Title: Pocket Island: A Story of Country Life in New England

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Release date: December 8, 2006 [eBook #20057]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Roger Frank and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net

Pocket Island

A Story of Country Life in New England

By

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New York
International Association of Newspapers and Authors
1901

POCKET ISLAND

NORTH RIVER BINDERY
PRINTERS AND BINDERS
NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.

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CHAPTER I.

POCKET ISLAND.

In the year 185- a Polish Jew peddler named Wolf and a roving Micmac Indian met at a small village on Annapolis Bay, in Nova Scotia, and there and then formed a partnership.

It was one of those chance meetings between two atoms tossed hither and thither in the whirligig of life; for the peddler, shrewd, calculating and unscrupulous, was wandering along the Acadian shores driving hard bargains in small wares; and the Indian, like his race, fond of a roaming life, was drifting about the bay in a small sloop he owned, fishing where he would, hunting when he chose, stopping a week in some uninhabited cove to set traps, or lounging in a village drinking or gambling.

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The Jew had a little money and, what was of more value, brains and audacity. He also knew the conditions then prevalent along the Maine coast, and all the risks, as well as the profit, to be obtained in smuggling liquor. Rum was cheap in Nova Scotia and dear in Maine. The Indian with his sloop formed one means to an end; his money and cunning the other. A verbal compact to join these two forces on the basis of share and share alike for mutual profit, was entered into, and

Captain Wolf and the Sea Fox, as the sloop was named, with the Indian and his dog for crew, began their career.

As a preliminary some fifty kegs of assorted liquors, as many empty mackerel kits, a small stock of oil clothing, sea boots, fishing gear, tobaccos, etc., were purchased and stowed away on the sloop, and then she set sail.

There were along the coast of Maine in those days many uninhabited islands seldom visited. Fishermen avoided them, for the deep sea furnished safer and more profitable ground; coasters gave them a wide berth, and there were no others to disturb them. Among these, and lying midway between Monhegan and Big Spoon Islands, and distant from the Isle au Haut, the nearest inhabited one, about twenty miles, was a freak of nature known as "The Pocket," or Pocket Island, as shown on the maps. This merits a brief description. It was hollow. That is, from a 13
general view it appeared like an attempt to inclose a small portion of the sea within high, fir-covered walls. It resembled a horseshoe with the points drawn close. Neptune beat Jove, however, leaving a narrow fissure connecting the inclosed water and the outer ocean, and through this the tides flowed fiercely; but so protected was the inner harbor that never a ripple disturbed its surface. It was this harbor that gave the island its name.

Occasionally a shipwreck occurred here. In 1842 the British barque Lancaster was driven on to this island in a winter night snowstorm, and all hands perished. Five of the crew were washed ashore alive, only to freeze among the snow-covered rocks. The vessel went entirely to pieces in one night and the wreck was not discovered until two years after by a stray fisherman, who suddenly came upon the bleaching bones and grinning skulls of those unfortunate sailors. The island was a menace to coasters and bore an uncanny reputation. It was said to be haunted. During a night storm a tall man had been seen, by a flash of lightning, standing on a cliff. Strange sounds like the cries of dying men had been heard. When the waves were high, a noise like that 14
made by a bellowing bull was noticed. The ocean and its storms play queer pranks at times, especially at night. White bursts of foam leaping over black rocks assume ghostly shape. Dark and grotesque figures appear crawling into or out of fissures, or hiding behind rocks. Hideous and devilish, snarling and snapping, sounds issue from caverns. In darkness an uninhabited coast becomes peopled with demons who sport and scream and leap in hellish glee.

Such a spot was Pocket Island.

Nature also played another prank here, and as if to furnish a lair for some sea monster she hollowed a cavern in the island, with an entrance below tidewater and at the head of this harbor. Inside and above tide-level it broadened into a small room. As if to still further isolate the island all about it were countless rocks and ledges bare only at low tide and, like a serried cordon of black fangs, ready to bite and destroy any vessel that approached. It is probable that the Indians who formerly inhabited the Maine coast had explored this island and discovered the cave. An Indian is always looking for such things. It is his nature. It may be this wandering and half-civilized remnant of a nearly extinct tribe whom the Jew had compacted with, knew of this sea 15
cavern and piloted his sloop into the safe shelter of "the pocket." And it was a secure shelter. No one came here; no one was likely to. Its uncanny reputation, added to the almost impassable barricade of rocks and ledges all about, made it what Captain Wolf needed—a veritable burrow for a sea fox. Here he brought his cargo of contraband spirits and stored them in the cave. Here he repacked kegs of rum inside of empty mackerel kits, storing them aboard the sloop with genuine ones. By this ruse he almost obliterated the chance of detection. Like a sly fox, he was always on guard. Even when the sloop was safe at anchor, he worked only in the cave. When all was ready, he and his swarthy partner would wait till low tide, then load the dozen or more rum-charged kits and set sail for the coast. In these ventures Wolf realized what his race have always wanted—the Jew's one per cent.

In this island cave nature had placed a curiosity, known as a rocking stone. In was a boulder of many tons' weight near the wall of the room, and so poised that a push of the hand at one particular point would move it easily. When so moved a little niche in the rock-wall back of it was exposed. Wolf had discovered this one day while alone in the cave and utilized it as a hiding place 16
for his money.

Here he would come alone and, taking out the increasing bags of coin, empty them on a flat stone and, by the light of a lamp, count their contents again and again. Those shining coins were his god and all his religion; and in this damp and dark sea cavern and by the dim light of a lamp he came to worship.

The Indian could neither read nor write, add nor subtract, and while he knew the value of coins, he was unable to compute them. Wolf knew this and, unprincipled as he was, he not only defied all law in smuggling, but he had from the first defied all justice, and cheated his partner in the division of profit. As the Indian was never present when either buying or selling took place, and had no knowledge of arithmetic, this was an easy matter. Wolf gave him a little money, of course. He needed him and his vessel; also his help in sailing her. Not only was the Indian a faithful helper, but he held his tongue as well, which was very important. When in some Nova Scotia port the money Wolf gave him as his share was usually spent in drinking and gambling, which suited Wolf, who only desired to use him as a medium. 17

An Indian has no sense of economy, no thought of the morrow. To hunt, fish and eat to-day and let the future provide for itself is enough. If he works one day, it is that he may spend the next. Among the aborigines thrift was an unknown quantity, and the scattered remnants of those tribes

existing to-day are the same. As they were hundreds of years ago, so are they now. They were satisfied with bark wigwams then; a board and a mud hovel is enough to-day. They cannot comprehend a white man's ambition to work that he may dress and live well, and all money and all thought spent in civilizing the Indian has only resulted in degrading him. He absorbs all the white man's vices and none of his virtues. Not only that, but the effort to redeem him has warped and twisted him into a cunning and revengeful creature; all malice and no honor. So true is this that the fact has crystalized itself into the universal belief that the only good Indian is a dead one.

Such a one, though not comprehended by Wolf, was his partner. While that fox-like Jew was reaping rich profit and deluding himself in believing he was successfully cheating an Indian, he was only sowing the seed that soon or late was destined to end in murder.

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CHAPTER II.

THE SEA FOX.

While Neal Dow and his associates were conducting an organized crusade against the sale of liquor in Maine, and that fruitless legislation known as the Maine Law was being enforced, there entered a small coast port in that State one day a sloop called the Sea Fox, manned by a white man, an Indian and a dog.

The white man had sinister black eyes; the Indian was tall and swarthy. He and the dog remained on board the sloop; the Jew, or, as he called himself, Captain Wolf, came ashore. He declared himself to be a small coast trader in search of choice lots of fish, and incidentally having for sale clothing, tobacco and various small wares. He lounged about the wharves and buildings devoted to curing fish, talking fish and fishing to all. He seemed to be in search of information, and appeared ready and willing to buy small and choice lots of cured fish at a low price; also to sell the assortment of wares he carried. He invited prospective buyers to visit his sloop, and exerted himself to interest them. While he seemed anxious to sell, he made no sales; and though willing to buy he bought nothing. He was in no hurry. He just ran in to look the market over and see if there was a chance to buy at a price that would enable him to make a fair profit. If not, he might come again, or may be he could do better elsewhere. His mission appeared innocent and natural enough and he and his small craft were duly accepted for what they appeared to be.

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Had any one, however, examined the dozen or so kits of mackerel which appeared as part of his cargo, they would have found, not fish, but a species of bait ofttimes used by fishermen; and could they have read between the lines of Captain Wolf's innocent inquiries they would have learned that fishing information was the thing he cared least about. Though Wolf talked trade, but did no trading; was anxious to buy, and bought not; willing to sell and sold not; it need not be inferred he transacted no business. Had any of these coast residents been blessed with the occult ability to see beyond the apparent facts, and to overhear, they might have learned of certain hard, if illegal, bargains made between Wolf and one or more of their number, and they might have witnessed late at night various mysterious movements of a small boat passing from shore to the sloop empty, and returning laden with apparently harmless kits of fish. Had these good people been still more watchful they would have seen the Sea Fox spread her sails and depart before dawn. Whence Wolf came no one knew; whither he went, no one guessed. Like a strange bird of prey, like a fox at night, he stole into port on occasions wide apart and unexpected, and as mysteriously went his way.

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The coast of Maine was particularly well adapted to aid Captain Wolf in his peculiar enterprise. The great tide of summer travel had not then started and its countless bays, coves and inlets were unmolested. Wherever a safe harbor occurred a small village had clustered about it and the larger islands only were inhabited. The residents of these hamlets were mainly engaged in fishing or coasting, and of a guileless nature. They were honest themselves, and not easy to suspect dishonesty in others. Into these ports Wolf could sail unsuspected, and, like the cunning fox he was, easily dupe them by his rôle of innocent trader till he found some one as unscrupulous as he, who was willing to take the chance and share his illegal profit.

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While he played his rôle of fox by day and smuggled by night, it was not without risk. The crusaders against the liquor traffic had an organized force of spies and reformers. In every town there was one or more, and as the reformers received half of all fines or value of liquor seized it may be seen that the Sea Fox had enemies. No one knew it any better than Wolf, and, like the human fox he was, no one was any more capable of guarding against them. Well skilled in the most adroit kind of deception, in comparison to his enemies he was as the fox is to the rabbit, the hawk to the chicken. Frequently he would set traps for his pursuers, and, giving them apparent reason for suspicion, would thus invite a search. On these occasions, it is needless to say, no liquor was found on board the Sea Fox. To discover his enemies by the method of inviting pursuit and then doubling on his track as Reynard does was child's play to him. In each town he had an accomplice who dare not, if he would, betray him.

Captain Wolf was also a miser. He loved gold as none but misers do. To him it was wife, child and heaven all in one, and its chink as he counted it was the sweetest of music. For four years he played his rôle and continually reaped rich reward, and then he resolved to quit. But, true to his nature, before doing so he decided to play the hyena. He had for all these years cheated the law; now he planned to cheat those who aided him. To this end he set a trap. When a fox sets a trap he sets it well. Wolf began by circulating an alluring story of a chance to share in the distribution of a large cargo of contraband spirits, provided those who could so share would buy a *pro rata* large amount at reduced price. Having thus set and baited his trap, he proceeded to spring it. He had, in his wanderings, obtained a formula for the manufacture of spurious brandy. All that was required was a few cheap chemicals and water. He purchased the former; on Pocket Island there was a spring that furnished the latter. Feeling sure that those whom he had duped would not dare to expose him, he yet acted cautiously and began his cheating at widely separated points. He had usually disposed of small lots at a time. He doubled and sometimes trebled these, and the hoard of silver and gold behind the rocking stone grew rapidly. Trip after trip he made to the various ports he had been accustomed to visit, never calling at the same one twice, and at each springing his well-set trap, pocketing his almost stolen money and disappearing, leaving behind him curses and threats of revenge. When all whom he could thus dupe were robbed by this wily Jew and he had secured all the profit they, as his accomplices, had made, Captain Wolf and the Sea Fox sailed away to his unknown lair at Pocket Island, and were never heard of afterward.

CHAPTER III.

NEMESIS.

While Captain Wolf was carrying out his scheme to rob his accomplices in smuggling, he was planning a still more despicable act, and that was to take his hoard of money, stow all valuables on the sloop, sail to a Nova Scotia port, and when near it, to kill the Indian, sell the Sea Fox and cross the ocean.

There were several weighty reasons for this. In the first place, those bags of coin behind the rocking stone weighed on his mind. He was a miser, and never before had he so much wealth he could call his own. A few hundred dollars at the most were all he had ever possessed. Now he had thousands. Money was his god, and to escape from danger and carry it with him seemed prudent. He was aware he was suspected of being, and in fact was known to be, a smuggler. While as yet undiscovered in his island lair, he might at any time be pounced upon. His act of swindling his accomplices, he knew well, would create revengeful enemies, who would spare neither time nor money to hunt him down.

Then there was the Indian whom he had also robbed from the start. He might become suspicious and betray him, or worse yet, discover the secret of the rocking stone. Wolf had discovered it by accident; why might not the Indian? With murder in his heart, Wolf for the first time began to be afraid. He put the pistols he had always carried in perfect order and ready for instant use. So far as he had discovered, the Indian possessed neither knife nor pistol; but nevertheless Wolf feared him, and the more he realized the danger he had incurred in duping his assistants in smuggling, and how much he was really in the power of his giant-framed partner, the more his fears grew. It may be thought it was conscience working in him; but it was not, for such as he have none. It was guilty fear, and that only. This so preyed upon his mind during his last trip to the coast that he could hardly sleep. Then he began to imagine that the Indian was suspicious of him. To allay that danger he doubled the small share of profit he had given his partner, knowing full well if he had no chance to spend it, it would all come back to him in the end. Then he set about deceiving him by an offer to buy the Sea Fox and pay what he believed the Indian would consider a fabulous price. It was a fatal mistake. The Indian had no real idea of the value of his sloop. It had come to him as payment for his share of a successful fishing-trip to The Banks years before, and he had become attached to that craft. It had been his home, his floating wigwam, for a long time, and for Wolf to want to buy it hurt him.

"Me no sell boat," he said, when the offer was made. "Me want sloop long time."

Wolf, who valued all things from a miser's standpoint, could not understand that there might lurk in the Indian a tinge of sentiment. He was mistaken, and the mistake was a little pitfall placed in his way.

There was another which he was also to blame for, and yet, like the first, he was not aware of it. In the cave where he had stored his cargo and prepared it for smuggling, he kept a large can of cheap and highly inflammable oil on a rock shelf, just above the flat stone where he, by the light of two lamps, had counted his wealth time and again. True to his nature, when he bought the oil he bought the cheapest, and unknown to him the can had sprung a leak and while he had been absent for weeks at a time, the oil had run out, saturating the rock below and forming little pools on the cave floor among the loose stones. Wolf had not noticed this, or, if he had, had thought nothing of it. Neither did he realize how fate could utilize his miser's instinct in purchasing the

cheap can as a means to bring together and bless two lives unknown to him. We seldom do notice the snags in life that usually trip us.

By the time the last voyage of the Sea Fox had been made and she returned to The Pocket, the relations between Wolf and the Indian were in danger of rupture. Wolf distrusted his partner, and yet believed he had lulled all suspicion. He had never failed before in duping any one he had set out to; why should he in this case? Still, he was uneasy and resolved to end it all as soon as possible. But Indians have one peculiarity that will baffle even the shrewdest Jew. They never talk. Their faces are always as expressionless as a graven image. While contemplating the most cruel murder they never show the least change in expression, nor do their eyes show the faintest shadow of an emotion. They are stolid, surly and Sphinx-like always. Wolf's partner was like his race, and not even by the droop of an eyelid did he betray the slowly gathering storm of hate and rage within. He brooded over the hurt he felt when Wolf had wanted to buy his sloop, and 28
believing the Jew meant to rob him of her, he grew suspicious and watched Wolf. Not by word or sign did he show it, and the Jew saw it not. Wolf watched the Indian as closely, only the Indian knew it, and Wolf did not. It was now Wolf against fox and fox against Wolf, and the swarthy fox was getting the best of it. Meanwhile the loading of the sloop for her final departure proceeded.

Wolf had planned to use the Indian's help to the last, and when all was ready, enter the cave, secure the money about his person and sail away. The cave entrance was under water for about two hours of high tide, and Wolf waited until a day came when the tide served early. He had planned to go in just before the rising water closed the entrance, thus securing himself from intrusion; and then, when the tide fell away, to come out ready to start. The day and hour came and he entered the cave.

Unknown to him the Indian followed!

Wolf lighted a lamp and sat down. When the sea had closed the entrance, no sound entered. Wolf waited. Ten, twenty, thirty minutes passed, and all sound of the ocean ceased. He believed himself alone. He lighted the other lamp, placing both on the flat rock. Then he went to the 29
rocking stone, and pushing it back, took from the niche, one by one, the bags of coin. These he carried to the table stone and poured their contents into a glittering pile.

From behind a rock a pair of sinister eyes watched him!

He felt that he had two hours of absolute seclusion and need not hurry. He began to slowly pile the coins in little stacks and count them. There was no reason for haste and he counted carefully. He enjoyed this beyond all else in his vile life, and desired to prolong the pleasure. The money was all his, and he gloated over it. No sense of awe at his separation from all things human in that damp, silent cavern, still as a tomb, came over him. No thought of the murder he was soon to commit; no feeling of remorse, no impulse of good; no thought of the future or of God—entered his soul. Only the miser's joy of possession. Not a sound entered the cavern and only the chink of the coin, as he counted it, disturbed the deathly silence.

Still the sinister eyes watched him from out the darkness!

Stack after stack he piled till all was counted—eight of one thousand dollars each, and twelve of 30
five hundred dollars, all in gold; and twenty of one hundred dollars each in silver.

A tall, swarthy form crept noiselessly toward him!

It was the supreme moment of his life, and as he gloatingly gazed on the stacks glittering in the dim light before him, a delirium of joy hushed all thought and deadened all sense, even that of hearing.

Nearer and nearer drew the swarthy form!

And as Wolf tasted the sublime ecstasy of a miser's joy, his heaven, his God, suddenly two cold, massive hands closed tight about his throat. But men die hard! Even while unable to breathe, and as he writhed and twisted beneath the awful menace of death bearing him down, his hand suddenly touched the pistol in his belt! The next instant it was drawn and fired full against the Indian's breast! Then a shriek of death agony, as his swarthy foe leaped upward against the rocky shelf; a crash of breaking glass; a flash of fierce flame bursting into red billows, curling and seething all about him and turning the cave into a mimic hell!

Outside could be heard the sound of a bellowing bull!

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CHAPTER IV.

THE BOY.

A boy is an inverted man. Small things seem to him great and great ones small. Trifling troubles move him to tears and serious ones pass unnoticed. To snare a few worthless suckers in the

meadow brook is to the country boy of more importance than the gathering of a field of grain. To play hooky and go nutting is far better than to study and fit himself for earning a livelihood. He works at his play and makes play of his work. He disdains boyhood and longs for manhood. In spite of his inverted position I would rather be a boy than a man, and a country boy than a city-bred one.

The country boy has so much the greater chance for enjoyment and is not so soon warped by restrictions and tarnished by the sewers of vice. He has deep forests, wide meadows and pure brooks to play in; and if his feet grow broad from lack of shoes, he hears the song of birds, the 32
whispers of winds in the trees, and knows the scent of new-mown hay and fresh water lilies, the beauty of flowers, green fields and shady woods. He learns how apples taste eaten under the tree, nuts cracked in the woods, sweet cider as it runs from the press, and strawberries picked in the orchard while moist with dew. All these delights are a closed book to the city boy. The country boy is surrounded by pure and wholesome influences and grows to be a better man for it. The wide range of forest and field, pure air, sweet water, plenty of sun and rain are all his, and worth ten times the chance for life, health, enjoyment and a good character than ever comes to the city boy. He may sooner learn to smoke or gather a choice selection of profane and vulgar words; he may have smaller feet and better clothes, but he often fails in attaining a healthy body and pure mind and never knows what a royal, wide-open chance for enjoying boyhood days he has missed. He never knows the delight of wading barefoot down a mountain brook where the clear water leaps over mossy ledges and where he can pull trout from every foam-flecked pool! He never realizes the charming suspense of lying upon the grassy bank of a meadow stream and snaring a sucker, or what fun it is to enter a chestnut grove just after frost and rain have covered 33
the ground with brown nuts, or setting traps, shaking apple trees, or gathering wild grapes! He never rode to the cider-mill on a load of apples and had the chance to shy one at every bird and squirrel on the way; or when winter came, to slide down hill when the slide was a half-mile field of crusted snow! All these and many other delights he never knows; but one thing he does know, and knows it early, and that is how much smarter, better dressed and better off in every way he is than the poor, despised greeny of a country boy! He may, it is true, go early to the theatre and look at half-nude actresses loaded with diamonds, but he never sees a twenty-acre cedar pasture just after an ice storm when the morning sun shines fair upon it!

True to his inverted comprehension, the country boy, and our boy especially, sees and feels all his surroundings and all the voices of nature from a boy's standpoint. He feels that his hours of work are long and hard, and that the countless chores are interspersed through his daily life on the farm for the sole purpose of preventing him from having a moment he can call his own. He has a great many pleasant hours, however, and does not realize why they pass so quickly. His little 34
world seems large to him and all his experiences great in their importance. A ten-acre meadow appears like a boundless prairie, and a half-mile wide piece of woods an unbounded forest.

On one side of the farm is a clear stream known as Ragged Brook, that, starting among the foothills of a low mountain range, laughs and chatters, leaps and tumbles, down the hills, through the gorges and over the ledges as if endowed with life. Since he is not blessed with brothers or sisters, this, together with the woods, the birds and squirrels, becomes his companion. The first trout he ever catches in this brook seems a monster and never afterward does one pull quite so hard. Isolated as he is, and having none but his elders for company, he talks to the creatures of the field and forest as if they could understand him, and he watches their ways and habits and tries to make them his friends. He is a lonely boy, and seldom sees others of his age, so that perhaps when he does they make a more distinct impression on his mind.

One day he is allowed to go to the mill with his father, and it is an event in his life he never forgets. The old brown mill with its big wheel splashing in the clear water; the millstones that 35
rumble so swiftly; the dusty miller who takes the bags of grain—all interest him, and especially so does the pond above the mill that is dotted with white lilies and where there is a boat fastened to a willow by a chain. On the way back, and a mile from home, his father stops to chat with a man in front of a large house with tall pillars, and two immense maples on either side of the gate. Standing beside the man and holding onto one of his hands with her two small ones is a little girl who looks at the boy with big, wondrous eyes. He wants to tell her about the mill and ask her if she ever saw the great wheel go around, but he is afraid to. He hears the man call her "Liddy," and wonders if she ever caught a fish.

Then his world grows larger as the months pass one by one, until he is sent to a little brown schoolhouse a mile away and finds a small crowd of boys and girls, only two or three of whom he ever saw before. One of them is the girl who looked wonderingly at him a year previous. He tells her he knows what her name is, and feels a little hurt because that fact does not seem to interest her. He studies his lessons because he is told he must, and plays hard because he enjoys it. He 36
feels no special attraction toward any of his schoolmates until one winter day this same little blue-eyed girl asks him for a place on his sled. He shares it with her as a well-behaved boy should, and so begins the first faint bond of feeling that like a tiny rill on the hillside slowly gathers power, until at last, a mighty river, it sweeps all other feelings before it.

