

The Project Gutenberg eBook of A Daughter of the Forest, by Evelyn Raymond

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: A Daughter of the Forest

Author: Evelyn Raymond

Illustrator: Ida Waugh

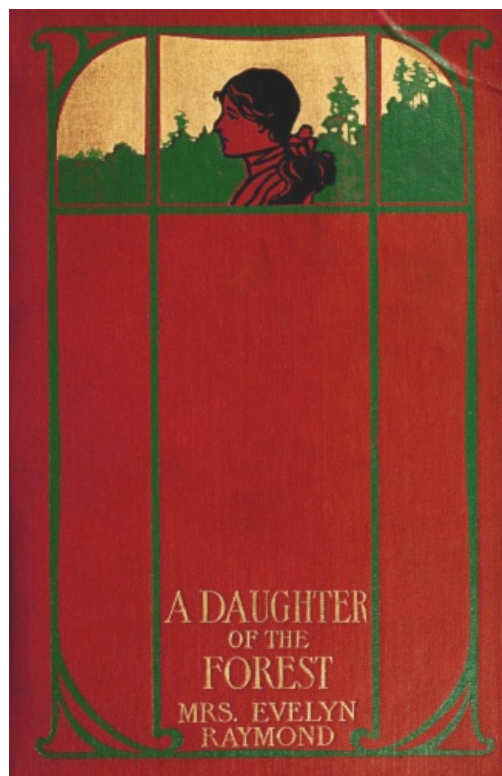
Release Date: March 15, 2010 [EBook #31655]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DAUGHTER OF THE
FOREST ***

**E-text prepared by D Alexander
and the Project Gutenberg Online Distributed Proofreading Team
(<http://www.pgdp.net>)
from page images generously made available by
Internet Archive
(<http://www.archive.org>)**

Note: Images of the original pages are available through Internet Archive.
See <http://www.archive.org/details/daughterofforest00raymrich>



A DAUGHTER OF THE FOREST

By EVELYN
RAYMOND

Author of
"A Yankee Girl" etc.

Illustrated by
IDA WAUGH

***The Penn Publishing
Company***

PHILADELPHIA MCMII

COPYRIGHT 1902 BY THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

Published August 15, 1902



THE GIRL KNELT, INDIAN FASHION

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE STORM	5
II SPIRIT OR MORTAL	15
III AN ESTRAY FROM CIVILIZATION	27
IV WHAT WAS IN THE NAME	40
V IN ALADDIN LAND	53
VI A ONE-SIDED STORY	67
VII A WOODLAND MENAGERIE	78
VIII KING MADOC	84
IX PERPLEXITIES	96
X DEPARTURE	109
XI A DISCLOSURE	120
XII CARRYING	134
XIII A DEAD WATER TRAGEDY	146
XIV SHOOTING THE RAPIDS	157
XV SCIENCE AND SUPERSTITION	172
XVI DIVERGING ROADS	188
XVII IN THE HOUR OF DARKNESS	201
XVIII THE LETTER	212
XIX A QUESTION OF APPAREL	226
XX COMING AND GOING	241
XXI IN THE GREAT RAILWAY STATION	259
XXII NUMBER 526	272
XXIII FATHER AND SON	283

A Daughter of the Forest

[Pg 5]

CHAPTER I

THE STORM

"MARGOT! Margot!"

Mother Angelique's anxious call rang out over the water, once, twice, many times. But, though she shaded her brows with her hands and strained her keen ears to listen, there was no one visible and no response came back to her. So she climbed the hill again and, reëntering the cabin, began to stir with almost vicious energy the contents of a pot swinging in the wide fireplace. As she toiled she muttered and wagged her gray head with sage misgivings.

"For my soul! There is the ver' bad hoorican' a-comin', and the child so heedless. But the signs, the omens! This same day I did fall asleep at the knitting and waked a-smother. True, 'twas Meroude, the cat, crouched on my breast; yet what sent her save for a warning?"

[Pg 6]

Though even in her scolding the woman smiled, recalling how Margot had jeered at her superstition; and that when she had dropped her bit of looking-glass the girl had merrily congratulated her on the fact; since by so doing she had secured "two mirrors in which to behold such loveliness!"

"No, no, not so. Death lurks in a broken glass; or, at the best, must follow seven full years of bad luck and sorrow."

On which had come the instant reproof:

"Silly Angelique! When there is no such thing as luck but all is of the will of God."

The old nurse had frowned. The maid was too wise for her years. She talked too much with the master. It was not good for womenkind to listen to grave speech or plague their heads with graver books. Books, indeed, were for priests and doctors; and, maybe, now and then, for men who could not live without them, like Master Hugh. She, Angelique, had never read a book in all her life. She never meant to do so. She had not even learned a single letter printed in their foolish pages. Not she. Yet was not she a most excellent cook and seamstress? Was there any cabin in all that northland as tidy as that she ruled? Would matters have been the better had she bothered her poor brain with books? She knew her duty and she did it. What more could mortal?

[Pg 7]

This argument had been early in the day. A day on which the master had gone away to the mainland and the house-mistress had improved by giving the house an extra cleaning. To escape the soapsuds and the loneliness, Margot had, also, gone, alone and unquestioned; taking with her a luncheon of brown bread and cold fowl, her book and microscope. Angelique had watched the little canoe push off from shore, without regret, since now she could work unhindered at clearing the room of the "rubbishy specimen" which the others had brought in to mess the place.

[Pg 8]

Now, at supper time, perfect order reigned, and perfect quiet, as well; save for the purring of Meroude upon the hearth and the simmering of the kettle. Angelique wiped her face with her apron.

"The great heat! and May but young yet. It means trouble. I wish——"

Suddenly, the cat waked from her sleep and with a sharp meouw leaped to her mistress' shoulder; who screamed, dropped the ladle, splashed the stew, and boxed the animal's ears—all within a few seconds. Her nerves were already tingling from the electricity in the air, and her anxiety returned with such force that, again swinging the crane around away from the fire, she hurried to the

beach.

To one so weatherwise the unusual heat, the leaden sky, and the intense hush were ominous. There was not a breath of wind stirring, apparently, yet the surface of the lake was already dotted by tiny white-caps, racing and chasing shoreward, like live creatures at play. Not many times, even in her long life in that solitude, had Angelique Ricord seen just that curious coloring of cloud and water, and she recalled these with a shudder. The child she loved was strong and skilful, but what would that avail? Her thin face darkened, its features sharpened, and making a trumpet of her hands, she put all her force into a long, terrified halloo.

[Pg 9]

"Ah-ho-a-ah! Margot—Mar-g-o-t—MARGOT!"

Something clutched her shoulder and with another frightened scream the woman turned to confront her master.

"Is the child away?"

"Yes, yes. I know not where."

"Since when?"

"It seems but an hour, maybe two, three, and she was here, laughing, singing, all as ever. Though it was before the midday, and she went in her canoe, still singing."

[Pg 10]

"Which way?"

She pointed due east, but now into a gloom that was impenetrable. On the instant, the lapping wavelets became breakers, the wind rose to a deafening shriek, throwing Angelique to the ground and causing even the strong man to reel before it. As soon as he could right himself he lifted her in his arms and staggered up the slope. Rather, he was almost blown up it and through the open door into the cabin, about which its furnishings were flying wildly. Here the woman recovered herself and lent her aid in closing the door against the tempest, a task that, for a time, seemed impossible. Her next thought was for her dinner-pot, now swaying in the fireplace, up which the draught was roaring furiously. Once the precious stew was in a sheltered corner, her courage failed again and she sank down beside it, moaning and wringing her hands.

"It is the end of the world!"

[Pg 11]

"Angelique!"

Her wails ceased. That was a tone of voice she had never disobeyed in all her fifteen years of service.

"Yes, Master Hugh."

"Spread some blankets. Brew some herb tea. Get out a change of dry clothing. Make everything ready against I bring Margot in."

She watched him hurrying about securing all the windows, piling wood on the coals, straightening the disordered furniture, fastening a bundle of kindlings to his own shoulders, putting matches in the pocket of his closely buttoned coat, and caught something of his spirit. After all, it was a relief to be doing something, even though the roar of the tempest and the incessant flashes of lightning turned her sick with fear. But it was all too short a task; and when, at last, her master climbed outward through a sheltered rear window, closing it behind him, her temporary courage sank again and finally.

"The broken glass! the broken glass! Yet who would dream it is my darling's bright young life must pay for that and not mine, the old and careworn? Ouch! the blast! That bolt struck—and near! Ah! me! Ah! me!"

[Pg 12]

Meroude rubbed pleadingly against her arm and, glad of any living companionship, she put out her hand to touch him; but drew it back in dread, for his surcharged fur sparkled and set her flesh a-tingle, while the whole room grew luminous with an uncanny radiance. Feeling that her own last hour had come, poor Angelique crouched still lower in her corner and began to say her prayers with so much earnestness that she became almost oblivious to the tornado without.

Meanwhile, by stooping and clinging to whatever support offered, Hugh Dutton made his slow way beachward. But the bushes uprooted in his clasp and the boulders slipped by him on this new torrent rushing to the lake. Then he flung himself face downward and cautiously crawled toward the point of rocks whereon he meant to make his beacon fire.

[Pg 13]

"She will see it and steer by it," he reflected; for he would not acknowledge how hopeless would be any human steering under such a stress.

Alas! the beacon would not light. The wind had turned icy cold and the rain changed to hail which hurled itself upon the tiny blaze and stifled its first breath. A sort of desperate patience fell on the man and he began again, with utmost care, to build and shelter his little stock of fire-wood. Match after match he struck and with unvarying failure, till all were gone; and realizing at last how chilled and rigid he was growing he struggled to his feet and set them into motion.

Then there came a momentary lull in the storm and he shouted aloud, as Angelique had done:

"Margot! Little Margot! MARGOT!"

Another gust swept over lake and island. He could hear the great trees falling in the forest, the bang, bang, bang, of the deafening thunder, as, blinded by lightning and overcome by exhaustion, he sank down behind the pile of rocks and knew no more.

[Pg 14]

CHAPTER II

[Pg 15]

SPIRIT OR MORTAL

THE end of that great storm was almost as sudden as its beginning. Aroused by the silence that succeeded the uproar, Angelique stood up and rubbed her limbs, stiff with long kneeling. The fire had gone out. Meroude was asleep on the blankets spread for Margot, who had not returned, nor the master. As for that matter the house-mistress had not expected that they ever would.

"There is nothin' left. I am alone. It was the glass. Ah! that the palsy had but seized my unlucky hand before I took it from its shelf! How still it is. How clear, too, is my darling's laugh—it rings through the room—it is a ghost. It will haunt me al-ways, al-ways."

Unable longer to bear the indoor silence, which her fancy filled with familiar sounds, she unbarred the heavy door and stepped out.

[Pg 16]

"Ah! is it possible! Can the sun be settin' that way? as if there had been nothin' happenin'."

Wrecks strewed the open ground about the cabin, poultry coops were washed away, the cow shed was a heap of ruins, into which the trembling observer dared not peer. That Snowfoot should be dead was a calamity but second only to the loss of master and nursling.

"Ah! my beast, my beast. The best in all this northern Maine. That the master bought and brought in the big canoe for an Easter gift to his so faithful Angelique. And yet the sun sets as red and calm as if all was the same as ever."

It was, indeed, a scene of grandeur. The storm, in passing northward, had left scattered banks of clouds, now colored most brilliantly by the setting sun and widely reflected on the once more placid lake. But neither the beauty, nor the sweet, rain-washed air, appealed to the distracted islander who faced the west and shook her hand in impotent rage toward it.

[Pg 17]

"Shine, will you? With the harm all done and nothin' left but me, old Angelique! Pouf! I turn my back on you!"

Then she ran shoreward with all speed, dreading what she might find yet eager to know the worst, if there it might be learned. With her apron over her head she saw only what lay straight before her and so passed the point of rocks

without observing her master lying behind it. But a few steps further she paused, arrested by a sight which turned her numb with superstitious terror. What was that coming over the water? A ghost! a spirit!

Did spirits paddle canoes and sing as this one was singing?

“The boatman’s song is borne along far over the
water so blue,
And loud and clear, the voice we hear of the
boatman so honest
and true;
He’s rowing, rowing, rowing along,
He’s rowing, rowing, rowing along—
He’s rowing and singing his song.”

Ghosts should sing hymns, not jolly little ballads like this, in which one could catch the very rhythm and dip of oar or paddle. Still, it was as well to wait and see if this were flesh or apparition before pronouncing judgment.

[Pg 18]

It was certainly a canoe, snowy white and most familiar—so familiar that the watcher began to lose her first terror. A girl knelt in it, Indian fashion, gracefully and evenly dipping her paddle to the melody of her lips. Her bare head was thrown back and her fair hair floated loose. Her face was lighted by the western glow, on which she fixed her eyes with such intentness that she did not perceive the woman who awaited her with now such mixed emotions.

But Tom saw. Tom, the eagle, perched in the bow, keen of vision and of prejudice. Between him and old Angelique was a grudge of long standing. Whenever they met, even after a brief separation, he expressed his feelings by his hoarsest screech. He did so now and, by so doing, recalled Margot from sky-gazing and his enemy from doubt.

[Pg 19]

“Ah! Angelique! Watching for me? How kind of you. Hush, Tom. Let her alone, good Angelique, poor Angelique!”

The eagle flapped his wings with a melancholy disdain and plunged his beak in his breast. The old woman on the beach was not worth minding, after all, by a monarch of the sky—as he would be but for his broken wing—but the girl was worth everything, even his obedience.

She laughed at his sulkiness, plying her paddle the faster, and soon reached the pebbly beach, where she sprang out, and drawing her canoe out of the water, swept her old nurse a curtsey.

“Home again, mother, and hungry for my supper.”

“Supper, indeed! Breakin’ my heart with your run-about ways! and the hoorican’, with ever’tthin’ ruined, ever’tthin’! The master— Where’s he, I know not. The great pine broken like a match; the coops, the cow-house, and Snowfoot— Ah, me! Yet the little one talks of supper!”

[Pg 20]

Margot looked about her in astonishment, scarcely noticing the other’s words. The devastation of her beloved home was evident, even down on the open beach, and she dared not think what it might be further inland.

“Why, it must have been a cyclone! We were reading about them only yesterday and Uncle Hugh—did you say that you knew—where is he?”

Angelique shook her head.

“Can I tell anythin’, me? Into the storm he went and out of it he will come alive, as you have. If the good Lord wills,” she added reverently.

The girl sprang to the woman’s side, and caught her arm impatiently.

“Tell me, quick. Where is he? where did you last see him?”

“Goin’ into the hoorican’, with wood upon his shoulder. To make a beacon for you. So I guess. But you—tell how you come alive out of all that?” Sweeping her arm over the outlook.

[Pg 21]

Margot did not stop to answer but darted toward the point of rocks where, if anywhere, she knew her guardian would have tried his signal fire. In a moment she found him.

"Angelique! Angelique! He's here. Quick—quick— He's— Oh! is he dead, is he dead?"

There was both French and Indian blood in mother Ricord's veins, a passionate loyalty in her heart, and the suppleness of youth still in her spare frame. With a dash she was at the girl's side and had thrust her away, to kneel herself and lift her master's head from its hard pillow of rock.

With swift nervous motions she unfastened his coat and bent her ear to his breast.

"'Tis only a faint, maybe shock. In all the world was only Margot, and Margot was lost. Ugh! the hail. See, it is still here—look! water, and—yes, the tea! It was for you— Ah!"

[Pg 22]

Her words ended with a sigh of satisfaction as a slight motion stirred the features into which she peered so earnestly, and she raised her master's head a bit higher. Then his eyes slowly opened and the dazed look gradually gave place to a normal expression.

"Why, Margot! Angelique? What's happened?"

"Oh! Uncle Hugh! are you hurt? are you ill? I found you here behind the rocks and Angelique says—but I wasn't hurt at all. I wasn't out in any storm, didn't know there had been one, that is, worth minding, till I came home—"

"Like a ghost out of the lake. She was not even dead, not she. And she was singin' fit to burst her throat while you were—well, maybe, not dead, yourself."

At this juncture, Tom, the inquisitive, thrust his white head forward into the midst of the group and, in her relief from her first fear, Margot laughed aloud.

[Pg 23]

"Don't, Tom! You're one of the family, of course, and since none of the rest of us will die to please that broken mirror, you may have to! Especially, if there's a new brood out—"

But here Angelique threw up her free hand with such a gesture of despair that Margot said no more, and her face sobered again, remembering that, even though they were all still alive, there might be suffering untold among her humbler woodland friends. Then, as Mr. Dutton rose, almost unaided, a fresh regret came:

"That there should be a cyclone, right here at home, and I not to see it! See! Look, uncle, look! You can trace its very path, just as we read. Away to the south there is no sign of it, nor on the northeast. It must have swept up to us out of the southeast and taken our island in its track. Oh! I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

The man rested his hand upon her shoulder and turned her gently homeward. His weakness had left him as it had come upon him, with a suddenness like that of the recent tempest. It was not the first seizure of the kind, which he had had, though neither of these others knew it; and the fact added a deeper gravity to his always thoughtful manner.

[Pg 24]

"I am most thankful that you were not here; but where could you have been to escape it?"

"All day in the long cave. To the very end of it I believe, and see! I found these. They are like the specimens you brought the other day. They must be some rich metal."

"In the long cave, you? Alone? All day? Margot, Margot, is not the glass enough? but you must tempt worse luck by goin' there!" cried Angelique, who had preceded the others on the path, but now faced about, trembling indignantly. What foolish creature was this who would pass a whole day in that haunted spot, in spite of the dreadful tales that had been told of it. "Pouf! But I wear out my poor brain, everlastin' to study the charms will save you from evil, me. And yet—"

[Pg 25]

"You would do well to use some of your charms on Tom, yonder. He's found an overturned coop and looks too happy to be out of mischief."

The woman wheeled again and was off up the slope like a flash, where presently the king of birds was treated to the indignity of a sound boxing, which he

resented with squawks and screeches, but not with talons, since under each foot he held the plump body of a fat chicken.

"Tom thinks a bird in the hand is worth a score of cuffs! and Angelique's so determined to have somebody die—I hope it won't be Tom. A pity, though, that harm should have happened to her own pets. Hark! What is that?"

"Some poor woodland creature in distress. The storm——"

[Pg 26]

"That's no sound belonging to the forest. But it is—distress!"

CHAPTER III

[Pg 27]

AN ESTRAY FROM CIVILIZATION

THEY paused by the cabin door, left open by Angelique, and listened intently. She, too, had caught the alien sound, the faint, appealing halloo of a human voice—the rarest of all cries in that wilderness. Even the eagle's screeches could not drown it, but she had had enough of anxieties for one day. Let other people look out for themselves; her precious ones should not stir afield again, no, not for anything. Let the evil bird devour the dead chickens, if he must, her place was in the cabin, and she rushed back down the slope, fairly forcing the others inward from the threshold where they hesitated.

"'Tis a loon. You should know that, I think, and that they're always cryin' fit to scare the dead. Come. The supper's waited this long time."

With a smile that disarmed offense Margot caught the woman's shoulder and lightly swung her aside out of the way.

[Pg 28]

"Eat then, hungry one! I, too, am hungry, but—— Hark!"

The cry came again, prolonged, entreating, not to be confounded with that of any forest wilding.

"It's from the north end of our own island!"

The master's ear was not less keen than the girl's, and both had the acuteness of an Indian's, but his judgment was better.

"From the mainland, across the narrows."

Neither delayed, as a mutual impulse sent them toward the shore, but again Angelique interposed.

"Thoughtless child, have you no sense? With the master just out of a faint that was nigh death itself! With nothin' in his poor stomach since the mornin' and your own as empty. Wait. Eat. Then chase loons, if you will."

Mr. Dutton laughed, though he also frowned and cast a swift, anxious glance toward Margot. But she was intent upon nothing save answering that far-off cry.

[Pg 29]

"Which canoe, uncle?"

"Mine."

The devoted servant made a last protest, and caught the girl's arm as it pushed the light craft downward into the water.

"My child, he is not fit. Believe me. Best leave others to their fate than he should over-tax himself again, so soon."

Margot was astonished. In all her life she had never before associated thought of physical weakness with her stalwart guardian, and a sharp fear of some unknown trouble shot through her heart.

"What do you mean?"

The master had reached them and now laid his own hand upon Angelique's detaining one.

"There, woman, that's enough. The storm has shaken your nerves. If you're

[Pg 30]

afraid to stay alone, Margot shall stop with you. But let's have no more nonsense."

Mother Ricord stepped back, away. She had done her best. Let come what might, her conscience was clear.

A few seconds later the canoe pushed off over the now darkening water and its inmates made all speed toward that point from which the cry had been heard, but was heard no more. However, the steersman followed a perfectly direct course and, if he were still weak from his seizure, his movement showed no signs of it, so that Margot's fear for him was lost in the interest of their present adventure. She rhymed her own stroke to her uncle's and when he rested her paddle instantly stopped.

"Halloo! Hal-l-oo!" he shouted, but as no answer came, said: "Now—both together!"

The girl's shriller treble may have had further carrying power than the man's voice, for there was promptly returned to them an echoing halloo, coming apparently from a great distance. But it was repeated at close intervals and each time with more distinctness.

[Pg 31]

"We'll beach the boat just yonder, under that tamarack. Whoever it is has heard and is coming back."

Margot's impatience broke bounds and she darted forward among the trees, shouting: "This way! this way! here we are—here!" Her peculiar life and training had made her absolutely fearless, and she would have been surprised by her guardian's command to "Wait!" had she heard it, which she did not. Also, she knew the forest as other girls know their city streets, and the dimness was no hindrance to her nimble feet. In a brief time she caught the crashing of boughs as some person, less familiar than she, blundered through the underbrush and finally came into view where a break in the timber gave a faint light.

