooms. In truth, it was rather picturesque, so many of those great gray bunches of intermeshed twigs, ensconced amid the green fir boughs that we had cut with them. A hall or a church would look odd indeed thus decorated.

Cheered by a good supper, we made ready to start for Portland the next morning. During the

night, however, the weather changed. By daybreak on the twenty-third considerable snow had fallen, and we were able to travel this time on snow again. We had the rack piled higher than before, with the Christmas trees and the boxes of lion's-paw in the front end, and all those witches' brooms stacked and lashed on at the rear. The load was actually fourteen feet high, yet far from heavy; witches' brooms are dry and light. A northwest wind, blowing in heavy gusts behind us, fairly pushed us along the road. We got on fast, baited our team at New Gloucester at one o'clock in the afternoon, and by dusk had reached Welch's Tavern, eleven miles out of Portland.

Here we put up for the night; as our load was too bulky to draw into the barn, we were obliged to leave it in the yard outside, near the garden fence—fifty yards, perhaps, from the tavern piazza.

We had supper and were about to go to bed, when in came three fellows who had driven up from the city, on their way to hunt moose in Batchelder's Grant. All three were in a hilarious mood; they called for supper, and said that they meant to drive on to Ricker's Tavern, at the Poland Spring.

There was a lively fire on the hearth, for the night was cold and windy; the newcomers stood in front of it—while Addison and I sat back, looking on. The cause of their boisterousness was quite apparent; they were plentifully supplied with whiskey. Then, as now, the "Maine law" prohibited the sale of intoxicants; but this happened to be one of the numerous periods when the authorities were lax in enforcing the law.

Soon one of the newly arrived moose hunters drew out a large flask, from which all three drank. Turning to us, he cried, "Step up, boys, and take a nip!" Addison thanked him, but said that we were just going to bed.

"Oh, you'll sleep all the warmer for it. Come, take a swig with us."

We made no move to accept the invitation.

"Aw, you're temperance, are you?" one of the three exclaimed. "Nice little temperance lads!"

"Yes," Addison said, laughing. "But that's all right. We thank you just the same."

The three stood regarding us in an ugly mood, ready to quarrel. "If there's anything I hate," one of them remarked with a sneer, "it's a young fellow who's too much a mollycoddle to take a drink with a friend, and too stingy to pay for one."

We made no reply, and he continued to vent offensive remarks. The landlord came in, and Addison asked him to show us to our room. The hilarious trio called out insultingly to us as we ascended the stairs, and when the hotel keeper went down, we heard them asking him who we were and what our lofty load consisted of.

Half an hour or more later, we heard the moose hunters drive off, shouting uproariously; hardly three minutes afterward there was a sudden alarm below, and the window of our room was illuminated with a ruddy light.

"Fire! The place is afire!" Addison exclaimed.

We jumped up and looked out. The whole yard was brilliantly illuminated; then we saw that our load by the garden fence was on fire, and burning fiercely.

Throwing on a few clothes, we rushed downstairs. The hotel keeper and his hostler were already out with buckets of water, but could do little. The load was ablaze, and those dry, pitchy witches' brooms flamed up tremendously. Fortunately, the wind carried the flame and sparks away from the tavern and barns, or the whole establishment might have burned down. The crackling was terrific; the firs as well as the witches' brooms burned. Great gusts of flame and vapor rose, writhing and twisting in the wind. Any one might have imagined them to be witches of the olden time, riding wildly away up toward the half-obscured moon!

So great was the heat that it proved impossible to save the rack and sleds, or even the near-by garden fence, which had caught fire.

That disaster ended the trip. It was now too near Christmas Day to get more large firs, to say nothing of witches' brooms; and we were obliged to send word to this effect to our Portland patrons. The next morning Addison and I rode home on old Jim and Buckskin, with their harness tied up in a bundle before us. The wind was piercing and bleak; we were both so chilled as to be ill of a cold for several days afterward. The story that we had to tell at home was far from being an inspiriting one. Not only had we lost our load, traverse sleds and rack, but in due time we had a bill of ten dollars to pay the hotel keeper for his garden fence.

We always supposed that those drunken ruffians touched off our load just before driving away; but of course it may have been a spark from the chimney.

That was our first and last experience with witches' brooms.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE LITTLE IMAGE PEDDLERS

I think it was the following Friday afternoon that a curious diversion occurred at the schoolhouse, just as the school was dismissed. Coming slowly along the white highway two small boys were espied, each carrying on his head a raft-like platform laden with plaster-of-Paris images. They were dark-complexioned little fellows, not more than twelve or thirteen years old; and were having difficulty to keep their feet and stagger along with their preposterous burdens.

The plaster casts comprised images of saints, elephants, giraffes, cherubs with little wings tinted in pink and yellow, a tall Madonna and Child, a bust of George Washington, a Napoleon, a grinning Voltaire, an angel with a pink trumpet and an evil-looking Tom Paine.

I suppose the loads were not as heavy as they looked, but the boys were having a hard time of it, to judge from their distressed faces peering anxiously from underneath the rafts which, at each step, rocked to and fro and seemed always on the point of toppling. Frantic clutches of small brown hands and the quick shifting of feet alone saved a smash-up.

The master was still in the schoolhouse with some of the older boys and girls; but the younger ones had rushed out when the bell rang.

"Hi, where are you going?" several shouted. "What you got on your heads?"

The little strangers turned their faces and, nodding violently, tried to smile ingratiatingly. Some one let fly a snowball, and in a moment the mob of boys, shouting and laughing noisily, chased after them. No harm was intended; it was merely excess of spirits at getting out from school. But the result was disastrous. The little fellows faced round in alarm, cried out wildly in an unknown tongue and then, in spite of their burdens, tried to run away.

The inevitable happened: one of them stumbled, fell against the other, and down they both went headlong with a crash. The tall Madonna was broken in two; Washington had his cocked hat crushed; the cherubs had lost their wings; and as for the elephants and the giraffes, there was a general mix-up of broken trunks and long necks.

The little fellows had scrambled to their feet, and after a frightened glance set up wails of lamentation in which the word *padrone* recurred fast and fearfully. By that time Master Brench, with the older pupils, among whom were my cousins, Addison, Theodora and Ellen, had come out. The old Squire, too, chanced to be approaching with a horse sled; often of late, since the traveling was bad, he had driven to the schoolhouse to get us.

It was a wholly compassionate group that now gathered about the forlorn itinerants. Who they were or whither they were traveling was at first far from clear, for they could not speak a word of English.

At last the old Squire, touched by their looks of despair and sorrow, decided to put their "rafts" on the horse sled and to take the little strangers home with us for the night.

They seemed to be chilled to the very marrow of their bones, for they hung round the stove in the kitchen as if they would never thaw out. When grandmother Ruth set a warm supper before them, they ate like starved animals and cast pathetic glances at the table to see whether there was more food. Tears stood in grandmother's eyes as she replenished their plates.