How slowly that rippling rill of feeling grew during the next few years need not be specified. Like other boys of his age, he feels at times ashamed of caring whether she notices him or not, and again the incipient pangs of jealousy, because she notices other boys. In a year he begins to bring her flag-root in summer, or big apples in winter, and although her way home is different from his, he occasionally feels called upon to accompany her, heedless of the fact that it costs him an extra half-mile and fault-finding at being late home. He passes unharmed through the terrors of

speaking pieces on examination day, and when St. Valentine's day comes he conquers the momentous task of inditing a verse where "bliss" rhymes with "kiss" upon one of those missives which he has purchased for five cents at the village store, and timidly leaves it where this same girl will find it, in her desk at school.

On two occasions during the last summer at the district school, he—quite a big boy now—joins the older boys and girls under a large apple tree that grows near the schoolhouse, and plays a silly game, the principal feature of which consists in his having to choose some girl to kiss. As he knows very well whom he prefers, and has the courage to kiss her when his turn comes, that seems a most delightful game; and although he and other boys who were guilty of this proceeding are jeered at by the younger ones, the experience makes such an impression on him that he lies awake half the first night thinking about it.

But all too soon to him comes the end of schooldays and especially the charming companionship of this particular fair-haired girl. On the last day she asks him to write in her album, and he again indulges in rhyme and inscribes therein a melancholy verse, the tenor of which is a hope that she will see that his grave is kept green, as such an unhappy duty must, in the near future, devolve upon some one. She in turn writes him a farewell note of similar tone, and encloses a lock of her hair tied with a blue ribbon. He has planned to walk home with her when the last day ends, and perhaps participate in a more tender leave-taking, but she rides home with her parents, and so that sweet scheme is foiled. With a heavy heart he watches her out of sight and then, feeling that possibly he may never see her again, takes his books and turns away from the dear old brown schoolhouse for the last time. He locks the curl of hair and her note up in a tin box where he keeps his fish-hooks, and resumes his unending round of hard work and chores. His horizon has enlarged a good deal, for he is now twelve years old—but it does not yet include Liddy.

It is over a year before he sees her again, though once, when given a rainy half-day to fish in Ragged Brook, he, like a silly boy, deserts that enticing stream for an hour and cuts across lots near her home in hopes that he may see her again, but fails.

Then one summer day a surprise comes to him. Half a mile from his home, and in the direction his thoughts often turn, is a cedar pasture where blackberries grow in plenty, and here he is sent to pick them. It is here, and while unconscious what Fate has in store for him, that he suddenly hears a scream, and running toward him, down the path comes a girl in a short dress with a calico sun-bonnet flying behind her, until almost at his feet she stumbles and falls and there, sprawling on the grass, is—Liddy.

In an instant he is at her side, and how glad he is of the chance to help her up and soothe her fears no one but himself ever knows. She, too, has been picking berries, and has come suddenly upon a monster snake just gliding from a cedar bough almost over her head. When her fright subsides he at once hunts for and kills that reptile with far more satisfaction than he ever felt in killing one before. It is an ungrateful return, for although the boy knew it not, the snake has done him a greater kindness than he ever realized. Then when all danger is removed, how sweet it is to sit beside her in the shade and talk over schooldays while he looks into her tender blue eyes. And how glad he is to fill her pail with berries which he has picked, and when the sun is almost down how charming it is to walk home with her along the maple-shaded lane! He even hopes that he will see another snake so that he can kill that also, and show her how brave a boy is. But no more snakes come to his aid that day and only the gentlest of breezes rustles the spreading boughs that shade their pathway. When she thanks him at parting, a little look of gratitude makes her blue eyes seem more tender than ever to him and her voice sound like sweetest music.

His world has enlarged wonderfully now, for Liddy has entered into it.

CHAPTER V.

THE BOY'S FIRST PARTY.

The Stillman girls were going to give a party, and the boy was invited. It was the first social recognition he had ever received, and it disturbed his equilibrium. It also made him feel that he was almost a man.

He had for some time longed to be a man, and for a year past had felt hurt when called a boy. When the little note of invitation, requesting "the pleasure of your company," etc., reached him, he felt he had suddenly grown taller. He realized it more fully that night when he tried on his best clothes to see how they would look. The sleeves of his jacket were too short and his pants missed connections with his boots by full two inches. The gap seemed to swell the size of his feet, also. When he looked in his little mirror he noticed a plainly defined growth of down on his lip, and his hair needed cutting.

Then the invitation filled him with mingled fear, surprise and pleasure. He hardly knew, after thinking it all over, whether he wanted to go or not. The one fact that turned the scale was Liddy.

He was sure she would be there. But then, that painful gap between his pants and boots! He had thought a good deal about her ever since school was over. Now that he was invited to a party where she would be, he began to feel just a little afraid of her.

When the important evening came and he presented himself at the Stillmans' house, and lifted the big iron knocker on the front door, its clang sounded loud enough to wake the dead, and his heart was going like a trip-hammer. Mary Stillman met him at the door, and her welcome was so cordial he couldn't understand it. He wasn't much used to society. All his schoolmates were there —boys that he had played ball, snared suckers, and gone in swimming with scores of times, and girls that seemed a good deal taller than when they went to school. Most of them were dressed in white, and with their rosy cheeks and bright eyes made a pretty picture.

They were nearly all in one of the big front rooms, and among them was Liddy, in pink muslin with a broad sash, and bows of blue ribbon at the ends of her two braids of hair. She looked so 43
sweet he was more afraid of her than ever. His first thought was to go into the room where some of the boys were, but Mary Stillman almost pushed him into the other room and he felt that he was in for it. When he sat down next to another boy and looked at the girls whispering and giggling together, he almost wished he had not come. Then when he thought of that unfriendly separation of his pants and boots he was sure of it. But he caught a pleasant smile and nod from Liddy, and that gave him a world of courage.

Then he began to talk to the boy next to him, and was just beginning to forget that he was at a party, in an exchange of experiences about bee hunting and finding wild honey, when the oldest Stillman girl proposed they play button. He had never played button and wasn't anxious to, for it might necessitate his walking about the room and expose that gap still more. He preferred to talk bee-hunting with Jim Pratt. He was soon made to realize, however, that there was a different sort of wild honey to be gathered at a party, and "Button, button, who's got the button?" was the method. When it came his turn to pay a forfeit, he was directed to measure three yards of tape 44
with Liddy. As this consisted in kneeling face to face with her on a cushion in the center of the room, joining hands, expanding arms to the limit, and back again, punctuating each outward stretch with a kiss, it wasn't so bad. He was sorry it wasn't six yards instead of three. He could stand it if Liddy could—only he hoped that no one had noticed that gap. On the next round, Jim Pratt was ordered to stand in a well four feet deep and choose a girl to pull him out. As four feet meant four kisses, and Jim knew a good thing when he saw it, he chose Liddy. And then the boy felt like licking him.

After button came post office, and the boy had a letter from Nellie Barnes, with five cents postage due, which called for his catching Nellie and kissing her five times. By this time he had forgotten he was at a party with abbreviated pants, and was having no end of a good time. Then some one started the good old frolic of run 'round chimney, and as the Stillman house was admirably adapted for that, the fun waxed fast and furious. It was catch any girl you wanted to, and kiss her if you did. In the romp the boy's collar came off, and he asked Liddy to pin it on, and when she purposely pricked him a little, he grabbed her and kissed her a few times extra, just for 45
luck. He was rapidly realizing why he was there, and what for. And that gap had passed entirely out of his mind.

Then the boys, all rather warm and excited, were requested to go into the kitchen and carry refreshments to the girls, and our boy and Liddy were soon ensconced in a cosy corner with two plates filled with a medley of frosted cake, mince pie, tarts and the like, and as happy as two birds in a nest. It was the first time he had ever eaten with her, and an event in his life of no small importance. They also talked as fast as they ate. She told him all her little plans about going to the village academy the next term, and what she liked to study, and all about a little white rabbit that her father had given her on her last birthday and how cunning it was. The boy decided at once that he would have a white rabbit if he had to steal one. He also told her that he had found a nest of young foxes that summer and had kept them ever since in a pen, and he offered to give her one. He also assured her he, too, meant to go to the academy if his parents would let him. It was a charming visit, and the boy's heart warmed in a wonderful way, and Liddy's blue eyes looked into his brown ones so sweetly that he felt as if heaven was just ahead. 46
Like a wise boy he asked her then and there if he could go home with her, which, of course, he could, and so all was well. Almost before any one realized it, the time for the party to break up came, and with a chorus of "good-nights" the happy gathering ended.

When the boy, with Liddy's soft hand curled confidingly around his arm, started for her home, a mile away, he was proud as a king, and far happier. And that long walk in the moonlight, while

"On his arm a soft hand rested; rested light as ocean's foam,"—

could he, or would he, ever forget it? I think not. It was a poem of blue eyes like spring violets, of tender, loving words, of mellow moonlight on the fields where the corn-shocks stood in spectral rows, and the brook they crossed looked like a rippling stream of silver; where the maples along the lane, still clad in yellow foliage, cast mottled shadows in their pathway, and the fallen leaves rustled beneath their feet. They did not talk much—their hearts were too full of love's young dream—although he told her of his visit to a deserted house a year before, and how he heard 47
ghostly footsteps in the house, and saw a closet door swing half open in a shadowy room, and he was sure there was a ghost in that closet; at which Liddy's arm clasped his a little closer. Maybe he enlarged a trifle upon that spook. Almost any boy with a fertile imagination and his sweetheart clinging to his arm, on a moonlit maple lane, with no one near, would. I am sure I would if I were a boy.

When her home was reached he was revolving a serious problem in his mind. To kiss Liddy in the games at the party was easy enough. It was a part of the play, and expected. He had even ventured a few independent ones when she pricked him, and though he got his ears boxed, she didn't seem angry. But to deliberately kiss her now at parting was an entirely different matter. No doubt Liddy knew what he was thinking about, for when the gate was reached she paused and did not enter. She thanked him sweetly for his company home, and declared she had had a delightful time. He assured her he had, and then there was a pause. It was a critical moment. He looked at the moon, high overhead. The man in it—as all men would—seemed to say: "Now's your chance, my boy; kiss her quick!" And yet he hesitated. Then he looked at the near-by brook where 48
the ripples were like dancing silver coin, and then at Liddy. Maybe the laughter of those ripples gave him courage, for he hesitated no longer, but full upon her rosy lips he kissed her. Then he walked home, and all the long mile, though his feet trod the earth, he knew it not. Rather was he floating on ripples of moonlight, with a fairy-like face and tender blue eyes ever hovering over him, and a soft white hand clinging to his arm.

And so ended the boy's first party.

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CHAPTER VI.

SERIOUS THOUGHTS.

When the boy reached home a new and surprising change had come to him. For the first time in his life he began to think—and what was more to the point, to faintly see himself as he was, and the picture was not pleasant. He had longed to be a man. He began to feel that he was almost one, and a poorly clad and ignorant one at that. He lay awake nearly all that night, and not only lived the party over, but more especially the walk home with Liddy.

All he had cared for before was boyish sports, to do his work, and escape wearing his best clothes. Now he began to think about those same clothes and how ill they fitted him and how awkward they made him look, and the more he thought about it the more he wondered how Liddy could have been so nice to him. He vowed he would never be seen in public again with them on. He had seen boys in the village who wore neat and well-fitting garments, a starched shirt and 50
collar that buttoned to it, instead of being pinned to the top of a roundabout, as his was, and thinking of them made him ashamed of himself. And then that awful gap between his pants and boots! Then he thought of how the girls were laughing when he came into the room at the party, and now he felt sure they must have been making fun of him, and that made him feel worse than ever. His coarse boots, in comparison with the nice, thin ones worn by some of the other boys there, also haunted him. In short, he took a mental inventory of himself, and the sum total was not pleasing.

All the next day he was glum and thoughtful and for a week he acted the same. It was the birth of the man in him; the step from the happy, care-free boy to young manhood. It was also, be it said, the beginning of a woman's refining influence that has slowly and for countless ages gradually lifted man from savagery to enlightenment. An evolution of good conduct, garb and cleanliness made necessary by woman's favor, and to win her admiration. The cynics call it vanity. So then, must they call the evolution of the species vanity. It may be so, but call it what you will, it's the influence that has wrought the naked savage, decorated with paint and feathers, and courting his 51
wife by knocking her senseless with a club and carrying her to a cave, into the well-dressed, gallant, kindly, thoughtful and refined gentleman of to-day.

Just a little of this realizing sense of what he should be, and why, came to the boy, and as ever will be it was a woman's face and a woman's smiles, albeit a very young and blue-eyed one, that inspired the thought. His parents rallied him a little about the party, but to him it was—especially its ending, a sacred secret. Then one day he astonished them by asking if he might have a new suit and go to the academy that coming winter. He had never before shown any unusual eagerness for study, and this request was surprising. For several weeks the question was held in abeyance, though duly considered in the family councils; and then one day at the supper-table the answer came.

"If the boy wants more learnin'," his father said, "by gosh, he can have it. I never had much chance at books myself, but that ain't no reason why he shouldn't. We'll fix ye up," he said cheerfully, with a twinkle in his eye, "so ye won't be ashamed to go to a party again;" from which it may be inferred that the old gentleman had divined some things which the boy little suspected 52
he had.

When the winter term at the village academy opened, the boy was there, his courage a good deal strengthened by a new suit that fitted and a pair of boots that did not give the impression that he was falling downstairs at every step. But his entry into the new school was not a thornless path. Most of the faces were new to him, and many a good deal older. He still felt himself what he was—a big, awkward boy, though a boy with a determined will to study hard and make the most of

his opportunity.

He soon learned a good many things; one of which was that earnestness in study did not always win the favor of either teacher or schoolmates; that in school, as in the world, pleasant manners and flattering words counted for more than devotion to duty. He also learned that such a thing as favoritism between master and pupil existed, and that the poorest scholar often stood nearest the teacher's heart. The master, Mr. Webber, he discovered, had a monstrous bump of self-esteem. He was a small man, not larger than the boy, who was sixteen, and large for his age, and who, as big boys will, cherished a sort of contempt for small men. It is possible that the boy was entirely 53
wrong in his estimate of the principal. No doubt that worthy, judged from an adult standpoint, was the most courtly and diplomatic pedagogue that ever let his favorite pupils whisper all they pleased, and banged the floor with the other sinners; but, to the boy, he seemed a little, arrogant bit of bumptiousness, who strutted about the schoolroom and was especially fond of hearing himself read aloud. "The Raven" was his favorite selection, and he read it no less than thirteen times during one term.

The boy did not feel at home at the academy. It was so unlike the dear old district school. But he felt it was a good training for him, and he watched the older scholars and studied hard. The girls all wore long dresses, and, as a rule, were just budding into young womanhood. Of these he was a trifle afraid, especially of Liddy, who was one of the prettiest. She was also one of the best scholars, and in her studies easily a leader. It acted as a spur to the boy, whose secret though ardent admiration had originally been the motive force that brought him to the academy. His pride was such that he was ashamed to have her surpass him, and for her to solve a problem in algebra that he had failed on, humiliated him. 54

Another thing he learned that winter besides his lessons, was that stylish clothes and genteel manners in a young man counted far more in a girl's estimation than proficiency in study. There was one pupil in particular, named James White, who, though dull in lessons, was popular with the girls. He was the fop of the school, wore the nattiest of garments, patent-leather shoes, gold watch, bosom pin, seal ring, and was blessed with a nice little moustache. He also smoked cigars with all the *sang froid* of experienced men. It might be said that he prided himself on his style, but that was all he had for consolation, for he was always at the foot of his class. He also showered a deal of attention and candy on Liddy. It is needless to say the boy hated him, and once gave him a good thrashing for calling him a "greeny." It was true enough, but then a boy who is a greenhorn doesn't enjoy being informed of it by a better-dressed stupid who tries to cut him out!

There was one other comfort the boy had: he was often enabled to give a far better recitation than White could. On these occasions a faint look of admiration in Liddy's blue eyes was like a rift of sunshine on a cloudy day to him. When the standing of all pupils was read at the middle of the 55
term, the boy was away ahead of White, and felt almost as proud as the night he walked home with Liddy from his first party. It cheered him a deal in his hard fight against ignorance and the awkwardness that, like hayseed from the farm, still clung to him. How much the few quiet attentions and pleasant words Liddy favored him with encouraged him, no one but himself ever knew. He never told Liddy even, till a good many years after. Toward the end of the term this studious little lady gave a party, and with the rest the boy was invited. It gladdened his heart, of course, but when the day before the affair, and as they were all leaving the hill upon which the academy stood, she quietly said to him: "Come early, I want you to help me get ready to play a new game called questions," he felt like a king. It is needless to say he went early.

The new game proved a success. It consisted of as many numbered cards as there were players, distributed among them by chance. The holders of these were each in turn to give an answer to any question asked beginning with "Who," the selection being made by the chance drawing of one of the same series of numbers from a hat. To illustrate: If there were thirty boys and girls 56
playing the same game, cards bearing the numbers from one to thirty were distributed among them.

As many more bearing the same numbers were retained by the leader, who would start the game by asking, for instance: "Who has the largest mouth?" A number would be drawn from the hat and the boy or girl who held the duplicate number was by this means identified as having a suitable mouth for pie. He or she in turn was then at liberty to get square by asking another question also beginning with "who," and so on.

"Questions" scored a hit and made no end of fun. Some one asked: "Who is the biggest fool in the room?" and when the number was called and Master White proved to hold the duplicate, the boy smiled, for retribution occasionally overtakes those who wear too fine clothes. A young folks' party in those days would be no party at all unless there were some kissing games, and when toward the close of this one, somebody proposed they wind up with "Copenhagen," all seemed willing.

When the little gathering had departed, the boy made bold to stay a few minutes longer and hold a most delightful though brief chat with Liddy. They talked over a lot of mutually interesting 57
subjects, including their opinions of Mr. Webber, and if that worthy could have heard what they said it might have reduced his bumptiousness just a trifle. Liddy also assured the boy that she did not care a row of pins for Jim White, and considered him too awfully stuck up for endurance, all of which, mingled with a few sweet smiles, caused our young friend to feel that his future life at the academy might be pleasanter for him.

CHAPTER VII.

LIDDY.

In one of the New England States, and occupying a beautiful valley between two low ranges of mountains, was the town of Southton. One of these ranges, that on the east, was known as the Blue Hills; the other was nameless. This valley was about four miles in width, and winding through it ran a small river. On the banks of this, and nearly in the center of the town, was a village, or "town center," as it was called, containing two churches, an academy and several stores. In one of these churches, Rev. Jonas Jotham expounded the orthodox Congregational faith, including predestination, foreordination, and all creation, and in the other Rev. Samuel Wetmore argued on the same lines, clinching them all with the necessity of total immersion as a means of salvation.

There was no affiliation between the two sects, each declaring the other totally blind to Scriptural truths; wrong in all points of creed, and sure to be damned for it. Sectarian feeling was strong, social lines between the two churches were sharply drawn, and the enmities of feeling engendered in the pulpits were reflected among the members. Each worthy dominie emitted long sermons every Sunday, often extending to "seventeenthly," while occasionally a few of the good deacons slept; and so, year after year, the windy war continued.

In the meantime the children attended school, played hard, were happy, grew up, courted, married, and kept on farming, and life in Southton flowed onward as peacefully as the current of the river that meandered through it.

Near the eastern border, and beside a merry brook that tumbled down from the Blue Hill range, was the home of Loring Camp, his wife, and his only daughter, Liddy. He was not a member of either of the two orthodox churches, but a fearless, independent thinker, believing in a merciful God of love and forgiveness, rather than a Calvinistic one, and who might be classed as a Unitarian in opinion. Broad-chested, broad-minded, outspoken in his ways, he was at once a loving husband, a kind father, a good neighbor, an honest man and respected. Tilling a small farm and mingling with that more or less attention to his trade of a builder, he earned a good livelihood. A reader of the best books and a thinker as well, he was firm in his convictions, terse in his criticism, and yet charitable toward all. His daughter inherited her father's keen intellect and her mother's fair face and complexion, it is needless to say, was the pride of his heart and loved by all.

Of Liddy herself, since she is the central figure in this narrative, a more explicit description must be given. To begin with, she was at the age of seventeen, a typical New England girl of ordinary accomplishments, home loving and filial in disposition, with a nature as sweet as the daisies that grew in the green meadows about her home, and a mind as clear as the brook that rippled through them. Fond of pretty things in the house, a daintily set table, tidy rooms, and loving neatness and order, she was a good cook, a capable housekeeper and a charming hostess as well. She loved the flowers that bloomed each summer in the wide dooryard, and had enough romance to enjoy nature's moods at all times. She cared but little for dress and abhorred loud or conspicuous garments of any kind. While fond of music, she never had had an opportunity to cultivate that taste, and her sole accomplishment in that respect was to play upon the cottage organ that stood in her parlor, and sing a few simple ballads or Sabbath-school hymns. She was of medium height, with a charmingly rounded figure, and blessed with a pair of blue eyes that could change from grave to gay, from mirth to tenderness, as easily as clouds cross the sun. With the crowning glory of her sunny hair, a sweet and sympathetic mouth, modest and unassuming ways, tender heart and affectionate manner, she was an unusually attractive girl.

Of her feelings toward the boy little need be said; and since he has now reached eighteen and a moustache, he deserves and shall have an introduction by his name of Mr. Charles Manson. He was tall, had honest brown eyes, an earnest manner; was unsophisticated and believed all the world like himself, good and true. He was of cheerful temper and generous disposition; hated shams and small conceits, and—next to Liddy—loved the fields, the woods, and the brooks that had been his companions since boyhood. She had known him when, at the district school, he ignored girls; and later, as he began to bring her flag-root in summer, or draw her on his sled in winter, she had taken more notice of him. When he left the little brown schoolhouse for good she had given him a lock of hair, though for what reason she could hardly tell; and when he walked home with her from his first party she felt startled a little at his boldness in kissing her. That act had caused a flutter in her feelings, and though she thought none the less of him for it, nothing would have tempted her to tell her parents about it. That experience may be considered as the birthday of her girlish love, and after that they were always the best of friends. He had never been presuming, but had always treated her with a kind of manly respect that slowly but surely had won her heart.

When they met at the academy she feared he might be too attentive, but when she found him even less so than she expected, unknown to herself, her admiration increased. While she gave

him but little encouragement there, still if he had paid any attention to another girl it would have hurt her. By nature she despised any deception, and to be called a flirt was to her mind an insult. She would as soon have been called a liar. On the other hand, any display of affection in public was equally obnoxious. She was loving by nature, but any feeling of that kind toward a young man was a sacred matter, that no one should be allowed to suspect, or at least inspect. This may be an old-fashioned peculiarity, yet it was a part of her nature. It may seem strange, but "Charlie," as she always called her admirer, had early discovered this and had always been governed by it.

It is not easy to give an accurate pen-picture of a young and pretty girl who is bright, vivacious, piquant, tender, sweet and lovable. One might as well try to describe the twinkle of a star or the rainbow flash of a diamond. To picture the growth of love in such a girl's heart is like describing the shades of color in a rose, or the expression of affection in the eyes of a dog, and equally impossible.

Liddy's home was one of the substantial, old-time kind, with tall pillars in front, a double piazza and wide hall, where stood an ancient clock of solemn tick. There were open fireplaces in parlor and sitting-room, and the wide dooryard was divided by a graveled and flower-bordered walk, where in summer bloomed syringas, sweet williams, peonies and phlox. On either side of the gate were two immense and broad-spreading maples. Houses have moods as well as people, and the mood of this one was calm, cool, dignified and typical of its fairest inmate.