"Here! Here! This way!"

He staggered and held out his hands, as if for aid, and Margot clasped them firmly. They were cold and tremulous. They were, also, slender and smooth, not at all like the hands of any men whom she was used to seeing. At the relief of her touch, his strength left him, but she caught his murmured:

[Pg 32]

"Thank God. I—had—given up——"

His voice, too, was different from any she knew, save her own uncle's. This was somebody, then, from that outside world of which she dreamed so much and knew so little. It was like a fairy tale come true.

"Are you ill? There. Lean on me. Don't fear. Oh! I'm strong, very strong, and uncle is just yonder, coming this way. Uncle—uncle!"

The stranger was almost past speech. Mr. Dutton recognized that at once and added his support to Margot's. Between them they half-led, half-carried the wanderer to the canoe and lifted him into it, where he sank exhausted. Then they dipped their paddles and the boat shot homeward, racing with death. Angelique was still on the beach and still complaining of their foolhardiness, but one word from her master silenced that. "Lend a hand, woman! Here's something real to worry about. Margot, go ahead and get the lights."

[Pg 33]

As the girl sprang from it, the housekeeper pulled the boat to a spot above the water and, stooping, lifted a generous share of the burden it contained.

It had not been a loon, then. No. Well, she had known that from the beginnin', just as she had known that her beloved master was in no fit condition to go man-huntin'. This one he had found was, probably, dead anyway. Of course. Somebody had to die—beyond chickens and such—had not the broken glass so said?

Even in the twilight Mr. Dutton could detect the grim satisfaction of her face and smiled, foreseeing her change of expression when this seemingly lifeless guest should revive.

[Pg 34]

They laid him on the lounge that had been spread with blankets for Margot, and she was already beside it, waiting to administer the herb tea which had, also,

been prepared for herself, and which she had marveled to find so opportunely brewed.

Mr. Dutton smiled again. In her simplicity the girl did not dream that the now bitter decoction was not a common restorative outside their primitive life, and in all good faith forced a spoonful of it between the closed lips.

"After all, it doesn't matter. The poor fellow is doubtless used to richer cordials, but it's hot and strong and will do the work. You, Angelique, make us a pot of your best coffee, and swing round that dinner-pot. The man is almost starved, and I'm on the road to follow him. How about you, Margot?"

"Poh! I guess I'm hungry—I will be—see! He's swallowing it. Fast. Give me that bigger spoon! Quick!"

"What would you? Scald the creature's throat? So he isn't dead, after all. Well, he needn't have made a body think so, he needn't. There, Margot! You've messed him with the black stuff!"

[Pg 35]

Indignantly brushing her child aside the woman seized the cup and deftly administered its entire contents. The stranger had not yet opened his eyes, but accepted the warm liquid mechanically, and his nurse hurried to fill a bowl with the broth of the stew in the kettle. This, in turn, was taken from her by Margot, who jealously exclaimed:

"He's mine. I heard him first, I found him first, let me be the first he sees. Dish up the supper, please, and set my uncle's place."

So when, a moment later, having been nearly choked by the more substantial food forced into his mouth, the guest opened his eyes, they beheld the eager face of a brown skinned, fair haired girl very close to his and heard her joyous cry:

"He sees me! he sees everything! He's getting well already!"

[Pg 36]

He had never seen anybody like her. Her hair was as abundant as a mantle and rippled over her shoulders like spun silver. So it looked in the lamplight. In fact, it had never been bound nor covered, and what in a different social condition might have been much darker, had in this outdoor life become bleached almost white. The weather which had whitened the hair had tanned the skin to bronze, making the blue eyes more vivid by contrast and the red lips redder. These were smiling now, over well kept teeth, and there was about the whole bearing of the maid something suggestive of the woodland in which she had been reared.

Purity, honesty, freedom, all spoke in every motion and tone, and to this observer, at least, seemed better than any beauty. Presently, he was able to push her too willing hand gently away and to say:

"Not quite so fast, please."

"Oh! uncle! Hear him? He talks just as you do! Not a bit like Pierre, or Joe, or the rest."

[Pg 37]

Mr. Dutton came forward, smiling and remonstrating.

"My dear, our new friend will think you quite rude, if you discuss him before his face, so frankly. But, sir, I assure you she means nothing but delight at your recovery. We are all most thankful that you are here and safe. There, Margot. Let the gentleman rest a few minutes. Then a cup of coffee may be better than the stew. Were you long without food, friend?"

The stranger tried to answer but the effort tired him, and with a beckoning nod to the young nurse, the woodlander led the way back to the table and their own delayed supper. Both needed it and both ate it rather hastily, much to the disgust of Angelique who felt that her skill was wasted; but one was anxious to be off out of doors, to learn the damage left by the storm, and the other to be back on her stool beside the lounge. When Mr. Dutton rose, the housekeeper left her own seat.

[Pg 38]

"I'll fetch the lantern, master. But that's the last of Snowfoot's good milk you'll ever drink," she sighed, touching the pitcher sadly.

"What? Is anything wrong with her?"

"The cow-house is in ruins. So are the poultry coops. What with falling ill yourself just at the worst time and fetchin' home other sick folks we might all go to wrack and nobody the better."

The familiar grumbling provoked only a smile from the master, who would readily have staked his life on the woman's devotion to "her people" and knew that the apparent crossness was not that in reality.

"Fie, good Angelique! Never so happy as when you're miserable. Come on. Nothing must suffer if we can prevent. Take care of our guest, Margot, but give him his nourishment slowly, at intervals. I'll get some tools, and join you at the shed, Angelique."

He went out and the housekeeper followed with the lantern, not needed in the moonlight, but possibly of use at the fallen cow-house.

[Pg 39]

They were long gone. The stranger dozed, waked, ate, and dozed again. Margot, accustomed to early hours, also slept and soundly, till a fearful shriek roused her. Her patient was wildly kicking and striking at some hideous monster which had settled on his chest and would not be displaced.

"He's killing me! Help—help! Oh-a-ah!"

CHAPTER IV

[Pg 40]

WHAT WAS IN THE NAME

THRUSTING back the hair that had fallen over her eyes, Margot sprang up and stared at the floundering mass of legs, arms, and wings upon the wide lounge—a battle to the death, it seemed. Then she caught the assailant in her strong hands and flung him aside, while her laughter rang out in a way to make the stranger, also, stare, believing she had gone crazy with sudden fear.

But his terror had restored his strength most marvelously, for he too, leaped to his feet and retreated to the furthest corner of the room, whence he regarded the scene with dilated eyes.

"Why—why—it's nobody, nothing but dear old Tom!"

"It's an eagle! The first—"

"Of course, he's an eagle. Aren't you, dear? The most splendid bird in Maine, or maybe Canada. The wisest, the most loving, the— Oh! You big blundering precious thing! Scaring people like that. You should be more civil, sir."

[Pg 41]

"Is—is—he tame?"

"Tame as a pet chicken. But mischievous. He wouldn't hurt you for anything."

"Humph! He would have killed me if I hadn't waked and yelled."

"Well, you did that surely. You feel better, don't you?"

"I wish you'd put him outdoors, or shut him up where he belongs. I want to sit down."

"There's no reason why you shouldn't," she answered, pushing a chair toward him.

"Where did you get it—that creature?"

"Uncle found him when he was ever so young. Somebody or something, a hunter or some other bird, had hurt his wing and one foot. Eagles can be injured by the least little blow upon their wings, you know."

"No. I know nothing about them—yet. But I shall, some day."

[Pg 42]

"Oh! I hope so. They're delightful to study. Tom is very large, we think. He's nearly four feet tall, and his wings— Spread your wings, sir! Spread!"

Margot had dropped upon the floor before the wide fireplace, her favorite seat. Her arms clasped her strange pet's body while his white head rested lovingly

upon her shoulder. His eyes were fixed upon the blazing logs and his yellow irises gleamed as if they had caught and held the dancing flames. But at her command he shook himself free, and extended one mighty wing, while she stretched out the other. Their tips were full nine feet apart and seemed to fill and darken the whole place.

In spite of this odd girl's fearless handling of the bird, it looked most formidable to the visitor, who retreated again to a safe distance, though he had begun to advance toward her. And again he implored her to put the uncanny "monster" out of the house.

Margot laughed; as she was always doing; but going to the table filled a plate with fragments from the stew and calling Tom, set the dish before him on the threshold.

[Pg 43]

"There's your supper, Thomas the King! Which means, no more of Angelique's chickens, dead or alive."

The eagle gravely limped out of doors and the visitor felt relieved, so that he cast somewhat longing glances upon the table, and Margot was quick to understand them. Putting a generous portion upon another plate, she moved a chair to the side nearest the fire.

"You're so much stronger, I guess it won't hurt you to take as much as you like now. When did you eat anything before?"

"Day before yesterday—I think. I hardly know. The time seems confused. As if I had been wandering, round and round, forever. I—was almost dead, wasn't I?"

"Yes. But 'twas our housekeeper who was first to see it was starvation. Angelique is a Canadian. She lived in the woods long before we came to them. She is very wise."

[Pg 44]

He made no comment, being then too busy eating; but at length, even his voracity was satisfied and he had leisure to examine his surroundings. He looked at Margot as if girls were as unknown as eagles; and indeed such as she were—to him, at least. Her dress was of blue flannel, and of the same simple cut that she had always worn. A loose blouse, short skirt, full knickerbockers, met at the knees by long shoes, or gaiters of buckskin. These were as comfortable and pliable as Indian moccasins, and the only footgear she had ever known. They were made for her in a distant town, whither Mr. Dutton went for needed supplies, and, like the rest of her costume, after a design of his own. She was certainly unconventional in manner, but not from rudeness so much as from a desire to study him—another unknown "specimen" from an outside world. Her speech was correct beyond that common among schoolgirls, and her gaze was as friendly as it was frank.

[Pg 45]

Their scrutiny of each other was ended by her exclaiming:

"Why—you are not old! Not much older than Pierre, I believe! It must be because you are so dirty that I thought you were a man like uncle."

"Thank you," he answered drily.

But she had no intention of offense. Accustomed all her own life to the utmost cleanliness, in the beginning insisted upon by Angelique because it was "proper," and by her guardian for health's sake, she had grown up with a horror of the discomfort of any untidiness, and she felt herself most remiss in her attentions, that she had not earlier offered soap and water. Before he realized what she was about, she had sped into the little outer room which the household used as a lavatory and whirled a wooden tub into its centre. This she promptly filled with water from a pipe in the wall, and having hung fresh towels on a chair, returned to the living room.

[Pg 46]

"I'm so sorry. I ought to have thought of that right away. But a bath is ready now, if you wish it."

The stranger rose, stammered a little, but accepted what was in truth a delightful surprise.

"Well, this is still more amazing! Into what sort of a spot have I stumbled? It's a log house, but with apparently, several rooms. It has all the comforts of civilization and at least this one luxury. There are books, too. I saw them in that

inner apartment as I passed the open door. The man looks like a gentleman in the disguise of a lumberman, and the girl—what'll she do next? Ask me where I came from and why, I presume. If she does, I'll have to answer her, and truthfully. I can't fancy anybody lying to those blue eyes. Maybe she won't ask."

She did, however, as soon as he reentered the living room, refreshed and certainly much more attractive in appearance than when he had had the soil and litter of his long wandering upon him.

[Pg 47]

"Oh! how much more comfortable you must be. How did you get lost? Is your home far from here?"

"A long, long way;" and for a moment, something like sadness touched his face. That look passed quickly and a defiant expression took its place.

"What a pity! It will be so much harder to get word to your people. Maybe Pierre can carry a message, or show you the road, once you are strong enough again."

"Who's Pierre?"

"Mother Ricord's son. He's a woodlander and wiser even than she is. He's really more French than Indian, but uncle says the latter race is strongest in him. It often is in his type."

"A-ah, indeed! So you study types up here, do you?"

"Yes. Uncle makes it so interesting. You see, he got used to teaching stupid people when he was a professor in his college. I'm dreadfully stupid about books, though I do my best. But I love living things; and the books about animals, and races, are charming. When they're true, that is. Often they're not. There's one book on squirrels uncle keeps as a curiosity, to show how little the writer knew about them. And the pictures are no more like squirrels than—than they are like me."

[Pg 48]

"A-ah," said the listener, again. "That explains."

"I don't know what you mean. No matter. It's the old stupidity, I suppose. How did you get lost?"

"The same prevailing stupidity," he laughed. "Though I didn't realize it for that quality. Just thought I was smart, you know—conceit. I—I—well, I didn't get on so very well at the lumber camp I'd joined. I wasn't used to work of that sort and there didn't seem to be room, even in the woods, for a greenhorn. I thought it was easy enough. I could find my way anywhere, in any wilderness, with my outfit. I'd brought that along, or bought it after I left civilization; so one night I left, set out to paddle my own canoe. I paddled it into the rapids, what those fellows called rips, and they ripped me to ruin. Upset, lost all my kit, tried to find my way back, wandered and walked forever and ever, it seemed to me, and—you know the rest."

[Pg 49]

"But I do not. Did you keep hallooing all that long time? or how did it happen we heard you?"

"I was in a rocky place when that tornado came and it was near the water. I had just sense enough left to know they could protect me and crept under them. Oh! that was awful—awful!"

"It must have been, but I was so deep in our cave that I heard but little of it. Uncle and Angelique thought I was out in it and lost. They suffered about it, and uncle tried to make a fire and was sick. We had just got home when we heard you."

[Pg 50]

"After the storm I crawled out and I saw you in the boat. You seemed to have come right out of the earth and I shouted, or tried to. I kept on shouting, even after you were out of sight and then I got discouraged and tried once more to find a road out."

"I was singing so loud I suppose I didn't hear, at first. I'm so sorry. But it's all right now. You're safe, and some way will be found to get you to your home, or that lumber camp, if you'd rather."

"Suppose I do not wish to go to either place? What then?"

Margot stared. "Not—wish—to go—to your own dear—home?"

The stranger smiled at the amazement of her face.

"Maybe not. Especially as I don't know how I would be received there. What if I was foolish and didn't know when I was well off? What if I ran away, meaning to stay away forever?"

[Pg 51]

"Well, if it hadn't been for the rocks, and me, it would have been forever. But God made the rocks and gave them to you for a shelter; and He made me, and sent me out on the lake so you should see me and be found. If He wants you to go back to that home He'll find a way. Now, it's queer. Here we've been talking ever so long yet I don't know who you are. You know all of us: Uncle Hugh Dutton, Angelique Ricord, and me. I'm Margot Romeyn. What is your name?"

"Mine? Oh! I'm Adrian Wadislaw. A good-for-nought, some people say. Young Wadislaw, the sinner, son of old Wadislaw, the saint."

The answer was given recklessly, while the dark young face grew sadly bitter and defiant.

After a moment, something startled Margot from the shocked surprise with which she had heard this harsh reply. It was a sigh, almost a groan, as from one who had been more deeply startled even than herself. Turning, she saw the master standing in the doorway, staring at their visitor as if he had seen a ghost and nearly as white as one himself.

[Pg 52]

CHAPTER V

[Pg 53]

IN ALADDIN LAND

It seemed to Margot, watching, that it was an endless time her uncle stood there gazing with that startled look upon their guest. In reality it was but a moment. Then he passed his hand over his eyes, as one who would brush away a mist, and came forward. He was still unduly pale, but he spoke in a courteous, almost natural manner, and quietly accepted the chair Margot hastened to bring him.

"You are getting rested, Mr.—"

"Oh! please don't 'Mister' me, sir. You've been so good to me and I'm not used to the title. Though, in my scratches and wood-dirt, this young lady did take me for an old fellow. Yes, thanks to her thoughtfulness, I've found myself again, and I'm just 'Adrian,' if you'll be so kind."

There was something very winning in this address, and it suited the elder man well. The stranger was scarcely out of boyhood and reminded the old collegian of other lads whom he had known and loved. "Wadislaw" was not a particularly pleasing name that one should dwell upon it, unless necessary. "Adrian" was better and far more common. Neither did it follow that this person was of a family he remembered far too well; and so Mr. Dutton reassured himself. In any case the youth was now "the stranger within the gates" and therefore entitled to the best.

[Pg 54]

"Adrian, then. We are a simple household, following the old habit of early to bed and to rise. You must be tired enough to sleep anywhere, and there is another big lounge in my study. You would best occupy it to-night, and to-morrow Angelique will fix you better quarters. Few guests favor us in our far-away home," he finished with a smile that was full of hospitality.

Adrian rose at once and bidding Margot and Angelique good-night, followed his host into a big room which, save for the log walls, might have been the library of some city home. It was a room which somehow gave him the impression of vastness, liberality, and freedom—an enclosed bit of the outside forest. Like each of the other apartments he had seen it had its great fireplace and its blazing logs, not at all uncomfortable now in the chill that had come after the storm.

[Pg 55]

But he was too worn out to notice much more than these details, and without

undressing, dropped upon the lounge and drew the Indian blanket over him. His head rested upon great pillows stuffed with fragrant spruce needles, and this perfume of the woods soothed him into instant sleep.

But Hugh Dutton stood for many minutes, gravely studying the face of the unconscious stranger. It was a comely, intelligent face, though marred by self-will and indulgence, and with each passing second its features grew more and more painfully familiar. Why, why, had it come into his distant retreat to disturb his peace? A peace that it had taken fifteen years of life to gain, that had been achieved only by bitter struggle with self and with all that was lowest in a noble nature.

[Pg 56]

“Alas! And I believed I had at last learned to forgive!”

But none the less because of the bitterness would this man be unjust. His very flesh recoiled from contact with that other flesh, fair as it might be in the sight of most eyes, yet he forced himself to draw with utmost gentleness the covering over the sleeper’s shoulders, and to interpose a screening chair between him and the firelight.

“Well, one may at least control his actions, if not his thoughts,” he murmured and quietly left the place.

A few moments later he stood regarding Margot, also, as she lay in sleep, and all the love of his strong nature rose to protect her from the sorrow which she would have to bear some time but—not yet! Oh! not yet! Then he turned quickly and went out of doors.

[Pg 57]

There had been nights in this woodlander’s life when no roof could cover him. When even the forest seemed to suffocate, and when he had found relief only upon the bald bare top of that rocky height which crowned the island. On such nights he had gone out early and come home with the daybreak, and none had known of his absence, save, now and then, the faithful Angelique, who knew the master’s story but kept it to herself.

Margot had never guessed of these midnight expeditions, nor understood the peculiar love and veneration her guardian had for that mountain top. She better loved the depths of the wonderful forest, with its flowers and ferns, and its furred or feathered creatures. She was dreaming of these, the next morning, when her uncle’s cheery whistle called her to get up.

A cold plunge, a swift dressing, and she was with him, seeing no signs of either illness or sorrow in his genial face, and eager with plans for the coming day. All her days were delightful, but this would be best of all.

[Pg 58]

“To think, uncle dear, that somebody else has come at last to see our island! why, there’s so much to show him I can hardly wait, nor know where best to begin.”

“Suppose, Miss Impatience, we begin with breakfast? Here comes Adrian. Ask his opinion.”

“Never was so hungry in my life!” agreed that youth, as he came hastily forward to bid them both good-morning. “I mean—not since last night. I wonder if a fellow that’s been half-starved, or three-quarters even, will ever get his appetite down to normal again? It seems to me I could eat a whole wild animal at a sitting!”

“So you shall, boy. So you shall!” cried Angelique, who now came in carrying a great dish of browned and smoking fish. This she placed at her master’s end of the table and flanked it with another platter of daintily crisped potatoes. There were heaps of delicate biscuits, with coffee and cakes galore; enough, the visitor thought, to satisfy even his own extravagant hunger, and again he wondered at such fare in such a wilderness.

[Pg 59]

“Why, this might be a hotel table!” he exclaimed, in unfeigned pleasure. “Not much like lumberman’s fare: salt pork, bad bread, molasses-sweetened tea, and the everlasting beans. I hope I shall never have to look another bean in the face! But that coffee! I never smelled anything so delicious.”

“Had some last night,” commented Angelique, shortly. She perceived that this stranger was in some way obnoxious to her beloved master, and she resented the surprise with which he had seen her take her own place behind the tray.

Her temper seemed fairly cross-edged that morning and Margot remarked:

"Don't mind mother. She's dreadfully disappointed that nobody died and no bad luck followed her breaking a mirror, yesterday."

[Pg 60]

"No bad luck?" demanded Angelique, looking at Adrian with so marked a manner that it spoke volumes. "And as for dyin'—you've but to go into the woods and you'll see."

Here Tom created a diversion by entering and limping straight to the stranger's side, who moved away, then blushed at his own timidity, seeing the amusement with which the others regarded him.

"Oh! we're all one family here, servants and ever'body," cried the woman, tossing the eagle a crumb of biscuit.

But the big bird was not to be drawn from his scrutiny of this new face; and the gravity of his unwinking gaze was certainly disconcerting.

"Get out, you uncanny creature! Beg pardon, Miss Margot, but I'm—he seems to have a special grudge against me."

"Oh! no. He doesn't understand who you are, yet. We had a man here last year, helping uncle, and Tom acted just as he does now. Though he never would make friends with the Canadian, as I hope he will with you."

[Pg 61]

Angelique flashed a glance toward the girl. Why should she, or anybody speak as if this lad's visit were to be a prolonged one? And they had, both she and the master. He had bidden the servant fill a fresh "tick" with the dried and shredded fern leaves and pine needles, such as supplied their own mattresses; and to put all needful furnishings into the one disused room of the cabin.

"But, master! When you've always acted as if that were bein' kept for somebody who was comin' some day. Somebody you love!" she protested.

"I have settled the matter, Angelique. Don't fear that I've not thought it all out. 'Do unto others,' you know. For each day its duty, its battle with self, and, please God, its victory."