Little by little, with the aid of many signs and gestures, they managed to tell us their story. A *padrone* had brought them with nine other boys from Naples to sell plaster images for him; we gathered that this man, who lived in Portland, cast the images himself. The only English words he had taught them were "ten cent," "twenty-five cent" and "fifty cent"—the prices of the plaster casts.

A few days before, in spite of the bitterly cold weather, he had sent them out with their wares and bidden them to call at every house until they had sold their stock. Then they were to bring back the money they had taken in. He had given a package of dry, black bread to each of them and had told them to sleep at nights in barns.

Sales were few, and long after their bread was gone they had wandered on, not daring to go back until they had sold all their wares. What little money they had taken in they dared not spend for food, for fear the *padrone* would whip them! Their tale roused no little indignation in the old Squire and grandmother Ruth.

What with the food and the warmth the little Italians soon grew so sleepy that they drowsed off before our eyes. We made a couch of blankets for them in a warm corner, and they were still soundly asleep there when Addison and I went out to do the farm chores the next morning.

We kept the little image peddlers with us for several days thereafter. In fact, we were at a loss to know what to do with them, for a cold snap had come on. With their thin clothes and worn-out shoes they were in no condition either to go on or to go back; and, moreover, now that their images were broken, they were in terror of their *padrone*.

One of the boys was slightly larger and stronger than the other; his name, he managed to tell us, was Emilio Foresi. The first name of the other was Tomaso, but I have forgotten his surname. Tomaso, I recollect, had little gold rings in his ears. His voice was soft, and he had gentle manners.

Under the influence of good food and a warm place to sleep both boys brightened visibly and even grew vivacious. On the third morning we heard Emilio singing some Neapolitan folk-song to himself. Yet they were shy about singing to us, and it was only after considerable coaxing that Theodora induced them to sing a few Italian songs together. Halstead had an old violin, and we found that Tomaso could play it surprisingly well.

By carefully sorting our reserve of worn clothes and shoes we managed to fit out the little strangers more comfortably, but the problem of what to do with them remained. Grandmother Ruth thought that their *padrone* might trace them and appear on the scene.

Several days more passed; and then the old Squire, having business at Portland, decided to take them with him. He intended to find this Neapolitan *padrone* and try to secure better treatment for the boys in the future.

Addison drove them to the railway station, where the old Squire checked their empty image "rafts" in the baggage car. Before they left the old farm, first Emilio and then Tomaso took grandmother Ruth's hand very prettily and said, with deep feeling, "*Vi ringrazio*," several times, and managed to add "Tank you."

After his return from Portland the old Squire told us that he had gone with the lads to the place where they lodged and had taken an officer with him. They found the *padrone* in a basement, engaged in casting more images. At first the Italian was very angry; but partly by persuasion, partly by putting the fear of the law into his heart, they made him promise not to send his boys out again until May.

The old Squire also enlisted the sympathies of two women in Portland, who undertook to see that the boys were better housed and cared for in the future. And there for the time being the episode of the little image venders ended.

Twelve, perhaps it was thirteen, years passed. Addison, Halstead, Theodora and Ellen went their various ways in life, and of the group of young folks at the old farm I alone was left there. The old Squire was not able now to do more than oversee the work and to give me advice from his large experience of the past.

One day, late in October, we were in the apple house getting the crop of winter apples ready for market—Baldwins, Greenings, Blue Pearmains, Russets, Orange Apples, Arctic Reds—about four hundred barrels of them. We were sorting the apples carefully and putting the "number ones" in fresh, new barrels.

It was near noon, and grandmother Ruth had come out to say that our midday meal would soon be ready. She remained for a few moments and was counting the barrels we had put up that forenoon, when the doorway darkened behind her, and, looking up, we saw a stranger standing there—a well-dressed, rather handsome young man with dark hair and dark moustache. He was looking at us inquiringly, smilingly, almost timidly, I thought.

"How do you do?" I said. "You wanted to see some one here?"

He came a step nearer and said, with a foreign accent, "I ver glad see you again."

Seeing our puzzled looks, he went on: "I tink maybe you not remember me. But I come here one time, when snow ver deep. Ver cold then," and he shuddered to show how cold it was. "I stay here whole week. You no remember? I Emilio—Emilio Foresi."

Now, indeed, we remembered the little image peddlers. "Yes, yes, yes!" the old Squire cried.

"Well, I never! Can it be possible?" grandmother Ruth exclaimed. "Why, you've grown up, of course!"

Grown up, in good truth, and a very prosperous-looking young man was Emilio. He evidently remembered well his sojourn with us years ago, and, moreover, remembered it with pleasure; for now he grasped the old Squire's hand warmly and then, laughing joyously, held grandmother Ruth's in both his own.

"But where have you been all this time?" the old Squire exclaimed.

"I live now in Boston. Not long did I sell the images. I leave my *padrone*. He was hard man, not so ver bad, but ver poor. Then I have a cart and sell fruit, banan, orange, apple, in de street, four year. After that I have fruit stand on Tremont Street three year. I do ver well, and have five fruit stands; and now I buy apples to send to Genoa and Messina."

"But Tomaso, where's little Tomaso?" grandmother Ruth exclaimed.

Emilio's face saddened. "Tomaso he die," said he and shook his head. "He tak bad colds and have cough two year. Doctors said he have no chance in dis climate. I send him home to Napoli, and he die. But America fine place," Emilio added, as if defending our climate. "Good country. Everybody do well here."

We had Emilio as a guest at our midday meal that day—quite a different Emilio from the pinched little fellow of thirteen years before. He glanced round the old dining-room.

"Here where I sit dat first night!" he cried, laughing like a boy. "Big old clock right over there, Tomaso dis side of me, and young, kind, pretty girl on other side. All smile so kind to us; and oh,

how good dat warm, nice food taste, we so hongry!"

He remembered every detail of his stay. The red apples that we had given him seemed to have impressed him especially; neither of the boys had ever eaten an apple before.

"Whole big basketful you fetch up from de cellar and say tak all you want," he ran on, still laughing. "Naver any apple taste like dose, so beeg, so red!"

As we sat and talked he told us of his present business and how he had tried the then novel experiment of shipping small lots of New England apples to Italy. There had been doubt whether the apples would bear the voyage and arrive in sound condition, but he had no trouble when the fruit was carefully selected and well put up. That led him to inquire about our apple crop and to explain that that was perhaps one of the reasons—not the only one—for his visit.

"I know you raise good apples," he said. "I like to buy them."

We told him how many we had, and he asked what price we expected to get. We answered that the local dealers had already fixed the price that fall at two dollars a barrel.

"I will pay you two dollars and a half," Emilio said without a moment's hesitation.

"But, Emilio," the old Squire put in, "we couldn't ask more than the market price."

"Ah, but you have good apples!" he replied. "I know how dose apples taste, and I know dey will be well barreled. No wormy apples, no bruised apples. Dey worf more because good honest man put dem up. I pay you two fifty."