When the first term of their academy life together closed, and the long summer vacation began, Manson called on Liddy the next Sunday evening and asked her to take a ride. He had called at various times before, but not as though she were the sole object of his visit. This time he came dressed in his best and as if he boldly came to woo the fair girl. All that summer he was a regular caller, and always received the same quiet and cordial welcome. Together they enjoyed many delightful drives along shaded roads on pleasant afternoons or moonlit evenings, and each charming hour only served to bind the chains of love more tightly. Occasionally they gathered waterlilies from a mill pond hidden away among the hills, and one Saturday afternoon he brought her to Ragged Brook—a spot that had been the delight of his boyhood—and showed her how to catch a trout.

The first one she hooked she threw up into the top of a tree, and as the line was wound many times around the tip of the limb the fish had to be left hanging there. Though almost mature in years, they were in many ways like children, telling each other their little plans and hopes, and giving and receiving mutual sympathy. It was all the sweetest and best kind of a courtship, for neither was conscious that it was such, and when schooltime came after the summer was over, the tender bond between them had reached a strength that was likely to shape and determine the history of their lives. How many coming heartaches were also to be woven into the tender bond they little realized.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HUSKING-BEE.

When David Newell, a prosperous Southton farmer living "over east," as that portion of the town was designated, invited all the young people in the vicinity to his annual husking-bee, every one knew that a good time was in store. Card-playing was considered a vice in those days, and limited to a few games of "seven-up," played by sinful boys on a hay-mow, and dancing was frowned upon by the churches. On the outskirts of the town a few of the younger people occasionally indulged in the crime of taking steps to music as a change from the pious freedom of kissing parties. There was one sacrilegious person named Joe Dencie living in the east-side neighborhood, who could not only "make a fiddle talk," as the saying was, but "call off" and keep time and head, foot, both arms and entire body as well, and at once. To describe his ability more completely it might be said that he fiddled and danced at the same time.

When the anticipated evening came, Manson and Liddy, as well as other invited ones, arrived at the Newell barn, where everything was in readiness. In the center of the large floor was a pile of unhusked corn surrounded by stools and boxes for seats, and lighted by lanterns swinging from cords above. No time was wasted, for Joe Dencie was there, and every one knew that the best of a husking came after the corn was disposed of. And how the husks flew! When a red ear was found by a girl the usual scramble occurred, for unless she could run once around the pile before the young man who discovered it could catch her, he claimed a kiss. Manson, who sat next to Liddy, kept a sharp watch, for he didn't intend to have some other fellow steal a march on him. He noticed that she husked cautiously, and when presently he saw her drop an unhusked ear by her side he quietly picked it up and found it was a red one. He said nothing, but her action set him to thinking. It was not long ere the pile of corn melted away, and then the floor was swept; Joe Dencie took his place in one corner on a tall stool, and the party formed in two lines for the Virginia reel.

There is no modern "function" that has one-half the fun in it that an old-time husking-bee had, and no dance that can compare with an old-fashioned contra-dance enjoyed in a big barn, with one energetic fiddler perched in a corner for an orchestra, and six lanterns to light the festivities! It was music, mirth, care-free happiness and frolic personified. The floor may have been rough, but what mattered? The young men's boots might have been a trifle heavy, but their hearts were not, and when it came to "balance and swing," with the strains of "Money Musk" echoing from the bare rafters, the girl knew she had a live fellow's arm around her waist, and not one afraid to more than touch her fingers lest her costume be soiled. Girls didn't wear "costumes" in those days; they wore just plain dresses, and their plump figures, bright eyes and rosy cheeks were as charming as though they had been clad in Parisian gowns. 68

When the dance was over all were invited into the house to dispose of mince pie, cheese, doughnuts and sweet cider, and then, with the moon silvering the autumn landscape, the party separated. As Manson drove along the wooded road conveying Liddy to her home, he felt a little curious. He could not quite understand why she had taken pains *not* to find a red ear. All the other girls had found one or more, and seemed to enjoy the scramble that followed. 69

"Why did you not husk that red ear?" he asked her, after they were well on their way.

"Simply because I do not like public kissing," she replied quietly. "Some girls do not mind, and perhaps they like it. I do not. It cheapens a girl in my opinion, or at least it certainly cheapens a kiss. You are not offended, are you?" turning her face toward him.

"By no means," he answered; and then, after a pause, he added: "I think you are right, but it seemed a little odd."

"I presume I am a little peculiar," she continued, "but to me this public kissing at parties and huskings seems not only silly, but just a trifle vulgar. When we were children at the district school, I thought it was fun, but it appears different now." Then, after a pause: "If I were a young man I would not want the girl I thought most of kissed a dozen times by every other fellow at a party. It is customary here in Southton, and considered all right and proper, while card-playing and dancing are not. I would much rather play cards or dance than act like school children."

"I most certainly agree with you, so far as the cards and dancing go," said Manson, "and now that you put it in the way you have, I will agree with you regarding kissing games." 70

As these two young people had just entered their third year at the academy, and Liddy was only eighteen, it may seem that she was rather young to discuss the ethics of kissing; but it must be remembered that she was older in thought than in years, and besides, she was blessed with a father who had rather liberal and advanced ideas. He did not consider card-playing at one's home a vice, or dancing a crime.

"A penny for your thoughts," said she, after they had ridden in silence for a time, and were crossing a brook that looked like a rippling stream of silver in the moonlight.

"I was thinking," he replied, "of a night just like this four years ago, when I went home with you from that party at the Stillman's. It was an event in my life that set me thinking."

"And have you been thinking about it ever since?" she said, laughing. "If you have it must have been an important event."

"No," he answered quietly; "but if it had not been for that party, it is likely I should not have gone to the academy, and most likely I should not be escorting you home to-night." 71

"I do not quite understand you," said Liddy; and then, with an accent of tenderness in her voice: "Tell me why, Charlie?"

"I am afraid you will laugh at me if I do," he said.

"No," she replied, "I will not; why should I?"

"Well," he continued, "to be candid, I was rather ashamed of myself that evening, or at least ashamed of my clothes. Then you told me you were going to the academy, and for that reason mainly I wanted to go, so you see what resulted from my going to the party. I do not think father intended to send me, and he would not if I had not coaxed him. My first term there was not very pleasant for many reasons, and had I known all I was to encounter I think my courage would have failed me. I am glad now that it did not." He paused a moment and then continued in a lower tone: "Whatever good it has done me is all due to you."

No more was said on the subject, and as they rode along in silence, each was thinking of the curious web of emotions that was moulding their lives and making definite objects grow from intangible impulses. He was hardly conscious yet what a motive force in his plans Liddy was destined to be; and she was filled with a new and sweet consciousness of a woman's power to shape a man's plans in life. When her home was reached, and after he had assisted her to alight, they stood for a moment by the gate beneath the maples. No light was visible in the house; no sound of any nature was heard. The sharp outlines of the buildings were softened by the moonlight, and the bold formation of the Blue Hills, vague and indistinct. The near-by brook, as of yore, sparkled like silver coin, and the landscape was bathed in mellow light. As Liddy's face was turned toward him, a ray of moonshine fell upon it, and her eyes seemed to fill with a new tenderness. It was a time and place for loving thoughts and words, and what these two young 72

hearts felt called upon to utter may be safely left to the reader's imagination.

When Manson drove away, he felt that the future was bright before him, and that life held new and wonderfully sweet possibilities. If he built a few air castles as he rode along in silence and alone, and if into them crept a fair girl's face and tender blue eyes, it was but natural. The magic sweetness of our first dreams of love come but once in their pure simplicity; and none ever afterward seem quite like them. We may strive to feel the same tender thrill; we may think the same thoughts and build the same fairy palaces, woven out of moonbeams and filled with the same divine illusions, but all in vain, for none can live life over.

When Liddy entered her home her footsteps seemed touched with a new life. Perhaps the effect of "Money Musk" had not entirely died away.

CHAPTER IX.

GOOD ADVICE.

The next day after the husking, when Manson resumed his studies at the academy, a new and serious ambition kept crowding itself into his thoughts. Some definite shape of what the object of a man's existence should be would in spite of all efforts mix itself with his algebra, and form an extra unknown quantity, still more elusive. He tried to put it out of his mind, but the captivating air castle would not down. Of course Liddy formed a central figure in this phantom dwelling, and to such an extent that he hardly dared to look at her when they met in the recitation room for fear she would read his thoughts. Occasionally, while studying he would steal a look across the schoolroom at her well-shaped head with its crown of sunny hair, but her face was usually bent over her book. She had always treated him with quiet but pleasant friendliness at school, and he, understanding her nature by degrees, had come to feel it would annoy her if he were too attentive. His newborn ambition he felt must be absolutely locked in his own heart for many years to come, or until some vocation in life and the ability to earn a livelihood for two could be won.

For the entire week his castle building troubled him in a way, as a sweet delusion, but a detriment to study, and then he resolved to put it away. "It may never come, and it may," he said to himself, "but if it does it will only be by hard work." He had never felt satisfied to become a farmer like his father, but what else to apply himself to he had no idea. He knew this was to be his last term at the academy, and that he must then turn his attention to some real occupation in life. He had been in the habit of calling upon Liddy nearly every Sunday evening for the past year, and to look forward to it as the one pleasant anticipation of the week. He felt she was glad to see him, and what was of nearly as much comfort, that her father was, as well. He resolved when a good chance came to ask Mr. Camp's advice as to some choice of a profession.

When he called the next Sunday evening, which happened to be chilly, Liddy met him with her usual pleasant smile and invited him into the parlor, where a bright fire was burning. She wore a new and becoming blue sacque, and he thought she never looked more charming. He had usually spent part of the evenings in the sitting-room with the family, but this time he felt he was considered as Liddy's especial company and treated as such.

"I have noticed a cloud on your face several times the past week," she said, as soon as they were seated. "Has your algebra bothered you, or is the barn dance troubling your conscience?"

"I have been building foolish air castles," he replied, "for one thing, and trying to solve a harder problem than algebra contains, for another. The husking dance does not trouble me. I would like to go to one every week. Do you feel any remorse from being there?"

"No," she answered, "I do not; and yet I heard this week that some one over in town who is active in the church said it was a disgrace to all who were there. I wish people thought differently about such things. I enjoyed the dance ever so much, but I do not like to be considered as acting disgracefully. Do you?"

"I presume you will be so considered," he responded, with a shade of annoyance on his face, "if you go to dances in this town. I wish the busybodies of that church would mind their business."

He made no further comment regarding the dance, but sat looking gloomily at the fire.

"What ails you to-night?" asked Liddy, finally breaking the silence; "you seem out of sorts."

"I am all right," he replied, with forced cheerfulness. "I have been trying to solve the problem of a future vocation when I leave school next spring, and I do not know what to do."

Liddy was silent. Perhaps some intuitive idea of what was in his mind came to her, for, although he had never uttered a word of love to her except by inference, she knew in her own heart he cared for her and cared a good deal.

"Come, Charlie," she said at last, "don't worry about a vocation now. It's time enough to cross bridges when you come to them. Do you know," she continued, thinking to take his mind from his troubles, "that I have discovered why Mr. Webber does not like me? It's simply because I do not flatter him enough. I have known for a long time I was not a favorite of his, and now I know why. You know what a little bunch of mischief Alice Barnes is. She whispers more than any other girl in school, and makes more fun of him, and yet she is one of his prime favorites. Well, one day last 78
week, at noontime, while she was talking with three or four of us girls, he came along, and she up and asked him if he wouldn't read 'The Raven' the next Wednesday afternoon when, you know, we all have compositions, and then she winked at us. He took it all right, and you ought to have heard the self-satisfied way in which he said: 'Certainly, Miss Barnes. I shall be very happy to read it for you.' The way he strutted across the schoolroom after that! Lida Stanton said he reminded her of a turkey gobbler."

Manson laughed.

"Webber doesn't like me, either," he said, "and never has from the first. I don't care. I came to the academy to learn, and not to curry favor with him. Willie Converse is another of his pets and is cutting up all the time, but he never sees it, or makes believe he does not."

The discussion of school affairs ended here, for even Manson's evident dislike of the principal was not strong enough to overcome the mood he was in. He sat in glum silence for a time, apparently buried in deep thought, while Liddy rocked idly in her low chair opposite. The crackling fire and the loud tick of the tall clock out in the hall were the only sounds. 79

At last he arose, and going to the center table, where the lamp stood, he took up a small daguerrotype of Liddy in a short dress, and looked at it. The face was that of a young and pretty girl of ten, with big, wondering eyes, a sweet mouth, and hair in curls.

"That was the way you looked," he said finally, "at the district school the day I wrote a painful verse in your album and you gave me a lock of hair. How time flies!"

"You are in a more painful mood to-night," responded Liddy, glad to talk about anything. "You have the worst case of blues I ever saw;" and then she added, after a pause, and in a low voice: "It makes me blue, too."

Manson made no reply, but sat down again and studied the fire. The little note of sympathy in her voice was a strong temptation to him to make a clean breast of it all; to tell her there and then how much he loved her; what his hopes were, and how utterly in the dark he was as to any definite plans in life. The thought made his heart beat loudly. He looked at Liddy, quietly rocking on the opposite side of the fireplace. A little touch of sadness had crept into her face, and the warmth of the fire had lent an unusual color to her cheeks and a more golden gleam to her hair. 80
As he looked at the sweet picture his courage began to leave him. "No, not yet," he said to himself, "she will think me a fool."

"Let's pop some corn," said Liddy suddenly, still anxious to say anything or do anything to break what seemed to her his unhappy train of thought; "the fire is just right."

She waited for no answer, but stepped quickly into the kitchen and returned with a long-handled popper, three small ears of popcorn, and a dish.

"There," she said, cheerfully, "you hold the popper while I shell the corn. I am going to make you work now, to drive away the blues. I believe it's the best medicine for you."

There is no doubt she understood his needs better than he supposed, for with the popping of the corn the cloud upon his face wore away. When it came time to go Liddy rested her hand a moment on his arm and said, in a low voice: "Charlie, we have known each other for a good many years, and have been very good friends. I am going to give you a little advice: Don't borrow trouble, and don't brood over your future so much. It will shape itself all in due time, and you will 81
win your way as other men have done. I have faith in you."

Her brave and sisterly words cheered him wonderfully, and when he had gone Liddy sat down a moment to watch the dying embers. She, too, had felt the contagion of his mood, and strange to say, his hopes and fears were insensibly merging themselves into her own. She watched the fading fire for a full half hour, absorbed in retrospection, and then lighting a small lamp and turning out the large one, she walked down the hall and upstairs to her room.

"I wish that clock wouldn't tick so loud," she thought as she reached her door, "it makes the house sound like a tomb."

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CHAPTER X.

HISTORY.

From the time Manson, as a barefooted boy, caught trout in Ragged Brook, until the winter of '62, when, a sturdy young man of eighteen, he had fallen deeply in love with Liddy Camp, a few changes had taken place in Southton. Three different principals had been in charge of the academy, one of these, a Mr. Snow, being very capable and universally popular. Later, when Mr. Webber succeeded to that position, the question of popularity may have been considered an open one. We must do him the justice to say he was efficient, however, and if he had an exaggerated idea of his own importance, it was inherited, and a failing that neither time nor experience could eradicate.

The two worthy dominies continued to try to convert sinners by exhaustive arguments on predestination and infant damnation, but strange to say, made little progress. A few of the good townspeople who were not members of either church, as well as some that were, had been for 83
many years reading and thinking for themselves, and had come to realize that the dry bones of Calvinistic argument had lost their force, and that the Supreme Being was not the merciless God the churches had for years depicted him, but rather a Father whose love and mercy was infinite. The then ultra-liberal Unitarian idea had begun to spread and a few who had outgrown the orthodox religion organized a Unitarian Society, and built a modest church to worship in. Among these pioneers in thought were Loring Camp and Jesse Olney, the latter the author of some of the best school-books then used; a deep thinker and a leader in town affairs. There were other thinking men, of course, who were prominent in this new movement, but, as this simple story is not an historical narrative, their names need not be mentioned. This new church and its followers of course incurred the condemnation of the other two, especially the one led by Parson Jotham, who exhausted all argument and invective to convince his hearers that Unitarianism and sin were synonymous terms, and that all the new church followers were surely slated for the fiery furnace. So vigorous were his utterances in this connection, and so explicit his description of the fire that 84
is never quenched and the torture that never ends, that it was said some of his hearers could smell brimstone and discern a blue halo about his venerable white head. One of his favorite arguments was to describe the intense joy those who were saved through his scheme of salvation would feel when they came to look over the heavenly walls and see the writhing agony of all sinners in the burning lake below. When his eloquence reached this climax he would cease pounding his open Bible and glare over the top of his tall pulpit at the assembled congregation, in the hope, perhaps, of discovering among them some Unitarian sinner who could thus be made to realize his doom.

In justice to Parson Jotham it must be said that his intentions were of the best, no doubt, but his estimate of the motive forces of human action was too narrow. He believed the only way to win people from vice to virtue and good conduct was to scare them into it.

In spite of all the denunciations of the other two churches, the new one, though feeble at first, slowly increased its following. To this one with their respective parents, came Liddy and Manson. While perhaps not mature enough to understand the wide distinction between Unitarianism and 85
Calvinism, they realized a little of the inexpressible horror of Rev. Mr. Jotham's theories of infant damnation and the like, and were glad to hear no more of them. Like many other young people to-day, they accepted their parents' opinions on all such matters as best and wisest.

They were not regular in their church attendance, either, for Liddy could not always leave her invalid mother, and occasionally she and Manson found a drive in the summer's woods or a visit to the top of Blue Hill more alluring than even the Unitarian church. Of similar tastes in that respect, and both ardent admirers of nature, and loving fields and flowers, birds and brooks, as the lovers of nature do, they often worshipped in that broad church. Manson especially, who had from childhood spent countless hours alone in the forests or roaming over the hills or along the streams, had learned all the lessons there taught, and now found Liddy a wonderfully sympathetic and sweet companion. To spend a few quiet hours on pleasant Sundays in showing her some pretty cascade where the foam-flecks floated around and around in the pool below; or a dark gorge, where the roots of the trees along its bank grew out and over the rocks like the arms of fabled gnomes, was a supreme delight to him. He knew where every bed of trailing arbutus for 86
miles around could be found; where sweet flag and checkerberries grew; where all the shady glens and pretty grottoes were, and to show her all these charming places and unfold to her his quaint and peculiar ideas about nature and all things that pertain to the woods and mountains delighted his heart.

Since the evening when she had given him the wise advice not to cross bridges till he came to them, they had grown nearer together in thought and feeling, and whether in summer, when they drove in shady woods or visited a beautiful waterfall, where the rising mist seemed full of rainbows when the sun shone through it; or in winter, when they went sleighing over the hills, after an ice storm, and were breathless with admiration at the wondrous vision, no words or declaration of love had as yet passed his lips. He had vowed to himself that none should until the time came when he had more than mere love to offer. Since all his acts and words showed her so plainly what his feelings were, she began to realize what it must all mean in the end, and that in due time he would ask her the one important question that contains the joy or sorrow of a woman's life. As this belief began to grow upon her it caused her many hours of serious thought, 87
and had she not discovered in her own heart an answering throb of love it is certain she was far too honorable to have allowed his attentions to continue.

How the townspeople viewed the affair may be gathered from a remark made by Aunt Sally Hart, the village gossip, one Sunday at church.

"They tell me," she said, "that young Manson's keeping stiddy company with Liddy Camp, and they're likely to make a match. Wonder if they'll go to live on his father's farm, or what he will do?"

As Aunt Sally was an estimable lady of uncertain age, who, never having had a love affair of her own, felt a keen interest in those of others, and as she occupied a place in Southton akin to the "personal mention" column of a modern society newspaper, it may be said her remark was a sufficient reflex of public opinion.

When there were any social gatherings where they were invited, he was by tacit consent considered as her proper and accepted escort. At the academy she had never been in the habit of discussing her private affairs with her mates, and so perhaps was spared what might have become an annoyance. While she listened to much gossip, she seldom repeated it, and, by reason of a certain dignified reticence among even her most intimate schoolgirl friends, no one felt free 88
to tell her of the opinions current among them regarding herself and Manson. For this reason a little deviation from the usual rule, made one day by her nearest friend, Emily Hobart, came with all the greater force.

"Do you know," said Emily, when they were alone, "it is common talk here in school that you and Charlie Manson are engaged? Oh, you need not blush so," she continued, as she saw the color rise in Liddy's face, "everybody says so and believes it, too. Shall I congratulate you?"

This did not please Liddy at all.

"I wish everybody would mind their own business," she said with a snap, "and leave me to mind mine."

"Oh, fiddlesticks," continued Emily; "what do you care? He is a nice fellow, and comes of a good family. We have all noticed that he has no eyes for any other girl but you, and never had. They say he fell in love with you when you wore short dresses."

When Liddy went home that night she held a communion with herself. So everybody believed it, did they? And she, in spite of her invariable reticence, was being gossiped about, was she? "I've a 89
good mind never to set foot in the academy again," she said to herself.

For a solitary hour she was miserable, and then the reaction came. She began to think it all over, and all the years she had known him from his boyhood passed in review. And in all those years there was not one unsightly fact, or one hour, or one word she could wish were blotted out. And they said he had loved her from the days of short dresses! Well, what if he had? It was no disgrace. Then pride came in and she began to feel thankful he had, and as the recollection of it all came crowding into her thoughts and surging through her heart, she arose and looked into her mirror. She saw the reflection of a sweet face with flushing cheeks, red lips, bright eyes, and —was it possible! a faint glistening of moisture on her eyelashes!

"Pshaw," she said to herself as she turned away, "I believe I am losing my senses."

The next two days at school she barely nodded to him each day. "At least he shall not see it," she thought.

When the next Sunday eve came she dressed herself with unusual care, and as it was a cold night she piled the parlor fireplace full of wood and started it early. 90

Then she sat down to wait. The time of his usual coming passed, but there was no knock at the door. The hall clock with slow and solemn tick marked one hour of waiting, and still he did not come. She arose and added fuel to the fire, and then, taking a book, tried to read. It was of no use, she could not fix her mind upon anything, and she laid the book down and, crossing the room, looked out of the window. How cheerless the snowclad dooryard, and what a cold glitter the stars seemed to have! She sat down again and watched the fire. The tall clock just outside the parlor door seemed to say: "Never—never—never!"

She arose and shut the door, for every one of those slow and solemn beats was like a blow upon her aching heart. Then she seated herself again by the dying fire, and as she gazed at the fading embers a little realization of what woman's love and woman's waiting means came to her. When the room had grown chill, she lighted her lamp and retired to her chamber.

"I have never realized it before," she said, as she looked at the sad, sweet face in the mirror. And that night it was long ere slumber came to her pillow.

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CHAPTER XI.

WAR CLOUDS.

When Liddy reached her desk at the academy the next day she found a note in a well-known hand

that said:

"My father was very ill. I could not call last eve. I hope to next Sunday."

It was a bitter-sweet message. At times during the week she felt her face burn at the recollection of how disappointed she had felt the previous Sunday eve. "I am a fool to care," she would say to herself, and then when she caught sight of his face and saw the cloud resting upon it she felt puzzled. She had asked regarding his father's illness and learned he was better, so the ominous shadow was not from that source. She felt sure it was not from an impending declaration of love brewing in his heart, for she knew him well enough to feel that when it came to that, he would have the manly courage to express his feelings in his usual outspoken way.