"He's a saint, ever'body knows; and there's somethin' behind all this I don't understand!" she had muttered, but had also done his bidding, still complaining.

[Pg 62]

Commonly, meals were leisurely affairs in that forest home, but on this morning Mr. Dutton set an example of haste that the others followed; and as soon as their appetites were satisfied he rose and said:

"I'll show you your own room now, Adrian. Occupy it as long as you wish. And find something to amuse yourself with while I am gone; for I have much to do out of doors. It was the worst storm, for its duration, that ever struck us. Fortunately, most of the outbuildings need only repairs, but Snowfoot's home is such a wreck she must have a new one. Margot, will you run up the signal for Pierre?"

"Yes, indeed! Though I believe he will come without it. He'll be curious about the tornado, too, and it's near his regular visiting time."

The room assigned to Adrian excited his fresh surprise; though he assured himself that he would be amazed at nothing further, when he saw lying upon a table in the middle of the floor, two complete suits of clothing, apparently placed there by the thoughtful host for his guest to use. They were not of the latest style, but perfectly new and bore the stamp of a well-known tailor of his own city.

[Pg 63]

"Where did he get them, and so soon? What a mammoth of a house it is, though built of logs. And isn't it the most fitting and beautiful of houses, after all? Whence came those comfortable chairs? and the books? Most of all, where and how did he get that wonderful picture over that magnificent log mantel? It looks like a room made ready for the unexpected coming of some prodigal son! I'm that, sure enough; but not of this household. If I were—well, maybe— Oh! hum!"

The lad crossed the floor and gazed reverently at the solitary painting which the room contained. A marvelously lifelike head of the Man of Sorrows, bending forward and gazing upon the onlooker with eyes of infinite tenderness and

[Pg 64]

appealing. Beneath it ran the inscription: "Come Unto Me"; and in one corner was the artist's signature—a broken pine branch.

"Whew! I wonder if that fellow ran away from home because he loved a brush and paint tube! What sort of a spot have I strayed into, anyway? A paradise? Hmm. I wish the mater could see me now. She'd not be so unhappy over her unworthy son, maybe. Bless her, anyhow. If everybody had been like her——"

He finished his soliloquy before an open window, through which he could see the summit of the bare mountain that crowned the centre of the island, and was itself crowned by a single pine-tree. Though many of its branches had been lopped away, enough were left to form a sort of spiral stairway up its straight trunk and to its lofty top.

"What a magnificent flagstaff that would make! I'd like to see Old Glory floating there. Believe I'll suggest it to the magician—that's what this woodlander is—and doubtless he'll attend to that little matter! Shades of Aladdin!"

[Pg 65]



SHE UNROLLED THE STARS AND STRIPES

Adrian was so startled that he dropped into a chair, the better to sustain himself against further Arabian-nights-like discoveries.

It was a flagstaff! Somebody was climbing it—Margot! Up, up, like a squirrel, her blond head appearing first on one side then the other, a glowing budget strapped to her back.

Adrian gasped. No sailor could have been more fleet or sure-footed. It seemed but a moment before that slender figure had scaled the topmost branch and was unrolling the brilliant burden it had borne. The stars and stripes, of course. Adrian would have been bitterly disappointed if it had been anything else this agile maiden hoisted from that dizzy height.

In wild excitement and admiration the watcher leaned out of his window and shouted hoarsely:

[Pg 66]

"Hurrah! H-u-r-rah! H-U-R——!"

The cheer died in his throat. Something had happened. Something too awful to contemplate. Adrian's eyes closed that he might not see. Had her foot slipped? Had his own cry reached and startled her?

For she was falling—falling! and the end could be but one.

A ONE-SIDED STORY

ADRIAN was not a gymnast though he had seen and admired many wonderful feats performed by his own classmates. But he had never beheld a miracle, and such he believed had been accomplished when, upon reaching the foot of that terrible tree, he found Margot sitting beneath it, pale and shaken, but, apparently, unhurt.

She had heard his breathless crashing up the slope and greeted him with a smile, and the tremulous question:

"How did you know where I was?"

"You aren't—dead?"

"Certainly not. I might have been, though, but God took care."

"Was it my cheers frightened you?"

"Was it you, then? I heard something, different from the wood sounds, and I looked quick to see. Then my foot slipped and I went down—a way. I caught a branch just in time and, please, don't tell uncle. I'd rather do that myself."

[Pg 68]

"You should never do such a thing. The idea of a girl climbing trees at all, least of any, such a tree as that!"

He threw his head back and looked upward, through the green spiral to the brilliant sky. The enormous height revived the horror he had felt as he leaped through the window and rushed to the mountain.

"Who planned such a death-trap as that, anyway?"

"I did."

"You! A girl!"

"Yes. Why not. It's great fun, usually."

"You'd better have been learning to sew."

"I can sew, but I don't like it. Angelique does that. I do like climbing and canoeing and botanizing, and geologizing, and astronomizing, and——"

Adrian threw up his hands in protest.

[Pg 69]

"What sort of creature are you, anyway?"

"Just plain girl."

"Anything but that!"

"Well, girl, without the adjective. Suits me rather better;" and she laughed in a way that proved she was not suffering from her mishap.

"This is the strangest place I ever saw. You are the strangest family. We are certainly in the backwoods of Maine, yet you might be a Holyoke senior, or a circus star, or—a fairy."

Margot stretched her long arms and looked at them quizzically.

"Fairies don't grow so big. Why don't you sit down? Or, if you will, climb up and look toward the narrows on the north. See if Pierre's birch is coming yet."

Again Adrian glanced upward, to the flag floating there, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Excuse me, please. That is, I suppose I could do it, only seeing you slip—I prefer to wait awhile."

[Pg 70]

"Are you afraid?"

There was no sarcasm in the question. She asked it in all sincerity. Adrian was different from Pierre, the only other boy she knew, and she simply wondered if tree-climbing were among his unknown accomplishments.

It had been, to the extent possible with his city training and his brief summer vacations, though unpracticed of late; but no lad of spirit, least of all impetuous Adrian, could bear even the suggestion of cowardice. He did not sit down, as she had bidden, but tossed aside his rough jacket and leaped to the lower branch of the pine.

"Why, it's easy! It's grand!" he called back and went up swiftly enough.

Indeed, it was not so difficult as it appeared from a distance. Wherever the branches failed the spiral ladder had been perfected by great spikes driven into the trunk and he had but to clasp these in turn to make a safe ascent. At the top he waved his hand, then shaded his eyes and peered northward.

[Pg 71]

"He's coming! Somebody's coming!" he shouted. "There's a little boat pushing off from that other shore."

Then he descended with a rapidity that delighted even himself and called a bit of praise from Margot.

"I'm so glad you can climb. One can see so much more from the tree-tops; and, oh! there is so much, so much to find out all the time! Isn't there?"

"Yes. Decidedly. One of the things I'd like to find out first is who you are and how you came here. If you're willing."

Then he added, rather hastily: "Of course, I don't want to be impertinently curious. It only seems so strange to find such educated people buried here in the north woods. I don't see how you live here. I—I—"

But the more he tried to explain the more confused he grew, and Margot merrily simplified matters by declaring:

"You are curious, all the same, and so am I. Let's tell each other all about everything and then we'll start straight without the bother of stopping as we go along. Do sit down and I'll begin."

[Pg 72]

"Ready."

"There's so little, I shan't be long. My dear mother was Cecily Dutton, my Uncle Hugh's twin. My father was Philip Romeyn, uncle's closest friend. They were almost more than brothers to each other, always; though uncle was a student and, young as he was, a professor at Columbia. Papa was a business man, a banker, or a cashier in a bank. He wasn't rich, but mamma and uncle had money. From the time they were boys uncle and papa were fond of the woods. They were great hunters, then, and spent all the time they could get up here in northern Maine. After the marriage mamma begged to come with them, and it was her money bought this island, and the land along the shore of this lake as far as we can see from here. Much farther, too, of course, because the trees hide things. They built this log cabin and it cost a great, great deal to do it. They had to bring the workmen so far, but it was finished at last, and everything was brought up here to make it—just as you see."

[Pg 73]

"What an ideal existence!"

"Was it? I don't know much about ideals, though uncle talks of them sometimes. It was real, that's all. They were very, very happy. They loved each other so dearly. Angelique came from Canada to keep the house and she says my mother was the sweetest woman she ever saw. Oh! I wish—I wish I could have seen her! Or that I might remember her. I'll show you her portrait. It hangs in my own room."

"Did she die?"

"Yes. When I was a year old. My father had passed away before that, and my mother was broken-hearted. Even for uncle and me she could not bear to live. It was my father's wish that we should come up here to stay, and Uncle Hugh left everything and came. I was to be reared 'in the wilderness, where nothing evil comes,' was what both my parents said. So I have been, and—that's all."

[Pg 74]

Adrian was silent for some moments. The girl's face had grown dreamy and full of a pathetic tenderness as it always did when she discussed her unknown father and mother, even with Angelique. Though, in reality, she had not been allowed to miss what she had never known. Then she looked up with a smile and observed:

"Your turn."

"Yes—I—suppose so. May as well give the end of my story first—I'm a runaway."

"Why?"

"No matter why."

"That isn't fair."

He parried the indignation of her look by some further questions of his own. "Have you always lived here?"

"Always."

[Pg 75]

"You go to the towns sometimes, I suppose."

"I've never seen a town, except in pictures."

"Whew! Don't you have any friends? Any girls come to see you?"

"I never saw a girl, only myself in that poor broken glass of Angelique's; and, of course, the pictured ones—as of the towns—in the books."

"You poor child!"

Margot's brown face flushed. She wanted nobody's pity and she had not felt that her life was a singular or narrow one, till this outsider came. A wish very like Angelique's, that he had stayed where he belonged, arose in her heart, but she dismissed it as inhospitable.

"I'm not poor. Not in the least. I have everything any girl could want and I have—uncle! He is the best, the wisest, the noblest man in all the world. I know it, and so Angelique says. She's been in your towns, if you please. Lived in them and says she never knew what comfort meant until she came to Peace Island and us. You don't understand."

[Pg 76]

Margot was more angry than she had ever been, and anger made her decidedly uncomfortable. She sprang up hastily, saying:

"If you've nothing to tell, I must go. I want to get into the forest and look after my friends there. The storm may have hurt them."

She was off down the mountain, as swift and sure-footed as if it were not a rough pathway that made him blunder along very slowly. For he followed, at once, feeling that he had not been "fair," as she had accused, in his report of himself; and that only a complete confidence was due these people who had treated him so kindly.

"Margot! Margot! Wait a minute! You're too swift for me! I want to——"

Just there he caught his foot in a running vine, stumbled over a hidden rock, and measured his length, head downward, on the slope. He was not hurt, however, though vexed and mortified. But when he had picked himself up and looked around the girl had vanished.

[Pg 77]

CHAPTER VII

[Pg 78]

A WOODLAND MENAGERIE

"HOO-AH! Yo-ho! H-e-r-e! This—way!"

Adrian followed the voice. It led him aside into the woods on the eastern slope, and it was accompanied by an indescribable babel of noises. Running water, screaming of wild fowl, cooing of pigeons, barking of dogs or some other beasts, cackling, chattering, laughter.

All the sounds of wild life had ceased suddenly in the tree-tops, as Adrian approached, recognizing and fearing his alien presence. But they were reassured by Margot's familiar summons, and soon the "menagerie" he had suspected was gathered about her.

"Whew! It just rains squirrels—and chipmunks—and birds! Hello! That's a fawn. That's a fox! As sure as I'm alive, a magnificent red fox! Why isn't he eating the whole outfit? And— Hurra!"

[Pg 79]

To the amazement of the watcher there came from the depths of the woods a sound that always thrills the pulses of any hunter—the cry of a moose-calf, accompanied by a soft crashing of branches, growing gradually louder.

"So they tame even the moose—these wonderful people! What next!" and as Adrian leaned forward the better to watch the advance of this uncommon "pet," the "next" concerning which he had speculated also approached. Slowly up the river bank, stalked a pair of blue herons, and for them Margot had her warmest welcome.

"Heigho, Xanthippé, Socrates! What laggards! But here's your breakfast, or one of them. I suppose you've eaten the other long ago. Indeed, you're always eating, gourmands!"

The red fox eyed the newcomers with a longing eye and crept cautiously to his mistress' side as she coaxed the herons nearer. But she was always prepared for any outbreak of nature among her forest friends, and drew him also close to her with the caressing touch she might have bestowed upon a beloved house-dog.

[Pg 80]

"Reynard, you beauty! Your head in my lap, sir;" and dropping to a sitting posture, she forced him to obey her. There he lay, winking but alert, while she scattered her store of good things right and left. There were nuts for the squirrels and 'munks, grains and seeds for the winged creatures, and for the herons, as well as Reynard, a few bits of dried meat. But for Browser, the moose-calf, she pulled the tender twigs and foliage with a lavish hand. When she had given some dainty to each of her oddly assorted pets, she sprang up, closed the box, and waved her arms in dismissal. The more timid of the creatures obeyed her, but some held their ground persistently, hoping for greater favors. To these she paid no further attention, and still keeping hold of Reynard's neck started back to her human guest.

[Pg 81]

The fox, however, declined to accompany her. He distrusted strangers and it may be had designs of his own upon some other forest wilding.

"That's the worst of it. We tame them and they love us. But they are only conquered, not changed. Isn't Reynard beautiful? Doesn't he look noble? as noble as a St. Bernard dog? If you'll believe me, that fellow is thoroughly acquainted with every one of Angelique's fowls, and knows he must never, never touch them, yet he'd eat one, quick as a flash, if he got a chance. He's a coward, though; and by his cowardice we manage him. Sometimes;" sighed Margot, who had led the way into a little path toward the lake.

"How odd! You seem actually grieved at this state of things."

"Why shouldn't I be? I love him and I have a notion that love will do anything with anybody or anything. I do believe it will, but that I haven't found just the right way of showing it. Uncle laughs at me, a little, but helps me all he can. Indeed, it is he who has tamed most of our pets. He says it is the very best way to study natural history."

[Pg 82]

"Hmm. He intends your education shall be complete!"

"Of course. But one thing troubles him. He cannot teach me music. And you seem surprised. Aren't girls, where you come from, educated? Doesn't everybody prize knowledge?"

"That depends. Our girls are educated, of course. They go to college and all that, but I think you'd down any of them in exams. For my own part, I ran away just because I did not want this famous 'education' you value. That is, I didn't of a certain sort. I wasn't fair with you awhile ago, you said. I'd like to tell you my story now."

"I'd like to hear it, of course. But, look yonder! Did you ever see anything like that?"

[Pg 83]

Margot was proud of the surprises she was able to offer this stranger in her woods, and pointed outward over the lake. They had just come to an open place on the shore and the water spread before them sparkling in the sunlight. Something was crossing the smooth surface, heading straight for their island,

and of a nature to make Adrian cry out:

“Oh! for a gun!”

CHAPTER VIII

[Pg 84]

KING MADOC

“If you had one you should not use it! Are you a dreadful hunter?”

Margot had turned upon her guest with a defiant fear. As near as she had ever come to hating anything she hated the men, of whom she had heard, who used this wonderful northland as a murder ground. That was what she named it, in her uncompromising judgment of those who killed for the sake of killing, for the lust of blood that was in them.

“Yes. I reckon I am a ‘dreadful’ hunter, for I am a mighty poor shot. But I’d like a try at that fellow. What horns! What a head! And how can that fellow in the canoe keep so close to him, yet not finish him!”

Adrian was so excited he could not stand still. His eyes gleamed, his hands clenched, and his whole appearance was changed. Greatly for the worse, the girl thought, regarding him with disgust.

[Pg 85]

“Finish him? That’s King Madoc, Pierre’s trained bull-moose. You’d be finished yourself, I fear, if you harmed that splendid creature. Pierre’s a lazy fellow, mostly, but he spent a long time teaching Madoc, and with his temper—I’m thankful you lost your gun.”

“Do you never shoot things up here? I saw you giving the fox and herons what looked like meat. You had a stew for supper, and fish for breakfast. I don’t mean to be impertinent, but the sight of that big game— Whew!”

“Yes. We do kill things, or have them killed, when it is necessary for food. Never in sport. Man is almost the only animal who does that. It’s all terrible, seems to me. Everything preys upon something else, weaker than itself. Sometimes when I think of it my dinner chokes me. It’s so easy to take life, and only God can create it. But uncle says it is also God’s law to take what is provided, and that there is no mistake, even if it seems such to me.”

[Pg 86]

But there Margot perceived that Adrian was not listening. Instead, he was watching, with the intensest interest, the closer approach of the canoe, in which sat idle Pierre, holding the reins of a harness attached to his aquatic steed. The moose swam easily, with powerful strokes, and Pierre was singing a gay melody, richer in his unique possession than any king.

When he touched the shore and the great animal stood shaking his wet hide, Adrian’s astonishment found vent in a whirlwind of questions that Pierre answered at his leisure and after his kind. But he walked first toward Margot and offered a great bunch of trailing arbutus flowers, saying:

“I saw these just as I pushed off and went back after them. What’s the matter here, that the flag is up? It was the biggest storm I ever saw. Yes. A deal of beasties are killed back on the mainland. Any dead over here?”

[Pg 87]

“No, I am glad to say, none that we know of. But Snowfoot’s shed is down and uncle is going to build a new one. I hope you’ve come to work.”

Pierre laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

“Oh! yes.”

But his interest in work was far less than in the stranger whom he now answered, and whose presence on Peace Island was a mystery to him. Heretofore, the only visitors there had been laborers or traders, but this young fellow so near his own age, despite his worn clothing, was of another sort. He recognized this, at once, as Margot had done, and his curiosity made him ask:

“Where’d you come from? Hurricane blow you out the sky?”

"About the same. I was lost in the woods and Margot found me and saved my life. What'll you take for that moose?"

"There isn't money enough in the state of Maine to buy him!"

[Pg 88]

"Nonsense. Well, if there was I haven't it. But you could get a good price for it anywhere."

Pierre looked Adrian over. From his appearance the lad was not likely to be possessed of much cash, but the moose-trainer was eager for capital, and never missed an opportunity of seeking it.

"I want to go into the show business. What do you say? would you furnish the tents and fixings? And share the profits. I'm no scholar, but maybe you'd know enough to get out the hand-bills and so on. What do you say?"

"I—say— What you mean, Pierre Ricord, keepin' the master waitin', your foolishness, and him half sick? What kept you twice as long as you ought? Hurry up, now, and put that moose in the cow-yard and get to work."

The interruption was caused by Angelique, and it was curious to see the fear with which she inspired the great fellow, her son. He forgot the stranger, the show business, and all his own immediate interests, and with the docility of a little child obeyed. Unhitching his odd steed, he turned the canoe bottom upward on the beach and hastily led the animal toward that part of the island clearing, where Snowfoot stood in a little fenced-in lot behind her ruined shed.

[Pg 89]

Adrian went with him, and asked:

"Won't those two animals fight?"

"Won't get a chance. When one goes in the other goes out. Here, bossy, you can take the range of the island. Get out!"

She was more willing to go than Madoc to enter the cramped place, but the transfer was made and Adrian lingered by the osier paling, to observe at close range this subjugated monarch of the forest.

"Oh! for a palette and brush!" he exclaimed, while Pierre walked away.

"What would you do with them?"

Margot had followed the lads and was beside him, though he had not heard her footsteps. Now he wheeled about, eager, enthusiastic.

[Pg 90]

"Paint—as I have never painted before!"

"Oh!—are you an—artist?"

"I want to be one. That's why I'm here."

"What? What do you mean?"

"I told you I was a runaway. I didn't say 'why,' before. It's truth. My people, my—father—forced me to college. I hated it. He was forcing me to business. I liked art. All my friends were artists. When I should have been at the books I was in their studios. They were a gay crowd, spent money like water when they had it, merrily starved and pinched when they hadn't. A few were worse than spendthrifts, and with my usual want of sense I made that particular set my intimates. I never had any money, though, after it was suspected what my tastes were. Except a little that my mother gave me."

Margot was listening breathlessly and watching intently. At the mention of his mother a shadow crossed Adrian's face, softening and bettering it, and his whole mood seemed to change.

[Pg 91]

Their talk drifted from vexing subjects to merry anecdotes of Adrian's childhood, in the home where he had been the petted only brother of a half-dozen elder sisters. But while they laughed and Margot listened, her fingers were busy weaving a great garland of wild laurel, and when it was finished she rose and said:

"It's getting late. There'll be just time to take this to the grave. Will you go with me?"

"Yes."

But this was another of the puzzling things he found at Peace Island. In its very loveliest nook was the last resting-place of Cecily Romeyn, and the sacred spot was always beautiful with flowers, or in the winter, with brilliant berries. Both the master and the girl spoke of their dead as if she were still present with them; or at least lived as if she were only removed from sight but not from their lives.

[Pg 92]

When Margot had laid the fresh wreath upon the mound, she carefully removed the faded flowers of the day before, and a thought of his own mother stirred Adrian's heart.

"I wish I could send a bunch of such blossoms to my mother!"

"How can you live without her, since she is still alive?"

His face hardened again.

"You forget. I told you that she, too, turned against me at the last. It was a case of husband or son, and she made her choice."

"Oh! no. She was unhappy. One may do strange things, then, I suppose. But I tell you one thing, if I had either father or mother, anywhere in this world, nothing should ever, ever make me leave them. Nothing. I would bear anything, do anything, suffer anything—but I would be true to them. I could not forget that I was their child, and if I had done wrong to them my whole life would be too short to make atonement."

[Pg 93]

She spoke strongly, as she felt. So early orphaned, she had come to think of parents as the most wonderful blessing in the power of God to leave one. She loved her Uncle Hugh like a second father, but her tenderest dreams were over the pictured faces of her dead.

"Where is your father buried?"

It was the simplest, most natural question.

"I—don't—know."