We shipped the entire lot to him the following week and received prompt payment. Incidentally, we learned that Foresi's rating as a business man was high, and that he enjoyed the reputation of being an honorable dealer. For many years—as long as he was in the business, in fact—we sent him choice lots of winter fruit, for which he always insisted on paying a price considerably in advance of the market quotations.

CHAPTER XXXV

A JANUARY THAW

Just before school closed a disagreeable incident occurred.

It was one of the few times that the old Squire really reproved us sternly. Often, of course, he had to caution us a little, or speak to us about our conduct; but he usually did it in an easy, tolerant way, ending with a laugh or a joke. But that time he was in earnest.

He had come home that night just at dark from Three Rivers, in Canada, where he was engaged in a lumbering enterprise. He had been gone a fortnight, and during his absence Addison, Halstead and I had been doing the farm chores. The drive from the railway stations, on that bleak January afternoon had chilled the old gentleman, and he went directly into the sitting-room to get warm. So it was not until he came out to sit down to supper with us that he noticed a vacant chair at table.

"Where is Halstead?" he asked. "Isn't Halstead at home?"

No one answered at first; none of us liked to tell him what had happened. We had always found our cousin Halstead hard to get on with. Lately he had been complaining to us that he ought to be paid wages for his labor, when, as a matter of fact, what he did at the farm never half repaid the old Squire for his board, clothes and the trouble he gave. During the old gentleman's absence that winter Halstead had become worse than ever and had also begun making trouble at the district school.

His special crony at school was Alfred Batchelder, who had an extremely bad influence on him. Alfred was a genius at instigating mischief, and he and Halstead played an odious prank at the schoolhouse, as a result of which the school committee suspended them for three weeks.

That was unfortunate, for it turned the boys loose to run about in company. Usually they quarreled by the time they had been together half a day; but this time there seemed to be a special bond between them, and they hatched a secret project to go off trapping up in the great woods. They intended to stay until spring, when they would reappear with five hundred dollar's worth of fur!

Addison and I guessed that something of the sort was in the wind, for we noticed that Halstead was collecting old traps and that he was oiling a gun he called his. We also missed two thick horse blankets from the stable and a large hand sled. A frozen quarter of beef also disappeared from the wagon-house chamber.

"Let him go, and good riddance," Addison said, and we decided not to tell grandmother or the girls what we suspected. In fact, I fear that we hoped Halstead would go.

The following Friday afternoon while the rest of us were at school both boys disappeared. That

evening Mrs. Batchelder sent over to inquire whether Alfred was at our house. Halstead, to his credit, had shown that he did not wish grandmother to worry about him. Shortly before two o'clock that afternoon, he had come hastily to the sitting-room door, and said, "Good-by, gram. I'm going away for a spell. Don't worry." Then, shutting the door, he had run off before she could reply or ask a question.

When we got home from school that night, Addison and I found traces of the runaways. There had been rain the week before, followed by a hard freeze and snow squalls, which had left a film of light snow on the hard crust beneath. At the rear of the west barn we found the tracks of a hand sled leading off across the fields toward the woods.

"Gone hunting, I guess," said Addison. "They are probably heading for the Old Slave's Farm, or for Adger's lumber camp. Let them go. They'll be sick to death of it in a week."

I felt much the same about it; but grandmother and Theodora were not a little disturbed. Ellen, however, sided with Addison. "Halse will be back by to-morrow night," she said. "He and Alfred will have a spat by that time."

Saturday and Sunday passed, however, and then all the following week, with no word from them.

On Tuesday evening, when they had been gone eleven days, Mrs. Batchelder hastened in with alarming news for us. She had had a letter from Alfred, she said, written from Berlin Falls in New Hampshire, where he had gone to work in a mill; but he had not said one word about Halstead!

"I don't think they could have gone off together," she said, and she read Alfred's letter aloud to us, or seemed to do so, but did not hand it to any of us to read.

We had never trusted Mrs. Batchelder implicitly; and a long time afterwards it came out that there was one sentence in that letter that she had not read to us. It was this: "Don't say anything to any of them about Halstead." Guessing that there had been trouble of some kind between the boys, she was frightened; to shield Alfred she had hurried over with the letter, and had tried to make us believe that the boys had not gone off together.

Addison and I still thought that the boys had set out in company, though we did not know what to make of Alfred's letter. We were waiting in that disturbed state of mind, hoping to hear something from Alfred that would clear up the mystery, when the old Squire came home.

"He has gone away, sir," Addison said at last, when the old gentleman inquired for Halstead at supper.

"Gone away? Where? What for?" the old gentleman asked in much astonishment; and then the whole story had to be told him.

The old Squire heard it through without saying much. When we had finished, he asked, "Did you know that Halstead meant to go away?"

"We did not know for certain, sir," Addison replied.

"Still, you both knew something about it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did either one of you do anything to prevent it?"

We had to admit that we had done nothing.

The old Squire regarded us a moment or two in silence.

"In one of the oldest narratives of life that have come down to us," he said at last, "we read that there were once two brothers living together, who did not agree and who often fell out. After a time one of them disappeared, and when the other—his name was Cain—was asked what had become of his brother, he replied, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

"In this world we all have to be our brothers' keepers," the old Squire continued. "We are all to a degree responsible for the good behavior and safety of our fellow beings. If we shirk that duty, troubles come and crimes are committed that might have been prevented. Especially in a family like ours, each ought to have the good of all at heart and do his best to make things go right."

That was a great deal for the old Squire to say to us. Addison and I saw just where we had shirked and where we had let temper and resentment influence us. Scarcely another word was said at table. It was one of those times of self-searching and reflection that occasionally come unbidden in every family circle. The old Squire went into the sitting-room to think it over and to learn what he could from grandmother. He was very tired, and I am afraid he felt somewhat discouraged about us.

Addison and I went up to our room early that evening. We exchanged scarcely a word as we went gloomily to bed. We knew that we were to blame; but we also felt tremendously indignant with Halstead.

Very early the next morning, however, long before it was light, Addison roused me.

"Wake up," he said. "Let's go see if we can find that noodle of ours and get him back home."

It was cold and dark and dreary; one of those miserable, shivery mornings when you hate to stir out of bed. But I got up, for I agreed with Addison that we ought to look for Halstead.

After dabbling our faces in ice-cold water and dressing we tiptoed downstairs. Going to the kitchen, we kindled a fire in order to get a bit of breakfast before we started. Theodora had heard us and came hastily down to bear a hand. She guessed what we meant to do.

"I'm glad you're going," said she as she began to make coffee and to warm some food.

It was partly the bitter weather, I think, but Addison and I felt so cross that we could hardly trust ourselves to speak.

"I'll put you up a nice, big lunch," Theodora said, trying to cheer us. "And I do hope that you will find him at the Old Slave's Farm, or over at Adger's camp. If you do, you may all be back by night."