When Sunday evening came again she awaited his coming with a new anxiety, and when he 92
arrived her heart felt heavy. He greeted her as though nothing was amiss, and began chatting in an offhand manner, as if to prevent any question from her. He even joked and told stories, but with a seeming effort and not in accord with his feelings. Liddy watched him quietly, feeling sure he was acting a part and for a purpose. The more he tried to dissemble, the deeper became her dread. At last, when the chance came, she said in her direct way:

"Charlie, you are not yourself to-night, and I believe you have some serious trouble on your mind. I wish you would tell me what it is."

He looked at her a moment before replying, and then said:

"Oh, well, perhaps I have; but please don't notice it. I do not like to talk of my troubles here. You will dislike me if I do."

"I shall feel hurt if you do not," she answered.

"Don't say that!" he replied; and then, after looking into her earnest face a moment he continued in a lower tone: "You are the last person in the world I would knowingly hurt."

He remained silent for a long time, looking at the fire in a vacant way, and then rising suddenly 93
he said:

"There is no use; I can't talk to-night. I am out of sorts. I think I will go home."

"No, no, Charlie," she replied, trying hard to keep the pain out of her voice: "don't go yet! It's too early, and we have not had a visit for two weeks. Please sit down and tell me all about it. Can't you trust me?"

He remained standing and looking earnestly into her upturned face and pleading eyes for a few moments in silence; then he said:

"Yes, I can trust you, Liddy, and I am not afraid to, either! I am not afraid to trust you with every thought and impulse that ever came to me, but I can't bring myself to hurt you," and then he turned away.

His words almost brought the tears to her eyes, but she kept them back. When he had his coat on and was at the door, she made one more effort. She clasped his arm with both hands, as if to hold him, and said:

"You have made me very wretched, Charlie! Don't leave me in suspense! I do not deserve it. No matter what it is, please tell me!"

He remained silent, but with one hand he softly caressed the two little ones that clasped his arm. Then as her face sank slowly upon them he stooped suddenly and kissed her hair. "When I come 94
again you shall know all," he whispered; "good-night!" and he tore himself away.

The meadows were growing green and the first spring violets were in bloom ere he called again.

To explain his strange mood a little history must be inserted here.

The summer and fall of '61 and the winter and spring of '62 were momentous in the annals of Southton. Fort Sumter had been fired upon, and the war for the preservation of the Union had begun. The President's first call for volunteers had been issued; the Bull Run retreat had occurred, and the seven days' horror of the Chickahominy swamp, followed by the battle of Fair Oaks and the siege of Fredericksburg, had startled the country. Secession was rampant, and Washington was threatened. The second call for volunteers had come and the entire North was alarmed.

In the spring of '62 came the third call, and by that time the spirit of patriotism was spreading over Southton. Captain Samuel Woodruff, a born soldier and a brave man, began to raise a company in that town. It did not require a great effort, for the best and bravest of her sons rallied to his call. This spirit even reached the oldest of the academy boys, and was the cause of 95
Manson's strange reticence with Liddy. Among his mates were many who openly asserted their intention to enlist. Before and after school and at noon it was talked about. Some were, like Manson, the sons of peaceful tillers of the soil, and others the sons of tradesmen, but all were animated by the same patriotic spirit and that was to defend their country in her hour of danger. The example of a few became contagious, and seemed likely to affect all the young men of the academy of suitable age. In fact it did, for out of about thirty that were old enough, eighteen finally enlisted and went to war. Were it not that a list of their names is not pertinent to the

thread of this narrative, that roll of honor should be inserted here, for it deserves to be; but it is not necessary. It is well known in Southton, and there the names of those young heroes will never be forgotten.

For weeks while the fever of enlistment was spreading, Manson had passed through serious mental torture. To sign the possibly fatal roll or not to sign was the question! He dared not tell Liddy; he dared not tell his parents. An only son, and one whom he knew his father loved, he felt torn by conflicting duty. Never in his simple life had he passed through such a struggle. Perhaps 96
pride and the example of his mates were strong factors in bringing him to a decision, but he reached one at last, and upon a Saturday during the latter part of April he quietly wrote his name upon the enlistment paper in Captain Woodruff's office, and the deed was done.

In the meantime, and for the few weeks in which he did not call, Liddy lived in an agony of suspense. She knew what was going on, for it was current gossip in school, and there was something in his face that seemed to her ominous. In school she tried hard to act unconcerned, even when, as often was the case, other girls whose young and loving hearts were sore, gave way to tears. Each day she smiled and nodded to him as usual; but the smile had grown pathetic, and into her eyes had crept a look of dread. He saw it all, and hardly dared speak to her. Each Sunday eve she dressed herself for his coming and watched the fire while the tall clock ticked in solemn silence. She dreaded to hear her father speak of the war news, and when at school the gossip as to who had or who was going to enlist was referred to she walked away. She grew silent and morose, and clouds were on her face at all times. There were plenty of sad and worried looks on 97
other girls' faces at school during those weeks, so she was not alone in her gloom.

Manson had felt that deep down in her heart she cared a good deal more for him than her conduct showed, and to tell her of his intentions before he carried them out would be to subject her to needless days of suspense and possibly affect his own sense of duty. Now that it was all over, she must be the first to be told, and how much he dreaded it only those who have passed through the same experiences can tell. He scarcely slept at all that night, and when he presented himself at her house the next day, just before church time, he looked pale and haggard. It was an unusual thing for him to call at that hour, and when Liddy met him her heart sank. Without any formality he asked her to put on her wraps and take a ride.

"I have come to tell you all," he said, "and I can talk better away from the house, and where we are alone."

When they were well on their way and driving along the wooded road toward the top of one of the Blue Hills—a lookout point whence all Southton's area could be seen—he turned his face and looked at hers for the first time since starting. What he saw there smote his heart. 98

"It's a nice day for a ride, isn't it, Liddy?" he said pleasantly, trying hard to act natural.

Her answer was peculiar.

"I can't talk of the day or anything else, Charlie, till I know the worst. Remember, you have kept me in suspense four long, weary weeks. Tell me now as soon as you can."

He made no reply, and spoke not another word until they reached the lookout place. In silence he assisted her to alight, and taking the carriage robe, he spread it upon a rock where they had often sat viewing the landscape below. Then he said, in a low voice:

"Please sit down, Liddy. I've fixed a nice seat for you, and now I can talk to you."

Then their eyes met for the second time since starting. Her face and lips were pale, and her eyes full of fear. She clasped her hands before her face as if to ward off the coming blow.

"Tell me now," she said hurriedly, "tell me the worst, only tell me quickly! I've suffered long enough!"

He looked at her a moment pityingly, dreading to deal the blow, and trying to frame it into suitable words—and then it came.

"Liddy," he said in a husky whisper, "I love you, and I've enlisted!" 99

A brief sentence, but what a message!

A woman's heaven and a woman's hell in six words!

For one instant she looked at him, until its full force came to her and then she burst into tears, and the next moment she was in a heap on the robe-covered rock and sobbing like a child. Instantly he was beside her, gathering her in his arms and kissing her hair, her tear-wet face and lips. Not a word was spoken; not one was needed! He knew now that her heart was his, and for weal or woe; for joy or sorrow, their lives must be as one.

"Don't cry any more, my darling," he whispered at last. "I shall come back all safe, and then you will be my wife, won't you, Liddy?"

She made no answer, but a small, soft hand crept into one of his, and he knew his prize was won.

When they were ready to leave the hallowed spot she gathered a bunch of the spring violets growing there, and kissing them, handed the cluster to him in silence.

Late that evening when they parted she put one arm caressingly about his neck and whispered: "Give me all the hours you can, Charlie, before you must go; they may be all we shall ever have together."

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CHAPTER XII.

A DAY IN THE WOODS.

When schoolmates who have studied and played together until almost maturity reach the parting of their ways a feeling of sadness comes to them; but when out of such a band there are eighteen of the best young men about to take part in the horror of war, the occasion becomes doubly so. The last few weeks passed together by the graduating pupils of Southton Academy came back to them in after years much like the memory of a funeral. There were no frolics at noontime or after school; no mirth and scant laughter.

A few of the girls were known to be carrying aching hearts, and it was whispered that two or three were engaged to be married to young soldier-boys now in the academy. Liddy wore a new and heavy plain gold ring, and when questioned as to its significance quietly answered, as was her wont: "I have no confessions to make," but those who were nearest to her and knew her best 101
detected a proud look in her eyes and drew their own conclusions. It was noticed also that she and Manson were seldom apart during the noon hour, and invariably walked away from the academy together. As there were other couples who thus paired off it caused no comment.

When the last day came the academy was packed with the parents and friends of pupils, and on Liddy's desk was a bunch of June roses. She knew whose hand had placed them there. When the final exercises began she felt herself growing nervous. She had never felt so before, but now the mingled joy and sorrow of the past four weeks were telling upon her. There were several patriotic and warlike recitations by the young men, and readings of an unusually melancholy nature by young ladies, all of which tended to make matters worse, so that when her turn came she felt ready to cry. But she caught a look from Manson that was like wine. "He has been brave," she thought; "I will be as much so"—and she was.

When the exercises were over the principal made a brief but feeling address which raised him several degrees in Manson's estimation, and that was the end. Most of the pupils lingered, loth to utter the last farewells, but finally they were spoken, and with many moist eyes among that 102
gathering of young friends they separated. Some of them never met in life again.

The few remaining evenings ere Liddy and her lover were to part were not wasted by them, and the last Sunday was one long to be remembered.

"Come early," she had said the night before; "I have a little surprise for you." When he arrived at her house that day, just as the distant church bells were faintly calling, he found her dressed for a ride, and was a little puzzled.

"I want you to take me to church to-day," she said, smiling, and then added, in a low voice, "to our church on the top of Blue Hill, where there will be no one but God and ourselves."

It was an odd thought, and yet, knowing her as he did, it was not surprising. The simple reverence of it touched him, however.

"Now," she continued more cheerfully, "no more sober thoughts. Let us try and be happy, and like children once more. Here is a basket I have packed, and you are to put it in the carriage. We are to dine in the woods."

The day was one of those rare ones that come only in June, and when they reached the spot, now, henceforth and forever sacred to them, the sheltering trees were fresh with new foliage, the 103
birds singing while building their nests, the summer breeze softly whispering in the scattered hemlocks, and over all shone the mellow sunshine.

For a long time they sat on the rock, now hallowed by her tears, viewing the beautiful landscape spreading out below and living over, as they had many times before, and as young lovers will, all the little incidents of their lives, and what a marvelous thing it was that they had come to love each other. It was all a story as old as the rock upon which they sat, and pure and sweet as the blue violets blooming at their feet. In the midst of it Manson pointed to a spot in the valley below —a cedar pasture with an immense boulder in the middle—and said: "Once upon a time, several years ago, when I was a boy, I was picking berries in that field, when a little girl in short dress and calico sun-bonnet came running down a path near me until, almost at my feet, she stumbled, and girl, berries and bonnet went sprawling upon the ground! Can you guess who it was?"

Liddy turned her face toward him and smilingly answered: "Was that the way I entered your heart, Charlie? It wasn't a dignified way, was it?" 104

"It was at least effective," he replied, "for you have remained in it ever since."

When the sun was high overhead she arose and said, with bewitching imperiousness: "Now, sir, you have been idle long enough; you must help me set the table. Bring me that basket in the carriage."

"If we are to begin keeping house up here," he answered cheerfully, "perhaps you had better wait till I build you a table."

"I shall be glad if you can," she said, and watched him curiously while he cut small, straight sticks, and then larger ones with forked ends. These he drove into the ground under a tree, and placing one stout stick to connect each of the forked ones and form supporting ends, laid the others across and close together to make the table. He then placed flat stones for seats, covering them with the carriage cushions, and when all was done he said: "My dear, your table is ready; now I will help you to set it."

"I am glad I brought a tablecloth," she remarked smiling.

When the dainty little banquet board, just large enough for two, was covered with a snow-white spread and napkins, plates, knives and forks, and all the attractive results of her culinary art, he 105
smiled, for the tempting food would make any hungry man smile.

"It's not an elaborate dinner," she remarked, as they sat down, "but you must get used to my cooking some time, and you might as well begin now."

When the sun was low in the west and she sat near him idly weaving flowers into the band of his hat, he said: "Liddy, have you never wondered how I am going to solve the vocation problem I used to worry about?"

"No," she answered quietly, "and I do not wish to discuss it, either. Remember, we are children to-day." Then she continued, in a lower tone: "I have trusted you with my heart, my life, and all the happiness I can ever hope for, and when the time comes I know you will not fail me."

"I realize what it all means," he answered, after a long pause, "and you can trust me, for so long as God gives me strength you shall have all the blessings I can win in life."

They sat in silence until the lowering sun had left the valley in shadow and smiled only on the hilltop where they lingered. Perhaps the dread parting that was near seemed creeping toward them with the shades of night, for his arm stole softly about her waist, and her hand crept into 106
his. They watched until the last ray of sunlight had vanished, and when they arose he once more gathered her close in his arms and whispered:

"Promise me, my darling, that if I never come back you will visit this spot alone, once a year, in June, and if there be such a thing as a life beyond the grave, I will be here in spirit."

"I promise," she answered solemnly, "and no man shall ever have the right to stop me."

When they were ready to leave the place he had to lead her to the carriage, for her eyes were blinded by tears.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME.

With bayonets flashing in the sunlight, with flags flying and keeping step to the martial music, Southton's brave Company E marched full one hundred strong to the depot the next day, ready to leave for the war.

Almost the entire town was there to see them off, and hundreds of men, old and young, filled the air with cheers. Mingling in that throng were as many mothers, wives, sweethearts and sisters with aching hearts, whose sobs of anguish were woven into the cheering. Strong men wept as well. As the train rolled away, Manson fought the tears back that he might not lose the last sight of one fair girl whose heart he knew was breaking. When it was all over, and he realized that for months or years, or perhaps never, would he behold her again, he knew what war and parting meant. He had obeyed his conscience and sense of duty, and now he must pay the price, and the 108
payment was very bitter. Of his future he knew not, or what it might hold for him. He could only hope that when his hour of trial came that he would not falter, and if the worst must come that he would find strength to meet it as a soldier should.

War is such a ghastly, hideous horror, and so utterly at variance with this simple narrative, that I hesitate to speak of it. There can be no moments of happiness, no rifts of sunshine, and but few gleams of hope woven into the picture. All must be as war is—a varying but continued succession of dreaded horror and the fear of death. The first month of Manson's experience at the training

camp was hard only in anticipation, and but a daily round of duty easily performed and soon passed. Liddy's frequent letters, each filled with all the sweet and loving words that, like flowers, naturally spring from a woman's heart, cheered him greatly; but when the order came to go to the front, the scene changed, and the reality of war came. He dreaded the first shock, not so much from fear of death; but lest his courage fail. When it came at Chancellorsville it was all over before he knew it. Although under fire for eight hours, he was not conscious of the lapse of time or aught else, except that he obeyed orders and loaded and fired with the rest; forgetting that he might fall, or whether he was brute or human. That night he wrote to Liddy: "We have had our first battle, and for many hours I forgot even you. I know now that I shall not falter. Poor Luzerne Norton, one of our academy boys, was killed, also three others from our company; and seven were wounded." 109

When the letter reached Liddy her heart sank. To know that one of her bright and happy schoolmates of a few months before had been shot and killed, and others wounded, was to have the dread reality of war brought very near home. "Thank God my boy was spared," she thought. That night she wrote him the most loving letter he had ever received, concluding with: "Be brave, my darling, and always remember that come what may I shall keep my promise."

Then came the battle of Gettysburg, and although his company escaped with only a few wounded, it was here he first realized the ghastly horror of a battlefield after the fight is over, and how the dead are buried.

When his next letter reached the sad-hearted one at home, no mention was made of this experience, and when she wrote asking why he had never told her how a battleground looked, or anything about it, he replied: "Not for worlds would I tell you how we bury the dead, or how they looked, or anything of the sickening details. Please do not read them in the papers, for it will do you no good, and cause you needless suffering. I wish to keep misery from you. Think of me only as doing my duty, and try to believe (as I do) that I shall come back to you alive and well." 110

For the next six months he had no battles to face—only skirmishing and picket duty. When Christmas came it brought him two boxes of good things to gladden his heart. One was from his dear old mother, and one was from Liddy, and tucked away in that, between four pairs of blue socks knit by her fair hands, was a loving letter and a picture of herself.

Almost a month after came the battle of Tracy City and the fall of brave Captain Upson. There were others wounded, but none of his company were killed. It was here Manson received his first promotion to a corporal's position, and he was afterward made sergeant. In the spring that followed, and almost one year from the day he first told Liddy of his love, came the battle of Boyd's Trail. Five days after, when the moon was full one night, he wrote by the light of a camp fire: "Do you remember one year ago to-day, and where we were and what I said? I little realized that day what was in store for me. One thing I must tell you, however, and that is you can never know how much comfort it has been to me to live over all the happy hours we have had together. Every little word and look of love from you has come back to me again and again in my long, lonesome hours of picket duty, and to-night as I sit by the camp fire and see the moon shining through the trees I can recall just how I felt the first time I kissed you, when the same moon seemed to be laughing at me. Do you remember one night when we were driving across the plains on our way back from a little party over to Marion, and you sang that 'Meet Me by Moonlight' ballad? That was three years ago, and yet I can almost hear your voice now." 111

When this letter reached Liddy she read it in tears.

For the next year it was with Manson as with all that slowly decreasing company—one unending round of nervous strain, long marches, sharp fighting, or, worse yet—carrying the wounded from the battlefield and burying the dead. They lived poorly, slept on the ground or in the mud at times, and became accustomed to filth and stench, indifferent to danger and hardened to death. When a comrade fell those who knew him best said: "Poor fellow, he's gone," and buried him without a prayer; but the dead who were personally unknown awakened no more feeling than so many leaves fallen by the wayside. It could not well be otherwise, for such is war. Individual cases of heroism were common enough, and passed almost unnoticed; for they were all brave men who came to fight and die if need be, and no less was expected. 112

War makes strange bedfellows, and forms unexpected friendships. It was after the battle of Gettysburg, when the Tenth Army Corps remained in camp for several months, and one night while on picket duty, that Manson met with a curious adventure, and made the acquaintance of a fellow-soldier by the name of Pullen, belonging to a Maine regiment, whose existence, and the tie thus formed, eventually led to a sequence of events of serious import. The enemy were encamped but a few miles away, and that most dastardly part of warfare, the firing upon pickets from ambush, was of nightly occurrence. Manson's beat that night was over a low hill covered with scrub oak, and across part of a narrow valley, through which wound a small, marsh-bordered stream. The night was sultry, and the dampness of the swamp formed in a shallow strata of fog, filling this valley, but not rising above the level of the uplands. To add to the weirdness of his surroundings, the thin crescent of a new moon threw a faint light over all and outlined the winding turns of this mist-filled gorge. Away to the northward a belt of dark clouds emitted frequent flashes of heat lightning, and occasional sharp reports along the line bespoke possible death lurking in every thicket. Keeping always in shadow, and oft pausing to listen, Manson slowly traversed his beat, waiting only at either end to exchange a whispered "All's well!" with the next sentry. 113

What a vigil! And what a menace seemed hidden behind every bush or spoke in every sound! The faint creak of a tree as the night wind stirred the branches; the rustle of leaves on the ground or the breaking of a twig as some prowling animal moved about; the flight of a bird, disturbed at its rest; the hoot of an owl on the hillside or the croak of a frog in the swamp were all magnified tenfold by the half-darkness and the sense of danger near. One end of his beat ended at the brook and here he waited longest, for the sentry he met there was, like himself, hardly out of his teens, 114
and unused to war. A bond of fellowship sprang into existence almost at sight, and made them brothers in feeling at once.

It was while whispering together beside this brook, and oppressed by the suspense of night and danger near, that they detected a sound of more than usual ill-omen, and that, the certain one that some creature had stepped into the stream above, and was cautiously and slowly wading in it. Hardly breathing, and bending low, the better to catch every sound that came, they listened with beating hearts until it ceased. Once they had detected the click of stones striking together as if moved by a human foot and twice caught the faint plash of a bush or limb of tree dropping into the water. Then the sounds ceased, and only the faint murmur of that slow-running stream disturbed the silence.

For a few moments they waited there, and then together crept up out of the gorge. Just as they emerged from the pall of the fog, and where the moon's thin disk still outlined that narrow white-blanketed valley, they paused, looking across, above, below and all around, and listening as intently as two human beings so environed would when believing danger near. And as they looked and listened for moments that seemed hours, suddenly, scarce five rods away, they saw a 115
man slowly emerged from the bush-covered bank, rapidly cross this narrow gorge, apparently walking on the fog, and disappear in the dark thicket on the other side!

Forgetting in the first shock of supernatural added to natural fear that they stood fully exposed in the faint moonlight, they looked at each other, while a cold chill of dread seemed to check even the power to think. Manson was the first to recover, and with a quick, "We must hide," almost hissed, dropped on all fours behind a bush, followed by his comrade. That the motion betrayed them to watchful eyes is certain, for the next instant, out from the dark thicket across the gorge there leaped a flash of red fire, and the ping of a bullet, cutting leaves and twigs above them, told its own tale. Too scared to think of returning the fire, or conscious that to do so was unwise, they slowly crawled deeper into the scrub and along the top of the hillock. All that night they kept together, and how long it was until the gray light of coming dawn lifted a little of their burden of fear, no one who has never skulked along a picket line in darkness and dread can imagine! 116

When the relief guard came, Manson and his mate tried to discover where their night-prowling enemy had crossed that narrow gorge, if he had crossed at all, but could not. Whether ghost, or shadow, or flesh-and-blood enemy had walked on fog in the faint moonlight before them, they could not tell, and never afterward were they able to determine. The only certain fact was that some one had fired at them, and fired meaning to kill! Wisely, too, they agreed to keep the ghost part of that experience a secret, and none of their comrades ever knew they had seen a man walking upon the fog.

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CHAPTER XIV.

BESIDE THE CAMP FIRE.

Both Manson's and Pullen's regiments were encamped along the edge of a belt of pine woods, and after their creepy experience together on picket duty, they naturally sought each other as often as possible. There is a 'witching romance lingering about a camp fire in the woods that stimulates the imagination, and when these two newly made friends could meet for an evening's visit beside theirs, many a tale of youthful experience and boyish escapade was exchanged.

"Speaking of ghosts," said Manson, one evening, "I do not believe in their existence exactly, and yet there is a strange fascination about the idea that I can't understand. Now I do not believe we saw a man walking on fog the other night, and yet I can't resist the desire to hunt the matter out and discover what sort of an optical illusion it was. I am not at all certain the man who took a shot at us was the one we saw across the ravine, either. I had an experience once when I was 118
about nine years old, that, in a way, tainted my mind with the ghost idea, and perhaps that is the reason why the possibility of seeing one affects me in the way it does. A couple of miles from the farm where I was reared there stood an old deserted ruin of a house known as the Tim Buck place. It was hidden away behind hills and woods and reached from the highway through a half-mile lane, thick grown with bushes. Here, years before I was born, there had once lived a man by the name of Buck, who hanged himself in the garret one day, while his wife was away. It was said she came back just at dusk and found him hanging lifeless from a rafter in the garret. What became of her I never knew, but no one ever lived on the place afterward, and in time the farm and house reverted to the town for taxes. It also soon obtained the reputation of being haunted, and no one ever went near it after dark. A couple of 'coon hunters told how they had taken refuge

in it from a sudden shower at night, but left in a hurry when they heard some one walking on the chamber floor above. Some one else said they had seen a white figure walking on the ridge-pole just at dusk. All this was current gossip in the town, and believed by many. 119

"My parents had sense enough not to tell me, but when I was old enough to be sent to the district school, I heard all this, and more, too; and the worst of it was I believed all I heard. I had never been near the house, but when I heard the stories, I got another boy for company and went to look at it from the top of a near-by hill. As I grew older the fascination of the place kept increasing, and one day it overcame my fear and all alone I paid it a visit.