They stared at one another. It was proof of her childlike acceptance of her life that she had never asked. Had never thought to do so, even. She had been told that he had "passed out of sight" before they came to Peace Island and the forest, and had asked no further concerning him. Of his character and habits she had heard much. Her uncle was never weary in extolling his virtues; but of his death he had said only what has been written.

[Pg 94]

"But—I must know right away!"

In her eagerness she ran, and Adrian followed as swiftly. He was sorry for his thoughtless inquiry, but regret came too late. He tried to call Margot back, but she would not wait.

"I must know. I must know right away. Why have I never known before?"

Hugh Dutton was resting after a day of study and mental labor, and his head leaned easily upon his cushioned chair. Yet as his dear child entered his room he held out his arms to draw her to his knee.

"In a minute, uncle. But Adrian has asked me something and it is the strangest thing that I cannot answer him. Where is my father buried?"

If she had dealt him a mortal blow he could not have turned more white. With a groan that pierced her very heart, he stared at Margot with wide, unseeing eyes; then sprang to his feet and fixed upon poor Adrian a look that scorched.

[Pg 95]

"You! You?" he gasped, and sinking back covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER IX

[Pg 96]

PERPLEXITIES

WHAT had he done?

Ignorant why his simple question should have had such strange results, that piercing look made Adrian feel the veriest culprit, and he hastened to leave the room and the cabin. Hurrying to the beach he appropriated Margot's little canvas canoe and pushed out upon the lake. From her and Pierre he had learned to handle the light craft with considerable skill and he now worked off his excitement by swift paddling, so that there was soon a wide distance between him and the island.

Then he paused and looked around him, upon as fair a scene as could be found in any land. Unbroken forests bounded this hidden Lake Profundis, out of whose placid waters rose that mountain-crowned, verdure-clad Island of Peace, with its picturesque home, and its cultured owner, who had brought into this best of the wilderness the best of civilization.

[Pg 97]

"What is this mystery? How am I concerned in it? For I am, and mystery there is. It is like that mist over the island, which I can see and feel but cannot touch. Pshaw! I'm getting sentimental, when I ought to be turning detective. Yet I couldn't do that—pry into the private affairs of a man who's treated me so generously. What shall I do? How can I go back there? But where else can I go?"

At thought that he might never return to the roof he had quitted, a curious homesickness seized him.

"Who'll hunt what game they need? Who'll catch their fish? Who'll keep the garden growing? Where can I study the forest and its furry people, at first hand, as in the Hollow? And I was doing well. Not as I hope to do, but getting on. Margot was a merciless critic, but even she admitted that my last picture had the look, the spirit of the woods. That's what I want to do, what Mr. Dutton, also, approved; to bring glimpses of these solitudes back to the cities and the thousands who can never see them in any other way. Well—let it go. I can't stay and be a torment to anybody, and some time, in some other place, maybe—Ah!"

[Pg 98]

What he had mistaken for the laughter of a loon was Pierre's halloo. He was coming back, then, from the mainland where he had been absent these past days. Adrian was thankful. There was nothing mysterious or perplexing about Pierre, whose rule of life was extremely simple.

"Pierre first, second, and forever. After Pierre, if there was anything left, then—anybody, the nearest at hand;" would have expressed the situation; but his honest, unblushing selfishness was sometimes a relief.

"One always knows just where to find Pierre," Margot had said.

So Adrian's answering halloo was prompt, and turning about he watched the birch leaving the shadow of the forest and heading for himself. It was soon alongside and Ricord's excited voice was shouting his good news:

[Pg 99]

"Run him up to seven hundred and fifty!"

"But I thought there wasn't money enough anywhere to buy him!"

Pierre cocked his dark head on one side and winked.

"Madoc sick and Madoc well are different."

"Oh! you wretch. Would you sell a sick moose and cheat the buyer?"

"Would I lose such a pile of money for foolishness? I guess not."

"But suppose, after you parted with him, he got well?"

Again the woodlander grinned and winked.

"Could you drive the king?"

"No."

"Well, that's all right. I buy him back, what you call trade. One do that many times, good enough. If——"

[Pg 100]

Pierre was silent for some moments, during which Adrian had steadily paddled backward to the island, keeping time with the other boat, and without thinking what he was doing. But when he did remember, he turned to Pierre and asked:

"Will you take me across the lake again?"

"What for?"

"No matter. I'll just leave Margot's canoe and you do it. There's time enough."

"What'll you give me?"

"Pshaw! What can I give you? Nothing."

"That's all right. My mother, she wants the salt," and he kicked the sack of that valuable article, lying at his feet. "There. She's on the bank now and it's not she will let me out of sight again, this long time."

"You'd go fast enough, for money."

"Maybe not. When one has Angelique Ricord for mère— Umm."

But it was less for Pierre than for Adrian that Angelique was waiting, and her expression was kinder than common.

[Pg 101]

"Carry that salt to my kitchen cupboard, son, and get to bed. No. You've no call to tarry. What the master's word is for his guest is nothin' to you."

Pierre's curiosity was roused. Why had Adrian wanted to leave the island at nightfall, since there was neither hunting nor fishing to be done? Sport for sport's sake, that was forbidden. And what could be the message he was not to hear? He meant to learn, and lingered, busying himself uselessly in beaching the canoes afresh, after he had once carefully turned them bottom side upward; in brushing out imaginary dirt, readjusting his own clothing—a task he did not often bother with—and in general making himself a nuisance to his impatient parent.

But, so long as he remained, she kept silence, till unable to hold back her rising anger she stole up behind him, unperceived, and administered a sounding box upon his sizable ears.

[Pg 102]

"Would you? To the cupboard, miserable!" and Adrian could not repress a smile at the meekness with which the great woodlander submitted to the little woman's authority.

"Xanthippé and Socrates!" he murmured, and Pierre heard him. So, grimacing at him from under the heavy sack, called back: "Fifty dollar. Tell her fifty dollar."

"What he mean by fifty dollar?" demanded Angelique.

"I suppose something about that 'show' business of his. It is his ambition, you know, and I must admit I believe he'd be a success at it."

"Pouf! There is more better business than the 'showin'' one, of takin' God's beasties into the towns and lettin' the foolish people stare. The money comes that way is not good money."

"Oh! yes. It's all right, fair Angelique. But what is the word for me?"

"It is: that you come with me, at once, to the master. He will speak with you before he sleeps. Yes. And Adrian, lad!"

[Pg 103]

"Well, Angelique?"

"This is the truth. Remember. When the heart is sore tried the tongue is often sharp. There is death. That is a sorrow. God sends it. There are sorrows God does not send but the evil one. Death is but joy to them. What the master says, answer; and luck light upon your lips."

The lad had never seen the old housekeeper so impressive nor so gentle. At the moment it seemed as if she almost liked him, though, despite the faithfulness with which she had obeyed her master's wishes and served him, he had never before suspected it.

"Thank you, Angelique. I am troubled, too, and I will take care that I neither say nor resent anything harsh. More than that, I will go away. I have stayed too long, already, though I had hoped I was making myself useful. Is he in his own study?"

"Yes, and the little maid is with him. No. There she comes, but she is not laughin', no. Oh! the broken glass. Scat, Meroude! Why leap upon one to scare the breath out, that way? Pst! 'Tis here that tame creatures grow wild and wild ones tame. Scat! I say."

Margot was coming through the rooms, holding Reynard by the collar she made him wear whenever he was in the neighborhood of the hen-house, and Tom limped listlessly along upon her other side. There was trouble and perplexity in the girl's face, and Angelique made a great pretense of being angry with the cat, to hide that in her own.

But Margot noticed neither her nor Adrian, and sitting down upon the threshold dropped her chin in her hands and fixed her eyes upon the darkening lake.

"Why, mistress! The beast here at the cabin, and it nightfall? My poor fowls!"

"He's leashed, you see, Angelique. And I'll lock the poultry up, if you like," observed Adrian. Anything to delay a little an interview from which he shrank with something very like that cowardice of which the girl had once accused him.



HER PETS ON EITHER SIDE OF HER

The housekeeper's ready temper flamed, and she laid an ungentle touch upon the stranger's shoulder.

"Go, boy. When Master Hugh commands, 'tis not for such as we to disobey."

"All right. I'm going. And I'll remember."

At the inner doorway he turned and looked back. Margot was still sitting, thoughtful and motionless, the firelight from the great hearth making a Rembrandt-like silhouette of her slight figure against the outer darkness and touching her wonderful hair to a flood of silver. Reynard and the eagle, the wild foresters her love had tamed, stood guard on either side. It was a picture that appealed to Adrian's artistic sense and he lingered a little, regarding its "effects," even considering what pigments would best convey them.

"Adrian!"

"Yes, Angelique. Yes."

When the door shut behind him Angelique touched her darling's shining head, and the toil-stiffened fingers had for it almost a mother's tenderness.

"Sweetheart, the bedtime."

"I know. I'm going. Angelique, my uncle sent me from him to-night. It was the first time in all my life that I remember."

"Maybe, little stupid, because you've never waited for that, before, but were quick enough to see whenever you were not wanted."

"He—— There's something wrong and Adrian is the cause of it. I—Angelique, you tell me. Uncle did not hear, or reply, anyway. Where is my father buried?"

Angelique was prepared and had her answer ready.

"'Tis not for a servant to reveal what her master hides. No. All will come to you in good time. Tarry the master's will. But, that silly Pierre! What think you? Is it fifty dollar would be the price of the tame blue herons? Hey?"

[Pg 107]

"No. Nor fifty times fifty. Pierre knows that. Love is more than money."

"Sometimes, to some folks. Well, what would you? That son will be havin' even me, his old mother, in his 'show,' why not? As a cur'osity—the only livin' human bein' can make that ingrate mind. Yes. To bed, my child."

Margot rose and housed her pets. This threat of Pierre's, that he would eventually carry off the "foresters" and exhibit their helplessness to staring crowds, always roused her fiercest indignation; and this result was just what Angelique wanted, at present, and she murmured her satisfaction:

"Good. That bee will buzz in her ear till she sleeps, and so sound she'll hear no dip of the paddle, by and by. Here, Pierre, my son, you're wanted."

"What for now? Do leave me be. I'm going to bed. I'm just wore out, trot-trottin' from Pontius to Pilate, lugging salt, and——" he finished by yawning most prodigiously.

[Pg 108]

"Firs'-rate sign, that gapin'. Yes. Sign you're healthy and able to do all's needed. There's no bed for you this night. Come. Here. Take this basket to the beach. If your canoe needs pitchin', pitch it. There's the lantern. If one goes into the show business he learns right now to work and travel o' nights. Yes. Start. I'll follow and explain."

CHAPTER X

[Pg 109]

DEPARTURE

BUT Adrian need not have dreaded the interview to which his host had summoned him. Mr. Dutton's face was a little graver than usual but his manner was even more kind. He was a man to whom justice seemed the highest good, who had himself suffered most bitterly from injustice. He was forcing himself to be perfectly fair with the lad and it was even with a smile that he motioned toward an easy-chair opposite himself. The chair stood in the direct light of the lamp, but Adrian did not notice that.

"Do not fear me, Adrian, though for a moment I forgot myself. For you personally—personally—I have only great good will. But—— Will you answer my questions, believing that it is a painful necessity which compels them?"

"Certainly."

[Pg 110]

"One word more. Beyond the fact, which you confided to Margot, that you were a runaway I know no details of your past life. I have wished not to know and have refrained from any inquiries. I must now break that silence. What—is your father's name?"

As he spoke the man's hands gripped the arms of his chair more tightly, like one prepared for an unpleasant answer.

"Malachi Wadislav."

The questioner waited a moment, during which he seemed to be thinking profoundly. Then he rallied his own judgment. It was an uncommon name, but there might be two men bearing it. That was not impossible.

"Where does he live?"

"Number —, Madison Avenue, New York."

A longer silence than before, broken by a long drawn: "A-ah!" There might, indeed, be two men of one name, but not two residing at that once familiar locality.

"Adrian, when you asked my niece that question about her father, did you—had you— Tell me what was in your mind."

[Pg 111]

The lad's face showed nothing but frank astonishment.

"Why, nothing, sir, beyond an idle curiosity. And I'm no end sorry for my thoughtlessness. I've seen how tenderly you both watch her mother's grave and I wondered where her father's was. That was all. I had no business to have done it—"

"It was natural. It was nothing wrong, in itself. But—unfortunately, it suggested to Margot what I have studiously kept from her. For reasons which I think best to keep to myself, it is impossible to run the risk of other questions which may rouse other speculations in her mind. I have been truly glad that she could for a time, at least, have the companionship of one nearer her own age than Angelique or me, but now—"

He paused significantly, and Adrian hastened to complete the unfinished sentence.

"Now it is time for her to return to her ordinary way of life. I understand you, of course. And I am going away at once. Indeed, I did start, not meaning to come back, but—I will—how can I do so, sir? If I could swim—"

[Pg 112]

Mr. Dutton's drawn face softened into something like a smile; and again, most gently, he motioned the excited boy to resume his seat. As he did so, he opened a drawer of the table and produced a purse that seemed to be well filled.

"Wait. There is no such haste, nor are you in such dire need as you seem to think. You have worked well and faithfully and relieved me of much hard labor that I have not, somehow, felt just equal to. I have kept an account for you and, if you will be good enough to see if it is right, I will hand you the amount due you."

He pushed a paper toward Adrian who would not, at first, touch it.

"You owe me nothing, sir, nor can I take anything. I thank you for your hospitality and some time—" he stopped, choked, and made a telling gesture. It said plainly enough that his pride was just then deeply humiliated but that he would have his revenge at some future day.

[Pg 113]

"Sit down, lad. I do not wonder at your feeling, nor would you at mine if you knew all. Under other circumstances we should have been the best of friends. It is impossible for me to be more explicit, and it hurts my pride as much to bid you go as yours to be sent. Some time—but no matter. What we have in hand is to arrange for your departure as speedily and comfortably as possible. I would suggest—" but his words had the force of a command—"that Pierre convey you to the nearest town from which, by stage or railway, you can reach any further place you choose. If I were to offer advice, it would be to go home. Make your peace there; and then, if you desire a life in the woods, seek such with the consent and approval of those to whom your duty is due."

Adrian said nothing at first; then remarked:

[Pg 114]

"Pierre need not go so far. Across the lake, to the mainland is enough. I can travel on foot afterward, and I know more about the forest now than when I lost myself and you, or Margot, found me. I owe my life to you. I am sorry I have given you pain. Sorry for many things."

"There are few who have not something to regret; for anything that has happened here no apology is necessary. As for saving life, that was by God's will. Now—to business. You will see that I have reckoned your wages the same as Pierre's: thirty dollars a month and 'found,' as the farmers say, though it has been much more difficult to find him than you. You have been here nearly three months and eighty dollars is yours."

"Eighty dollars! Whew! I mean, impossible. In the first place I haven't earned it; in the second, I couldn't take it from—from you—if I had. How could a man take money from one who had saved his life?"

[Pg 115]

"Easily, I hope, if he has common sense. You exaggerate the service we were able to do you, which we would have rendered to anybody. Your earnings will start you straight again. Take them, and oblige me by making no further objections."

Despite his protests, which were honest, Adrian could not but be delighted at the thought of possessing so goodly a sum. It was the first money he had ever earned, therefore better than any other ever could be, and as he put it, in his own thoughts: "it changed him from a beggar to a prince." Yet he made a final protest, asking:

"Have I really, really, and justly earned all this? Do you surely mean it?"

"I am not in the habit of saying anything I do not mean. It is getting late, and if you are to go to-night, it would be better to start soon," answered Mr. Dutton, with a frown.

"Beg pardon. But I'm always saying what I should not, or putting the right things backward. There are some affairs 'not mentioned in the bond': my artist's outfit, these clothes, boots, and other matters. I want to pay the cost of them. Indeed, I must. You must allow me, as you would any other man."

[Pg 116]

The woodlander hesitated a moment as if he were considering. He would have preferred no return for anything, but again that effort to be wholly just influenced him.

"For the clothing, if you so desire, certainly. Here, in this account book, is a price list of all such articles as I buy. We will deduct that much. But I hope, in consideration of the pleasure that your talent has given me, that you will accept the painting stuff I so gladly provided. If you choose, also, you may leave a small gift for Angelique. Come. Pride is commendable, but not always."

"Very well. Thank you, then, for your gift. Now, the price list."

It had been a gratification to Mr. Dutton that Adrian had never worn the suits of clothing which he had laid out ready for use, on that morning after his arrival at the island. The lad had preferred the rougher costume suited to the woods and still wore it.

[Pg 117]

In a few moments the small business transactions were settled, and Adrian rose.

"I would like to bid Margot good-bye. But, I suppose, she has gone to bed."

"Yes. I will give her your message. There is always a pain in parting and you two have been much together. I would spare her as much as I can. Angelique has packed a basket of food and Pierre is on the beach with his canoe. He may go as far with you as you desire, and you must pay him nothing for his service. He is already paid, though his greed might make him despoil you, if he could. Good-bye. I wish you well."

Mr. Dutton had also risen, and as he moved forward into the lamplight Adrian noticed how much altered for the worse was his physical bearing. The man seemed to have aged by many years and his fine head was now snow-white. He half extended his hand, in response to the lad's proffered clasp, then dropped it to his side. He hoped that the departing guest had not observed this inhospitable movement—but he had. Possibly, it helped him over an awkward moment, by touching his pride afresh.

[Pg 118]

"Good-bye, sir, and again—thank you. For the present, that is all I can do. Yet I have heard it was not so big a world, after all, and my chance may come. I'll get my traps from my room, if you please, and one or two little drawings as souvenirs. I'll not be long."

Fifteen minutes later Pierre was paddling vigorously toward the further side of the lake and Adrian was straining his eyes for the last glimpse of the beautiful island which even now, in his banishment from it, seemed his real and beloved home. It became a vague and shadowy outline, as silent as the stars that brooded over it; and again he marveled what the mystery might be which enshrouded it, and why he should be connected with it.

"Now that I am no longer its guest, there is no dishonor in my finding out; and find out—I will!"

[Pg 119]

"Hey?" asked Pierre, so suddenly, that Adrian jumped and nearly upset the boat.

“Oh! I thought you said somethin’. Say, ain’t this a go? What you done that make the master shut the door on you? I never knew him do it before. Hey?”

“Nothing. Keep quiet. I don’t feel like talking.”

“Pr-r-r-rrp! Look a here, young fello’. Me and you’s alone on this dead water and I can swim—you can’t. I’ve got all I expect to get out the trip and I’ve no notion o’ makin’ it. Not ’less things go to my thinkin’. Now, I’ll rest a spell. You paddle!”

With that, he began to rock the frail craft violently and Adrian’s attention was recalled to the necessity of saving his own life.

CHAPTER XI

[Pg 120]

A DISCLOSURE

As the sun rose, Margot came out of her own room, fresh from her plunge that had washed all drowsiness away, as the good sleep had also banished all perplexities. Happy at all times, she was most so at morning, when, to her nature-loving eyes, the world seemed to have been made anew and doubly beautiful. The gay little melodies she had picked up from Pierre, or Angelique—who had been a sweet singer in her day—and now again from Adrian, were always on her lips at such an hour, and were dear beyond expression to her uncle’s ears.

But this morning she seemed to be singing them to the empty air. There was nobody in the living room, nor in the “study-library,” as the housekeeper called the room of books, nor even in the kitchen. That was oddest of all! For there, at least, should Angelique have been, frying, or stewing, or broiling, as the case might be. Yet the coffee stood simmering, at one corner of the hearth and a bowl of eggs waited ready for the omelet which Angelique could make to perfection.

[Pg 121]

“Why, how still it is! As if everybody had gone away and left the island alone.”

She ran to the door and called: “Adrian!”

No answer.

“Pierre! Angelique! Where is everybody?”

Then she saw Angelique coming down the slope and ran to meet her. With one hand the woman carried a brimming pail of milk and with the other dragged by his collar the reluctant form of Reynard, who appeared as guilty and subdued as if he had been born a slave not free. To make matters more difficult, Meroude was surreptitiously helping herself to a breakfast from the pail and thereby ruining its contents for other uses.

[Pg 122]

“Oh! the plague of a life with such beasts! And him the worst o’ they all. The ver’ next time my Pierre goes cross-lake, that fox goes or I do! There’s no room on the island for the two of us. No. Indeed no. The harm comes of takin’ in folks and beasties and friendin’ them ’at don’t deserve it. What now, think you?”

Margot had run the faster, as soon as she descried poor Reynard’s abject state, and had taken him under her own protection, which immediately restored him to his natural pride and noble bearing.

“I think nothing evil of my pet, believe that! See the beauty now! That’s the difference between harsh words and loving ones. If you’d only treat the ‘beasties’ as well as you do me, Angelique dear, you’d have less cause for scolding. What I think now is—speckled rooster. Right?”

“Aye. Dead as dead; and the feathers still stickin’ to the villain’s jaws. What’s the life of such brutes to that o’ good fowls? Pst! Meroude! Scat! Well, if it’s milk you will, milk you shall!” and, turning angrily about, Snowfoot’s mistress dashed the entire contents of her pail over the annoying cat.

[Pg 123]

Margot laughed till the tears came. “Why, Angelique! only the other day, in that quaint old ‘Book of Beauty’ uncle has, I read how a Queen of Naples, and some

noted Parisian beauties, used baths of milk for their complexions; but poor Meroude's a hopeless case, I fear."

Angelique's countenance took on a grim expression. "Mistress Meroude's got a day's job to clean herself, the greedy. It's not her nose'll go in the pail another mornin'. No. No, indeed."

"And it was so full. Yet that's the same Snowfoot who was to give us no more, because of the broken glass. Angelique, where's uncle?"

"How should I tell? Am I set to spy the master's ins and outs?"