She stole up to her room to get a pair of new double mittens that she had just finished knitting for Addison; and for me she brought down a woolen neck muffler that grandmother had knitted for her. Life brightens up, even in a Maine winter, with a girl like that round.

Addison took his shotgun, and I carried the basket of luncheon. No snow had come since Halstead and Alfred left, and we could still see along the old lumber road the faint marks of their hand-sled runners. In the hollows where the film of snow was a little deeper, two boot tracks were visible.

"Halse wouldn't go off far into the woods alone, after Alf left him," said I.

"No, he is too big a coward," said Addison.

It was thirteen miles up to the Old Slave's Farm, where the negro—who called himself Pinkney Doman—had lived for so many years before the Civil War.

"We can make it in three hours!" Addison exclaimed. "If we find him there, we shall be back before dark. And we had better hurry," he added, with a glance at the sky. "For I guess there's a storm coming; feels like it."

In a yellow-birch top at a little opening near the old road we saw two partridges eating buds; Addison shot one of them and took it along, slung to his gun barrel.

The faint trail of the sled continued along the old winter road all the way up to the clearing where the negro had lived, and by ten o'clock we came into view of the two log cabins. Very still and solitary they looked under that cold gray sky.

"No smoke," Addison said. "But we'll soon know." He called once. We then hurried forward and pushed open the door of the larger cabin. No one was there.

But clearly the two truants had stopped there, for the sled track led directly to the door of the cabin. There had been a fire in the stone fireplace. Beside a log at the door, too, Addison espied a hatchet that a while before we had missed from the tool bench in the wagon-house.

"Well, if that isn't like their carelessness!" he exclaimed, laughing. "I'll take this along."

But the runaways had not tarried long. We found the sled track again, leading into the woods at the northwest of the clearing.

"Well, that settles it," said Addison. "They haven't gone to Adger's, for that is east from here. I'll tell you! They went to Boundary Camp on Lurvey's Stream. And that's eighteen or nineteen miles from here." He glanced at the sky. "Now, what shall we do? It will snow to-night."

"Perhaps we could get up there by dark," said I.

For a moment Addison considered. "All right!" he exclaimed. "It's a long jaunt. But come on!"

On we tramped again, following that will-o'-the-wisp of a hand-sled track into the thick spruce forest. For the first nine or ten miles everything went well; then one of the dangers of the great Maine woods in winter suddenly presented itself.

About one o'clock it began to snow—little icy pellets that rattled down through the tree tops like fine shot or sifted sand. The chill, damp wind sighing drearily across the forest presaged a northeaster.

"We've got to hurry!" Addison said, glancing round.

We both struck into a trot and, with our eyes fastened to the trail, ran on for about two miles until we came to a brook down in a gorge. By the time we had crossed that the storm was upon us and the forest had taken on the bewildering misty, gray look that even the most experienced woodsman has reason to dread.

The snow that had fallen had obscured the faint sled tracks, and Addison, who was ahead, pulled up. "We can't do it," he said. "We shan't get through."

My first impulse was to run on, to run faster; that is always your first instinct in such cases. Then I remembered the old Squire's advice to us what to do if we should ever happen to be caught by a snowstorm in the great woods:

"Don't go on a moment after you feel bewildered. Don't start to run, and don't get excited. Stop right where you are and camp. If you run, you will begin to circle, get crazy and perish before morning."

Addison cast another uneasy glance into the dim forest ahead. "Better camp, I guess," he said. Turning, we hurried back into the hollow.

A few yards back from the brook were two rocks, about six feet apart and nearly as high as my head. Hard snow lay between them; but we broke it into pieces by stamping on it, and succeeded in clearing most of it away, so that we bared the leaves and twigs that covered the ground. Then, while I hacked off dry branches from a fallen fir-tree, Addison gathered a few curled rolls of bark from several birches near by and kindled a fire between the rocks.

We kept the fire going for more than an hour, until all the remaining snow was thawed and the frost and wet thoroughly dried out, and until the rocks had become so hot that we could hardly touch them. Then, after hauling away the brands and embers, we brushed the place clean with green boughs, and thus made for ourselves a warm, dry spot between the rocks.

With poles and green boughs, we made for our shelter a roof that was tight enough to keep out the snow. Except that we made a little mat of bark and dry fir brush, to lie on, and that Addison brought an armful of curled bark from the birches and a quantity of dry sticks to burn now and then, that was the extent of our preparation for the night. We had as warm and comfortable a den as any one could wish for.

We decided not to cook our partridge, but to eat the food in our basket. After our meal we got a drink of water at the brook, then crawled inside our den and—as Maine woodsmen say—"pulled the hole in after us," by stopping it with boughs.

"Now, let it storm!" Addison exclaimed.

Taking off our jackets and spreading them over us, we cuddled down there by the warm rocks, and there we passed the night safely and by no means uncomfortably.

It was still snowing fast in the morning; but the flakes were larger now, and the weather had perceptibly moderated during the latter part of the night. The forest, however, still looked too misty for us to find our way through it.

"We might as well take it easy," Addison said. "If Halse is at Boundary Camp, he will not leave in such weather as this."

All that forenoon it snowed steadily, and in fact for most of the afternoon. More than a foot of snow had come. We opened the front of our snow-coated den, kindled a fire there, and after dressing our partridge broiled it over the embers. Still it snowed; but the weather now was much warmer. By the following morning, we thought, we should have clear, cold weather and should be able to set out again.

But never were weather predictions more at fault. The next morning it was raining furiously; and our den had begun to drip. In fact, a veritable January thaw had set in.

All that forenoon it poured steadily; and water began to show yellow through the snow in the brook beside our camp. Addison crept out and looked round, but soon came back dripping wet.

"Look here!" said he in some excitement. "There's a freshet coming, and Lurvey's Stream is between us and Boundary Camp. If we don't start soon, we can't get there at all."

Just as he finished speaking a deep, portentous rumbling began and continued for several seconds. The distant mountain sides seemed to reverberate with it, and at the end the whole forest shook with heavy, jarring sounds. We both leaped out into the rain.

"What is it, Ad?" I cried.

"Earthquake," said Addison at last. "I've heard the old Squire say that one sometimes comes in Maine, when there is a great winter thaw."

The deep jar and tremor gave us a strange sense of insecurity and terror; there seemed to be no telling what might happen next. Accordingly, we abandoned our moist den and set off in the rain. We went halfway to our knees at every step in the now soft, slushy snow. Addison went ahead with the hatchet, spotting a tree every hundred feet or so, and I followed in his tracks, carrying the basket and the gun. In fifteen minutes we were wet to our skins.

For three or four miles we were uncertain of our course. The forest then lightened ahead, and presently we came out on the shore of a small lake that looked yellow over its whole surface.

"Good!" Addison exclaimed. "This must be Lone Pond, and see, away over there is Birchboard Mountain. Boundary Camp is just this side of it. It can't be more than four or five miles."