"The house was a ruin—roof fallen in, floor rotted away and pitched into the cellar: only the walls were standing, and the beams and rafters, like the ribs of a skeleton, still in place. I remember the well-sweep was in the usual position, and seemed to me like a warning finger pointing at the bleaching rafters. It took me a good half hour to muster courage enough to go within ten rods of the ruin, but I finally did, and at last, scared half to death, and trembling, found myself peeping in at one window. It was dark in there and smelt queer, and I, a nine-year-old boy, fully expected to see some new and horrible spook appear at any moment. How long I stood there I never knew, for I forgot all else except the belief that if I waited long enough I should see something queer. I did, too, for all at once I saw in an inner room, where a closet door stood half open, a white, bony 120 hand reach out from behind it, take hold, and seemingly shut that door from the inside! I didn't wait any longer, you may be sure, and never stopped running until I came in sight of home, two miles away!"

"And didn't you ever go back there?" said Pullen, "when you got older?"

"Oh, yes, I did, but not for a year after, and during that year I dreamed of that house and one or a dozen skeleton hands, countless times. Finally I mustered up spunk, went there one day all alone, set the old ruin on fire, and then ran as fast as my legs would carry me to a hilltop half a mile away, and stood and watched the fire. The place was so hidden away no one saw it burn except me, and I never told for fear of consequences."

"And did you ever outgrow the belief that you really saw a skeleton hand open that door?" said Pullen, reaching forward to pick up an ember and light the pipe he had just refilled.

Manson was silent for a few moments, as he lay resting his head on one hand and watching the firelight play hide-and-seek among the pine boughs overhead.

"No, to tell you the truth, Frank," he replied at last, slowly, "I do not think I ever did. Of course, I 121 know I did not see what I thought I did, and yet I have not quite outgrown the scare. I won't admit that I believe in ghosts, and yet the thought of them, owing perhaps to that boyhood fright, has a sort of deadly fascination for me. I believe and yet I do not believe, and if I were told I could see one by going anywhere, no matter how grewsome the spook was, I could not resist going."

"You ought to have lived where I came from," observed Pullen, looking curiously at his comrade; "for about twenty miles from my home is an island known as 'The Pocket,' that is fairly swarming with ghosts."

"Tell me about it," said Manson, suddenly interested.

"Well, it is a long yarn," replied Pullen, "but, from your make-up, the island is just such a spot as you would enjoy visiting. As I told you the other night, I was born and brought up on an island off the coast of Maine, and when I was quite a lad I first heard about this island, and that no one ever went there because it was haunted. I wasn't old enough to understand what being haunted meant, but later on I did. They used to tell about it being a hiding-place for smugglers before I 122 was born, and that a murder had been committed there and that some one in a fishing boat had seen a man fully ten feet tall, standing on a cliff on it, one night. Dad, who was a sea captain, used to laugh at all this, and yet almost everybody believed there was some mystery connected with it. Another thing, I guess, helped give it a bad name was the fact that a ship was wrecked on it once, and no one discovered it until long after, and then they found four or five skeletons among the rocks. Another queer thing about this island that is really a fact is, that any time, day or night, you can hear a strange, bellowing sound like that of a mad bull, coming from somewhere on it. When there is a storm you can hear it for miles away. The sound can't be located anywhere, and yet you can hear it all the time. If you are one side, it seems to come from the other, and go around to that side and it is back where you came from. Inside the island is a circular pocket or walled-in harbor, like the crater of a volcano, that is entered through a narrow passage between two cliffs. Altogether it's a curious place, but as for ghosts—well, I've been there many a time and never saw one yet. But then, I do not believe in spooks, and perhaps that accounts for it. It's like the believers in spiritualism, that can readily see their dead ancestors' 123 faces peering out of a cabinet, and all that sort of bosh, but I never could. I'll bet," with a laugh, "that you could go to Pocket Island and see ghosts by the dozen."

"I would like to go there," replied Manson quietly, "and if we ever get home alive, I will."

"Come and make a visit, and I'll take you there," said Pullen; "that is" (soberly) "if I ever go home."

The story-telling ceased while the two friends, each thinking of the same thing, gravely watched the slowly fading fire.

"Come," said Pullen at last, "quit thinking about what may happen, and tell me another ghost

story. It's your turn now."

But Manson was silent, for the story-telling mood had fled, and his thoughts were far away.

"Where are you now?" continued Pullen, studying his comrade's face. "With some girl, I'll bet; am I right?"

"Yes," answered Manson slowly, "I was with some one just then, and thinking of a fool promise I exacted from her before I left, and all this ghost-story telling has made me realize what an injury I may have done her by exacting that promise." 124

"Tell me," said Pullen, "I can sympathize with you, for I, too, have a girl I left behind me."

"Well," came the answer slowly, "this girl has too much good sense to believe in ghosts, and yet, you can't ever tell who does or does not believe in them. The foolish part of it is that I took her to a lonely spot away in the woods one day, before I left, and asked her to promise me that in case I never came back she would visit this spot alone once a year, on that same day, and if I was in spirit I would appear to her, or at least if there was any such thing as spirit life, I would be there, too. She is one of those 'true blue' girls would keep such a promise as long as she lived, I think; and now you understand what a fool promise it was."

"I can't dispute you," answered Pullen, and then they separated.

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CHAPTER XV.

MYSTERIES.

"Do you know, Frank," said Manson, a week later, as once more the two lounged beside their camp fire, "that I have the hardest kind of a task to keep myself from believing in omens, and especially the 'three warnings' business? Now, to illustrate, we lost a man out of our company two nights ago, and he was shot within ten feet of where you and I stood the night we were shot at. His name was Bishop, and an old schoolmate of mine. I was on the morning guard-mount detail, and was the first one to see him as we were going along the picket line. He had been shot in the head, and most likely never knew what hit him. To make the fate of Bishop more impressive his going on for night duty instead of myself had been decided by chance."

"Well, what of it?" said Pullen. "It was his bad luck and not yours that time, wasn't it? That fact ought to drive away your presentiments instead of increasing them, my boy." 126

"Perhaps, and yet it doesn't," replied Manson. "It keeps crowding me into the belief that I am booked for the same fate in the near future, and, do all I can, I can't put that idea away."

"Nonsense," put in Pullen, "that is all bosh, and in the same list with the Friday business, and seeing the moon over your left shoulder, and all that string of superstition that has come down to us, or rather, up to us from the Dark Ages, when mankind believed in no end of hobgoblin things."

"Say, Frank, don't you believe in luck?" interposed Manson. "Don't you believe there is such a thing as good or ill luck in this world, and that one or the other follows us most of the time all through life?"

"Yes, to a certain extent I do," answered Frank. "But I've noticed that good luck comes oftenest to those who put forth the greatest effort, and ill luck is quite apt to chase those who are seemingly born tired."

Manson was silent, for the wholesome optimism of his friend went far to dispel his grewsome imaginings.

"How does a mystery you can't understand affect you, Frank?" he said at last.

"Oh, as for that, if I can't find some solution for it easily I put it away and think of some other matter. Life is too short to waste in trying to solve all we can't understand. And speaking of mysteries," continued Frank, "you ought to have been born and brought up where I was, on an island off the coast of Maine. There is more mystery to the square mile down that way, I believe, than anywhere else in the world, unless it be Egypt. There is a little village called Pemaquid, where they fence it in and charge an admission. I know of a dozen places where there are old Indian villages; old fort sites; old burial-places that fairly bristle with mystery! If you go anywhere near them the natives will ask you to go and look at this spot, or that, and act as if they expected you to take off your hat while they tell all about it in an awed whisper. Oh, we have mystery to burn down in Maine! Maine would just suit you, Manson! There isn't an island on the coast, a lake or mountain in the interior that hasn't got a fairy tale, or some legend connected with it. You remember what I told you about Pocket Island the other night? Well, that is a fair sample. And speaking of fairy tales, there is a curious one current down our way about a Jew and an Indian 127

who were known to be smugglers and came and went in a mysterious way. They sailed a small sloop called the Sea Fox, and, according to the stories, this Jew was one of the most adroit villains ever born with a hooked nose. Where he hailed from the devil only knew, and he never told, and when after he had mystified everybody for two years, smuggled liquor by the boatload all the time without getting caught once, he mysteriously disappeared, and left the entire coast guessing. According to the stories, and there are hundreds told about him, he was the smoothest Sheeney that ever swore by Moses. Dozens of constables were on the watch for him; his sloop was searched many times; every one believed he was smuggling liquor all the time and yet no one ever caught him. All this happened when I was a boy, and yet to-day no one sees a small tops'l sloop gliding into some uninhabited cove that they don't say 'There goes the Sea Fox.'" 128

"And did no story ever crop out regarding what became of him, or where he went to?" inquired Manson.

"Not a word or whisper; that is where the mystery lies, and, as I said, it is one more added to the large stock we already have."

"I would love to spend a month down your way, Frank," said Manson, after a pause.

"And why not?" replied Pullen. "I've a good boat, plenty of time, and when we get out of this scrape I would be more than glad to have you visit me. I will take you all around among the islands and show you all the mysteries, even Pocket Island, and who knows but we may run across the Sea Fox? Promise me to come, will you?" 129

"Yes, if ever I get back alive I will," answered Manson.

It was not long after this pleasant chat that there occurred another episode in Manson's war experience that had a peculiar effect upon his imagination, and one that perhaps will illustrate the pathos of war as well as any.

"We do not pause to think what we are about to do when we are marched into battle," he said to his friend Frank the day after it happened; "we are under orders to kill if we can, and the smell of smoke, the roar of guns, and the awful horror of it all deadens every sense except the brutal one to shed blood. But to deliberately shoot an enemy, even though you know he is only waiting to shoot you, is another matter. I had to do it yesterday morning, however, and how miserable I have been ever since, no one can imagine. As you know, the Rebs have been shooting pickets off and on, for two weeks, and orders have been issued to shoot at sight and ask no questions. I had been on the line all night and was so dead tired and worn out with the nervous strain that I was ready to lie down in the mud even, and go to sleep, when just at daylight I saw a man crawling on all fours across an open space maybe twenty rods away, and across a ravine. 130

"It was a little lighter up where he was and I knew he couldn't see me. I lay low behind a rock and watched him, and as it grew lighter saw he wore gray, and I knew he was an enemy. For ten minutes he never moved, and I lay there with a bead on him trying to decide what to do. I knew he was there to kill, and that my duty was to shoot, and yet I hesitated. We shoot in battle not really knowing whether we kill or not, but to deliberately pull trigger knowing it means sending a human soul into eternity is an awful thing to do. His own action decided the matter, for, as I saw him lift himself a little and then raise his gun to the shoulder, I fired. Then I saw him spring to his feet, whirl around, clasp his hands to his breast and slowly sink forward half out of sight. I put a fresh cartridge in, and then never took my eyes off that gray heap until the relief guard came along. He was not quite dead when we went to him, for the ball had gone through his lungs, and he was fighting hard for breath. He was a beardless boy, not over eighteen, and as he gasped, the blood gushed out of his mouth. We saw him try to speak, but could not, and then he looked at us three; first one and then another. It must be he saw more pity in my face than in the others, for the poor boy suddenly reached out his hand toward me, and as I took it he drew me down to try and whisper to me. It was of no use; I could not catch the sound. 131

"I wiped the blood away from his lips and then rolled my blouse up for a pillow and laid his head on it. I could see a mute look of gratitude in his eyes, like those of a dying dog, and, mingling with that, the awful fear of death. It was all over in a few moments, and at the last he drew my hand to his lips and kissed it. The other two boys turned away, and I was glad, for the tears were chasing each other down my face. The one bit of consolation I had was, the poor boy did not know I shot him. When it was all over, we left him, and later we three went up there and buried him beside the rock where he died. I saw his face hovering over me all last night, and it will haunt me as long as I live."

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE GRASP OF DEATH.

When the fierce heat of E Company's second summer in an almost tropical climate was fast

depleting their ranks, Manson wrote to Liddy:

"Disease among us is more dangerous than rebel bullets. When I was a boy I used to feel that the long, hot hours in hay fields, or the bitter cold ones in the snow-buried woods, were severe hardships, but now I thank God for them! If I survive the exposure here it will be because of the splendid health and strength that came to me from those days on the farm. Sometimes when the miserable food I have to eat, or the vile water I must drink, is at its worst, I think of what mother used to cook, and how sweet the water in dear old Ragged Brook used to taste on a hot summer day, and you cannot imagine what I would give for a chance to thrust my face into that cool stream, where it was leaping over a mossy ledge, and drink my fill.

"I have passed through some ghastly and sickening experiences, too horrible to relate to you, and at times I am so depressed that I lose all hope, and then again I feel that I shall pull through all right. One thing I want you to do, and that is, forget the foolish promise I exacted from you that day on Blue Hill. Some things have occurred that have convinced me it was doing you a cruel injustice to ask such a promise."

It was the last letter Liddy ever received from her soldier boy, and when she read it it filled her with a new and uncanny dread.

During those first two years of service, E Company made heroic history. They took part in eleven hard-fought battles, besides many skirmishes, and not a man flinched or shirked a duty! They were all hardy sons of old New England, who, like their forefathers of '76, fought for home and liberty; for freedom and love of country. Such, and such only, are true heroes!

Of the battles in which they took part, now famous in history, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Tracy City, Resaca, Peach Creek and Atlanta were the most severe, though many others were as sanguinary. Their losses in all these engagements were sixteen officers, killed or wounded in battle, and twenty-three privates, or total of thirty-nine. In addition, eight were taken prisoners, most of whom died in rebel prison pens; and thirty-six others died of disease or were disabled by it. Out of the one hundred hardy men who left Southton, only nineteen returned unharmed at the close of the war!—a record for brave service that was not surpassed, and one that should weave a laurel wreath around every name!

Manson had passed through eight battles unharmed and dread disease had failed to touch his splendid strength; but at the battle of Peach Creek, and under a blazing July sun he fell. His regiment had been ordered to charge a hill, from the top of which a perfect storm of rebel bullets were pouring upon them, and with hands gripping his gun and teeth fiercely set, he with the rest faced the almost certain death as they charged up the hill! When half way up, and just as he had leaped a low stone wall, two red-hot irons seemed to pierce him, and with a bullet through one leg, and a shattered arm he went down, and leaving him there, the storm of battle swept on!

Conscious still, and believing his end had come, he yet remembered that wall, and faint and bleeding he crawled back to it. He could hear the roar of guns, and the groans of dying men about him, and in that awful moment, with death near, one thought alone came, and that was to shelter himself between the rocks, so that mad horses and frenzied men might not trample upon his face. He could see near by a rock close to the wall, and like some wild animal that had received its death wound, yet crawls into a thicket to die, so he crept into this shelter and lay there moaning.

Hour after hour passed in agony, while his life blood ebbed away. He could not stop it; he did not try. Since death was near and he felt that it must come, the sooner it was over the better. Men and horses swept by and heeded him not! The fierce sun beat upon him, but no one came to succor! His tongue grew parched and a terrible thirst tortured him; but there was no water. Only the hard stones upon which his head was pillowed, the dry earth that drank his blood, and the merciless sun blazing above. He could hear the dying men about him groaning and cursing God in their agony, and the roar of cannon that made the earth tremble beneath him.

Then the sounds of conflict and carnage passed away, and left only the moans of the wounded near him to echo his own. At last night came and threw her dark mantle over that scene of death and despair, and later the moon rose and shed her pale light upon it. Those soft beams of silvery white were angels of mercy, for they carried that dying boy's heart away to the hills of old New England, and to where a rippling brook danced like silver coin beneath them, and a fair girl's face and tender blue eyes smiled upon him. Then the picture faded and he knew no more.

CHAPTER XVII.

THOSE WHO WAIT.

There is nothing in life much harder to bear than suspense. To know the worst, whatever that may be, is far preferable to the long agony of doubt; hoping for the best, yet fearing the worst.

Even a hardened criminal has been known to admit that the two or three hours of waiting for the verdict was far worse than the march to the gallows. If this be so, what must it be to the tender, loving hearts of good and true women whose husbands, sweethearts, brothers and sons are facing the dangers of war, and who (God pity them) have to endure this dread suspense for weeks and months when no tidings reach them?

When the train bearing Liddy's soldier boy from sight had rolled away she clung to her father's arm in mute despair. Pride sustained her until they had left the town behind, and were driving across the wide plains toward her home, and then the tears came. The memory of many pleasant 138
moonlit drives along the same road when her lover was with her came back, and with it the realization that it was all ended, perhaps forever, and that the best she could look forward to was three years of weary waiting. Before her, miles away, rose the Blue Hills, distinct in the clear air, and as she looked at them, back came the memory of one day a month before—a day replete with joy and sorrow, when he had paid her the greatest and sweetest compliment a man can pay a woman. She could recall the very tones of his voice and she could almost feel the touch of his arms when he had held her close for one brief moment. In silence she rode along for a time, trying to control herself, and then turning to her father she said:

"Father, there is something I must tell you, and I ask your forgiveness for not doing so before." And then, in her odd, winsome way, resting her cheek against his shoulder and holding her left hand before his face for a moment, she continued: "Can you guess?"

"No, my child," he answered, quickly, wishing to cheer her, "I could not possibly guess. The ways of my little girl are so deep and dark, how could I?" and then continuing in a more cheerful tone: 139
"Don't cry any more, Liddy. Some one is coming back from the war by and by, and some one else will want a lot of new dresses for a wedding, and expects to be happy, and I hope she will be."

Then a little hand began stroking his arm and a still damp face was being rubbed against his shoulder, and presently a soft voice whispered: "Father, you have always been too good to me. You never said a word and you knew it all along, I guess!" which rather incoherent speech may be excused under the circumstances.

The few weeks that followed were not as gloomy to Liddy as later ones. Her home duties outside of school hours had always been numerous, and now she found them a relief. Letters also came frequently from the absent one, and she felt that he was not yet in danger—that was a grain of consolation. But when he wrote that they were to start for the front the next day, her heart grew heavy again and from that time on the dread suspense was never lifted. She wrote him frequently and tried to make her letters brave and cheerful. All the simple details of her home life were faithfully portrayed, and it became a habit to write him a page every night. She called it a little chat, but it might better have been called an evening prayer, for into those tender words were 140
woven every sweet wish and hopeful petition of a loving woman's heart. After the battle of Chancellorsville a cloud seemed resting upon Southton, and Liddy felt that the weary waiting was becoming more oppressive than ever. It had been her father's custom to drive "over town," as it was called, once a day to obtain the news, and she had always met him on his return, even before he entered the house, to more quickly learn the worst. She began to dread even this, lest he should bring the tidings she feared most.

Then came the call for needed supplies to be used in the care of the wounded, and gladly Liddy joined with other good ladies in picking lint, preparing bandages, and the like, and contributing many articles for the use and comfort of the soldiers. In this noble work she came to realize how many other hearts besides her own carried a burden, and to feel a kinship of sorrow with them. Her engagement to Manson seemed to be generally known and the common burden soon obliterated her first girlish reticence concerning it.

"I feel that I am growing old very fast," she wrote him, "and that I am a girl no longer. Just think, it is only ten months since I felt angry when some of the girls told me they heard I was engaged 141
to you, and now I don't care who knows it."

For the next three months there were no battles that he was engaged in, and yet the suspense was the same. Then when the new year came another burden was added, for her mother grew worse, and it seemed to Liddy as if the shadows were thick about her. An event that occurred in the early spring, and two months after the battle of Tracy City, made a deep impression on her. Captain Upson, promoted from first lieutenant of Company E, was wounded at that battle, and dying later, was brought to Southton for burial. He was universally respected and almost the entire townsfolk gathered at the church to pay their tribute. Hundreds failed to gain admission, and it was said to have been the largest funeral ever known in the town. Liddy had never seen a military funeral and the ceremonies were sadly impressive. The long service at the church; the touching words of the minister uttered over the flag-draped coffin, upon which rested a sword; the sad procession to the cemetery, headed by muffled drum and melancholy fife mingling their sounds with the tolling bell, and then the arched arms of soldiers, beneath which the body was 142
borne; the short prayer; the three volleys; and last of all, lively music on the return. This feature impressed her as the saddest of all, for it seemed to say: "Now, we will forget the dead as soon as possible," which in truth was what it meant in military custom.

It is needless to say as she returned with her father to their now saddened home, a possible event of similar import in which she must be a broken-hearted mourner entered her mind. During the next month came another and far worse blow. Her mother, long an invalid, contracted a severe cold and, in spite of all possible effort to save her, in three short days passed away. To even

faintly express the anguish of that now bereaved husband and motherless girl is impossible and shall not be attempted.

When the funeral was over and they once more sat by the fire in the sitting-room, as was customary each evening, their pleasant home seemed utterly desolate, and the tall clock in the hall ticked with far deeper solemnity. Liddy in fact was, as she felt herself to be, walking "through the valley and shadow of death." To add to her utter wretchedness, if that were possible, she had received no letter from Manson for three weeks, and there were no rifts of sunshine in her horizon. She wrote him a long account of her loss and all the misery of mind she 143
was experiencing and then, as she had no address to mail it to, held the letter in waiting, and finally tore it up. "It will only give him pain to know it," she thought, "and he has enough to bear." When she next heard from him she realized more than ever how many lonely and homesick hours he had to endure, and was glad she had kept her sorrow to herself.

A few weeks later her father, thinking to make the house more cheerful, proposed that her Aunt Mary—a widowed sister of his—should come and live with them.

"No, father," said Liddy, after the matter had been discussed, "I would rather be alone and take care of you myself." Then she added, with a little quiver in her voice: "You are the only one I've got to love now and perhaps the only one I shall ever have."

Liddy was essentially a home-loving girl and cared but little for company. A few friends, and good ones, might be considered as the text of her life, and even at school it had been the same. Her home duties and her father's needs were a sufficient kingdom, and over it she was a gracious queen. For the first three months after her mother's death she and her father lived a life of nearly 144
silent sadness. Almost daily he visited the town, dreading far worse than Liddy ever knew lest he must return with sad tidings. He knew what was ever in her heart, and as her life-happiness was dear to him, he wasted no time in discussing war news with his friends in the village. When June came Liddy felt that a change in the morose current of their lives must be made, and in her peculiar way set about to carry out her idea. She knew his fiftieth birthday came during that month, and when the day arrived she said to him:

"Come home early to-night, father, I have a great, big favor to ask of you." All that afternoon she worked at her little plot, and when tea time came and he entered the house a surprise awaited him. The dining-table had been moved into the sitting-room, set with the best china, and in the center was a vase of flowers. Draped from the hanging lamp above it, and extending to each corner were ropes of ground pine, and around his plate was a double row of full-blown roses. It was a pretty sight, and when he looked at it he smiled and said: "Expecting company, Liddy?"

"Yes, you," was her answer; "and I've made a shortcake, and I picked the strawberries myself." 145

When he was seated in his accustomed chair he looked at the array of roses, and in a surprised voice remarked: "Why didn't you put some around your own plate, Liddy?"