[Pg 124]

"Funny Angelique! You're not set to do it, but you can usually tell them. And where's Adrian? I've called and called, but nobody answers. I can't guess where they all are. Even Pierre is out of sight, and he's mostly to be found at the kitchen door when meal time comes."

"There, there, child. You can ask more questions than old Angelique can answer. But the breakfast. That's a good thought. So be. Whisk in and mix the batter cakes for the master's eatin'. 'Tis he, foolish man, finds they have better savor from Margot's fingers than mine. Simple one, with all his wisdom."

"It's love gives them savor, sweet Angelique! and the desire to see me a proper housewife. I wonder why he cares about that, since you are here to do such things."

"Ah! The 'I wonders!' and the 'Is its?' of a maid! They set the head awlirl. The batter cakes, my child. I see the master comin' down the hill this minute."

[Pg 125]

Margot paused long enough to caress Tom, the eagle, who met her on the path, then sped indoors, leaving Reynard to his own devices and Angelique's not too tender mercies. But she put all her energy into the task assigned her and proudly placed a plate of her uncle's favorite dainty before him when he took his seat at table. Till then she had not noticed its altered arrangement, and even her guardian's coveted: "Well done, little housekeeper!" could not banish the sudden fear that assailed her.

"Why, what does it mean? Where is Adrian? Where Pierre? Why are only dishes for three?"

"Pst! my child! Hast been askin' questions in the sleep? Sure, you have ever since your eyes flew open. Say your grace and eat your meat, and let the master rest."

"Yes, darling. Angelique is wise. Eat your breakfast as usual, and afterward I will tell you all—that you should know."

[Pg 126]

"But, I cannot eat. It chokes me. It seems so awfully still and strange and empty. As I should think it might be, were somebody dead."

Angelique's scant patience was exhausted. Not only was her loyal heart tried by her master's troubles, but she had had added labor to accomplish. During all that summer two strong and, at least one, willing lads had been at hand to do the various chores pertaining to all country homes, however isolated. That morning she had brought in her own supply of fire-wood, filled her buckets from the spring, attended the poultry, fed the oxen, milked Snowfoot, wrestled over the iniquity of Reynard and grieved at the untimely death of the speckled rooster: "When he would have made such a lovely fricasee, yes. Indeed, 'twas a sinful waste!"

Though none of these tasks were new or arduous to her, she had not performed them during the past weeks, save and except the care of her cow. That she had never entrusted to anybody, not even the master; and it was to spare him that she had done some of the things he meant to attend to later. Now she had reached her limit.

[Pg 127]

"Angelique wants her breakfast, child. She has been long astir. After that the deluge!" quoted Mr. Dutton, with an attempt at lightness which did not agree with his real depression.

Margot made heroic efforts to act as usual but they ended in failure, and as soon as might be her guardian pushed back his chair and she promptly did the same.

"Now I can ask as many questions as I please, can't I? First, where are they?"

"They have gone across the lake, southward, I suppose. Toward whatever place or town Adrian selects. He will not come back but Pierre will do so, after he has guided the other to some safe point beyond the woods. How soon I do not know, of course."

"Gone! Without bidding me good-bye? Gone to stay? Oh! uncle, how could he? I know you didn't like him but I did. He was——"

[Pg 128]

Margot dropped her face in her hands and sobbed bitterly. Then ashamed of her unaccustomed tears she ran out of the house and as far from it as she could. But even the blue herons could give her no amusement, though they stalked gravely up the river bank and posed beside her, where she lay prone and disconsolate in Harmony Hollow. Her squirrels saw and wondered, for she had no returning chatter for them, even when they chased one another over her prostrate person and playfully pulled at her long hair.

"He was the only friend I ever had that was not old and wise in sorrow. It was true he seemed to bring a shadow with him and while he was here I sometimes wished he would go, or had never come; yet now that he has—oh! it's so awfully, awfully lonesome. Nobody to talk with about my dreams and fancies, nobody to talk nonsense, nobody to teach me any more songs—nobody but just old folks and animals! And he went, he went without a word or a single good-bye!"

[Pg 129]

It was, indeed, Margot's first grief; and the fact that her late comrade could leave her so coolly, without even mentioning his plan, hurt her very deeply. But, after awhile, resentment at Adrian's seeming neglect almost banished her loneliness; and, sitting up, she stared at Xanthippé, poised on one leg before her, apparently asleep but really waiting for anything which might turn up in the shape of dainties.

"Oh! you sweet vixen! but you needn't pose. There's no artist here now to sketch you, and I don't care, not very much, if there isn't. After all my trying to do him good, praising and blaming and petting, if he was impolite enough to go as he did—— Well, no matter!"

While this indignation lasted she felt better, but as soon as she came once more in sight of the clearing and of her uncle finishing one of Adrian's uncompleted tasks, her loneliness returned with double force. It had almost the effect of bodily illness and she had no experience to guide her. With a fresh burst of tears she caught her guardian's hand and hid her face on his shoulder.

[Pg 130]

"Oh! it's so desolate. So empty. Everything's so changed. Even the Hollow is different and the squirrels seem like strangers. If he had to go, why did he ever, ever come!"

"Why, indeed!"

Mr. Dutton was surprised and frightened by the intensity of her grief. If she could sorrow in this way for a brief friendship, what untold misery might not life have in store for her? There must have been some serious blunder in his training if she were no better fitted than this to face trouble; and for the first time it occurred to him that he should not have kept her from all companions of her own age.

"Margot!"

[Pg 131]

The sternness of his tone made her look up and calm herself.

"Y-es, uncle."

"This must stop. Adrian went by my invitation. Because I could no longer permit your association. Between his household and ours is a wrong beyond repair. He cannot help that he is his father's son, but being such he is an impossible friend for your father's daughter. I should have sent him away, at my very first suspicion of his identity, but—I want to be just. It has been the effort of my life to learn forgiveness. Until the last I would not allow myself even to believe who he was, but gave him the benefit of the chance that his name might be of another family. When I did know—there was no choice. He had to go."

Margot watched his face, as he spoke, with a curious feeling that this was not the loved and loving uncle she had always known but a stranger. There were

wrinkles and scars she had never noticed, a bitterness that made the voice an unfamiliar one, and a weariness in the droop of the figure leaning upon the hoe which suggested an aged and heart-broken man.

[Pg 132]

Why, only yesterday, it seemed, Hugh Dutton was the very type of a stalwart woodlander, with the grace of a finished and untiring scholar, making the man unique. Now—— If Adrian had done this thing, if his mere presence had so altered her beloved guardian, then let Adrian go! Her arms went around the man's neck and her kisses showered upon his cheeks, his hands, even his bent white head.

"Uncle, uncle! Don't look like that! Don't. He's gone and shall never come back. Everything's gone, hasn't it? Even that irreparable past, of which I'd never heard. Why, if I'd dreamed, do you suppose I'd even ever have spoken to him? No, indeed. Why you, the tip of your smallest finger, the smallest lock of your hair, is worth more than a thousand Adrians! I was sorry he'd treated me so rudely. But now I'm glad, glad, glad. I wouldn't listen to him now, not if he said good-bye forever and ever. I love you, uncle, best of all the world, and you love me. Let's be just as we were before any strangers came. Come, let's go out on the lake."

[Pg 133]

He smiled at her extravagance and abruptness. The times when they had gone canoeing together had been their merriest, happiest times. It seemed to her that it needed only some such outing to restore the former conditions of their life.

"Not to-day, dearest."

"Why not? The potatoes won't hurt and it's so lovely."

"There are other matters, more important than potatoes. I have put them off too long. Now—Margot, do you love me?"

"Why—uncle!"

"Because there is somebody whom you must love even more dearly. Your father."

"My—father! My father? Of course; though he is dead."

"No, Margot. He is still alive."

CHAPTER XII

[Pg 134]

CARRYING

PIERRE'S ill-temper was short-lived, but his curiosity remained. However, when Adrian steadily refused to gratify it his interest returned to himself.

"Say, I've a mind to go the whole way."

"Where?"

"Wherever you're going. Nothin' to call me back."

"Madoc?"

"We might take him along."

"Not if he's sick. That would be as cruel to him as troublesome to us. Besides, you need go no further than yonder shore."

"Them's the woods you got lost in."

"I know them better now."

"Couldn't find your road to save your life."

"I think I could. Besides, you will be wanted at the island. I don't think Mr. Dutton is a well man. With nobody but an old woman and a young girl he'll need somebody. You're not much good, still——"

[Pg 135]

Pierre laughed. They had about reached the forest and he rested his paddle.

"You hear me. I'm going to where you go. That was the master's word. I wouldn't dare not do it. If I did, my mother'd make me sorry. So that's settled."

Adrian had doubts as to the truth of this statement of the islander's commands. He recalled the words: "as far as you desire." After all, this was not setting a time limit, and it was perfectly natural that anybody should like company through the wilderness. Why, it would be a wild, adventurous journey! the very sort of which he had dreamed before he had tasted the prosaic routine of the lumber-camp. He had his colors and brushes, the birch-bark which served so many forest purposes should be his canvas, they had food, and Pierre, at least, his gun and ammunition—no lad could have protested further.

[Pg 136]

"All right. It will be a lark after my own heart. We can quit as soon as we're tired of it; and—look here. Mr. Dutton said you were paid to take me to the nearest town. How far is that? How long to get there?"

"Oh! I don't know. Donovan's nighest. Might go in four days—might a week. Canada's closer, but you don't want to go north. South, he said."

"Ye-es. I suppose so. Fact is, I don't care where I go nor when. I'm in no hurry. As long as the money and food hold out, I'm satisfied."

"Speakin' of money. I couldn't afford to waste my time."

Adrian laughed at this sudden change of front. It was Pierre who had proposed the long road, but at the mention of money had remembered prudence.

"That's all right, too. It was of that I was thinking, you greedy fellow. What do guides get, here in the woods?"

[Pg 137]

Pierre stepped ashore, carefully beached his canoe, and as carefully considered his reply before he made it. How much did this city lad know? Either at camp or on the island had he heard the just rates of such service?

"Well—how much you got?"

"I'm asking a question, not you."

"About four dollars, likely."

"Whew! not much. You can get the best of them for two. I'll give you a dollar a day when we're resting and one-fifty when we're traveling."

Adrian was smiling in the darkness at his own sudden thrift. He had taken a leaf out of his comrade's own book, and beyond that, he almost loved his precious earnings, so soon as the thought came of parting with them. He instantly resolved to put aside a ten dollar piece to take the "mater," whenever he should see her. The rest he would use, of course, but not waste. He would paint such pictures up here as would make his old artist friends and the critics open their eyes. The very novelty of the material which should embody them would "take." Already, in imagination, he saw dozens of fascinating "bits" hung on the line at the old Academy, and felt the marvelous sums they brought swelling his pockets to bursting. He'd be the rage, the hit of the next season; and what pride he'd have in sending newspaper notices of himself to Peace Island! How Margot would open her blue eyes, and Angelique toss her hands, and the master slowly admit that there was genius where he had estimated only talent.

[Pg 138]

"There's such a wide, wide difference in the two!" cried Adrian, aloud.

"Hey? What?"

The dreamer came back to reality, and to Pierre, demanding,

"Make it one-seventy-five, and I'll do it."

"Well. I will. Now, for to-night. Shall we camp right here or go further into the forest? In the woods I'm always ready for bed, and its later than usual now."

[Pg 139]

"Here. I know the very rocks you got under in that storm. They'll do as good as a tent, and easier."

Adrian, also, knew that spot and in a few moments both lads were asleep. They had not stopped even to build the fire that was customary in such quarters.

Pierre was awake first, on the next morning, and Adrian slowly rose, stretching

his cramped limbs and yawning widely.

"Well, I must say that Angelique's good mattress beats rocks. You don't catch me doing that again. I guess I'll walk down to the water and have a last look at the island."

"I guess you won't. You'll eat your breakfast right now. Then you'll fix that birch for the carry. If I do the heavy work you've got to do the light."

"Sounds fair enough, but you're paid and I'm not."

"It is fair."

Adrian did not contest the point; the less readily because he saw that the fried chicken Angelique had given them was rapidly diminishing in quantity.

[Pg 140]

"Think I'll fall to, myself. My, but I'm hungry! Wish I had a cup of coffee."

"Can't waste time now. We'll have some to-night."

"Did they give us some?"

"Look in the pack."

"After breakfast, I'll oblige you."

Pierre grinned and helped himself to a wing.

Adrian seized the tin basin which held the fowl and placed it behind himself. "Enough's as good as a feast. We shall be hungry again. See here. What kind of a bird was this? or birds? all legs and arms, no bodies. Freaks of nature. Eh? How many breast portions have you devoured?"

"Three."

"Oh! Then, travel or no travel, you get no wage this day. Understand. I'm commander of this expedition. I see to the commissariat. I'll overhaul the pack, and take account of stock."

[Pg 141]

Pierre assisted at the task. Though he had been impatient to get away from that locality, still too dangerously near his mother's rule, he intended to keep an eye on everything. Paid or not paid, as Adrian fared so would he—only rather better.

"Why, they must have thought we would be in the woods a long time. They were certainly generous."

They had been, but Pierre considered that they might have been more so.

"This was for both trips. Half is mine."

"Nonsense. But—there. We're not going to squabble all the time, like children. And we both know exactly what we have to depend on. We must fish and shoot—"

"How'll you do that? The only gun is mine."

"It's part of the outfit. Let's see. A little good tent cloth—not big enough to cover any but good-natured folks—salt pork, beans, sugar, coffee, tea, flour, meal, dishes— Hello! We're kings, Ricord! Monarchs of Maine."

[Pg 142]

"Cut the splints."

After all, it seemed to be Pierre who did the ordering, but Adrian had sense to see that he was the wiser of the two in woodcraft; even though he himself had made it a study during the last weeks. He seized the axe and attacked a cedar-tree, from which he had soon cut the binding strips he wanted. Then he laid the paddles in the boat, fastening them with rootlets to the three thwarts. He also fastened two broad bands of the pliable splints in such a way that when it was inverted, the weight of the canoe could be borne in part by the forehead and shoulders. He was ready almost as soon as Pierre had retied the pack, which was to be Adrian's burden.

"All right! I'll swing her up. This 'carry' isn't a long one and the first thoroughfare is ten miles before we come to dead water. But it's up-stream that far and we'll have to warp up some. Part is fair, but more is rips."

[Pg 143]

If Pierre thought to confound his mate by his woodland slang he was

disappointed. Margot had been a good teacher and Adrian had been eager to learn what he had not already done from the loggers. Pierre had been puzzled by “commissariat” and “expedition” and felt that he had evened matters nicely.

“Oh! I know. A thoroughfare is a river, and a dead water is a lake. And a carrier is—yourself!”

To show his new skill he caught up the canoe and inverted it over his own head. He, also, had been calculating a bit, and realized that the birch was really the lighter burden. So he generously left the pack to his neighbor and started forward bravely.

“All right, like you say. One little bit, then you change. Then, too, maybe I’m not ready.”

With a whistle and spring Pierre hoisted the pack to his shoulders, wound its straps around his body and started off through the forest at a sort of dog-trot pace, pausing neither for swamp nor fallen tree; and Adrian realized that if he were to keep his companion in sight he must travel equally fast.

[Pg 144]

Alas! this was impossible. The birch which had seemed so light and romantic a “carry” became suddenly the heaviest and most difficult. He caught its ends on tree trunks and righting these blunders he stumbled over the rough way. The thongs that had seemed so smooth cut his forehead and burned into his chest, and putting pride in his pocket, he shouted:

“Pierre! Pierre Ricord! Come back or you’ll get no money!”

It would have been a convincing argument had it been heard, but it was not. Pierre had already gone too far in advance. Yet at that moment a sound was borne on the breeze toward Adrian which effectually banished all thought of fatigue or of ill-treatment. A long-drawn, unmistakable cry that once heard no man with the hunter instinct ever forgets.

[Pg 145]

“A moose! And Pierre has the gun!”

CHAPTER XIII

[Pg 146]

A DEAD WATER TRAGEDY

BUT Pierre, also, had heard that distant “Ugh-u-u-ugh!” and instantly paused. His own anxiety was lest Adrian should not hear and be still. Fortunately, the wind was in their favor and the sensitive nostrils of the moose less apt to scent them. Having listened a moment, he dropped his pack so softly that, heavy as it was, it scarcely made the undergrowth crack. His gun was always loaded and now making it ready for prompt use, he started back toward his companion. The Indian in his nature came to the fore. His step was alert, precise, and light as that of any four-footed forester. When within sight of the other lad, listening and motionless, his eye brightened.

“If he keeps that way, maybe— Ah!”

The moose called again, but further off. This was a disappointment, but they were on good ground for hunting and another chance would come. Meanwhile they would better make all haste to the thoroughfare. There would be the better place, and out in the canoe they’d have a wider range.

[Pg 147]

“Here, you. Give me the boat. Did you hear it?”

“Did I not? But you had the gun!”

“Wouldn’t have made any difference if you’d had it. Too far off. Let’s get on.”

Adrian lifted the pack and dropped it in disgust. “I can’t carry that load!”

Pierre was also disgusted—by the other’s ignorance and lack of endurance.

“What you don’t know about the woods beats all. Haven’t you seen anybody pack things before? I’ll show you. When there’s big game handy is no time to quarrel. If a pack’s too heavy, halve it. Watch and learn something.”

Pierre could be both swift and dexterous if he chose, and he rapidly unrolled and divided the contents of the cotton tent. Putting part into the blanket he retied the rest in the sheeting, and now neither bundle was a very severe tax.

[Pg 148]

"Whew! What's the sense of that? It's the same weight. How does halving it help?"

Pierre swung the canoe upon his head and directed:

"Catch hold them straps. Carry one a few rods. Drop it. Come back after the other. Carry that a ways beyond the first. Drop it. Get number one. All time lap over, beyond, over, beyond. So."

With a stick he illustrated on the ground, and wasting no further time nor speech, clasped his gun the tighter under his arm and trotted forward again.

Adrian obeyed instructions, and though it seemed, at first, a waste to go back and forth along the carry as he had been directed, found that, in the end, he had accomplished his task with small fatigue or delay.

"Another bit of woodcraft for my knowledge box. Useful elsewhere, too. Wish I could get through this country as fast as Pierre does. But he'll have to wait for me, anyway."

[Pg 149]

For a time Adrian could easily trace the route of his guide by the bruises the canoe had given the leaves and undergrowth but after awhile the forest grew more open and this trail was lost. Then he stopped to consider. He had no intention of losing himself again.

"We are aiming for the south. Good. All the big branches of these hemlocks point that way—so yonder's my road. Queer, too, how mossy the tree trunks are on the north sides. I've heard that you could drop an Indian anywhere in any forest and he'd travel to either point of the compass he desired with nothing to guide him but his instinct. Wish I were an Indian! Wish, rather, I had my own compass and good outfit that went over in my canoe. Hurrah! There's a glimmer of water. That's the thoroughfare. Now a dash for it!"

[Pg 150]

Adrian was proud of his new skill in finding his own way through a trackless forest, but though he duly reached the stream he could not for a time see anything of Pierre. He did not wish to shout, lest the moose might be near and take fright, but at last he did give a faint halloo and an answer came at once. Then the boat shot out from behind a clump of alders and made down the river toward him.

The current was swift and strong and there was considerable poling to be done before it touched the shore and Pierre stepped out.

"I've been looking round. This is as good a place to camp to-night as we'll find. Leave the things here, and might as well get ready now. Then we can stay out all day and come back when we like."

"But I thought we were to go on up the thoroughfare. Why stop here at all? Other camping places are easy to find."

"Are they? My, you can ask questions. Good many things go to making right sort of camp. Dry ground, good water to drink, fire-wood, poles— Oh! shucks! If you don't know, keep still and learn."

[Pg 151]

This was excellent advice and Adrian was tired. He decided to trust to the other lad's common sense and larger experience, and having so decided, calmly stretched himself out upon the level bank of the stream and went to sleep.

Pierre's temper rose still higher and after he had endured the sight of Adrian's indolence as long as possible he stepped to the river and dipped a bucket of water. Then he returned and quietly dashed it over the drowsy lad. The effect was all that Pierre desired.

"What did you do that for?"

"Take this axe and get to work. I've chopped long enough. It's my turn to rest. Or would be, only I'm after moose."

Adrian realized that he had given cause for offense and laughed good-naturedly. His nap had rested him much more than his broken sleep of the night under the

[Pg 152]

rocks, and the word "moose" had an inspiration all its own.

"I've cut the fire-wood. You get poles for the tent. I'll get things ready for supper."

Adrian laid his hand dramatically upon his stomach. "I've an inner conviction already that dinner precedes supper."

"Cut, can't you?"

"Cut, it is."

In a few moments he had chopped down a few slender poles, and selecting two with forked branches he planted these upright on a little rise of the driest ground. Across the notches he laid a third pole, and over this he stretched their strip of sheeting. When this was pegged down at a convenient angle at the back and also secured at the ends, they had a very comfortable shelter from the dew and possible rain. The affair was open on one side and before this Pierre had heaped the wood for the fire when they should return after the day's hunt. Together they cut and spread the spruce and hemlock boughs for their bed, arranging them in overlapping rows, with an added quantity for pillows. Wrapped in their blankets, for even at midsummer these were not amiss, they hoped to sleep luxuriously.

[Pg 153]

They stored their food in as safe a spot as possible, though Pierre said that nothing would molest it, unless it might be a hungry hedgehog, but Adrian preferred to take no risks. Then with knives freshly sharpened on the rocks, and the gun in hand, they cautiously stepped into the canoe and pushed off.

"One should not jump into a birch. Easiest thing in the world to split the bottom," its owner had explained.

Adrian had no desire to do anything that would hinder their success, therefore submitted to his guide's dictation with a meekness that would have amused Margot.