Skirting the south shore of the pond, we pushed on through fir and cedar swamps. Worse traveling it would be impossible to imagine. Every hole and hollow was full of yellow slush. Finally, after another two hours or so of hard going, we came out on Lurvey's Stream about half a mile below the camp, which was on the other bank. A foot or more of water was running yellow over the ice; but the ice itself was still firm, and we were able to cross on it.

Even before we came in sight of the camp, we smelled wood smoke.

"Halse is there!" I exclaimed.

"It may be trappers from over the line," Addison said. "Be cautious."

I ran forward, however, and peeped in at the little window. Some one was crawling on the floor, partly behind the old camp stove, and I had to look twice before I could make out that it was really Halstead. Then we burst in upon him, and Addison said rather shortly, "Well, hunter, what are you doing here?"

Halstead raised himself slowly off the floor beside the stove, stared at us for a moment without saying a word, and then suddenly burst into tears!

It was some moments before Halstead could speak, he was so shaken with sobs. We then discovered that his left leg was virtually useless, and that in general he was in a bad plight. He had been there for eight days in that condition, crawling round on one knee and his hands to keep a fire and to cook his food.

"But how did you get hurt?" Addison asked.

"That Alf did it!" Halstead cried; and then, with tears still flowing, he went on to tell the story—his side of it.

While getting their breakfast on the third morning after they had reached the camp, they had had a dispute about making their coffee; hard names had followed, and at last, in high temper, Alfred had sprung up declaring that he would not camp with Halstead another hour. Grabbing the gun, he had started off.

"That's my gun! Leave it here! Drop it!" Halstead had shouted angrily and had run after him.

Down near the bank of the stream, Halstead had overtaken him and had tried to wrest the gun from him. Alfred had turned, struck him, and then given him so hard a push that he had fallen over sidewise with his foot down between two logs. Alfred had run on without even looking back.

The story did not astonish us. For the time being, however, we were chiefly concerned to find out how badly Halstead was injured, with a view to getting him home. His ankle was swollen, sore and painful; he could not touch the foot to the floor, and he howled when we tried to move it.

Evidently he had suffered a good deal, and pity prevented us from freeing our minds to him as fully as we should otherwise have done. The main thing now was to get him home, where a doctor could attend him.

"We shall have to haul him on the hand sled," Addison said to me; and fortunately the sled that Alfred and he had taken was there at the camp.

But first we cooked a meal of some of the beef, corn meal and coffee they had taken from the old Squire's.

It was still raining; and on going out an hour later we found that the stream had risen so high that we could not cross it. The afternoon, too, was waning; and, urgent as Halstead's case appeared, we had to give up the idea of starting that night. During the rest of the afternoon we busied ourselves rigging a rude seat on the sled.

There were good dry bunks at the camp, but little sleep was in store for us. Halstead was in a fevered, querulous mood and kept calling to us for something or other all night long. Whenever he fell asleep he tumbled about and hurt his ankle. That would partly wake him and set him crying, or shouting what he would do to Alfred.

Throughout the night the roar of the stream outside grew louder, and at daybreak it was running feather white. As for the snow, most of it had disappeared; stumps, logs and stones showed through it everywhere; the swamps were flooded, and every hole, hollow and depression was full of water.

That was Wednesday. We made a soup of the beef bone, cooked johnny-cake from the corn meal and kept Halstead as quiet as possible. We had left home early Sunday morning and knew that our folks would be greatly worried about all three of us.

As the day passed, the stream rose steadily until the water was nearly up to the camp door.

"If only we had a boat, we could put Halse in it and go home," Addison said.

We discussed making a raft, for if we could navigate the stream we could descend it to within four miles of the old farm. But the roaring yellow torrent was clearly so tumultuous that no raft that we could build would hold together for a minute; and we resigned ourselves to pass another night in the camp.

The end of the thaw was at hand, however; at sunset the sky lightened, and during the evening the stars came out. At midnight, while replenishing the fire, I heard smart gusts of wind blowing from the northwest. It was clearing off cold. Noticing that it seemed very light outside, I went to the door and saw the bright arch of a splendid aurora spanning the whole sky. It was so beautiful that I waked Addison to see it.

By morning winter weather had come again; the snow slush was frozen. The stream, however, was still too high to be crossed, and the swamps and meadows were also impassable. We now bethought ourselves of another route home, by way of a lumber trail that led southward to Lurvey's Mills, where there was a bridge over the stream.

"It is five miles farther, but it is our only chance of getting home this week," Addison said.

We were busy bundling Halstead up for the sled trip when the door opened and in stepped Asa Doane, one of our hired men at the farm, and a neighbor named Davis.

"Well, well, here you are, then!" Asa exclaimed in a tone of great relief. "Do you know that the old Squire's got ten men out searching the woods for you? Why, the folks at home are scared half to death!"

We were not sorry to see Asa and Davis, and to have help for the long pull homeward. We made a start, and after a very hard tramp we finally reached the old farm, thoroughly tired out, at eight o'clock that evening.

Theodora and grandmother were so affected at seeing us back that they actually shed tears. The old Squire said little; but it was plain to see that he was greatly relieved.

If the day had been a fatiguing one for us, it had been doubly so for poor Halstead. We carried him up to his room, put him to bed and sent for a doctor. He did not leave his room again for three weeks and required no end of care from grandmother and the girls.

Little was ever said among us afterwards of this escapade of Halstead's. As for Alfred, he came sneaking home about a month later, but had the decency, or perhaps it was the prudence, to keep away from us for nearly a year.

CHAPTER XXXVI

UNCLE BILLY MURCH'S HAIR-RAISER

At about this time Tom and I were up at the Murches' one evening to see Willis, and persuaded old Uncle Billy, Willis' grandfather, to tell us his panther story again. That panther story was a veritable hair-raiser; and we were never tired of hearing the old man tell it. Owing to our severe climate panthers were never very numerous in northern New England—not nearly so numerous as panther stories, in which the "panther" is usually a Canadian lynx. Even at present we occasionally hear of a catamount or an "Indian devil"; but perhaps the last real panther was trapped and shot in the town of Wardsboro, Vermont, in 1875. There can be no doubt whatever that it was a genuine panther, for its skin and bones, handsomely mounted, as taxidermists say, can be seen at any time in the Museum of Natural History in Boston. It is a fine specimen of the New England variety of the *Felis concolor* and would no doubt have proved an ugly customer to meet on a dark night.

No doubt there were panthers larger than that one. According to Uncle Billy the Wardsboro panther was a mere kitten to the one that he once encountered when he was a boy of fourteen. Our old Squire, who then was fifteen years old, was with him and shared the experience. But try as we would, we never could induce him to tell the story. "You get Uncle Billy Murch to tell you about that," he would say and laugh. "That's Uncle Billy's story; he tells it a little better every time, and he has got that catamount so large now that I am beginning to think that it must have been a survival of the cave tiger." Yet when pinned down to it the old Squire admitted that he was with Grandsir Billy on that night and that they did have an alarming experience with an animal that beyond doubt was a large and hungry panther.