"Because it's not my birthday," came the answer; "count them, father."

The thoughtful tribute touched him, and a look of sadness crept in his face. "I had forgotten how old I was," he said.

Liddy made no reply until she had poured his tea, and then she said, in her earnest way: "Now, father, I don't want you to think of that any more, or anything else that is past and gone. Please think how hard I worked all the afternoon to fix the table and how much I want to make you happy."

When it came time to retire, he said: "You haven't told me yet what that big favor is, Liddy!"

For answer she went to him and taking his face in her hands, she kissed him on either cheek and whispered: "Wait till to-morrow!"

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CHAPTER XVIII.

A FEW BRIGHT DAYS.

The next evening after supper Liddy showed unusual cheerfulness. She had that day received three letters from the absent one, though of different dates, and all contained assuring words. Then she had a little plan of loving intent mapped out in her mind and was eager to carry it out. Her father noticed her unusual mood and said: "It seems good to see you smile once more, Liddy."

"I am trying hard to feel happy," she answered, "and harder still to make you feel so as well." And then, drawing her chair close to him, she sat down and rested her face against his shoulder. It was one of her odd ways, and it must be now stated that when this winsome girl most earnestly desired to reach her father's heart, she always stroked his shoulder with her face.

"Well," he said, recognizing her method, "I know you have something on your mind; so tell me what it is right away!" 147

She made no immediate reply, but softly stroked him for a moment and then replied: "Yes, I do want something; I want a clock!" and then, straightening herself up, she continued earnestly: "I want a lot of things; I want a pretty clock to put on the mantel, and I want you to put the tall one up into the attic, for it gives me the blues; and say, father"—— and here again her face went to his shoulder, "I want a piano!"

"Is that all?" he answered, a droll smile creeping into his face.

"No," she said, "that isn't all; but it's all I dare ask for now."

"Better tell me the rest," he replied, stroking the head that still rested against his arm. "You haven't surprised me yet."

And then there was a very pretty scene, for the next instant that blue-eyed heart-breaker was sitting in her father's lap, with both arms around his neck.

"Do you mean it, father?" she whispered. "Can I have a piano?"

"Why, of course," he answered softly, "if you want one."

In a week the old cottage organ that had felt the touch of Liddy's childish fingers learning the 148
scale, was keeping company with the tall clock in the attic, and in its place stood a piano. In the sitting-room a new clock that chimed the hours and halves ticked on the mantel. These were not all the changes, for when so much was won our heart-breaker renewed her assault by her usual method, and pretty portières took the place of doors between parlor, hall and sitting-room, and delicate lace curtains draped the windows. Then Liddy surveyed her home with satisfaction and asked her father how he liked it.

"It makes a great change in the rooms," he replied, "and they seem more cheerful."

"Do you notice that it also makes the carpets look worn and shabby?" said Liddy; "and the parlor furniture a little old-fashioned?"

Mr. Camp sat down in one of the parlor chairs and looked around. For a few moments he surveyed the room in silence and then said: "Liddy, did you ever hear the story of the brass fire-dogs? I don't think you have, so I will tell it. There was once a good woman who persuaded her husband to buy a pair of brass fire-dogs for the parlor, to take the place of the old iron ones. When the new ones were in place she polished them very brightly and asked him to look into the room. 'Don't you think,' she said, 'they make the carpet look old and worn?' They certainly did, so 149
he bought a new carpet. That in turn made the furniture seem shabby, so he was persuaded to renew that. By this time the curtains were not in harmony, and had to be changed. When it was all done he remarked: 'Wife, you said the fire-dogs would only cost me four dollars, but they have really cost me two hundred.'"

"But we had the brass fire-dogs already," said Liddy laughing, "so the story doesn't hit me." Then, going to him and putting one arm around his neck and stroking his face with the other hand, she continued: "The trouble is, father, you have got me instead of new fire-dogs; are you sorry?"

"You must judge for yourself," was his answer. "Is there anything else you wish?"

"Yes, there are two other things I want," was her reply, still stroking him; "I want to see you look happier, and feel happier, and I want some one to come back safe from the war."

Life is at best but a succession of moods that, like a pendulum, ever vibrate between mirth and sadness. Circumstances will almost invariably force the vibrations to greater extremes, but just as surely will its opposite mood return. Though clouds darken to-day, the sun will shine to-morrow; and if sorrow comes, joy will follow; while ever above the rippled shores of laughter 150
floats the mist of tears.

In some respects Liddy was a peculiar girl. While loving those near her with almost pathetic tenderness and constantly striving to show it, she shrank like a scared child from any public exhibition of that feeling. She had another peculiarity that might be called a whim—she loved to try experiments upon her own feelings to see what effect they would have. It was this that had been the real cause of her desire to attend the military funeral that had taken place in Southton a few months previous. Since her mother's death Liddy had remained at home nearly all the time. She seldom went to the village, because to do so awakened unpleasant memories. To drive past the now vacant academy or near the depot was to awaken unhappy thought and force her into a sad mood. The seclusion of her home seemed more in harmony with her feelings. She had but few intimate friends, and even those jarred upon her now, and her father was the best, and the only one she cared to be with. One day in mid-summer, she surprised him with a strange request.

"Father," she said, "I want to go fishing. I don't mean to tramp through the brush along a brook, 151
but I want you to take me to some pretty pond where there are trees all around, and where I can sit in a boat on the shady side and fish. We will take a basket of lunch and have a nice time. If we cannot catch fish we can pick pond lilies. Will you go?"

As there was nothing that loving father would not do for his only child, it is needless to say that the trip was made.

When Liddy began to catch fish, and he noticed how excited she became, he said, with quiet humor: "Which would you rather do, Liddy, put your fish in the boat or hang them up in the trees? Tut, tut!" he continued, as he saw a deep shadow creep over her face, "you will have Charlie to bait your hook next summer, never fear!"

That night she wrote to her soldier boy: "I coaxed father to take me fishing to-day. I wanted to see if it wouldn't bring me nearer to you or you to me. I came home in a sad mood, however, though I learned one thing, and that is wherein lies the fascination of fishing. It's the constant expectation of getting a bite that takes your mind away from all else."

With the autumn evenings came the time for open fires, and Liddy had hard work to keep her 152
spirits up. There were so many tender associations lurking in the firelight, and so much that brought back the past and gone hours of happiness that it was painful instead of cheerful. Thanksgiving time and the holidays were days of sadness instead of joy. The long eighteen months of constant dread and suspense had worn upon her nerves and was slowly changing her from a light-hearted, happy girl to a saddened, waiting woman. The winter slowly dragged its weary length, and one evening, about a year from the time she had attended the military funeral, she broke down entirely. She had tried piano practice for a time and then reading, but neither availed to occupy her thoughts or drive away the gloom. Finally she sat down beside her father, who was reading, and said piteously:

"Father, please talk to me; tell me stories, scold me—anything! I am so utterly wretched I am ready to cry!"

"My child," he answered tenderly, stroking the fair head that was resting against his arm, "don't let your mind brood so much upon your own troubles; try and think how many there are who have more to bear than you have."

The delicate reproach, though not intended as such by him, was the last straw, for the next
instant her head was down in his lap and she was sobbing like a child. When the little shower was 153
over she raised her face and whispered:

"Don't think it's all Charlie, father, or that I forget mother, or how much you have to bear; for I do not. It's all combined, and the silent room upstairs added to the dread, that is breaking my heart."

When the day that marked the anniversary of her parting from Manson arrived she tried another experiment upon herself. The promise she had made him that day seemed a sacred bond, and she resolved to go alone to Blue Hill and see how it would affect her. The day was almost identical to the one two years previous, and when, late in the afternoon, she arrived at the top, the spot seemed unchanged. The trees were thick with the same fresh foliage, the birds were there, and around the rock where they had sat grew the same blue violets. Under a tree was the little lattice table, just as they had left it. She sat down on the rock and tried to live over the thoughts and feelings of that day. They all came back, like so many spectres of a past and gone happiness, and as, one by one, they filed by in thought, the utter silence and solitude of the place seemed to
increase. The only sound was the faint whisper of the breeze in the hemlocks, and as she listened 154
and looked into the shadow beyond where the trees grew thicker, a strange feeling of fear began to assail her heart and a new and horrible dread crept into her thoughts. She had not heard from the absent one for two weeks—what if the dreaded fate had already come and he was at this very moment near her in spirit? And as all the horror of this thought forced itself upon her, she suddenly rose to her feet, and almost running, left the spot.

When she arrived home and looked into her mirror she saw a strange expression on her face and her lips were pale. "I could not go there again," she said to herself; "I should go mad if I did."

During the next few weeks the dread seemed to grow upon her day by day. She did not dare tell her father of her trip to Blue Hill, but he noticed that she was getting thin and that her eyes were growing hollow. Then came the news of the battle of Peach Creek and that Company E were engaged in it; but no names of the killed or wounded, if any, reached her, and no letter from Manson.

Each day her father drove to the village and he was always met at the gate upon his return by a 155
sad-faced girl whose blue eyes wore a look of piteous appeal. He tried to comfort her all he could; but it did no good. She could not talk; she could scarcely eat or sleep, but went about her daily work as if in a trance. Occasionally in the evening she would give way to tears, and for three weeks she existed in a state of wretchedness no pen can describe. Then one evening her father handed her a letter in a strange handwriting and turned his face away, for he knew its contents.

"Tell me the worst, father," she almost screamed, "tell me quick; is he alive?"

"Yes, my child," he answered sadly, "but we must go to him to-morrow. He is in the hospital at Washington and very low."

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CHAPTER XIX.

AMONG THE WOUNDED.

At nearly noon the day after the battle of Peach Creek the searchers for wounded came upon Manson, still alive, but delirious. Of that ghastly battlefield, or the long agony of that wounded boy, I hesitate to speak. No pen can describe, either, and to even faintly portray them is but to add gloom to a narrative already replete with it. The twenty-four hours of his indescribable pain and torturing thirst were only broken by a few hours of merciful delirium, when he was once more a boy and living his simple, care-free life on the farm, or happy with Liddy. When found he knew it not. When examined by a surgeon that stern man shook his head and remarked: "Slim chance for you, poor devil—too much blood gone already!"

For two weeks he was delirious most of the time, but his rugged constitution saved him, and when he showed signs of gaining and could be moved, he was taken to the hospital at Washington. Once there, he began to fail again, for the long journey had been too much for him. 157

"He won't last long," said the doctor in charge to the nurse. "Better ask him if there is any one he wishes to see."

When he made his rounds the next morning Manson was worse and again out of his head. "He has been wandering in his mind all night," was the nurse's report, "and he talks about fishing and catching things in traps, and there is a girl mixed in it all. Case of sweetheart, I guess."

That day the wounded boy rallied a little and began to think, and bit by bit the sane hours of the past few weeks came back to him. How near to the shores of eternal silence his bark had drifted, he little knew! The long hours of agony on the battlefield since the moment he had instinctively crawled behind a rock had been a delirium of despair broken only by visions of vague and shadowy import that he could not grasp. All that he thought was that death must soon end his misery, and he hoped it might come soon. At times he had bitten and torn the sleeves of his coat, soaked with blood from his shattered arm, or beaten his head against the dry earth in his agony. 158

How long it had lasted he could not tell, and the last that he remembered was looking at the moon, and then he seemed to be drifting away and all pain ceased. Then all around him he could hear voices and over his head a roof, and he felt as if awakened from some horrible dream. With his well arm he felt of the other and found it was bound with splints. The faces he could see were all strange, but the men wore the familiar blue uniform and he knew they were not enemies. He was carried to a freight-car and laid in it, where he took a long, jolting ride that was all a torture, at the end of which he was taken in an open wagon to a long, low building, and laid on one of many narrow cots which were ranged in double rows. He could not raise his head or turn his body. He could only rest utterly helpless and inert, and indifferent to either life or death.

Of Liddy he thought many times, and of his mother and father as well, and he wondered what they would say and how they would feel when the tidings reached them. Then a kind-faced woman came and lifted his head and held it while he took medicine or sipped broth, and then he was wandering beside a brook again, or in green meadows. Later he could see the white cots all about and the unceiled roof over his head and the same motherly face, and he was asked who his friends were and whom he would like to send for, and from that time on he began to hope. 159

Would the one human being on earth he cared most to see come so far, and could she if she would? And would life still be left in him when she reached his side; or would he have been carried out of the long, low room, dead, as he had seen others carried? He wondered what she would say or do when she came, and oh! if he could only know whether she was coming! He could see the door at one corner of the room where she must enter, and it was a little comfort to look at that. Then a resolution and a feeling that he must live and be there when she came began to grow upon him. He knew four days had passed since she had been sent for and he could now count the hours, and from that time on his eyes were seldom turned away from that door while he was awake. Did ever hours pass more slowly than those? Could it be possible? I think not. He had no means of knowing the time except to ask the nurse, and when night came he knew that sleep might bridge a few hours more speedily. 160

Six days passed, and then in the gray light of the next morning he opened his weary waiting eyes and saw bending over him the fair face that for two long years, and all through his hopeless agony he had longed for, and as he reached his hand to her in mute gratitude, unable to speak, he felt it clasped, and the next instant she was on her knees beside him and pressing a tear-wet face upon it, and he was listening to the first prayer she ever uttered!

Gone now like a flash of light were all those weary months of heart-hunger! Gone all the agony and despair of that day and night on the battlefield! Gone all the hours of pain through which he counted the moments one by one as he watched the door! No more was he lying upon a narrow cot listening to the moans of the wounded as he saw the dead carried out! Instead was he resting on a bed of violets and listening to the heart throbs of thankfulness and supplication murmured by an angel! And if ever a prayer reached the heavenly throne it was that one! When it was finished, and her loving blue eyes were looking into his, he whispered:

"Liddy, God bless you! Now I shall live."

Such is the power of love!

I feel that here and now I must beg the kind reader's pardon for introducing so much that is painful and sad in the lives of these two, fitted by birth and education for peace and simple home happiness. War and all its horrors is not akin to them and was never meant to be. Rather should their footsteps lead them where the bobolink sings as he circles over a green meadow, and the blue water lilies stoop to kiss the brook that ripples through it; or where the fields of grain bend and billow in the summer breeze; or the old mill-wheel splashes, while the white flowers in the pond above smile in the sunlight. If the patient reader will but follow their lives a little further, only peace and happiness and all the gentle voices of nature shall be their companions.

For a month, while cheered by the presence of her devoted father, Liddy nursed that feeble spark of life back to health and strength as only a tender and heroic woman could. All the dread aftermath of war that daily assailed her every sense, did not make her falter, but through all those scenes of misery and death she bravely stood by her post and her love-imposed duty. How hard a task it was, no one unaccustomed to such surroundings can even faintly realize, and it need not be dwelt upon. When she had fulfilled the most God-like mission ever confided to woman's hands—that of caring for the sick and dying—and when returning strength made it possible to remove her charge, those three devoted ones returned to the hills of old New England.

How fair the peaceful valley of Southton seemed once more, and how clear and distinct the Blue Hills were outlined in the pure September air! The trees were just gaining the annual glory of autumn color; but to Liddy they brought no tinge of melancholy, for her heart was full of sweetest joy. She had saved the one life dearest on earth to her, and now the voices of nature were but sounds of heavenly music. And how dear to her was her home once more, and all about it! The brook that rippled near sounded like the low tinkle of sweet bells, and the maple by the gate whispered once again the tender thoughts of the love that had first come to her beneath them. She was like a child in her happiness, and every thought and every impulse was touched by the mystic, magic wand of love. Few ever know the supreme joy that came to her and none can except they walk with bleeding hearts and weary feet through the valley of despair, bearing the burden of a loved one's life.

The first evening she was alone with her father, she came as a child would, to sit upon his knee, and putting her arms around his neck whispered:

"Father, I never knew until now what it means to be happy, and how good and kind you could be to me, and how little it is in my power to pay it all back. I can only love and care for you as long as I live, or as long as God spares your life."

And be it said, she kept her promise.

CHAPTER XX.

PLANS FOR HAPPINESS.

Appomattox and a glorious ending of the most sanguinary war in the history of the nineteenth century had come, and with it a few changes in Southton.

Only a part of that brave E Company that three years before marched so proudly away to fight for the Union ever returned, and of those the greater number bore the scars of war and disease. Very many sorrowing women and children were scattered through the town, whose hearts were sore with wounds that only time could heal, and the empty sleeve and the vacant chair were sad reminders on all sides.

The Rev. Jotham still extended his time-worn orthodox arguments to a wearisome length, usually concluding them with more or less varied and vivid pictures of the doom in store for those who failed at once to repent and believe; but strange to say the sinners who were moved by his eloquence were few and far between. It was known that he was not in sympathy with the great majority of the North, or the principles upon which the war had been fought, but believed in the right of secession, and that the North was wrong in its political position. Had he kept these opinions to himself it would have been far wiser; but he made the mistake of giving utterance to them at a Memorial Day service held in his church, which expression was so obnoxious to the most of his audience and such a direct reflection upon the brave men from the town who had shed their blood for their country that one of the leading men of Southton arose at the close of Rev. Jotham's remarks and there and then rebuked him. The affair created quite a disturbance in public feeling and was perhaps one of the indirect causes that eventually led to a division of his church and to the formation of a separate society in another part of the town.

A new principal had assumed charge of the academy, the trustees having decided for several reasons that a change would be beneficial. Mr. Webber, who had ruled there for several years, industriously circulated a report that by reason of several very flattering offers to engage in mercantile pursuits, as well as failing health, he had decided to resign. As his voice, and the

apparent desire to use it upon any and all possible occasions, showed no cessation of energy, a few skeptical ones were inclined to doubt that his health was seriously affected, and as it was over a year before he accepted any of the flattering offers, they believed he must have had hard work to find them. For the rest the town resumed the old-time even tenor of its way, though there had been added to its annals heroic history, and to its calendar one day of annual mourning. 166

Aunt Sally Hart said that "Liddy Camp had showed mighty good grit and that young Manson ought to feel purty proud of her," which expression seemed to reflect the general sentiment.

When the autumn days and returning health came to Manson, sunshine seemed to once more smile upon the lives of our two young friends, and how happy they were during the all too short evenings spent together in Liddy's newly furnished parlor, need not be described. It was no longer a courtship, but rather a loving discussion of future plans in life, for each felt bound by an obligation stronger even than love, and how many charming air castles they built out of the firelight flashes shall not be told. In a way, Liddy was a heroine among the little circle of her schoolmates and friends, and deserved to be, for few there were among them who could have found the strength to have faced the ghastly scenes she had, from a sense of duty. 167

"I do not care to talk about it," she said once to one of those who had been near her in the old days at the academy; "it all came so suddenly I did not stop to think, and if I had it would have made no difference. I did not think of myself at all, or what I was to meet. How horrible it was to be thrust among hundreds of wounded and dying men; to hear what I had to, and see what I did, I cannot describe and do not wish to. Under the same circumstances," she added quietly, "I should face that awful experience over again if necessary."

Life and all its plans practically resolve themselves into a question of income finally, and no matter how well aimed Cupid's darts may be, the almighty dollar and the ability to obtain possession of it, is of greater weight in the scale than all the arrows the boy-god ever carried. Even as an academy boy Manson had realized this; faintly at first, and yet with growing force, as his attachment for Liddy increased. With a certain pride in character he had resolved to withhold any declaration of love until he had at least a settled occupation in life; but when it came to going to war and parting, perhaps forever, from the girl he loved, to longer remain silent was to control himself beyond his strength. Now that she had shown how much his life meant to her by an act of devotion and self-sacrifice so unusual, his ambition to obtain a home that he could invite her to share, returned with redoubled force. What to do, or where to turn, he did not know. He was not even recuperated from the terrible ordeal that had so nearly cost him his life; but for all that his ambition was spurring him onward far in advance of his strength. One evening late that autumn, when he found himself unexpectedly alone with Mr. Camp, he said: 168

"I have for some time wished to express to you my hopes and ask your advice regarding my future plans. First, I want to ask you for Liddy, and beyond that, what I had best turn to to obtain a livelihood. I want Liddy, and I want a home to keep her in."

Mr. Camp looked at him a moment, while a droll smile crept into his face, and then replied:

"I am willing you should have Liddy, of course. I wouldn't have taken her to that hospital to try to save your life if I hadn't believed you worthy of her; but beyond that I don't think I have much to say in the matter anyway. I couldn't keep you apart if I would, and I wouldn't if I could." And then he added a little more seriously: "She is all I have left in my life, and whatever plans you two make, I hope you will consider that." 169

Manson was silent. The perfect confidence and simple pathos of Mr. Camp's statement came to him forcibly, and made him realize how much he was asking. He meditated a few moments, and then said:

"I feel that I am asking for more than I deserve, and that I owe you far more than I can ever repay, but believe me, I shall do all in my power."

"We won't worry about that now," replied Mr. Camp, smiling again; "wait till your arm is well, and then we will talk it all over. In the meantime"—and a twinkle came into his eyes—"you have one well arm, and I guess that's all Liddy needs just at present."

The autumn and winter evenings sped by on wings of wind to Liddy and her lover, for all the sweet illusions of life were theirs. Occasionally they called on some of their old schoolmates, or were invited to social gatherings, and how proud she was of her manly escort, and he of the fair girl he felt was all his own, need not be told. 170

One day in the spring Mr. Camp said to Manson: "How would you like to be a farmer?"

"I have no objections," he replied; "my father is one, and there is no reason why I should be ashamed of it. It means hard work, but I am used to that. I am ready and willing to do anything to earn an honest living."

Mr. Camp looked at him for a moment reflectively, and then said:

"That has the right ring in it, my boy," and after thinking a little longer added: "I'll tell you what I'll do. Charles, if you can get Liddy to set the day I will give her a deed of the house and you a deed of the farm, provided you two will take care of me. That's fair, isn't it?" Then he added, with a smile, "I guess you can coax her consent if you try hard."

The proposition was so unexpected and surprising that for a moment Manson could not speak, and then, when it all came to him, and he saw the door of his dream of happiness opened wide by such an offer, the tears almost started. For one instant he was in danger of yielding, but he recovered himself.

"No mere words can possibly express my gratitude, sir," he replied, "but I could not accept so much. All I ask for, and all I will accept is Liddy, and that is enough. To let you give me your farm would make me feel that I was robbing you. I could not do it, sir." 171

And then, as he saw a look of pain come into his would-be benefactor's face, he continued: "Now, I will tell you what I am willing, and should be more than glad to do. Let Liddy and me keep house for you, and I will manage the farm, under your direction. That is enough, and all I can accept."

"I respect your feeling of independence," replied Mr. Camp, a little sadly, "but it won't work. A young man, to be content, must feel that he has a home that is, or soon will be, all his own. I do not want to put a burden on your feelings, but I want to make both you and my child happy, and"—with a little tremor in his voice—"I've only got Liddy to care for me in my old age, and it's hard to give her up. Can't you believe what I offer is wisest and best? Would it make you feel any better to give me a note and pay it when you chose? I would never ask you for it."

That evening when the lovers sat under the freshly leaved maples, he told her what her father had offered.

"I've known it for some time," she said, "and I feared you would feel hurt and refuse it, and hurt father, and I hope you did not. Put yourself in father's place," she continued seriously, "and tell me how you would feel. Remember that I am all he has to love and care for him, and he is very dear to me. He would not hurt you for the world, and what he thinks is the best way I believe *is* the best." 172

"I will think it over," was Manson's comment. "It's so sudden and overwhelming I do not know what to say or do. I can't see a way out of it, either," he went on reflectively. "I want you and I want a home to keep you in, all our own, but how, or where it's coming from, I can't see. Then it's too much to ask him to give you up."