She would not have been amused by their undertaking nor its but half-anticipated results. After a long and difficult warping-up the rapids, in which Adrian's skill at using the sharp-pointed pole that helped to keep the canoe off the rocks surprised Ricord, they reached a dead water, with low, rush-dotted banks.

[Pg 154]

"Get her into that cove yonder, and keep still. I've brought some bark and'll make a horn."

There, while they rested and listened, Pierre deftly rolled his strip of birch-bark into a horn of two feet in length, small at the mouth end but several inches wide at the other. He tied it with cedar thongs and putting it to his lips, uttered a call so like a cow-moose that Adrian wondered more and more.

"Hmm. I thought I was pretty smart, myself; but I'll step down when you take the stand."

"Sh-h-h! Don't move. Don't speak. Don't breathe, if you can help it."

Adrian became rigid, all his faculties merged in that one desire to lose no sound.

[Pg 155]

Again Pierre gave the moose-call, and—hark! what was that? An answering cry, a far-away crashing of boughs, the onrush of some big creature, hastening to its mate.

Noiselessly Pierre brought his gun into position, sighting one distant point from which he thought his prey would come. Adrian's body dripped with a cold sweat, his hands trembled, specks floated before his staring eyes, every nerve was tense, and, as Margot would have said, he was a-thrill "with murder," from head to foot! Oh! if the gun were his, and the shot!

Another call, another cry, and a magnificent head came into view. With horns erect and quivering nostrils the monarch of that wilderness came, seeking love, and faced his enemies.

"He's within range—shoot!" whispered Adrian.

"Only anger him that way. 'Sh! When he turns——"

[Pg 156]

"Bang! bang—bang!" in swift succession.

The great horns tossed, the noble head came round again, then bent, wavered and disappeared. The tragedy was over.

"I got him! I got him that time! Always shoot that way, never——"

Pierre picked up his paddle and sent the canoe forward at a leap. When there came no responding movement from his companion he looked back over his shoulder. Adrian's face had gone white and the eagerness of his eyes had given place to unspeakable regret.

"What's the matter? Sick?"

"Yes. Why, it was murder! Margot was right."

"Oh! shucks!"

Whereupon Pierre pulled the faster toward the body of his victim.

CHAPTER XIV

[Pg 157]

SHOOTING THE RAPIDS

THREE months earlier, if anybody had told Adrian he would ever be guilty of such "squeamishness" he would have laughed in derision. Now, all unconsciously to himself, the influence of his summer at Peace Island was upon him and it came to him with the force of a revelation that God had created the wild creatures of His forests for something nobler than to become the prey of man.

"Oh! that grand fellow! his splendidly defiant, yet hopeless, facing of death! I wish we'd never met him!"

"Well, of all foolishness! I thought you wanted nothing but the chance at him yourself."

"So I did. Before I saw him. What if it had been Madoc?"

"That's different."

[Pg 158]

"The same. Might have been twin brothers. Maybe they were."

"Couldn't have been. Paddle, won't you?"

Adrian did so, but with a poor grace. He would now far rather have turned the canoe about toward camp, yet railed at himself for his sudden cowardice. He shrank from looking on the dead moose as only an hour before he had longed to do so.

They were soon at the spot where the animal had disappeared and pushing the boat upon the reedy shore, Pierre plunged forward through the marsh. Adrian did not follow, till a triumphant shout reached him. Then he felt in his pocket and, finding a pencil with a bit of paper, made his own way more slowly to the side of his comrade, who, wildly excited, was examining and measuring his quarry. On a broad leaved rush he had marked off a hand's width and from this unit calculated that:

"He's eight feet four from hoof to shoulder, and that betters the King by six inches. See. His horns spread nigh six feet. If he stood straight and held them up he'd be fifteen feet or nothing! They spread more'n six feet, and I tell you, he's a beauty!"

[Pg 159]

"Yes. He's all of that. But of what use is his beauty now?"

"Humph! Didn't know you was a girl!"

Adrian did not answer. He was rapidly and skilfully sketching the prostrate animal, and studying it minutely. From his memory of it alive and the drawing he hoped to paint a tolerably lifelike portrait of the animal; and a fresh inspiration came to him. To those projected woodland pictures he would add glimpses of its wild denizens, and in such a way that the hearts of the beholders should be moved to pity, not to slaughter.

But, already that sharpened knife of Pierre's was at work, defacing, mutilating.

"Why do that, man?"

"Why not? What ails you? What'd we hunt for?"

[Pg 160]

"We don't need him for food. You cannot possibly carry those horns any distance on our trip, and you're not apt to come back just this same way. Let him lie. You've done him all the harm you should. Come on. Is this like him?" And Adrian showed his drawing.

"Oh! it's like enough. If you don't relish my job—clear out. I can skin him alone."

Adrian waited no second bidding, but strolled away to a distance and tried to think of other things than the butchering in progress. But at last Pierre whistled and he had to go back or else be left in the wilderness to fare alone as best he might. It was a ghastly sight. The great skin, splashed and wet with its owner's blood, the dismembered antlers, the slashed off nose—which such as Pierre considered a precious tid-bit, the naked carcass and the butcher's own uninviting state.

"I declare, I can never get into the same boat with you and all that horror. Do leave it here. Do wash yourself—there's plenty of water, and let's be gone."

[Pg 161]

Pierre did not notice the appeal. Though the lust of killing had died out of his eyes the lust of greed remained. Already he was estimating the value of the hide, cured or uncured, and the price those antlers would bring could he once get them to the proper market.

"Why, I've heard that in some of the towns folks buy 'em to hang their hats on. Odd! Lend a hand."

Reluctantly, Adrian did lift his portion of the heavy horns and helped carry them to the birch. He realized that the pluckiest way of putting this disagreeable spot behind him was by doing as he was asked. He was hopeless of influencing the other by any change in his own feelings and wisely kept silence.

But they hunted no more that day, nor did they make any further progress on their journey. Pierre busied himself in erecting a rude frame upon which he stretched the moose skin to dry. He also prepared the antlers and built a sort of hut, of saplings and bark, where he could store his trophies till his return trip.

[Pg 162]

"For I shall surely come back this same way. It's good hunting ground and moose feed in herds. Small herds, course, but two, three make a fellow rich. Eh?"

Adrian said nothing. He occupied himself in what Pierre considered a silly fashion, sketching, studying "effects," and carefully cutting big pieces of the birch-bark that he meant to use for "canvas." To keep this flat during his travels was a rather difficult problem, but finally solved by cutting two slabs of cedar wood and placing the sheets of bark between these.

Whereupon, Pierre laughed and assured the weary chopper that he had had his trouble for his pains.

"What for you want to carry big lumber that way? Roll your bark. That's all right. When you want to use it put it in water. Easy. Queer how little you know about things."

[Pg 163]

"All right. I was silly, sure enough. But thanks for your teaching. Maybe, if you were in my city I might show you a thing or two."

Both lads were glad, however, when night came, and having cooked themselves a good supper and replenished their fire, they slept as only such healthy lads can sleep; to wake at sunrise, ready for fresh adventures, and with the tragedy of the previous day partly forgotten even by Adrian. Then, after a hearty breakfast, they resumed their trip.

Nothing eventful occurred for some time after. No more moose appeared, and beyond winging a duck or two and fishing now and then, Pierre kept his hunting instincts down. In fact, he was just then too lazy to exert himself. He felt that he had labored beyond all reason during the past summer and needed a rest. Besides, were not his wages steadily going on? If Adrian was silly enough to paint and paint and paint—all day, this old tree and that mossy stump, he was

[Pg 164]

not responsible for another man's stupidity. Not he. The food was still holding out, so let things take their course.

Suddenly, however, Adrian realized that they were wasting time. He had made sketches on everything and anything he could find and had accumulated enough birch-bark to swamp the canoe, should they strike rough water; and far more than was comfortable for him to carry over any portage. So one morning he announced his intention of leaving the wilderness and getting back to civilization.

"All right. I go with you. Show me the town, then I'll come back."

"Well. As you please. Only I don't propose to pay you any longer than will take us, now by the shortest road, to Donovan's."

"Time enough to borrow that trouble when you see it."

But Pierre suggested that, as Adrian wished to learn everything possible about the woods, he should now take the guidance of affairs, and that whenever things went wrong he, Pierre, could point the way. He did this because, of late, he fancied that his young employer had taken a "too top-lofty" tone in addressing him; and, in truth, Adrian's day-dreams of coming fame and his own genius were making him feel vastly superior to the rough woodsman.

[Pg 165]

They had paddled over dead water to a point where two streams touched it, and the question rose—which way?

"That!" said Adrian, with decision, pointing to the broader and more southern of the two.

"Good enough."

For a moment the leader fancied there was a gleam of malice in his hireling's eye, but he considered it beneath his notice and calmly turned the canoe into the thoroughfare he had chosen. It was wonderfully smooth and delightful paddling. In all their trip they had not found so level a stream, and it was nothing but enjoyment of the scenery that Adrian felt, until it seemed to him that they had been moving a long time without arriving anywhere. "Haven't we?" he asked.

[Pg 166]

"Oh! we'll get there soon, now."

Presently things began to look familiar. There was one curiously shaped, lightning-riven pine, standing high above its fellows, that appeared like an old friend.

"Why, what's this? Can there be two trees, exactly alike, within a half-day's rowing? I've certainly sketched that old landmark from every side, and—Hello! yonder's my group of white-birches or I'm blind. How queer!"

A few more sweeps and the remains of the camp they had that morning left were before them, and Pierre could no longer repress his glee.

"Good guide, you! Trust a know-it-all for making mistakes."

"What does it mean?" demanded Adrian, angrily.

"Nothing. Only you picked out a run-about, a little branch of river, that wanders out of course and then comes home again. Begins and ends the same. Oh! you're wise, you are."

[Pg 167]

"Would the other lead us right?"

"Yes."

"But it turns north. We're bound south."

"That's no matter. Can't a river turn, same as runabouts?"

"I give up. You guide. I'll stick to my brush."

This restored affairs to the ground which Pierre considered proper; and having paused long enough to eat a lunch, they set out afresh. The new track they followed ascended steadily, and it proved a difficult stream to get up; but the ascent was accomplished without accident and then the surface of the land altered. Again they reached a point where two branches met and Pierre

explained that the waters of one ran due north, but the other bent gradually toward the south and in a little while descended through one of the most dangerous "rips" he had ever seen.

[Pg 168]

"Only saw them once, too. When I went as far as Donovan's with the master, year before last."

"Didn't know he ever came so far from the island."

"Why, he goes once every summer, or fall, as far as that New York of yours. Likely he'll be going soon again."

"He does? Queer he never mentioned it."

"Maybe. I've a notion, though, that the things he don't say are more important than what he does. Ever shoot a rip?"

"No. I've tried and failed. That's how I happened to get lost and wandered to Dutton's."

"He's the boss hand at it. Seems as if the danger fired him up. Makes him feel as I do when I hunt big game. He didn't need my help, only fetched me along to take back some truck. That's how he picked me out to show you. He knew I knew——"

[Pg 169]

"And I wish I knew—lots of things!"

"One of 'em might be that round that next turn comes the first dip. Then, look out."

The stream was descending very perceptibly; and they needed no paddling to keep them moving. But they did require to be incessantly on the watch to guard against the rocks which obstructed the current and which threatened the safety of their frail craft.

"You keep an eye on me and one on the channel. It'll take a clear head to carry us through, and no fooling."

Adrian did not answer. He had no thought for anything just then but the menace of those jagged points which seemed to reach toward them as if to destroy.

Nor did Pierre speak again. Far better even than his silent companion could he estimate the perils which beset them. Life itself was the price which they would pay for a moment's carelessness; but a cool head, a clear eye, and a steady wrist—these meant safety and the proud record of a dangerous passage wisely made. A man who could shoot those rapids was a guide who might, indeed, some time demand the high wages at which Adrian had jeered.

[Pg 170]

Suddenly, the channel seemed barred by two opposing bowlders, whose points lapped each other. In reality, there was a way between them, by the shortest of curves and of but little more than the canoe's width. Pierre saw and measured the distance skilfully, but he had not counted upon the opposing force of the water that rushed against them.

"Look—out! take——"

Behind the right-hand rock seethed a mighty whirlpool where the river speeding downward was caught and tossed back upon itself, around and around, mad to escape yet bound by its own power.

Into this vortex the canoe was hurled; to be instantly overturned and dashed to pieces on the rock.

[Pg 171]

On its first circuit of the pool Adrian leaped and landed upon the slippery bowlder—breathless, but alive! His hand still clasped the pole he had been using to steer with, and Pierre——? He had almost disappeared within the whirling water, that tossed him like a feather.

CHAPTER XV

[Pg 172]

SCIENCE AND SUPERSTITION

FOR an instant Adrian closed his eyes that he might not see the inevitable end. But—was it inevitable? At the logging camp he had heard of just such accidents as this and not all of them were fatal. The water in its whirling sometimes tossed that which it had caught outward to safety.

He flung himself prone and extended the pole. Pierre's body was making another circuit of that horrible pit and when—if—should it— The drowning boy's head was under the current, but his legs swung round upon its surface, faster and faster, as they drew nearer the centre.

Then—a marvel! The long pole was thrust under the invisible arms, which closed upon it as a vice.

"Hold! Hold! I'll pull you out!"

[Pg 173]

But for the hard labor of the past few weeks Adrian's muscles could not have stood the strain. Yet they did, and as he drew the nearly senseless Pierre upon the rock beside himself his soul went up in such glad thanksgiving as he had never known, or might know again. A life saved. That was worth all things.

For an hour they lay there, resting, recovering; then Pierre, himself, stood up to see what chance there was for a fuller deliverance. He was a very sober and altered Pierre, and his drenched clothing added to the forlornness of his appearance.

"Nothing left but—us. Came nigh bein' only you. Say, Adrian, I shan't forget it."

"How are we going to get ashore?"

"'Tisn't much harder'n Margot's stepping-stones. Done them times enough."

Again Adrian was grateful for his forest experience, but he asked with some anxiety:

"Suppose you are strong enough to do it?"

"Isn't any supposin' about it. Got to. Might as well died in the pool as starve on this rock."

[Pg 174]

Adrian didn't see that there was much better than starvation before them even if they did reach shore, but he kept his fear to himself. Besides, it was not probable that they had been saved from the flood to perish in the forest. They would better look at the bright side of the situation, if they hoped to find such.

"I can jump them."

"So can I."

"Don't let go that pole. I mean to keep that as long as I live—'less you want it yourself. If you do—"

"No, Pierre, it belongs to you, and doubly now. Which should go first—you or I?"

"Draw lots. If that one falls in, the other must fish him out. Only we won't try it on this side, by the pool."

They carefully surveyed the crossing, almost as dangerous an affair as shooting the rapids had been. Yet, as Pierre had said, they "had to."

[Pg 175]

Adrian picked a bit of floating weed that had swept within his reach and broke it into unequal portions. The shortest bit fell to him and with as cheerful a "here goes!" as he could muster he sprang for the next stone. He made it; more easily than he had hoped, and saw that his best chance lay in looking straight ahead to the next landing-point—and the next—never down at the swirling river.

"Landed! Come!"

Pierre was heavier but more practiced than his mate, and in a few seconds the two stood together on the shore, regarding the ruins of their boat and thinking of what they would not have for supper.

All at once Pierre's eye brightened.

"Say! there's been a camp here. Not so long ago, either. See that barrel in the brush? There's an old birch shed yonder. Hurrah!"

They did not linger, though Adrian kept hoping that something from their lost

[Pg 176]

outfit might be tossed outward toward them, even as Pierre had been; but nothing came in sight and he reached the dilapidated shed only a few feet behind the other.

"There's a bed left still, but not such a soft one. And there's pork in that barrel. Wonder the hedgehogs haven't found it."

But as Pierre thrust his nose into the depths of the cask he understood the reason of its safety.

"Whew! Even a porkypine wouldn't touch that! Never mind. Reckon our boots'll need greasing after that ducking, or mine will, and it'll answer. Anything under the shed?"

"Don't see anything. Wait. Yes, I do. A canvas bag hung up high. Must have been forgotten when the campers left, for they took everything else, clean sweep. Hurrah! It's beans!"

"Good. Beans are good fodder for hungry cattle."

"How can you eat such hard things? Should think they'd been resurrected from the Pyramids."

[Pg 177]

"Well, I don't know 'Pyramids,' but I do know beans, and how to cook them. Fall to. Let's get a fire. I'm nearly frozen."

"Fire? Can you make one?"

"I can try and—— I've got to. When needs must, you know."

Adrian hastily collected some dry twigs and decaying chips and heaped them in the sunniest place, but for this was promptly reprimanded by the shivering Pierre.

"Don't you know anything at all? Wood won't light, nor burn after 'tis lighted, in the sunshine. Stick up something to shade the stuff, whilst——"

He illustrated what he did not further say, by carefully selecting some hard stones and briskly rubbing them together. A faint spark resulted and a thistle-down caught the spark. To the thistle-down he held a dried grass blade and another. By this small beginning they had soon a tiny blaze and very soon a comforting fire.

[Pg 178]

When they were partially dried and rested, said Pierre:

"Now, fetch on your beans. While they're cooking, we'll take account of what is left."

Adrian brought the bag, refraining from any questions this time. He was wondering and watchful. Pierre's misadventures were developing unsuspected resources and the spirits of both lads rose again to the normal.

"You're so fond of splitting birch for pictures, split me some now for a bucket, while I sharpen this knife again. Lucky for me my pocket buttoned, else it would have gone to the bottom of that pool. Got yours?"

"Yes. I didn't fall in, you know."

"Then I don't ask odds of anybody. I'd rather have a good axe, but when I can't get my rather I take the next best thing."

Adrian procured the strips of birch, which grows so plentifully to hand in all that woodland, and when Pierre had trimmed it into the desired shape he deftly rolled it and tied it with stout rootlets, and behold! there was a shapely sort of kettle, with a twig for a handle. But of what use it might be the city lad had yet to learn.

[Pg 179]

Pierre filled the affair with water and put into it a good handful of the beans. Then he fixed a crotched stick over his fire and hung the birch kettle upon it.

"Oh! don't waste them. I know. I saw Angelique soak them, as they did at camp. I know, now. If we can't cook them we can make them swell up in water, and starving men can exist on such food till they reach a settlement. Of course we'll start as soon as you're all right."

"We'll start when we're ready. That's after we've had something to eat and have

made our new canoe. Never struck a spot where there was likelier birches. 'Twon't be the first one I've built or seen built. Say. Seems as if that God that Margot is always saying takes care of folks must have had a hand in this. Doesn't it?"

[Pg 180]

"Yes. It does," answered Adrian, reverently. Surely, Pierre was a changed and better lad.

Then his eyes rested on the wooden dinner-pot, and to his astonishment it was not burning but hung steadily in its place and the water in it was already beginning to simmer. Above the water line the bark shrivelled and scorched slightly, but Pierre looked out for this and with a scoop made from a leaf replenished the water as it steamed away. The beans, too, were swelling and gave every promise of cooking—in due course of time. Meanwhile, the cook rolled himself over and about in the warmth of the fire till his clothes were dry and all the cold had left his body. Also, he had observed Adrian's surprise with a pardonable pride.

"Lose an Indian in the woods and he's as rich as a lord. It's the Indian in me coming out now."

"It's an extra sense. Divination, instinct, something better than education."

[Pg 181]

"What the master calls 'woodcraft.' Yes. Wonder how he is, and all of them. Say. What do you think I thought about when I was whirling round that pool, before I didn't think of anything?"

"Your sins, I suppose. That's what I've heard comes to a drowning man."

"Shucks! Saw the mère's face when she broke that glass! Fact. Though I wasn't there at the time. And one thing more: saw that ridiculous Xanthippé, looking like she'd never done a thing but warble. Oh! my! How I do wish Margot'd sell her."

"Shall I help you get birch for the canoe now? I begin to believe you can do even that, you are so clever."

This praise was sweet to Pierre's vain ears and had the result which Adrian desired, of diverting the talk from their island friends. In their present situation, hopeful as the other pretended to find it, he felt it best for his own peace of mind not to recall loved and absent faces.

[Pg 182]

They went to work with a will, and will it was that helped them; else with the poor tools at hand they had never accomplished their undertaking. Indeed, it was a labor of considerable time. Not only was that first meal of boiled beans cooked and eaten, but several more of the same sort followed. To vary these, Pierre baked some, in the same method as he had boiled them, or else in the ashes of their fire. He even fashioned a sort of hook from a coat button and with cedar roots for a line, caught a fish now and then. But they craved the seasoning of salt, and even the dessert of blue-berries which nature provided them could not satisfy this longing, which grew almost intolerable to Adrian's civilized palate.

"Queer, isn't it? When I was at that lumber camp I nearly died because all the meat, or nearly all, was so salt. Got so I couldn't eat anything, hardly. Now, just because I haven't salt I can't eat, either."

[Pg 183]

"Indians not that way. Indians eat one thing same's another. Indian just wants to live, don't care about the rest. Indian never eats too much. I'm all Indian now."

Adrian opened his eyes to their widest, then threw himself back and laughed till the tears came.

"Pierre, Pierre! Would you had been 'all Indian' when you tackled Angelique's fried chicken! Umm! I can taste it now!"

But at length the new canoe was ready. They had put as few ribs into it as would suffice to hold it in shape and Pierre had carefully sewn it with the roots of the black cedar, which serves the woodsman for so many purposes, where thread or twine is needed. They had made a paddle and a pole as well as they could with their knives, and having nothing to pack except themselves and their small remnant of beans, made their last camp-fire at that spot and lay down to sleep.

But the dreams of both were troubled; and in the night Adrian rose and went to add wood to the fire. It had died down to coals, but his attention was caught by a ring of white light upon the ashes, wholly distinct from the red embers.

[Pg 184]

“What’s that?”