I must have heard the story ten or twelve times in all, and I recollect many of Grandsir Billy's words and expressions. But the old man's vocabulary was "picturesque"; when he was describing exciting events he was apt to drift into language that was more forceful than choice. It will be best therefore to give this account substantially as years later—long after Grandsir Billy had passed away—the old Squire told it one afternoon when he and I were driving home together from a field day of the grange.

It seems that back in the days when the county was first settled the pioneers found the ponds and streams in peaceful possession of an ancient trapper whom they called Daddy Goss. Trapping was his business; he did nothing else. Every fall and winter while he was tending his trap lines he used to stay for a week or a month at a time at the settlers' houses. Frequently the wife of a settler at whose house he was staying would have to take drastic measures to get rid of him; no gentler measures than taking his chair and his plate away from the table or putting his bundle of things out on the doorstep would move him. "As slow to take the hint as old Daddy Goss," came to be a local proverb.

One December while he was staying at the Murch farm he fell sick with a heavy cold, and while he lay in bed he fretted constantly about his traps. At last he offered Billy Murch, who was then fourteen years old, half of all the animals that might be in them if he would go out and fetch them home. The line of traps, he said, began at a large pine-tree near the head of Stoss Pond and

thence extended round about through the then unbroken forest for a distance of perhaps fifteen miles to a birch-bark camp on Lurvey's Stream that the old trapper had built to shelter himself from storms two years before.

Billy wanted to go but his mother would not consent to his going alone. So he talked the matter over with the old Squire, who was a year older than Billy, and offered him half the profits if he would accompany him; and the result was that the two boys took the old man's flintlock gun and set off at daylight the following morning. They were not to stop to skin any animals that they found in the traps, but were to make bunches of them and carry them home on their backs. The old trapper would not trust them either to skin the catch or to reset the traps. Since there were only two or three inches of snow on the ground, they did not have to use snowshoes and hoped therefore that they should return by evening. They found the first trap on Stoss Pond and from there followed the line without much difficulty, for Daddy Goss had made a trail by spotting trees with his hatchet. Moreover, the marten traps were "boxed" into spruce-trees at a height of two or three feet from the ground and could easily be seen.

There is an old saying among trappers that nothing catches game like a neglected trap; and that time at least the adage was correct. The boys found a marten in the second trap and found others at frequent intervals. What was remarkable, they found three minks, two ermines and a fisher in traps on high, hilly forest land. I think the old Squire once said that they took nineteen martens from the traps, of which there were one hundred and two.

The boys soon found themselves loaded down with fur. Since they were to have half of what they brought home, they did not like to leave anything. So with an ever increasing burden on their backs they toiled on from trap to trap. Before night each was carrying at least forty and perhaps fifty pounds. They had brought thongs for tying the animals together. Billy carried his bunch slung over the stock of the gun, which he carried over his shoulder. His comrade carried his on a short pole. A good many of the martens were still alive in the traps and had to be knocked on the head; the blood from them dripped from the packs on the snow behind.

Fifteen miles is a long tramp for boys of their age, and, since December days are short, it is not astonishing that the afternoon had waned and the sun set before they reached the birch-bark camp. From that place they would have to descend Lurvey's Stream for two or three miles to Lurvey's Mills, and then reach home by way of a wagon road. Dusk falls rapidly in the woods. By the time they reached the camp they could barely see the "blazes" on the tree trunks. They decided to kindle a fire and remain at the camp till the next morning. Each began at once to collect dry branches and bark from the white birch-trees that grew along the stream.

It was not until then that Billy made a bad discovery. In those days there were no matches; for kindling a fire pioneers depended on igniting a little powder and tow in the pans of their flintlocks. But when Billy unslung his pack of martens from the stock of the gun he found that the thong had somehow loosened the flint in the lock and that it had dropped out and was lost. Both boys were discouraged, for the night was chilly. They crept inside the camp, which was barely large enough to hold two persons. It was merely a boxlike structure only six feet square and five feet high; sheets of bark from the large white birch-trees were tied with small, flexible spruce roots to the frame, which was of light poles. The door was a small square sheet of bark bound to a little frame that would open and shut on curious wooden hinges. Though the camp was frail, it kept off the wind and was slightly warmer than it was outside. The boys found a couch of dry fir boughs inside, but the only cover for it was a dried deerskin and one of Daddy Goss's old coats.

Meanwhile full darkness had fallen; and there would be no moon till late at night. An owl came circling round and whoop-hooed dismally. Billy said that he wished he were at home, and his companion admitted that he wished he were there also. They closed the door and then, lying down as close together as they could, put the two bunches of fur at their feet and covered themselves with the old coat and the deer hide. But they had scarcely lain down when crashes in the underbrush startled them, and they heard a great noise as of a herd of cattle running past. The old Squire peeped out at the door. "I guess it's deer," he said. "Something's scared them."

He lay down again; but a few minutes later they heard what sounded like a shriek a long way off up the stream. Billy started up. "Now what do you s'pose that was, Joe?" he exclaimed.

"I—I don't know."

"It sounded," said Billy, "just as the schoolmistress did when she stepped on a snake last summer."

They sat up to listen; pretty soon they heard the noise again, this time much nearer.

"It's coming this way, Joe!" Billy whispered. "What do you s'pose it is?"

They continued to listen, and soon they heard a short, ugly shriek close by in the woods.

"Joe, I'm afraid that's a catamount," Billy said unsteadily.

The old Squire picked up the useless gun and sat with it in his hands. For some time there were no more outcries; but after a while they heard the crumpling of snow and the snapping of twigs behind the camp. Some large animal was walking round; several times they heard the sough of its breath.

"Joe, I'm scared!" Billy whispered.

The old Squire was frightened also, but he opened the door a crack and peered out. On the snow under the birch-trees he could distinguish the dark form of a large panther. It had seen the door move and had crouched as if to spring. He saw the flash of two fiery eyes in the dim light and again heard the sough of the creature's breath before he clapped the door shut and braced the gun against it. But he had no confidence in the flimsy birch bark; so he got out his jackknife and bade Billy get out his. It did not occur to them that the panther had scented the freshly killed game and had followed the trail of it.

The boys passed dreadful hours of suspense during that long, cold December night. More than once they heard the creature "sharpen its claws" on tree trunks, and the sound was by no means cheerful. The brute seemed bent on remaining near the little camp. I remember that Grandsir Billy said that they heard it "garp" several times; I suppose he meant yawn. The circumstance seems rather strange. He said that it "garped" like a big dog every time it sharpened its claws. Yet it did not cease to watch the little inclosure.

At last, tired with watching the boys fell asleep, a circumstance that is not strange perhaps when you consider they had plodded fifteen miles that day and had carried heavy loads.