He paused, and leaning over and resting his face on his hands, continued rather sadly:

"I guess it would have been just as well if you had left me to die in the hospital."

It was a cruel remark and he saw it in an instant, for he said quickly: "Forgive me, I didn't mean that. I've got you and two hands to work with, and that's hope enough. Give me time and I'll solve the problem, never fear!"

When they parted she put one arm around his neck and whispered:

"It's the old vocation enigma over again, Charlie, isn't it? But don't let it make you miserable, and don't ever say such a thing as that you just said again. Do you know, when I came to you in the hospital that morning, I had not slept one moment for two long days and nights! Now try and be happy to pay me for it, and remember: 173

> *"'The happiest life that ever was led*
> *Is always to court and never to wed.'"*

Then she kissed him, in her tender way, and if he did not think she was right, it was because he was like most young men who don't know when they are well off and happy.

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CHAPTER XXI.

BLUE HILL.

Three years from the day Manson led Liddy to the carriage, blinded by tears and heart broken at the separation in store, they once more visited that dearly loved spot. It was a place more sacred to them than a church, for it had been hallowed by the tears of love and sanctified by the noblest impulses of two honest and true hearts. It was far removed from all the vain pomp and display of humanity and the sordid and selfish influences of life. To Liddy and her lover it was a spot that appealed to all that was holiest and best in their natures, and lifted them above selfish thought.

"Can you realize how I felt," Manson said on the way, "the day I rode in silence up here and then told you I had enlisted?"

"No," she answered; "no more than you can imagine how I felt. I think I suffered the more, for I was in suspense and you were not. That makes me think of a question I have long wanted to ask you. You won't mind now, will you?" she continued with a smile and a twinkle in her eyes. "Why 175

did you tell the bad news first and propose afterward? Why didn't you pop the question first?"

"I thought you would be more apt to say 'yes' if I put it the way I did."

"I think you knew it wouldn't be 'no,'" she said. "I knew that was coming weeks before."

"You did," he replied, a little surprised. "How did you know?"

"Do you think I was blind?" she answered archly. "A girl usually knows when that question is liable to come for months beforehand, and if it is to be 'no' the man in the case will have hard work to obtain a good opportunity."

When they were seated beside the rock once more she said: "Now, sir, three years ago I told you we must feel and act like children one day up here, and you minded me very well; but it was hard work, I think. It was for me, I am sure."

"It will be easier to-day," he responded, "for I've only one thing to worry about, and that is the proposition your father made."

She looked at him a moment, and in her eyes he saw a little of the same humorous twinkle he had 176
at one time noticed in her father's eyes, and then she said:

"Suppose I should say I would not marry you until you had a home of your own to take me to; how would that seem?"

"I would not blame you," he answered soberly; "only you would have to see clouds on my face a long time, I fear."

"Oh, I haven't said so yet," she continued as she saw one gathering there then, "only I thought it might make you see father's proposition in a new light. Poor father," she went on musingly, "he wants to make us both happy, and he doesn't know how to bring it about."

"Why can't he accept my plan, then?" said Manson. "I am ready and willing."

"But I haven't said I was," responded Liddy. "I am not sure that I want people to think my husband is working for my father on the farm. Oh, I didn't mean it that way," as she saw a frown coming, "only I have some pride as well as you; that is all. Now, Charlie, please don't say another word about it to-day. Remember, we are children!"

Then she told him about her lone visit to this spot a year before, and how it affected her. 177

"Do you know," she explained, "I was terribly scared, and I imagined I heard ghostly footsteps all around here, and when I reached home I was as pale as a ghost myself."

"It was a foolish thing to do," he said, "and a silly promise for me to exact."

"I should have kept it just the same," was her answer, "as long as I lived."

At noon he rebuilt the little lattice table, and after the dainty dinner was disposed of, they gathered flowers, picked wintergreen, wove wreaths for each other's hats and talked silly nothings for hours, and enjoyed it, too, as lovers will. Late in the afternoon, when tired of this, he arranged the carriage robe and cushions beside the rock and asked her to sit beside him. It was a preliminary to some serious utterance, she felt, for he at once remarked:

"Liddy, I've something to tell you."

She looked at him for a moment, while a smile crept into her face, and then said:

"Now, Charlie, if you have any more startling or painful things to tell me, don't bring me up here first, or I shall always dread to come."

"Was my confession of love, made here, painful?" he remarked.

"Of course not," she answered, "nor startling, either, for, as I told you, I knew that was coming. 178
But the other part of it nearly broke my heart. You must have thought me silly!"

How earnestly, and in what manner he assured her she did not act silly on that occasion, but was the sweetest and dearest girl that ever lived, need not be specified. When that little episode was over and she had adjusted her hat, she said:

"Now tell me your story, Charlie."

"Well," he replied, "one night nearly two years ago I was on picket duty, and I made the acquaintance of a young fellow by the name of Frank Pullen, who belonged to a Maine regiment. We kept up an acquaintance for two months and in that time became very good friends. We were in much the same state of mind, for he, too, had a waiting sweetheart at home, and when we separated we each promised to write to the other, if we lived to do so. His father is a retired sea captain, and well-to-do, and lives in a little out-of-the-way place in Maine. A month ago I received a letter from Frank and an urgent invitation to visit him, and I've promised to do so."

"That's nice," said Liddy regretfully, "to be told I am to be left alone all summer! The next time 179
you ask me up here I shall say: 'Tell me the bad news first!'"

"Liddy," he replied seriously, "it's not for a pleasure trip that I am going. He knows how I am situated and a good deal about my hopes and plans, and he has promised to help me."

She was silent, for this opened a new field of conjecture and for a long time she mused upon it, and at last said:

"I do not see how his assistance will help matters much, do you?"

"No, to be candid," he replied, "I do not yet; still it may. I am almost sorry I promised to go, but my friend will feel hurt now if I don't. I may obtain a few suggestions that will help me to solve this problem."

She made no reply, for the situation seemed as complex to her as to her suitor. She respected the pride that had made him refuse her father's generous offer, and at the same time she felt herself tortured by conflicting emotions. To desert her father she could not, and to deny her lover his right to herself as a wife was almost as impossible. A long wait seemed the only solution, unless he would accept her father's offer.

Perhaps the same conclusions were reached by Manson, for he said at last: "Do not blame me for 180
going away or looking about to find some way out of this dilemma. I shall never find one here in Southton. The world is wide, and I do not feel it half so hard to face as rebel bullets. There is room for me in it, and a chance to win a home for you and me, and I am going to fight for that chance. I am too proud to accept your father's farm as a gift, and you are too proud to have me work for him, even if he gave me all the farm produced. Then you can't leave him, and I won't ask you to do so. The only way is to wait and work, and work hard for the girl I love, and her father will be as welcome in that home as she."

He paused, and a look of admiration for his spirited words came into her face.

"Charlie," she said in a low voice, "please don't think I am proud or stubborn. I can't leave father, but I will wait for you as long as you wish or I will marry you when you wish, provided, of course, you give me time to get ready. Only do not feel that I will let pride separate us for long. Whatever you are satisfied to do shall be my law."

Her loving assurance cheered him greatly, for he answered in a hopeful voice: 181

"Wait patiently until I return, and then we will decide what is best to do."

When it came time to leave their trysting-place he drew from an inside pocket a small pocketbook, worn and stained, and handed it to Liddy. She opened it and found a bunch of faded violets and a lock of golden hair.

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE MAINE COAST.

There is no part of the New England shores so charming as the coast of Maine. From Cape Elizabeth on the west to Quoddy Head on the east, there are over a thousand large and small islands, nearly all of which are of bold formation and most of them wholly or in part covered with a growth of spruce and fir. The shores of these islands, as well as the mainland, are mainly rock-ribbed, with many high cliffs, at the foot of which the ocean surges beat unceasingly. Deep fissures and sea caverns into which the green water, changed to yeasty foam, ever churns and rushes by day and night, are common; and when storms arise it bellows and roars like an angry bull. Here the clinging rock-weeds and broad kelpie float and wave idly or are lashed in anger by the waves that seem always trying to tear them loose from the rocks. 183

Locked in the embrace of these bold shores are countless coves, inlets and harbors, many so land-locked that never a ripple disturbs their surface, and here the fishhawk and seagull seek their food and build their nests undisturbed by man. No sound except the unceasing murmur of the winds in the fir trees, or the low-voiced neighboring ocean, breaks the stillness. Along the rocky shore and over these green-clad cliffs one may wander for days in absolute solitude, seeing or hearing naught of humanity or the handiwork of man. Here may be found the wondrous magic and mystery of the sea in all its moods—pathetic, peaceful or grand, and its society, where none intrude. Here, too, wedged among the wave-washed rocks, can be found many a tale of shipwreck, despair and death, or whispers of luxuriant life in tropical lands, and all the flotsam and jetsam of the ocean, cast ashore to bleach like bones in a desert, year in and year out.

Safe harbors are numerous, though not easy of access, for sunken ledges or merciless reefs guard them from approach. In places are deep bays, notably Somes Sound, connected with the ocean by an inlet a few rods wide. Only the accessible harbors have been utilized by man, and but 184
few of these are, even to-day. At the head of one of these, and forming the only safe harbor of the Isle au Haut, there clustered a little fishing hamlet forty years ago, the largest house of which was one occupied by Captain Obed Pullen, a retired sea captain, his wife, two sons—Frank and Obed, Jr., and one daughter.

The house was a white, square, two-story one with a flat roof built with bulwarks around it, having portholes like those of a man-of-war. There was a small yard in front surrounded by a board fence, and on a knoll just back of the house was a small enclosure containing a few white headstones. Captain Pullen, having amassed sufficient of this world's goods, lived in peaceful seclusion, far removed from the worldly strife he wished to avoid. With his two sons, he tilled a few acres of land. He fished a little as a pastime, and visited the mainland but seldom. He was a blunt-spoken, but warm-hearted man, with shaggy white beard and hair, and a voice and handshake as hearty as a gale of wind.

To this abode of simple cordiality and good will, one summer day, and by invitation of the old captain's son Frank, came our battle-scarred and love-lorn friend Manson. He and young Pullen had much in common, for both loved the sea, and their friendship, formed when both were 185
environed by the dangers of war, made them now the most affectionate of friends. Manson found himself at once welcomed by the entire family as a valued friend and one whom they all seemed proud to entertain.

"We don't put on style down here," said the old captain to him at the first meal, and in a voice that made the dishes rattle, "but we're right glad to see ye, and we'll give ye some fun if the wind holds out. Be ye fond o' fishin'?"

As fishing was a mania with Manson, and as his opportunities had been limited to the peaceful seclusion of brooks, or the calm waters of mill ponds, it is needless to say that he admitted he was fond of that sport.

"Frank tells me," continued the captain with blunt directness, "that ye have got a sweetheart ye left to come here visitin', but ye best quit thinkin' 'bout her if ye go fishin'."

Whether our young friend did or not does not matter; but it is certain that the days which followed, passed amid such surroundings, were red letter ones in his history. With two young men of about his own age for companions, a trim and staunch fishing sloop with cabin and cooking conveniences ready at hand, and nothing to do but sail and fish, or explore the wild 186
shores and fir-clad islands all about, was like a new world to him. One day it was a fishing trip and a chowder party composed of the entire family; and the next a frolic in an island grove where the young men dug clams on a bit of sandy shore and afterward steamed them among the rocks. Such opportunities were new to him, and with kind friends near, and a feeling that he was thoroughly welcome in their home added to the marvel of enchantment; while all about, the ever-present sea made him almost forget the vexing problem of his future.

"It's like a visit to a fairy land," he said one day to his friend Frank, as they were slowly drifting past a low green island. It was nearly sundown, and the breeze had almost died away, so that the sloop barely moved through the unruffled waters and every tree and rock on the near-by shore was reflected clear and distinct. "To me," he continued, "it is an entrance into an old-time wonder world, and to sail for hours among these islands or in sight of shores where not a house or even a fish hut is visible, makes it seem as if we were explorers first visiting a new land. When we pass the entrance to some deep cove I half expect to see an Indian paddling a canoe up into it, or spy a 187
deer watching us out of a thicket. My ideas of the ocean have been obtained where islands are few, and passing ships or houses along shore are always visible. Here it is so solitary. We seldom see a vessel and not more than two or three small craft in an all day's cruise."

"That's the best of it," explained Frank, "you have it all to yourself. But it's different in winter. You have too much of it to yourself then. Altogether too much, for we are prisoners on the island for weeks at a time, and that graveyard up back of the house makes it seem worse. I wish you could come down here next fall and stay all winter. We don't do a thing but eat and sleep or go ashore once a month for papers, and"—laughing—"just think of what a good chance you would have to get acquainted with your wife!"

Manson was silent. The suggestion opened a vein of vexatious thought in connection with his dilemma that was not pleasant.

"Just think it over," continued Frank, not noticing his silence; "dad and mother would be ever so glad to have you, and so would sis, if your sweetheart ain't stuck up; is she?"

"No," replied Manson, "she's just a sensible, everyday sort of a girl, and as sweet and loving as 188
you can imagine. Your folks would like her, I think, and I am sure she would like them."

"Why didn't you splice and bring her along in the first place?" said Frank, laughing. "I wish you had, and then you wouldn't be looking for Injuns in every cove. Do you remember the night we saw a man walking on fog and thought it was a ghost, and how ten minutes after that same ghost took a shot at us?"

"I do," answered Manson, looking serious as the memory of that experience came back, "and I recall the next night, too, when we sat by the camp fire and swapped ghost stories, and you told me about a haunted island down here. Where is it?"

"Do you see that little patch of green away out beyond Spoon Island?" answered Frank, pointing seaward. "Well, that's the famous Pocket Island that I told you about, and the abiding-place of not only a bellowing bull's ghost, but lots of others as well. When we are likely to have a good spell of weather I am going to take you out there and" (with a laugh) "give you a chance to satisfy your mania for ghost hunting, for I believe that is one of your hobbies." 189

"Well, not so much as it was when we carried a musket," said Manson, "for I am not as superstitious as I was then. Still, I want to see your haunted island just the same and hear that strange noise. Is there a harbor there where we can run in?"

"Yes, and a queer freak of nature it is, too," answered Frank, "but I do not know the channel in, and would not dare to try to enter. All I can do is to wait for a fair day and lay outside while Obed takes you ashore."

That night when Manson had retired he lay awake a long time thinking over the interesting impressions made upon him by his visit, and especially the suggestion that he at some time should bring Liddy down here as his wife! That alone was such an entrancing thought that he could not go to sleep when he tried to. What a new world it would be to take her into, and what supreme delight to show her these beautiful islands and placid coves, and the bold cliffs at the foot of which the white-crested billows were beating! How he would enjoy seeing her open her big, blue eyes with wonder and sweet surprise at all the grand and beautiful bits of scenery and all the magic and mystery of the ocean, far removed from man! 190

"Some day I will bring her here," he thought, and then he fell asleep and dreamed he heard the ominous sound of some monster bellowing in anger.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

BIG SPOON ISLAND.

The next morning our young friends prepared for a three days' trip on their little sloop. For a week they had discussed it and had carefully considered when it was best to go.

"I want to wait till the moon fulls," Frank had said, "for then the weather will be better, and as our friend Manson is in a romantic frame of mind, he will enjoy it all the more."

Everything likely to be needed was put on board their boat; provisions, water, extra clothing, guns, fishing gear, and also, it must be said, a bottle of good old whiskey, for on such a trip it might be even more needful than food.

"We will take along the banjo," Obed said, for he was quite an expert with that cheerful instrument, "and evenings we can have some darkey songs."

"What is the program?" asked Manson, when everything was stowed, the sails set, and with Frank at the helm they were gliding out of the little island harbor. "Where are we going?" 192

"Well," replied Frank, "I think we will run to Big Spoon Island first and try for mackerel. There is a nice little harbor there if it comes on to blow, and two miles out are some good cod grounds. I suppose you would like to visit Pocket Island?"

"I would like to just call there," said Manson, "for you have excited my curiosity. I have a weakness for ghost hunting, you told me once, and now you must gratify it, you see."

There is, perhaps, no pleasanter way for three or four young men to spend a day or two than to have a tidy little yacht all to themselves, and sail her away off among the Maine coast islands, with a summer day breeze and clear skies to cheer them.

To feel themselves just lifted over the broad ground swells, ruffled by a light wind that smells sweet and crisp; to watch some distant green island gradually coming nearer, or the seagulls lighting on the water just ahead, or the white clouds in the blue sky, and with no sense of danger, but only the care-free buoyancy of youth and good spirits, is to many the very acme of enjoyment. At least, it was to Manson, to whom such an experience was entirely new. When they reached 193 Spoon Island he went into raptures over it, for it was a rarity, even among the many beautiful ones he had visited. As its name implied, it was shaped like a spoon, about five hundreds rods long and formed of white sand, with a growth of green sedge grass all over it. On the broadest part was a cluster of spruce forming a little thicket and beside this, and entered by a narrow inlet the tiniest bit of a harbor, just large enough to shelter a small sloop. The seagulls had also discovered its beauty, for thousands hovered about it, and the small harbor was alive with them. The island was a favorite nesting-place for them as well, and their shrill cries at being disturbed almost obliterated the voice of the ocean.

"We will anchor under the lee," said Frank, as they drew near, "and try for mackerel, and then run into the harbor, make everything snug, and stay here to-night, or"—with a droll look at Manson—"perhaps you would prefer to go to Pocket Island and have ghosts for company!"

"This is good enough for me," replied Manson, "and I guess the gulls will be the more cheerful companions!"

When the sloop was at anchor, sails furled, and they were all waiting for mackerel bites, he said: 194

"What is there so mysterious about this Pocket Island, and why are people afraid to go there? Tell me all about it! You have got me so worked up over it, I dreamed I heard a bull bellowing last night."

"Well," replied Frank, "it's like all ghost stories and spook spots in the world; all imagination, I guess. I do not take any stock in them, and dad laughs at the entire batch. The only reality about it is that the island itself is the most forbidding pile of rock, covered with the worst tangle of scrub spruce you ever saw, and the shore is full of deep fissures and cracks. The one mysterious fact is, that strange bellowing noise that you can't locate anywhere. You may clamber all over the island and all around the shores and it seems to be just ahead of you, or just behind; so far as the stories go, well; the queer harbor inside is said to have been a smuggler's hiding-place years ago, and there are all kinds of yarns connected with the island, from bloody murders down to strange sea monsters seen crawling over the rocks. It has a bad name and is seldom visited; for one reason, I think, because it's impossible to land there except in a small boat, and then only when the sea is smooth. The bellowing noise, I believe, is made by the waves entering some cavern 195
below high-water mark. There is also an odd sort of a story linked with it about a little Jew who was known to be a smuggler and who played a sharp trick on a few people ten or twelve years ago. I do not think he had any connection with the island, however, although some say he had. I fancy it's because any ghost-haunted spot always attracts all the mysterious stories told in its neighborhood."

All this was interesting to Manson, and not only added a charm to all the islands he had visited, but made him especially anxious to explore this one.

"Do not laugh at me," he said when Frank had finished his recital, "for expecting to see Indians paddling canoes among your islands when your people down here believe all the ghost stories they do. My fancy is only the shadow of what was certainly a reality not so very long ago; while your stories are spook yarns of the most hobgoblin shape. I want to go to Pocket Island, however," he added a little later, reflectively, "and hear that mysterious bellowing anyhow."

That evening when the sloop was riding quietly at anchor in the little Spoon Island harbor and 196
the full moon just rising, round and red, out of the sea, Obed brought his banjo on deck and away out there, miles from any other island, and mingling with the murmur of the ocean's voice about this one, there came the strains of old, familiar plantation songs sung by those three young friends, at peace with all the world and happy in their seclusion. The gulls had gone to rest, the sea almost so, for the ground swell only washed the island's sandy shore and idly rocked the sloop as she rode secure at anchor. The moon and the man in it both smiled, and when Manson and Frank, wearied of singing, lived over once more the battle scenes they had passed through, feeling that never again could they or would they be called upon to face such danger, it may be said that they were as near contentment as often comes in life. And if the droll look of the man in the moon brought back to one a certain night years before, when, as a bashful boy, he could hardly find courage to kiss a blue-eyed girl whom he had walked home with, and who had since become very dear to him, it is not surprising. Neither was it at all strange, if, when looking seaward, that night, he could see far away in the broadening path of silvery sheen, a small, dark 197
island; that he should feel it held a mystery; and that some occult influence had linked that uncanny place, in some way not as yet understood, with his own past and future; that it was some link, some tangible spot, some queer connection between dreams and hopes that might develop into real facts.

While not what is usually called superstitious, Manson could not understand why he had from the very first mention of this island, felt an unaccountable influence attracting him toward it. What it was he could not tell, and yet every hour seemed to bind this influence all the closer, and as it were, cast its spell over him. When they all turned in for the night, he could not go to sleep. His thoughts would go back to that horrible night on the battlefield when he, in his agonies, fancied himself wading down a cool, clear brook; then to the strange influence Liddy had said she felt when, in keeping a foolish promise, she had all alone paid a visit to Blue Hill, and now this weird spell of enchantment that was growing upon him. Was there some mysterious plot in his life that was being unfolded step by step, and one that was far beyond his comprehension? Was his chance meeting with this friend, Frank, on the picket line, a part of it? Was the imperative 198
inclination to always take Liddy away to the top of Blue Hill when he wished to speak to her very soul, also due to some incomprehensible power that was shaping and bending their lives together? That they were, and must be as one in the future—as long as life lasted, he believed as firmly as he believed he lived, and yet beyond that belief there was—and here he met an impassable barrier and could go no further, only realizing that he was being led by an unseen force. Was it a power that was pushing him toward Pocket Island? He could not tell.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

POCKET ISLAND.

When the sun rose red and sullen the next morning, and our three friends had breakfasted and were hoisting sail on the sloop, Frank said:

"If the wind holds up as it did yesterday, we can run to Pocket Island and back easily. There is no chance to land"—addressing Manson—"or even to go within half a mile of it in the sloop; but I can lay her to while Obed rows ashore in the dory. One hour there will give you all the ghost hunting you want, I guess. The only thing I don't like is the way the sun looked this morning. Old Sol appeared mad!"

When they were under way and the sloop was heeling over before the fresh morning breeze, Manson said: "I do not want you to take any chances on my account, Frank. We can go there some other day."

"Oh, I'll take no risks," replied his friend. "It's not the wind that worries me, for we can reef close, 200
and the sloop takes big seas like a duck. It's these beastly coast fogs that come in without warning and absolutely bury you. If the wind shifts, then your compass is the only salvation."

Manson was silent, for he was only a passenger, and as his friend's guest, he felt it unwise to offer any suggestion.

"We are all right," continued Frank, scanning the horizon, "so long as the wind holds this way, for we can beat up to the island by noon, and have a fair run back."

Manson was in no mood for talking, for the strange strain of reflections that had come to him the night before still oppressed him and he silently watched the little island ahead growing nearer. When they were within a mile of it, the wind began to drop away and by the time they could see the many rocks that surrounded it, rising like black fangs out of the white froth of the wave wash, it died out entirely.

Frank looked anxious. "You had better," he said, addressing Manson, "eat a bite while Obed and I furl the jib and lower the tops'l. He can then row you ashore in the dory. I do not like the way the wind acts."