In a moment he had answered his own question. It was the phosphorescent glow from the inner bark of a half burned log, and further away he saw another portion of the same log making a ghostly radiance on the surrounding ground.

“Oh! I wouldn’t have missed that for anything. Mr. Dutton told me of beautiful sights he had witnessed and of the strange will-o’-the-wisps that abound in the forest. I’ll gather some of the chips.”

He did so, and they made a fairy-like radiance over his palm; but while he was intently studying them, he felt his hand rudely knocked up, so that the bits of wood flew out of it.

“Pierre! Stop that!”

[Pg 185]

“Don’t you know what that is? A warning—a sign—an omen. Oh! if I had never come upon this trip!”

“You foolish fellow. Just as I thought you were beginning to get sense. Nothing in the world but decayed bark and chemical——”

Pierre stopped his ears.

“I was dreaming of the mère. She came with her apron to her eyes and her clothes in tatters. She was scolding——”

“Perfectly natural.”

“And begging me——”

“Not to eat so many half-baked beans for supper.”

“There’s something wrong at the island. I saw the cabin all dark. I saw Margot’s eyes red with weeping.”

“No doubt Tom has been into fresh mischief and your mother has punished him.”

Pierre ignored these flippant interruptions, but rehearsed his dismal visions till Adrian lost patience and pushed him aside.

[Pg 186]

“Go. Bring an armful of fresh wood; some that isn’t phosphorescent, if you prefer. That’ll wake you up and drive the megrims out of your mind.”

“’Tis neither of them things. ’Tis a warning. They were all painted with black, and all the Hollow creatures were painted, too. ’Tis a warning. I shall see death before I am——”

Even while he mandered on in this strain he was unconsciously obeying the command to fetch wood, and moved toward a pile left ready. Now, in raking this together, Adrian had, also, swept that spot of ground clean and exposed; and what neither had observed in the twilight was plainly revealed by the glow and shadows cast by the fire.

This was a low, carefully made mound that, in shape and significance, could be confounded with no other sort of mound, wherever met. Both recognized it at once, and even upon Adrian the shock was painful; but its effect upon superstitious Pierre was far greater. With a shriek that startled the silence of the forest he flung himself headlong.

[Pg 187]

CHAPTER XVI

[Pg 188]

DIVERGING ROADS

“GET up, Pierre. You should be ashamed of yourself!”

It needed a strong and firm grasp to force the terrified lad to his feet and even

when he, at last, stood up he shivered like an aspen.

"A grave!"

"Certainly. A grave. But neither yours nor mine. Only that of some poor fellow who has died in the wilderness. I'm sorry I piled the brush upon it, yet glad we discovered it in the end."

"Gla-a-ad!" gasped the other.

"Yes. Of course. I mean to cover it with fresh sods and plant some of those purple orchids at its head. I'll cut a cedar headstone, too, and mark it so that nobody else shall desecrate it as we have done."

"You mustn't touch it! It's nobody's—only a warning."

[Pg 189]

"A warning, surely; that we must take great care lest a like fate come on us; but somebody lies under that mound and I pity him. Most probable that he lost his life in that very whirlpool which wrecked us. Twice I've been upset and lost all my belongings, but escaped safe. I hope I'll not run the same chance again. Come. Lie down again, and go to sleep."

"Couldn't sleep; to try in such a haunted place would be to be 'spelled'—"

"Pierre Ricord! For a fellow that's so smart at some things you are the biggest dunce I know, in others. Haven't we slept like lords ever since we struck this camp? I'm going to make my bed up again and turn in. I advise you to do the same."

Adrian tossed the branches aside, then rearranged them, lapping the soft ends over the hard ones in an orderly row which would have pleased a housewife. Thus freshened his odorous mattress was as good as new, and stretching himself upon it he went to sleep immediately.

[Pg 190]

Pierre fully intended to keep awake; but fatigue and loneliness prevailed, and five minutes later he had crept close to Adrian's side.

The sunshine on his face, and the sound of a knife cutting wood awoke him; and there was Adrian whittling away at a broad slab of cedar, smiling and jeering, and in the best of spirits, despite his rather solemn occupation.

"For a fellow who wouldn't sleep, you've done pretty well. See. I've caught a fish and set it cooking. I've picked a pile of berries, and have nearly finished this headstone. Added another accomplishment to my many—monument maker. But I'm wrong to laugh over that, though the poor unknown to whom it belongs would be grateful to me, I've no doubt. Lend a hand, will you?"

But nothing would induce Pierre to engage in any such business. Nor would he touch his breakfast while Adrian's knife was busy. He sat apart, looking anywhere rather than toward his mate, and talking over his shoulder to him in a strangely subdued voice.

[Pg 191]

"Adrian!"

"Well?"

"Most done?"

"Nearly."

"What you going to put on it?"

"I've been wondering. Think this: 'To the Memory of My Unknown Brother.'"

"Wh-a-a-t!"

Adrian repeated the inscription.

"He was no kin to you."

"We are all kin. It's all one world, God's world. All the people and all these forests, and the creatures in them—I tell you I've never heard a sermon that touched me as the sight of this grave in the wilderness has touched me. I mean to be a better, kinder man, because of it. Margot was right, none of us has a right to his own self. She told me often that I should go home to my own folks and make everything right with them; then, if I could, come back and live in the

[Pg 192]

woods, somewhere. 'If I felt I must.' But I don't feel that way now. I want to get back and go to work. I want to live so that when I die—like that poor chap, yonder,—somebody will have been the better for my life. Pshaw! Why do I talk to you like this? Anyway, I'll set this slab in place, and then——"

Pierre rose and still without looking Adrian's way, pushed the new canoe into the water. He had carefully pitched it, on the day before, with a mixture of the old pork grease and gum from the trees, so that there need be no delay at starting.

Adrian finished his work, lettered the slab with a coal from the fire, and re-watered the wild flowers he had already planted.

"Aren't you going to eat breakfast first?"

"Not in a graveyard," answered Pierre, with a solemnity that checked Adrian's desire to smile.

A last reverent attention, a final clearing of all rubbish from the spot, and he, too, stepped into the canoe and picked up his paddle. They had passed the rapids and reached a smooth stretch of the river, where they had camped, and now pulled steadily and easily away, once more upon their journey south. But not till they had put a considerable distance between themselves and that woodland grave, would Pierre consent to stop and eat the food that Adrian had prepared. Even then, he restricted the amount to be consumed, remarking with doleful conviction:

[Pg 193]

"We're going to be starved before we reach Donovan's. The 'food stick' burnt off and dropped into the fire, last night."

Adrian remembered that his mate had spoken of it at the time, when by some carelessness, they had not secured the crotched sapling on which they hung their birch kettle.

"Oh! you simple thing. Why will you go through life tormenting yourself with such nonsense? Come. Eat your breakfast. We're going straight to Donovan's as fast as we can. I've done with the woods for a time. So should you be done. You're needed at the island. Not because of any dreams but because the more I recall of Mr. Dutton's appearance the surer I am that he is a sick man. You'll go back, won't you?"

[Pg 194]

"Yes. I'm going back. Not because you ask me, though."

"I don't care why—only go."

"I'm not going into the show business."

Adrian smiled. "Of course you're not. You'll never have money enough. It would cost lots."

"'Tisn't that. 'Twas the dream. That was sent me. All them animals in black paint, and the blue herons without any heads, and—— My mother came for me, last night."

"I heartily wish you could go to her this minute! She's superstitious enough, in all conscience, yet she has the happy faculty of keeping her lugubrious son in subjection."

Whenever Pierre became particularly depressing the other would rattle off as many of the longest words as occurred to him. They had the effect of diverting his comrade's thoughts.

[Pg 195]

Then they pulled on again, nor did anything disastrous happen to further hinder their progress. The food did not give out, for they lived mostly upon berries, having neither time nor desire to stop and cook their remnant of beans. When they were especially tired Pierre lighted a fire and made a bucket of hemlock tea, but Adrian found cold water preferable to this decoction; and, in fact, they were much nearer Donovan's, that first settlement in the wilderness, than even Pierre had suspected.

Their last portage was made—an easy one, there being nothing but themselves and the canoe to carry—and they came to a big dead water where they had looked to find another running stream; but had no sooner sighted it than their ears were greeted by the laughter of loons, which threw up their legs and dived

[Pg 196]

beneath the surface in that absurd manner which Adrian always found amusing.

"Bad luck, again!" cried Pierre, instantly, "never hear a loon but——"

"But you see a house! Look, look! Donovan's, or somebody's, no matter whose! A house, a house!"

There, indeed, it lay; a goodly farmstead, with its substantial cabins, its outbuildings, its groups of cattle on the cleared land, and—yes, yes, its moving human beings, and what seemed oddest still, its teams of horses.

Even Pierre was silent, and tears sprang to the eyes of both lads as they gazed. Until that moment neither had fully realized how lonely and desolate had been their situation.

"Now for it! It's a biggish lake and we're pretty tired! But that means rest, plenty to eat, people—everything."

Their rudely built canoe was almost useless when they beached it at last on Donovan's wharf, and their own strength was spent. But it was a hospitable household to which they had come, and one quite used to welcoming wanderers from the forest. They were fed and clothed and bedded, without question, but, when a long sleep had set them both right, tongues wagged and plans were settled with amazing promptness.

[Pg 197]

For there were other guests at the farm; a party of prospectors, going north into the woods to locate timber for the next season's cutting. These would be glad of Pierre's company and help, and would pay him "the going wages." But they would not return by the route he had come, though by leaving theirs at a point well north, he could easily make his way back to the island.

"So you shot the poor moose for nothing. You cannot even have his horns!" said Adrian reproachfully. "Well, as soon as I can vote, I mean to use all my influence to stop this murder in the forest."

The strangers smiled and shrugged their shoulders. "We're after game ourselves, as well as timber, but legislation is already in progress to stop the indiscriminate slaughter of the fast disappearing moose and caribou. Five hundred dollars is the fine to be imposed for any infringement of the law, once passed."

[Pg 198]

Pierre's jaw dropped. He was so impressed by the long words and the mention of that, to him, enormous sum, that he was rendered speechless for a longer time than Adrian ever remembered. But, if he said nothing, he reflected sadly upon the magnificent antlers he should see no more.

Adrian's affairs were also, speedily and satisfactorily arranged. Farmer Donovan would willingly take him to the nearest stage route; thence to a railway would be easy journeying; and by steam he could travel swiftly, indeed, to that distant home which he now so longed to see.

The parting of the lads was brief, but not without emotion. Two people cannot go through their experiences and dangers, to remain indifferent to each other. In both their hearts was now the kindest feeling and the sincere hope that they should meet again. Pierre departed first and looked back many times at the tall, graceful figure of his comrade; then the trees intervened and the forest had again swallowed him into its familiar depths.

[Pg 199]

Then Adrian, also, stepped upon the waiting buck-board and was driven over the rough road in the opposite direction.

Three days later, with nothing in his pocket but his treasured knife, a roll of birch-bark, and the ten-dollar piece which, through all his adventures, he had worn pinned to his inner clothing, "a make-piece offering" to his mother he reached the brown stone steps to his father's city mansion.

There, for the first time, he hesitated. All the bitterness with which he had descended those steps, banished in disgrace, was keenly remembered.

"Can I, shall I, dare I go up and ring that bell?"

A vision floated before him. Margot's earnest face and tear-dimmed eyes. Her lips speaking:

[Pg 200]

"If I had father or mother anywhere—nothing should ever make me leave them. I would bear everything—but I would be true to them."

An instant later a peal rang through that silent house, such as it had not echoed in many a day. What would be the answer to it?

CHAPTER XVII

[Pg 201]

IN THE HOUR OF DARKNESS

"No sign yet?"

"No sign." Margot's tone was almost hopeless. Day after day, many times each day, she had climbed the pine-tree flagstaff and peered into the distance. Not once had anything been visible, save that wide stretch of forest and the shining lake.

"Suppose you cross again, to old Joe's. He might be back by this time. I'll fix you a bite of dinner, and you better. Maybe——"

The girl shook her head and clasped her arms about old Angelique's neck. Then the long repressed grief burst forth in dry sobs that shook them both, and pierced the housekeeper's faithful heart with a pain beyond endurance.

"Pst! Pouf! Hush, sweetheart, hush! 'Tis nought. A few days more and the master will be well. A few days more and Pierre will come—— Ah! but I had my hands about his ears this minute! That would teach him, yes, to turn his back on duty, him. The ingrate! Well, what the Lord sends the body must bear."

[Pg 202]

Margot lifted her head, shook back her hair, and smiled wanly. The veriest ghost of her old smile, it was, yet even such a delight to the other's eyes.

"Good. That's right. Rouse up. There's a wing of a fowl in the cupboard, left from the master's broth——"

"Angelique, he didn't touch it, to-day. Not even touch it."

"'Tis nought. When the fever is on the appetite is gone. Will be all right once that is over."

"But, will it ever be over? Day after day, just the same. Always that tossing to and fro, the queer, jumbled talk, the growing thinner—all of the dreadful signs of how he suffers. Angelique, if I could bear it for him! I am so young and strong and worth nothing to this world while he's so wise and good. Everybody who ever knew him must be the better for Uncle Hughie."

[Pg 203]

"'Tis truth. For that, the good Lord will spare him to us. Of that be sure."

"But I pray and pray and pray, and there comes no answer. He is never any better. You know that. You can't deny it. Always before when I have prayed the answer has come swift and sure, but now——"

"Take care, Margot. 'Tis not for us to judge the Lord's strange ways. Else were not you and me and the master shut up alone on this island, with no doctor near, and only our two selves to keep the dumb things in comfort, though, as for dumbness, hark yonder beast!"

"Reynard! Oh! I forgot. I shut him up because he would hang about the house and watch your poor chickens. If he'd stay in his own forest now, I would be so glad. Yet I love him——"

[Pg 204]

"Aye, and he loves you. Be thankful. Even a beastie's love is of God's sending. Go feed him. Here. The wing you'll not eat yourself."

There were dark days now on the once sunny island of peace.

That day when Mr. Dutton had said: "Your father is still alive," seemed now to Margot, looking back, as one of such experiences as change a whole life. Up till that morning she had been a thoughtless, unreflecting child, but the utterance of those fateful words altered everything.

Amazement, unbelief of what her ears told her, indignation that she had been so long deceived—as she put it—were swiftly followed by a dreadful fear. Even while he spoke, the woodlander's figure swayed and trembled, the hoe-handle on which he rested wavered and fell, and he, too, would have fallen had not the girl's arms caught and eased his sudden sinking in the furrow he had worked. Her shrill cry of alarm had reached Angelique, always alert for trouble and then more than ever, and had brought her swiftly to the field. Between them they had carried the now unconscious man within and laid him on his bed. He had never risen from it since; nor, in her heart, did Angelique believe he ever would, though she so stoutly asserted to the contrary before Margot.

[Pg 205]

"We have changed places, Angelique, dear," the child often said. "It used to be you who was always croaking and looking for trouble. Now you see only brightness."

"Well, good sooth. 'Tis a long lane has no turnin', and better late nor never. Sometimes 'tis well to say 'stay good trouble lest worsen comes,' eh? But things'll mend. They must. Now, run and climb the tree. It might be this ver' minute that wretch, Pierre, was on his way across the lake. Pouf! But he'll stir his lazy bones, once he touches this shore! Yes, yes, indeed. Run and hail him, maybe."

[Pg 206]

So Margot had gone, again and again, and had returned to sit beside her uncle's bed, anxious and watchful.

Often, also, she had paddled across the narrows and made her way swiftly to a little clearing on her uncle's land, where, among giant trees, old Joseph Wills, the Indian guide and faithful friend of all on Peace Island, made one of his homes. Once Mr. Dutton had nursed this red man through a dangerous illness, and had kept him in his own home for many weeks thereafter. He would have been the very nurse they now needed, in their turn, could he have been found. But his cabin was closed, and on its doorway, under the family sign-picture of a turtle on a rock, he had printed in dialect, what signified his departure for a long hunting trip.

Now, as Angelique advised, she resolved to try once more; and hurrying to the shore, pushed her canoe into the water and paddled swiftly away. She had taken the neglected Reynard with her and Tom had invited himself to be a party of the trip; and in the odd but sympathetic companionship, Margot's spirits rose again.

[Pg 207]

"It must be as Angelique says. The long lane will turn. Why have I been so easily discouraged? I never saw my precious uncle ill before, and that is why I have been so frightened. I suppose anybody gets thin and says things, when there is fever. But he's troubled about something. He wants to do something that neither of us understand. Unless— Oh! I believe I do understand! My head is clearer out here on the water, and I know, I know! it is just about the time of year when he goes away on those long trips of his. And we've been so anxious we never remembered. That's it. That surely is it. Then, of course, Joe will be back now or soon. He always stays on the island when uncle goes and he'll remember. Oh! I'm brighter already, and I guess, I believe, it is as Angelique claims—God won't take away so good a man as uncle and leave me alone. Though—I am not alone! I have a father! I have a father, somewhere, if I only knew—all in good time—and I'm growing gladder and gladder every minute."

[Pg 208]

She could even sing to the stroke of her paddle and she skimmed the water with increasing speed. Whatever the reason for her growing cheerfulness, whether the reaction of youth or a prescience of happiness to come, the result was the same; she reached the further shore flushed and eager eyed, more like the old Margot than she had been for many days.

"Oh! he's there. He is at home. There is a smoke coming out the chimney. Joseph! Oh! Joseph, Joseph!"

She did not even stop to take care of her canoe but left it to float whither it would. Nothing mattered, Joseph was at home. He had canoes galore, and he was help indeed.

She was quite right. The old man came to his doorway and waited her arrival with apparent indifference, though surely no human heart could have been unmoved by such unfeigned delight. Catching his unresponsive hands in hers she cried:

[Pg 209]

“Come at once, Joseph! At once!”

“Does not the master trust his friend? It is the time to come. Therefore I am here.”

“Of course. I just thought about that. But, Joseph, the master is ill. He knows nothing any more. If he ever needed you he needs you doubly now. Come, come at once.”

Then, indeed, though there was little outward expression of it, was old Joseph moved. He stopped for nothing, but leaving his fire burning on the hearth and his supper cooking before it, went out and closed the door. Even Margot's nimble feet had ado to keep pace with his long strides and she had to spring before him to prevent his pushing off without her.

“No, no. I'm going with you. Here. I'll tow my own boat, with Tom and Reynard—don't you squabble, pets!—but I'll paddle no more while you're here to do it for me.”

[Pg 210]

Joseph did not answer, but he allowed her to seat herself where she pleased and with one strong movement sent his big birch a long distance over the water.

Margot had never made the passage so swiftly, but the motion suited her exactly, and she leaped ashore almost before it was reached, to speed up the hill and call out to Angelique wherever she might be:

“All is well! All will now be well—Joseph has come.”

The Indian reached the house but just behind her and acknowledged Angelique's greeting with a sort of grunt; yet he paused not at all to ask the way or if he might enter the master's room, passing directly into it as if by right.

Margot followed him, cautioning, with finger on lip, anxious lest her patient should be shocked and harmed by the too sudden appearance of the visitor.

Then and only then, when her beloved child was safely out of sight did Angelique throw her apron over her head and give her own despairing tears free vent. She was spent and very weary; but help had come; and in the revulsion of that relief nature gave way. Her tears ceased, her breath came heavily, and the poor woman slept, the first refreshing slumber of an unmeasured time.

[Pg 211]

When she waked at length, Joseph was crossing the room. The fire had died out, twilight was falling, she was conscious of duties left undone. Yet there was light enough left for her to scan the Indian's impassive face with keen intensity, and though he turned neither to the right nor left but went out with no word or gesture to satisfy her craving, she felt that she had had her answer:

“Unless a miracle is wrought my master is doomed.”

CHAPTER XVIII

[Pg 212]

THE LETTER

FROM the moment of his entrance to the sick room, old Joe assumed all charge to it, and with scant courtesy banished from it both Angelique and Margot.

“But he is mine, my own precious uncle. Joe has no right to keep me out!” protested Margot, vehemently.

Angelique was wiser. “In his own way, among his own folks, that Indian good doctor. Leave him be. Yes. If my master can be save', Joe Wills'll save him. That's as God plans; but if I hadn't broke—”

“Angelique! Don't you ever, ever let me hear that dreadful talk again! I can't bear it. I don't believe it. I won't hear it. I will not. Do you suppose that our dear Lord is—will—”

She could not finish her sentence and Angelique was frightened by the intensity of the girl's excitement. Was she, too, growing feverish and ill? But Margot's

[Pg 213]

outburst had worked off some of her own uncomprehended terror, and she grew calm again. Though it had not been put into so many words, she knew from both Angelique's and Joseph's manner that they anticipated but one end to her guardian's illness. She had never seen death, except among the birds and beasts of the forest, and even then it had been horrible to her; and that this should come into her own happy home was unbearable.

Then she reflected. Hugh Dutton's example had been her instruction, and she had never seen him idle. At times when he seemed most so, sitting among his books, or gazing silently into the fire, his brain had been active over some problem that perplexed or interested him. "Never hasting, never wasting," time, nor thought, nor any energy of life. That was his rule and she would make it hers.

"I can, at least, make things more comfortable out of doors. Angelique has let even Snowfoot suffer, sometimes, for want of the grooming and care she's always had. The poultry, too, and the poor garden. I'm glad I'm strong enough to rake and hoe, even if I couldn't lift uncle as Joe does."

[Pg 214]

Her industry brought its own reward. Things outside the house took on a more natural aspect. The weeds were cleared away, and both vegetables and flowers lifted their heads more cheerfully. Snowfoot showed the benefit of the attention she received, and the forgotten family in the Hollow chattered and gambled in delight at the reappearance among them of their indulgent mistress. Margot herself grew lighter of heart and more positive that, after all, things would end well.