They slept for some time. From later events the boys could infer what took place outside the hut. The late-rising moon swung up from behind the dark tree-tops. The panther had crept to within a few feet of the shack. Suddenly it crouched and sprang upon the roof of the little camp! When it struck the flimsy roof, the boys woke up. For an instant the whole frail structure shook; then it reeled and partly collapsed. The boys sprang up, and as they did so a big paw with claws spread burst through the roof and came down between them! The claws opened and closed as the paw moved to and fro. Billy's face was scratched slightly, and Joe's jacket was ripped. Joe then seized the paw with both hands and tried to hold it. The roof swayed and trembled and, for a moment, seemed about to fall; then the panther withdrew its paw, and the boys heard the creature leap off and bound away.

Hunters say that if a panther misses its first spring it will not try again. That may sometimes be true; but in this case the panther went off a short distance among the trees and after a few minutes crept forward as if to spring again. Terribly excited, the boys peered out at it and waited. They could not close the door of the camp. The whole structure had lurched to one side, and several sheets of bark had fallen from the light frame. Billy wanted to rush out and run, but his comrade, fearful lest the panther should chase them, held him back.

Now for the first time it occurred to Joe that he might divert the creature's attention by throwing out some of the dead martens. Cutting one of them loose, he slung it as far as he could into the woods. Immediately the panther stole forward, seized the carcass of the little animal in its mouth and ran off. But before long it returned, and then Joe threw out a second marten, which the panther carried off. After the boys had thrown out two more martens, the panther did not return, and they saw nothing more of it. As soon as day dawned they crept forth from their shattered camp, hastened down the stream and reached home with their trapped animals.

The first time I heard Grandsir Billy tell the story he said that the panther was as large as a yearling steer. Later he declared that it was the size of a two-year-old steer; and I have frequently heard him say that it was as large as a three-year-old! The old Squire said it was as large as the largest dog he ever saw.

CHAPTER XXXVII

ADDISON'S POCKETFUL OF AUGER CHIPS

Another year had now passed, and we were not much nearer realizing our plans for getting an education than when Master Pierson left us the winter before.

Owing to the bad times and a close money market, lumbering scarcely more than paid expenses that winter. This and the loss of five work-horses the previous November, put such stress on the family purse, that we felt it would be unkind to ask the old Squire to send four of us to the village Academy that spring, as had been planned.

"We shall have to wait another year," Theodora said soberly.

"It will always be 'another year' with us, I guess!" Ellen exclaimed sadly.

But during March that spring, a shrewd stroke of mother wit, on the part of Addison, greatly relieved the situation and, in fact, quite set us on our feet in the matter of funds. This, however, requires a bit of explanation.

For fifty years grandsir Cranston had lavished his love and care on the old Cranston farm, situated three miles from our place. He had been born there, and he had lived and worked there all his life. Year by year he had cleared the fields of stone and fenced them with walls. The farm buildings looked neat and well-cared for. The sixty-acre wood-lot that stretched from the fields up to the foot of Hedgehog Ledge had been cleaned and cleared of undergrowth until you could drive a team from end to end of it, among the three hundred or more immense old sugar maples

and yellow birches.

That wood-lot, indeed, had been the old farmer's special pride. He loved those big old-growth maples, loved them so well that he would not tap them in the spring for maple sugar. It shortened the lives of trees, he said, to tap them, particularly large old trees.

It was therefore distressing to see how, after grandsir Cranston died, the farm was allowed to run down and go to ruin. His wife had died years before; they had no children; and the only relatives were a brother and a nephew in Portland, and a niece in Bangor. Cranston had left no will. The three heirs could not agree about dividing the property. The case had gone to court and stayed there for four years.

Meanwhile the farm was rented first to one and then to another tenant, who cropped the fields, let weeds, briers, and bushes grow, neglected the buildings and opened unsightly gaps in the hitherto tidy stone walls. The taxes went unpaid; none of the heirs would pay a cent toward them; and the fifth year after the old farmer's death the place was advertised for sale at auction for delinquent taxes.

In March of the fifth year after grandsir Cranston died, Willis and Ben Murch wrote to one of the Cranston heirs, and got permission to tap the maples in the wood-lot at the foot of the ledge and to make sugar there.

They tapped two hundred trees, three spiles to the tree, and had a great run of sap. Addison and I went over one afternoon to see them "boil down." They had built an "arch" of stones for their kettles up near the foot of the great ledge, and had a cosy little shed there. Sap was running well that day; and toward sunset, since they had no team, we helped them to gather the day's run in pails by hand. It was no easy task, for there were two feet or more of soft snow on the ground, and there were as many as three hundred brimming bucketfuls that had to be carried to the sap holders at the shed.

Several times I thought that Addison was shirking. I noticed that at nearly every tree he stopped, put down his sap pails, picked up a handful of the auger chips that lay in the snow at the foot of the tree, and stood there turning them over with his fingers. The boys had used an inch and a half auger, for in those days people thought that the bigger the auger hole and the deeper they bored, the more sap would flow.

"Don't hurry, Ad," I said, smiling, as we passed each other. "The snow's soft! Pails of sap are heavy!"

He grinned, but said nothing. Afterward I saw him slyly slipping handfuls of those chips into his pocket. What he wanted them for I could not imagine; and later, after sunset, as we were going home, I asked him why he had carried away a pocketful of auger chips.

He looked at me shrewdly, but would not reply. Then, after a minute, he asked me whether I thought that Ben or Willis had seen him pick them up.

"What if they did?" I asked. But I could get nothing further from him.

It was that very evening I think, after we got home, that we saw the notice the tax collector had put in the county paper announcing the sale at public auction of the Cranston farm on the following Thursday, for delinquent taxes. The paper had come that night, and Theodora read the notice aloud at supper. The announcement briefly described the farm property, and among other values mentioned five hundred cords of rock-maple wood ready to cut and go to market.

"That's that old sugar lot up by the big ledge, where Willis and Ben were making syrup," said I. "Ad, whatever did you do with that pocketful of auger chips?"

Addison glanced at me queerly. He seemed disturbed, but said nothing. The following forenoon, when he and I were making a hot-bed for early garden vegetables, he remarked that he meant to go to that auction.

It was not the kind of auction sale that draws a crowd of people; there was only one piece of property to be sold, and that was an expensive one. Not more than twenty persons came to it—mostly prosperous farmers or lumbermen, who intended to buy the place as a speculation if it should go at a low price. The old Squire was not there; he had gone to Portland the day before; but Addison went over, as he had planned, and Willis Murch and I went with him.

Hilburn, the tax collector, was there, and two of the selectmen of the town, besides Cole, the auctioneer. At four o'clock Hilburn stood on the house steps, read the published notice of the sale and the court warrant for it. The town, he said, would deduct $114—the amount of unpaid taxes—from the sum received for the farm. Otherwise the place would be sold intact to the highest bidder.