When Manson started for the island in the small boat he was almost ready to give his visit up, for 201
the little look of anxiety on his friend's face, coupled with the ugly-looking reefs between which Obed was rowing him, and the forbidding shores of the island itself, made a strange feeling of fear creep over him. Beneath it, however, was that queer influence that, like a beckoning spirit, seemed to lure him forward in spite of himself.

"I'll land you on the lee side," said Obed, as he pulled into a narrow opening between two cliffs, "and wait here for you while you go across to the harbor on the other side. It will save time, and I can keep an eye on the sloop."

That Obed felt it necessary to watch the sloop was not reassuring to Manson, but, bidding him good-bye cheerfully, he leaped ashore. When he had made his way up over the confusion of rocks that confronted him, and out of sight of the dory, he stopped and listened. It was a silent and desolate spot, but, true to his expectations, as he passed there he caught the sound of a low, moaning bellow that rose and fell, almost dying away, and seemed to come from the farther side of the island. He looked and listened, and then, with a parting glance at the sloop half a mile away, started over the island. He soon found he had been rightly informed, for its surface was the 202
worst tangle of rocks and scrub spruce thick between them he ever saw or heard of. He crawled in a little way and then retraced his steps and followed the shore, but even that was almost impassable. He worked his way slowly along, until all at once, when he had climbed a ledge, he found himself looking down into what seemed like a sunken lake surrounded by a wall, with a narrow opening on the seaward side, and so still that not a ripple disturbed its surface. Cautiously he crawled down to the edge and glanced about! The spot seemed to fascinate him, and as he gazed at the irregular cliff wall shutting him in, he felt he had descended into a den infested by evil spirits!

Then he started around the shore of this harbor, avoiding the weed-covered rocks, for the tide was low, and as he was slowly moving along, he came suddenly upon a keg caught between two rocks, and just above high-water mark. Its staves were warped and gaping, and when he stooped to lift it they fell apart and disclosed another keg inside. This he found was heavy, and as he stood it on end he discovered it was filled with some liquid. For a moment he was dazed by the 203
discovery, and then he turned it around till he came to a piece of metal midway between the rusted hoops, and this he pried off with his knife and found it covered a small bung. Trembling with excitement at this mysterious find, he hunted for a pointed stone, and with it drove the bung in, when to his intense surprise he was saluted by the well-known odor of rum!

For an instant his heart almost stopped beating, as there flashed through his mind all the vague tales of this island having been a smuggler's hiding-place long before, and then he looked quickly about him. Naught was visible save the frowning rock walls and the still cove. Then he stooped again and inserted a finger in the keg and smelled and then tasted! Rum it was, and no mistake, and the best he had ever sipped! But what a find! And what a place to find it in! He looked about him again. Crusoe, when he came upon the footprints in the sand, was not more surprised than Manson at this moment.

Unconscious of the lapse of time, or where he was, or how he came there, he gazed upon that harmless keg as if it held some ghastly secret instead of rum! Where did it come from? Who 204

brought it there? Why had it been concealed in an outer shell? What did it all mean, and was he about to make some horrible discovery? Once more he looked about, and then in an instant, he found himself staring at a dark opening beneath an overhanging shelf of rock not two rods away! Breathless with excitement now, and feeling himself yielding to some dread spell, he almost sprang to the spot, and oblivious of weed-covered rocks and mud, he went down on his hands and knees and peered in. It was a cave opening, sure enough! Trembling still, and yet lured by a weird fascination, he crawled in a short distance and then paused. The hole looked larger inside, and as his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom he could see it sloped upward. He felt for a match, and lighting it tried to peer further in. The match burned out and left him unable to see as far as before. Then reason began to assert itself, and he turned and crawled out, realizing the folly of trying to explore a cave with lighted matches as an aid.

When once more he stood upright outside a strange thing had happened. Not only had the tide crept up almost to the cave entrance, but the sun was no longer visible, and as he looked up to 205
the top of the rock wall that environed him, a white pall of fog was slowly settling down and hiding all things. He looked at his watch. He had been on the island over four hours! With sudden fear he started around the way he had come, and when he reached the keg of rum an inspiration almost, made him lift and carry it to a place of safety, well above high-tide mark. Then he retraced his steps to where he had left Obed, but the dory had gone and no one was there, and to add to the situation, the fog had so shut the island in that he could not see two rods over the water. He hallooed again and again, but received no answer.

He was alone on Pocket Island with not a morsel to eat, not a blanket to cover him, night coming on, and a fog so thick that he could not see a rod ahead! Even all this did not for one moment obliterate that mysterious keg or cave discovery from his mind, but he felt that he must take steps at once to protect himself from coming night, and darkness, and possible rain, for he knew that when the fog lifted, his friends would return. The first thing was to build himself a shelter, and then a fire. Here his army experience came in well, and he searched until he found two rocks with a level space between, and laying sticks across and cutting spruce boughs to pile over them 206
and others to serve as a bed, he soon made ready a place to at least crawl into when night came.

Hunger began to assert itself, but food was out of the question. That keg of rum came to his mind as he worked, however, and when the rude shelter was complete he searched the rocky shores for some large shell, or anything that would hold a small portion of the liquor. He found a cocoanut that the sea had kindly cast up among the rocks, and cutting one end off with his pocket-knife, and digging out the interior, he once more returned where he had left the mysterious keg.

Twilight was near and the dark cave entrance and frowning walls about the little harbor seemed more ominous than ever. He made haste to fill his rude cup with rum and return to his shelter. Then he gathered fuel, for fire at least would be a little company, and a strange dread of spending the coming night alone there on that haunted island was creeping over him. He did not believe in ghosts, but when he thought of the peculiar sequence of events, mingled with a slowly growing belief that some mysterious power was leading him—he knew not whither—a feeling that 207
he was soon to face some ghastly experience, came like an icy hand grasping his in the dark. He could not shake that feeling off, and as he gathered driftwood, bits of dead spruce—anything that would burn, and piled the fuel near his shelter—his dread increased. What strange spell was it that had kept him four hours beside that wall-enclosed harbor unconscious of the lapse of time? Why had he not seen the fog coming until too late? And that keg and cave!—what did all these mysteries mean? Then, searching further along the shore for driftwood, he came suddenly upon a tangle of wreckage piled high among the rocks. It would serve as fuel, and he began to drag large pieces to his shelter. Three trips he made, and was just lifting the end of a broken spar, when right at his feet, and half-buried in the sand, he saw a white object. The night was fast approaching and he was in a hurry, but some impulse made him stoop, and there in the gathering gloom he saw—a grinning human skull!

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE SMUGGLER'S CAVE.

Manson had faced death on the battlefield when comrades were falling beside him; he had paced for hours on the picket-line in the darkness of night, feeling that at any moment an enemy might fire at him from some thicket or from behind some tree or rock; but amid all these dangers he had not felt the nameless horror that came to him as he saw that hideous skull grinning at him there in the tangle of wreckage just at dusk on Pocket Island. It was like a hand reaching out from a grave, or a voice calling to him from a tomb. Alone on that little, sea-grit isle, trembling beneath the waves that beat upon it, and in the fast-gathering darkness he stood for a moment spellbound. All the ghostly tales he had been told of this spot came to him in an instant and with the force of truth, and had he at that moment beheld some spectral figure rise from among the

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black rocks he would not have been surprised. Then feeling his strength leaving him, he turned and ran as fast as he could back to where he had built the shelter. With trembling hands he managed to start a fire and sat down beside it. It was a little comfort, but not enough to drive away the dread that seemed to increase as the night grew blacker. He dared not use his small stock of fuel except sparingly, fearing it would not last till morning, and he should be left in total darkness. Back of him was the impassable thicket, and in front the rock-bound shore, and as he listened to the booming of the surges he could see, just in the edge of the zone of light, those eyeless sockets and that mocking grin ever hovering near. Then as the night wore on and the wind increased, slowly rising and falling and rising again, each time a little louder, came that ominous, bellowing sound. It was not like that of any creature he had ever heard or dreamed of, but rather the menace of some horrible monster unknown to earth or air. All the stories of hideous shapes that dwelt beneath the ocean waves, and all the old legends of the sea and its unknown denizens, came to him, and ever mingling with these phantasms that seemed to be crawling all about was that grinning skull. 210

Solitude and night on a lonely shore, far removed from human kind, inevitably produces in the mind strange effects. All ordinary reasoning is set at naught and common sense goes astray. The nearness of the unknown and unapproachable ocean; the ever varying and menacing sounds that issue from it; the leaping and curling billows that, like white and black demons, seem trying to engulf the earth and make even the rocks tremble—all have a weird and uncanny influence. In their presence the imagination runs riot and the ghostly and supernatural usurp reason. Spectral shapes crawl out of dark fissures and leap from rock to rock and hideous sea monsters creep in the verge of shadows. To be alone on a small island of evil repute and many miles out in the ocean, as Manson was, was to have this weird influence more than doubled. At times, when reason seemed trembling in the balance, he fancied himself hovering over the battlefield where he had lain for hours suffering indescribable agony; and looking at the ghastly faces of dead men in the moonlight! He could see their white teeth showing in mocking grin and their glazed eyes staring at him! Here and there were parts of bodies: a head in one place, an arm and hand in another! Then he could see himself sitting upon the ground amid thick bushes, and resting in his lap was a boy's face, the eyes looking up into his in piteous appeal! How well he could recall every moment of that half-hour of dumb anguish and the last fight for life that dying boy had made! He could see the blood gush from his lips at every breath drawn in desperate effort, and feel the tight clasp of his hands and oh! the awful dread of coming death in his eyes! Then the last earthly effort when the poor boy had, in gratitude at sight of a pitying face, kissed the hand that killed him! 211

To Manson's keen imagination it seemed as if Fate had led him to this horrible spot to go mad and die alone, tortured by remorse and despair.

As he sat by his one companion, the little fire, all that long night, trying to fight back the imaginary horrors that menaced him, one constant thought weighed heaviest upon his feelings, and that was that some uncomprehended motive force was shaping his every action and asserting itself more and more. What evil was in store for him, or what fate was to come, was a greater burden than all the rest. How long that night was no pen can describe, and when the first faint tinge of morning light came, he felt that nothing in life was quite so blessed as daylight. The fog was still thick, but the hideous darkness, with all its terrors, was passed, and with the light came a bit of returning courage. He had sipped from the cup of rum at times through the night, but had felt no effect, and now he was faint from need of food. He hunted the shore, where clams could be found, and securing a few roasted and ate them. Then once more came the uncanny fascination of that cave! He dreaded to go near it, and yet could not keep away. It was like a voice calling to him that must be answered. But how to enter without a light! Once more he thought of that keg, and going to the pile of wreckage, found pieces of rope, and moistening one end of a bit in the rum that was left in his cup, set it on fire. It burned slowly but steadily, and now he felt he had means to enter the cave. With a few pieces of this rope he made his way down to where the keg was, and soaked them well in the rum. Then he paused and looked around. The frowning walls seemed more menacing than ever, and that black hole just beyond, which he had tried to enter the day before, glared at his like a huge eye of sinister import. He thought of the ghastly skull he had found the night before, and wondered if it had any connection with this cave. Cautiously, step by step, he crept toward it. Was it the hiding-place of some sea monster, and was death there in that dark cavern awaiting him? Once again he felt his courage leaving and a strange weakness stealing his strength. He turned back and sat down by the keg. 212 213

Given the right conditions, and our imaginations will surround us with hobgoblins and spectres by day as well as night, and almost upset the reasoning power of strong men. To Manson, who had passed one long, sleepless night full of imaginary terrors, and believing himself governed and controlled by some supernatural power, the experience he had passed through, and the impulses that were now alternately pulling him back and pushing him toward that dark cave in front of him, he felt must be ill-omened and uncanny. For an hour he sat and looked at his surroundings, trying to reason away his fears and convince himself they were groundless, and that all the stories he had heard about this island being haunted were purely imaginary. Only partially did he succeed, however, and then, at last yielding to the fascination that constantly drew him toward the cave, arose and once more cautiously crept toward it. 214

At the entrance he paused and listened. Not a sound could be heard except the faint voice of the ocean outside. He stooped and took one step inward, and listened again. All he could hear now was the beating of his own heart. He lit one of his torches and then another. Then he took two

steps more and paused again. The faint light showed the cavern sloped sharply upward. Carefully, on his knees, supporting himself by one hand, he crawled up the incline until the floor became level and then he stood upright. For a moment he halted there, trying to peer into the inky darkness. He seemed to be looking into a wide, open space; a peculiar odor tainted the air. He took a few steps and paused again. Then he turned one of his torches down inward to increase the flame, and as it burned brighter he held it above his head. Now he could see the wall of rock all about, and on the further side and close to the wall, a large boulder. Then, as his eyes grew accustomed to the semi-darkness, he could see the floor formation, and as its outlines grew more distinct, he caught the gleam of white teeth grinning at him from some creature almost at his feet! Breathless now, and trembling, he lowered his torch, and beheld prostrate there in front of him two shriveled and blackened corpses!

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FATE OF A MISER.

As Manson gazed in horror at those two charred bodies reduced to skeletons in that dark cave, he felt more than ever that his every step for many days had been in obedience to some mysterious power that had at last brought him face to face with danger and death.

For one instant the impulse to turn from that ghastly sight and leave the cave came to him, but the baleful fascination of those hideous objects held him prisoner. He could not if he would turn away. One of the skeletons, for such they almost were, was that of a tall man, face up, the grinning teeth fully exposed; the other of smaller size, with legs and arms drawn together. No signs of clothing were visible on either, and the flesh appeared to have shrunk away, showing the shape of every bone. Midway between them lay a rusted pistol and just beyond, glistening in the faint light, were bits of glass. When his eyes grew accustomed to the sickening sight he raised them, looked around, and for the first time saw, a few feet away, a raised, table-like rock, and on it piles of round dark bits of metal. Taking two steps he stooped, and picking up one of these pieces held it close to the light. It was a twenty-dollar gold piece!

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Wonder succeeded horror! What mystery was this? Two charred skeletons beside a pile of gold in this dark and silent cavern! Was it some infernal dream or a reality? He stooped and picked up more of the coins. Gold, every one! Then he examined others and found silver dollars and halves. He turned and looked about, holding one torch above his head, and almost expecting to see some spectral form half-hid in the shadows. Only the faintly outlined walls of rock could be seen. Then, feeling faint and weak from the intense strain, he hastily retraced his steps down and out of the cave. He was just in time, for the rising tide had almost cut off his exit. So weak now that he could hardly walk, he crept around to the keg and sat down to think. Then for the first time he looked at the sky and saw the sun faintly visible through the fog. What a blessed sight it was! He had never known before how good the sun could look to a poor, hungry, horror-struck mortal! Then he picked up a shell, and pouring a little of the rum out of the keg, drank it. It had a magic effect, for it brought back his strength and courage and a realization of what he had discovered. In the dread experiences he had just passed through, he had not comprehended what it meant to him. Now he did.

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He, alone on that haunted island, abhorred and shunned by all, had found a fortune!

He drank a little more of the rum. Then he thought of his friends. Maybe at that very moment they were nearing the island!

He quickly clambered out of the walled-in pocket, and looked over the ocean. The fog was lifting, the wind rising, but no sail was visible. He was still a prisoner. Once more he heard that strange bellowing coming from somewhere beneath the island, but it had lost its terrors. He thought of those skeletons in the dark cavern, and only felt curious to know how those two human beings met their death. A thousand bulls, for aught he cared now, might bellow all they chose, so long as they did not show their horns above the rocks, and two or two dozen skeletons more or less in the cave made no difference. He had met and conquered the ghost of Pocket Island, and was himself once more.

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He took one long look all around, where the white, crested waves were rolling as far as the eye could reach; then at the sun now shining bright and warm, and then returned to the cave. The entrance was half under water, but the tide was falling, and he boldly waded in. He was so eager now he could hardly wait to light a torch, and when once more inside, he did not even stop to look at the hideous skeletons, but went directly to the flat rock where the stacks of coin were; removed his coat, heaped all he could carry upon it, and returned to the sunlight. Wildly excited now, he carried his bundle to a flat shelf of rock near where he had first descended into "The Pocket," emptied it and returned for more. Three trips he made to secure his wondrous find, and when the last mildewed and tarnished bit of money was secured, he took the pistol and left the cave for good. Then, feeling a little faint and weak, he sat down on the shelf beside his pile of

gold and silver, and examined the rusty weapon.

On the stock was engraved the name of "Wolf." 220

Then, as that miser had many years before stacked and counted those same pieces of money, so did Manson now stack and count them.

But what a contrast!

Wolf had counted with murder in his heart, and feeling only the miser's lust of possession as he hid himself in that dark cavern. Manson counted, thinking only of one good and true girl waiting for him, and feeling that every one of those bits of money were but so many keys to open the door of his dream of wife and home and all the blessings he longed to surround that one loved woman with. And as he counted where God's sunlight fell upon him, and not in darkness, fearing enemies, so was that money destined to be a blessing and not a curse. When the count was made, and that poor, hungry fellow, with naught to aid him in the battle of life except two hands and a brave heart, found himself the possessor of sixteen thousand dollars, he felt like offering a prayer of thankfulness.

He no longer cared that he was faint with hunger, or that he was still a prisoner on that lone island. All he thought of was to await the coming of his friends with patience; end his visit as soon as possible; return to Liddy, and tell her of his wondrous find, and the fortune that was theirs to 221
enjoy. But he was not to escape that day, for the wind still blew almost a gale, and the waves still cut him off from rescue. When the tide fell he dug clams, and when night came he sat by his little fire, roasted and ate them, and was happy. That night he saw no spectral shapes or grinning skulls, and when his fire burned low he crept into his shelter and slept in peace and content. When the morning came only a summer-day breeze ruffled the ocean, and, most gladsome sight of all, only a few miles away was the sloop, with all sails set, and heading directly for the island! When Frank came ashore in the dory there was a joyful meeting.

"We had to put up sail and run for a harbor to save the sloop when we saw the fog coming," said Frank, "and leave you behind. It was that or desert her and come ashore. I am awfully glad to find you safe, though. Obed waited as long as he dared. Where were you, and what were you doing so long?"

"Trying to find a ghost," replied Manson, who felt like joking now, "and I succeeded. I not only found ghosts by the dozen, but two skeletons, and one or two skulls scattered around to make things more cheerful. Oh, I've had a real sociable time, I assure you! One of those kind of times 222
when every way you turn a still more hideous object confronts you; a fit of the jims minus the fun that goes before it. The first night I was so scared I didn't sleep a wink, and the spooks were so thick I dared not turn around for fear of seeing a new one. Your island deserves all that has been said of it, and a good deal more. I've found what's better than ghosts, however!"

When Frank had followed his friend over into "The Pocket," and saw what he had found and heard the marvelous story, he gasped for breath.

"So that is what became of the little Jew smuggler, is it?" he said when he saw the pistol; "and the story was true after all! My stars! but you are in luck," he continued, as he looked at the stacks of coin; and then, slapping Manson on the back, hilariously exclaimed: "Ghost hunting pays once in a while, old fellow, don't it? Now you can get married and come down here and stay all next summer, can't you?"

Then the two friends, happy as children escaped from school, returned to the sloop, and after half-starved Manson had eaten as he never did before, they all three went ashore and visited the 223
cave.

"As near as I can recall the story," said Frank, when they stood looking at the skeletons, "there was an Indian who acted as helper for the Jew, and this tall fellow with the horrible grin may have been that poor fellow. Most likely they got into a quarrel over the money, and fought it out to the death. Great Scott! but what a grim duel that must have been here in this dark cavern!"

When they had looked the cave all over, they carried Manson's strangely found fortune aboard the sloop, and sailed for home. Two days later he bade adieu to his friend and departed two weeks sooner than he had planned, but not until he had made a solemn promise to return the next summer and bring a companion.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

The maples in front of Liddy's home were just showing the first tints of autumn color when Manson returned. It had been a long three weeks of separation to her, and her first words

contained a note of reproach.

"You might have written me once or twice, Charlie," she said; "the days have seemed so long!"

"I could not," he replied; "I was lost to the world on an island twenty miles from a post office, and letters were not in style there. The people are so far removed from the world they do not seem to think communication of any value. It is a wild and romantic spot, and the only thing I do not like about it is every house has two or three tombstones close by."

He seemed in a surprisingly cheerful mood, and described his visit and the friends he had met in glowing words. One incident of his visit, however, he withheld, and for a purpose. The little, half- 225
jesting remark Liddy had made a month previous on Blue Hill—a remark merely expressive of her pride—still lingered in his mind, and he was resolved to test that pride in his own peculiar way.

A short distance from her house and near the brook was a rustic seat beneath the maple. Many hours she had passed there with him, and many more alone with only sad thoughts for company, when the brook's music seemed a voice of sympathy. Even when a child she had learned to love this spot, and the low, sweet murmur of the stream. Early that evening, when the full moon had just appeared over Blue Hill, they intuitively sought this familiar place. Perhaps the joy in their hearts added a new charm, for the ripples in the brook appeared like so many laughing water sprites dancing there in the silvery light. For a few moments they silently yielded to the magic witchery of the time and place, and then she could contain herself no longer. She had noticed his unusual elation—even more than could be ascribed to his gladness at being once more beside her, and, grown accustomed to his ways, knew there was a surprise in store.

"Well, Charlie," she said at last, with a bright smile, "you need not wait to take me up to Blue Hill 226
this time to tell your story. Tell it now. You have some good news, for I can see it in your face. What is it?"

He looked at her a moment in silence, and then answered:

"Yes, I have a story to tell you, and one that will more than surprise you, but first I have a question to ask. Do you remember the promise you made me a month ago?"

The thought of that tender pledge and his now evident intention to ask its fulfillment brought the color to her face, but she bravely answered: "I have never made a promise and failed to keep it. I shall not begin now."

Then, as the question he asked and the answer he received were heard only by the elfin sprites dancing in the brook beside them, so we will leave it to those fairies to tell if they choose. Suffice it to say it was such as filled his heart so full of happiness it could no longer hold a secret, and there, where the moonlight fell in little rifts upon them, and the music of running water echoed their feelings, he told her the strange story of Pocket Island, and what he had found in the cave.

When late that evening they returned to the house, never again in their lives did the man in the 227
moon seem to smile so graciously or the brook sound so sweet.

Then one day—a day bright above all others to them, when nature seemed aglow with joyous color—all those who were near and dear gathered to listen to their vows, and wish them well in life. Whether those kind wishes were deserved or not, and whether the Fates that direct the steps of all human kind led theirs along the pleasant walks of prosperity and happiness, or among the rocks and thorns of adversity, we will leave to the imagination of those who have read this story, for here their history ends.

It is told that when Jove, the mythological ruler of the universe, conceived the creation of the human race, he sent Pandora to the realms of Pluto to bring him the box containing all the good and evil impulses he intended to select from in his creative work. He gave her strict orders not to open the box, lest its contents escape and work woe to the coming mortals. But as woman's curiosity never was restrained by any power, human or divine, since Mother Eve ate apples, and most likely never will be, no sooner had Pandora set out upon her return than she lifted the lid of 228
that fatal box, and the result to the human race need not be enlarged upon. One good result came from her disobedience, however, for, seeing her error in time, she closed the cover before Hope escaped, and so that blessed impulse came to be shared alike by mortals.

Life at best is but an enigma, and like children pursuing an Ignis Fatuus, so do we all pursue the illusive beacon light of a brighter and happier to-morrow—always hoping, never attaining, though striving ever until, wearied of the vain pursuit, at last we fall by the wayside and are forgotten.

THE END

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goin' out."

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