The auctioneer then mounted the steps, read the Cranston warranty deed of the farm, as copied from the county records, describing the premises, lines, and corners. "A fine piece of property, which can soon be put into good shape," he added. "How much am I offered for it?"

After a pause, Zachary Lurvey, the owner of Lurvey's Lumber Mills, started the bidding by offering $1,000.

"One thousand dollars," repeated the auctioneer. "I am offered one thousand dollars. Of course

that isn't what this farm is really worth. Only one thousand! Who offers more?"

"Fifteen hundred," said a man named Haines, who had arrived from the southern part of the township while the deed was being read.

"Sixteen," said another: and presently another said, "Seventeen!"

I noticed that Addison was edging up nearer the steps, but I was amazed to hear him call out, "Seventeen fifty!"

"Ad!" I whispered. "What if Cole knocks it off to you? You have only $100 in the savings bank. You couldn't pay for it."

I thought he had made a bid just for fun, or to show off. Addison paid no attention to me, but watched the auctioneer closely. The others, too, seemed surprised at Addison's bid. Lurvey turned and looked at him sharply. I suppose he thought that Addison was bidding for the old Squire; but I knew that the old Squire had no thought of buying the farm.

After a few moments Lurvey called, "Eighteen hundred!"

"Eighteen fifty," said Addison; and now I grew uneasy for him in good earnest.

"You had better stop that," I whispered. "They'll get it off on to you if you don't take care." And I pulled his sleeve impatiently.

Willis was grinning broadly; he also thought that Addison was bluffing the other bidders.

Haines then said, "Nineteen hundred"; and Lurvey at once cried, "Nineteen twenty-five!"

It was now apparent that Lurvey meant to get the farm if he could, and that Haines also wanted it. The auctioneer glanced toward us. Much to my relief, Addison now backed off a little, as if he had made his best bid and was going away; but to my consternation he turned when near the gate and cried, "Nineteen fifty!"

"Are you crazy?" I whispered, and tried to get him to leave. He backed up against the gatepost, however, and stood there, watching the auctioneer. Lurvey looked suspicious and disgruntled, but after a pause, said in a low voice, "Nineteen seventy-five." Haines then raised the bid to $2,000, and the auctioneer repeated that offer several times. We thought Haines would get it; but Lurvey finally cried, "Two thousand twenty-five!" and the auctioneer began calling, "Going—going—going for two thousand twenty-five!" when Addison shouted, "Two thousand fifty!"

Lurvey cast an angry look at him. Haines turned away; and Cole, after waiting for further bids, cried, "Going—going—gone at two thousand fifty to that young man by the gate—if he has got the money to pay for it!"

"You've done it now, Ad!" I exclaimed, in distress. "How are you going to get out of this?"

I was frightened for him; I did not know what the consequences of his prank would be. To my surprise and relief, Addison went to Hilburn and handed him $100.

"I'll pay a hundred down," he said, "to bind my bid, and the balance to-morrow."

The two selectmen and Hilburn smiled, but accepted it. I remembered then that Addison had gone to the village the day before, and guessed that he had drawn his savings from the bank. But I did not see how he could raise $1,950 by the next day. All the way home I wanted to ask him what he planned to do. However, I did not like to question him before Willis and two other boys who were with us. All the way home Addison seemed rather excited.

The family were at supper when we went in. The old Squire was back from Portland; grandmother and the girls had told him that we had gone to the auction. The first thing he did was to ask us whether the farm had been sold, and how much it had brought.

"Two thousand and fifty," said I, with a glance at Addison.

"That's all it's worth," the old Squire said. "Who bought it?"

Addison looked embarrassed; and to help him out I said jocosely, "Oh, it was bid off by a young fellow we saw there."

"What was his name?" the old Squire asked in surprise.

"He spells it A-d-d-i-s-o-n," said I.

There was a sudden pause round the table.

"Yes," I continued, laughing, for I thought the best thing for Ad was to have the old Squire know the facts at once. "He paid $100 of it down, and he has to get round with nineteen hundred and fifty more by to-morrow noon."

Food was quite forgotten by this time. The old Squire, grandmother, and the girls were looking at Addison in much concern.

"Haven't you been rather rash?" the old Squire said, gravely.

"Maybe I have," Addison admitted. "But the bank has promised to lend me the money to-morrow

at seven per cent. if—if,"—he hesitated and reddened visibly,—"if you will put your name on the note with me, sir."

The old Squire's face was a study. He looked surprised, grave, and stern; but his kind old heart stood the test.

"My son," he said, after a short pause, "what led you into this? You must tell me before we go farther."

"It was something I noticed over there in that wood-lot. I haven't said anything about it so far; but I think I am right."

He went upstairs to his trunk and brought down a handful of those auger chips, and also a letter that he had received recently. He spread the chips on the table by the old Squire's plate, and the latter, after a glance at them, put on his reading glasses. Dry as the chips had become, we could still see what looked like tiny bubbles and pits in the wood.

"Bird's-eye, isn't it?" the old Squire said, taking up a chip in his fingers. "Bird's-eye maple. Was there more than one tree of this?"

"More than forty, sir, that I saw myself, and I've no doubt there are others," Addison replied.

"Ah!" the old Squire exclaimed, with a look of understanding kindling in his face. "I see! I see!"

During our three or four winters at the old Squire's we boys had naturally picked up considerable knowledge about lumber and lumber values.

"Yes," Addison said. "That's why I planned to get hold of that wood-lot. I wrote to Jones & Adams to see what they would give for clear, kiln-dried bird's-eye maple lumber, for furniture and room finish, and in this letter they offer $90 per thousand. I haven't a doubt we can get a hundred thousand feet of bird's-eye out of that lot."

"If Lurvey had known that," said I, "he wouldn't have stopped bidding at two thousand!"

"You may be sure he wouldn't," the old Squire remarked, with a smile.

"As for the quarreling heirs," said Addison, "they'll be well satisfied to get that much for the farm."

The next day the old Squire accompanied Addison to the savings bank and indorsed his note. The bank at once lent Addison the money necessary to pay for the farm.

No one learned what Addison's real motive in bidding for the farm had been until the following winter, when we cut the larger part of the maple-trees in the wood-lot and sawed them into three-inch plank at our own mill. Afterward we kiln-dried the plank, and shipped it to the furniture company.

Out of the three hundred or more sugar maples that we cut in that lot, eighty-nine proved to be bird's-eye, from which we realized well over $7,000. We also got $600 for the firewood; and two years later we sold the old farm for $1,500, making in all a handsome profit. It seemed no more than right that $3,000 of it should go to Addison.

The rest of us more than half expected that Addison would retain this handsome bonus, and use it wholly for his own education, since the fine profit we had made was due entirely to his own sagacity.

But no, he said at once that we were all to share it with him; and after thinking the matter over, the old Squire saw his way clear to add two thousand from his share of the profits.

We therefore entered on our course at the Academy the following spring, with what was deemed a safe fund for future expenses.

---

for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must

comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary

Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array

of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.