"You see, Angelique dismal, we might as well take that broken glass sign to mean good things as evil. That uncle will soon be up and around again; Pierre be at home; and the 'specimen' from the old cave prove copper or something just as rich; and—everybody be as happy as a king."

[Pg 215]

Angelique grunted her disbelief, but was thankful for the other's lighter mood.

"Well, then, if you've so much time and strength to spare, go yonder and clean up the room that Adrian left so untidy. Where he never should have been, had I my own way; but one never has that in this world; hey, no. Indeed, no. Ever'thin' goes contrary, else I'd have cleared away all trace long sin'. Yes, indeed, yes."

"Well, he is gone. There's no need to abuse him, even if he did not have the politeness to say good-bye. Though, I suppose, it was my uncle who put a stop to that. What uncle has to do he does at once. There's never any hesitation about uncle. But I wish—I wish—Angelique Ricord, do you know something? Do you know all the history of this family?"

"Why should I not, eh?" demanded the woman, indignantly. "Is it not my own family, yes? What is Pierre but one son? I love him, oh! yes. But——"

[Pg 216]

"You adore him, bad and trying as he is. But there is something you must tell me. If you know it. Maybe you do not. I did not, till that awful morning when he was taken ill. But that very minute he told me what I had never dreamed. I was angry; for a moment I almost hated him because he had deceived me, though afterward I knew that he had done it for the best and would tell me why when he could. So I've tried to trust him just the same and be patient. But—he may never be able—and I must know. Angelique, where is my father?"

The housekeeper was so startled that she dropped the plate she was wiping and broke it. Yet even at that fresh omen of disaster she could not remove her gaze from the girl's face nor banish the dismay of her own.

"He told—you—that—that——"

"That my father is still alive. He would, I think have told me more; all that there may be yet to tell, if he had not so suddenly been stricken. Where is my father?"

[Pg 217]



“WHERE IS MY FATHER?”

“Oh! child, child! Don’t ask me. It is not for me——”

“If uncle cannot and you can, and there is no other person, Angelique—you must!”

“This much, then. It is in a far, far away city, or town, or place, he lives. I know not, I. This much I know. He is good, a ver’ good man. And he have enemies. Yes. They have done him much harm. Some day, in many years, maybe when you have grown a woman, old like me, he will come to Peace Island and forget. That is why we wait. That is why the master goes, once each summer, on the long, long trip. When Joseph comes, and the bad Pierre to stay. I, too, wait to see him though I never have. And when he comes, we must be ver’ tender, me and you, for people who have been done wrong to, they—they—— Pouf! ‘Twas anger I was that the master could put the evil-come into that room, yes.”

“Angelique! Is that my father’s room? Is it? Is that why there are the very best things in it? And that wonderful picture? And the fresh suits of clothing? Is it?”

[Pg 218]

Angelique slowly nodded. She had been amazed to find that Margot knew thus much of a long withheld history, and saw no harm in adding these few facts. The real secret, the heart of the matter—that was not yet. Meanwhile, let the child accustom herself to the new ideas and so be prepared for what she must certainly learn, should the master’s illness be a fatal one.

“Oh! then, hear me. That room shall always now be mine to care for. I haven’t liked the housewifery, not at all. But if I have a father and I can do things for him—that alters everything. Oh! you can’t mean that it will be so long before he comes. You must have been jesting. If he knew uncle was ill he would come at once, wouldn’t he? He would, I know.”

Poor Angelique turned her face away to hide its curious expression, but in her new interest concerning the “friend’s room,” as it had always been called, Margot did not notice this. She was all eagerness and loving excitement.

[Pg 219]

“To think that I have a father who may come, at any minute, for he might, Angelique, you know that, and not be ready for him. Your best and newest broom, please; and the softest dusters. That room shall, indeed, be cleaned better than anybody else could do it. Just hurry, please, I must begin. I must begin right away.”

She trembled so that she could hardly braid and pin up her long hair out of the way, and her face had regained more than its old-time color. She was content to let all that was still a mystery remain for the present. She had enough to think about and enjoy.

Angelique brought the things that would be needed and, for once, forbore advice. Let love teach the child—she had nought to say. In any case she could not have seen the dust, herself, for her dark eyes were misty with tears, and her thoughts on matters wholly foreign to household cares.

[Pg 220]

Margot opened the windows and began to dust the various articles which could be set out in the wide passage, and did not come round to the heavy dresser for some moments. As she did so, finally, her glance flew instantly to a bulky parcel, wrapped in sheets of white birch-bark, and bearing her own name, in Adrian's handwriting.

"Why, he did remember me, then!" she cried, delightedly, tearing the package open. "Pictures! the very ones I liked the best. Xanthippé and Socrates, and oh! that's Reynard! Reynard! Reynard, ready to speak! The splendid, beautiful creature! and the splendid, generous boy to have given it. He called it his 'masterpiece' and, indeed, it was by far the best he ever did here. Harmony Hollow—but that's not so fine. However, he meant to make it like, and— Why, here's a note. Why didn't I come in here before? Why didn't I think he would do something like this? Forgive me, Adrian, wherever you are, for misjudging you so. I'm sorry uncle didn't like you and sorry—for lots of things. But I'm glad, glad you weren't so rude and mean as I believed. If I ever see you I'll tell you so. Now, I'll put these in my own room and then get to work again. This room you left so messed shall be as spotless as a snowflake before I'm done with it."

[Pg 221]

For hours she labored there, brushing, renovating, polishing; and when all was finished she called Angelique to see and criticise—if she could! But she could not; and she, too, had something now of vital importance to impart.

"It is beautiful' done, yes, yes. I couldn't do it more clean myself, I, Angelique, no. But, my child! Hear, hear, and be calm! The master is himself! The master has awoke, yes, and is askin' for his child! True, true. Old Joe, he says, 'Come. Quick, soft, no cry, no laugh, just listen.' Yes. Oh! now all will be well."

[Pg 222]

Margot almost hushed her very breathing. Her uncle awake, sane, asking for her! Her face was radiant, flushed, eager, a face to brighten the gloom of any sick room, however dark.

But this one was not dark. Joe knew his patient's fancies. He had forgotten none. One of them was the sunshine and fresh air; and though in his heart he believed that these two things did a world of harm, and that the ill-ventilated and ill-lighted cabins of his own people were more conducive to recovery, he opposed nothing which the master desired. He had experimented, at first, but finding a close room aggravated Mr. Dutton's fever, reasoned that it was too late to break up the foolish habits of a man's lifetime; and as the woodlander had lived in the sunlight so he would better die in it, and easier.

If she had been a trained nurse Margot could not have entered her uncle's presence more quietly, though it seemed to her that he must hear the happy beating of her heart and how her breath came fast and short. He was almost too weak to speak at all, but there was all the old love, and more, in his whispered greeting:

[Pg 223]

"My precious child!"

"Yes, uncle. And such a happy child because you are better."

She caught his hand and covered it with kisses, but softly, oh! so softly, and he smiled the rare sweet smile that she had feared she'd never see again. Then he looked past her to Angelique in the doorway and his eyes moved toward his desk in the corner. A little fanciful desk that held only his most sacred belongings and had been Margot's mother's. It was to be hers some day, but not till he had done with it, and she had never cared to own it since doing so meant that he could no longer use it. Now she watched him and Angelique wonderingly.

For the woman knew exactly what was required. Without question or hesitation she answered the command of his eyes by crossing to the desk and opening it with a key she took from her own pocket. Then she lifted a letter from an inner drawer and gave it into his thin fingers.

[Pg 224]

"Well done, good Angelique. Margot—the letter—is yours."

"Mine? I am to read it? Now? Here?"

"No, no. No, no, indeed! Would you tire the master with the rustlin' of paper? Take it else. Not here, where ever'thin' must be still as still."

Mr. Dutton's eyes closed. Angelique knew that she had spoken for him and that the disclosure which that letter would make should be faced in solitude.

"Is she right, uncle, dearest? Shall I take it away to read?"

His eyes assented, and the tender, reassuring pressure of his hand.

"Then I'm going to your own mountain top with it. To think of having a letter from you, right here at home! Why, I can hardly wait! I'm so thankful to you for it, and so thankful to God that you are getting well. That you will be soon; and then—why, then—we'll go a-fishing!"

[Pg 225]

A spasm of pain crossed the sick man's wasted features and poor Angelique fled the place, forgetful of her own caution to "be still as still," and with her own dark face convulsed with grief for the grief which the letter would bring to her idolized Margot.

But the girl had already gone away up the slope, faster and faster. Surely a letter from nobody but her uncle and at such a solemn time must concern but one subject—her father. Now she would know all, and her happiness should have no limit.

But it was nightfall when she, at last, came down from the mountain, and though there were no signs of tears upon her face neither was there any happiness in it.

CHAPTER XIX

[Pg 226]

A QUESTION OF APPAREL

"THE master."

"He wants me?"

Joe nodded and went out of doors. But it was noticeable that he merely walked around to the rear of the sick room and stationed himself beside the open window. Not that he might overhear the conversation within, but to be near if he were needed. He cast one stern look upon Margot, as he summoned her, and was evidently reassured by her own calmness.

Three days had passed since she had been given that fateful letter, and she had had time to think over its startling contents in every connection. There was now not the slightest blame of her guardian for having so long kept her in ignorance of her father's existence; and, indeed, her love had been strengthened, if that were possible. The sick man had gained somewhat, though he was yet very weak and recovery was still a question. But, with improvement, came again the terrible restlessness and impatience with the circumstances which kept him a prisoner in bed, when, of all times in the year, he would be up and abroad.

[Pg 227]

When the child entered the room he was watching for her, eagerly, anxiously. How had she borne his news? How would she greet him?

Her first glance answered him. It was so tender, so pitiful, so strong.

"My darling! My own Margot! I—need not—have feared."

"There is nothing to fear, dearest uncle. Fear must have been done with years ago, when—when—it happened. Now, now, it is time for hope, for confidence."

He shook his head mournfully. Then he asked:

"You will let it make no difference in your love, your loyalty to him, when—when he comes? If he lives to come?"

[Pg 228]

"If he had been a father who did not come because he would not, then, maybe, I don't know. But a father who could not come, who has been so cruelly,

frightfully wronged—why, uncle! all my life, no matter how long, all my care and devotion, no matter how great, will never, never be able to express one-half of my love. And I bless you more for your faithfulness to him than for all you've ever done for me—yet even my debt to you is boundless.”

“My own impulsive, overgrateful Margot! As if it had not been also all my life, my happiness. Well, since I cannot go, you must write to him. For me and for yourself. Explaining why I cannot come, just yet, but that I will as soon as may be. Make it a letter such as you have talked just now and it will be better to his hungry heart than even a sight of his old friend and brother.”

“I will write as many letters for you as you please, but—I will deliver them in person.”

[Pg 229]

He did not get the full import of her words, at first, but when he did he frowned. It hurt him beyond expression that she should jest on such a subject, even for the laudable purpose of cheering himself.

Then he felt her cool hand on his wrist.

“Uncle, I mean it. I have thought it over and over. I have thought of nothing else, except that you were getting better, and I know I am right. I am going to see my father. I am going to get my father. I shall never come back without him. But I shall certainly come, and he with me. You cannot go. I can, I want to, beyond telling. I must.”

A thousand objections flashed through his mind and the struggle to comprehend just what were and were not valid ones wearied him. For some time neither of them spoke again, but clasped hands until he fell into a sudden sleep. Even then Margot did not release her hold, though her cramped position numbed her arm, and her impatience to make him see matters from her point of view was hard to control. But he awoke almost as suddenly as he had dozed, and with a clear idea of her meaning. After all, how simple it was! and what an infinite relief to his anxiety.

[Pg 230]

“Tell me what you think.”

“This: My father must not be disappointed. Your visit, the one link that connects him with his old life and happiness, is impossible. Each year you have taken him reports of me and how I grew. I'm going to show him whether you represented me as I am or as your partial eyes behold me. More than that, I must go. I must see him. I must put my arms about his neck and tell him that I love him, as my mother loved him, with all his child's affection added. I must. It is my right.”

“But—how. You've never been beyond the forest. You are so young and ignorant of—everything.”

“Maybe I shall do all the better for that reason. ‘Know nothing, fear nothing,’ and I certainly am not afraid. We are looking for Pierre to come home, any day. He should have been here long ago. As soon as he comes I will start. Old Joseph shall go with me. He knows what I do not, of towns and routes, and all those troublesome things. You will give us the money it will cost; and enough to pay for my father's coming home. I have made his room ready. There isn't a speck or spot in it, and there are fresh flowers every day. There have been ever since I knew that room was his. I shall go to that city of New York where—where it happened, and I shall find out the truth. I shall certainly bring him home with me.”

[Pg 231]

It was absurd. He said that to himself, not once but many times; yet despite his common sense and his bitter experience, he could not but catch something of her hopefulness. Yet so much the more hard to bear would be her disappointment.

“Dear, I have no right, it may be, to stop you. It was agreed upon between us that, when you were sixteen years old, if nothing happened to make it unnecessary, you should be told. That is, if I believed you had a character which could endure sorrow and not turn bitter under it. I do so believe, I know. But though you may make the journey, if you wish and it can be arranged safely, you must not even hope to do more than see your father and that only for a brief time.”

[Pg 232]

Margot smiled. The same bright, unconvinced smile with which she had always

received any astonishing statement. When, not much more than a baby, she had been told that fire would burn, she had laughed her unbelief that fire would burn, and had thrust her small hand into the flame. The fire had burned, but she had still smiled, and bravely, though her lips trembled and there were tears upon her cheeks.

"I must go, uncle. It is my right, and his. I must try this matter for myself. I shall never be happy else and I shall succeed. I shall. I trust in God. You have taught me that He never fails those who trust in Him."

[Pg 233]

"Have I not trusted? Have I not prayed? Did I not labor till labor was useless? But, there, child. Not for me to darken your faith. His ways are not as our ways, else this had never come. But you shall go. You are right; and may He prosper your devotion!"

She saw that he was tired and, having gained his consent, went gladly away to Angelique, to consult with that disturbed person concerning her journey.

Angelique heard this strange announcement with incredulity. The master was delirious again. That was the explanation. Else he would never, never have consented for this outrageous journey from Pontius to Pilate, with only a never-say-anything old Indian for escort.

"But you're part Indian yourself, sweet Angelique, so don't abuse your own race. As for knowing nothing, who but Joe could have brought my uncle through this dreadful sickness so well? I believe it is all a beautiful plan."

[Pg 234]

"Well, we'll see. If Adrian had not come, maybe my uncle would never have told me all he has. The letter was written, you know that, because he feared he might not live to tell it with his lips. And even when he was getting better he thought I still should learn the truth, and the written pages held it all. I'm so glad I know. Oh! Angelique, think! How happy, how happy we shall be when my father comes home!"

"'Tis that bad Pierre who should be comin', yes. Wait till I get my hands about his ears."

"Pierre's too big to have his ears boxed. I don't wonder he hates it. I think I would—would box back again if anybody treated me to that indignity."

"Pst. Pouf! you are you, and Pierre is Pierre; and as long as he is in the world and I am, if his ears need boxin', I shall box them. I, his mother."

[Pg 235]

"Oh! very well. Suit yourself. But now, Angelique!"

"Well? I must go set the churn. Yes, I've wasted too much time, already, bein' taught my manners by a chit of a thing like you. Yes. I have so. Indeed, yes."

"Come, Angelique. Be good. When you were young, and lived in the towns, did the girls who went a-journeying wear bonnets?"

"Did they not? And the good Book that the master reads o' nights, sayin' the women must cover their heads. Hmm. I've thought a many time how his readin' and his rearin' didn't go hand in glove. Bonnets, indeed! Have I not the very one I wore when I came to Peace Island. A charmin' thing, all green ribbons and red roses. I shall wear it again, to my Pierre's weddin'. 'Tis for that I've been savin' it. And, well, because a body has no need to wear out bonnets on this bit of land in water. No."

But Angelique was a true woman; and once upon the subject of dress her mind refused to be drawn thence. She recalled items of what had been her own trousseau, ignoring Margot's ridicule of the clumsy Pierre as a bridegroom, and even her assertion that: "I should pity his wife, for I expect her ears would have to be boxed, also."

[Pg 236]

"Come yon. I've that I will show you. 'Tis your mother's own lovely clothes. Just as she wore them here, and carefully folded away for you till you needed them. Well, that is now, I suppose, if you're to be let gad all over the earth, with as good a home as girl ever had right here in the peaceful woods."

"Oh! show them to me, Angelique. Quick. Why have you never before? Of course, I shall need them now. And, Angelique! That is some more of the beautiful plan. The working out of the pattern. Else why should there be the clothes here when I need clothes? Answer me that, good Angelique, if you can."

"Pst. 'Twas always a bothersome child for questions. But answer one yourself. If you had had them before would you have had them ready now, and the pleasure of them? No. No, indeed. But come. The clothes and then the churnin'. If that Pierre were here, 'twould not be my arms would have to ache this night with the dash, dash, dashin'. No. No, indeed, no. But come."

[Pg 237]

Alas! Of all the carefully preserved and dainty garments there was not one which Margot could wear.

"Why, Angelique! What a tiny thing she must have been! I can't get even my hand through the wrist of this sleeve. And look here. This skirt is away up as short as my own. If I've to wear short ones I'll not change at all. In the pictures, I've seen lovely ladies with skirts on the ground and I thought that was the way I should look if I ever went into the world."

"Eh? What? Lovely? You? Hmm. Lovely is that lovely does. Vanity is a disgrace to any woman. Has not the master said that often and often?"

[Pg 238]

Margot flushed. She was not conscious of vanity, yet she did not question Angelique's opinion. But she rallied.

"I don't think I should feel at all vain if I put on any of these things. That is, if I could even get them on. I should all the time be thinking how uncomfortable I was. Well, that's settled. I wear my own clothes, and not even my dear mother's. Hers I will always keep for her sake; but to her great daughter they are useless. And I'll go bareheaded just as here. Why not? I certainly don't need a bonnet, with all this hair."

Now Margot's hair was Angelique's especial pride. Indeed, it was a wonderful glory upon that shapely young head; but again this was not to be admitted.

"Hair! What's hair? Not but you've enough of it for three women, for that matter. But it will not do to go that way. It must be braided and pinned fast. Here is a bonnet, not so gay as mine, and I would trust you with that—only——"

[Pg 239]

"I wouldn't wear it, dear Angelique. It's lovely and kind for you to even think of offering. You must keep that for Pierre's wife, and——"

"I should like to see her with it on! Huh! Indeed! Pouf!"

"There are hats enough of my own mother's, and to wear one may be another piece of your 'good luck.' I shall wear this one. It is all blue like my frocks, and the little brown ribbon is the color of my shoes. Adrian would say that was 'artistic,' if he were here. Oh! Angelique! When I go to that far city, do you suppose I shall see Adrian? Do you?"

"Do you go there to break your uncle's heart again? 'Tis not Adrian you will see, ever again, I hope. No. Indeed, no. See. This shawl. It goes so;" and Angelique adjusted the soft, rich fabric around her own shoulders, put a hat jauntily upon her head, and surveyed the effect with undisguised admiration, as reflected in the little mirror in the lid of the big trunk.

[Pg 240]

"Angelique! Angelique, take care! 'Vanity is a disgrace to any woman!' What if that misguided Pierre should see you now? What would he think of his——"

Hark! What was that? How dared old Joseph tramp through the house at such a pace, with such a noise? and the master still so weak. Why——

The indignant house-mistress disappeared with indignation blazing in her eyes.

Margot, also, stood still in the midst of her finery, listening and almost as angry as the other; till there came back to her another sound so familiar and reassuring that her fears were promptly banished, while one more anxiety was lifted from her heart.

CHAPTER XX

[Pg 241]

COMING AND GOING

"PIERRE! and Angelique is boxing his ears! My, what a whack, that I can hear it

way in here! I must to the rescue, but his coming makes right for me to go. Angelique, Angelique, don't! Heigho, Pierre! I'm glad you're back!"

But if he heard this welcome he did not heed it, and Margot stood amazed at the ridiculous scene upon which she had entered.

There was Angelique, still arrayed in her own flower-bedecked bonnet and her mistress' India shawl, being whirled about the big kitchen in a crazy sort of waltz which seemed to suit the son's excited mood. Her bonnet sat rakishly on one side and the rich shawl dragged over the floor, which, fortunately, was too clean to harm it; but amidst her enforced exercises, the mother continued to aim those resounding blows at her son's great ears. Sometimes they hit the mark, but at others fell harmlessly upon his broad shoulders. In any case, they seemed not to disturb him but rather to add to the homelikeness of his return.

[Pg 242]

At length, however, he released his irate parent and held out his hand to Margot.

"Done the old lady heap of good. How's things? How's the menagerie? and the master?"

"Hey? Where's the manners I've always taught you? Askin' for the master last when 'tis he is always first. Yes. Yes, indeed. But, Pierre, 'twas nigh no master at all you came home to. He's been at death's door for weeks. Even yet——"

Then Angelique turned and saw Margot, whose presence she had not before observed. But she rallied instantly, turning her sentence into a brisk command:

"Even yet, the churnin' not done and it goin' on to measure nine o'clock. Get to the dasher, lad, and tie this big apron round your neck. Then change that dirty shirt. That a child of mine should wear such filthy things. Pouf! you were always the torment; that is so."

[Pg 243]

"Just the same, Angelique, dear, your eyes are shining like stars, and you are happier than you have been a single minute since that bad boy of yours paddled away in the night. If he's to churn I'm to sit beside him and hear all his long story first. Come on, Pierre! Oh! how good it is to have you back!"

It was, also, most delightful to the mother, even though her happiness expressed itself in a peculiar way, by grumbling and scolding as she had not done once since real trouble fell upon that home, with the illness of its master.

The churn stood outside the kitchen door, for Angelique would allow no chance of spilled cream on her scoured boards; so Margot settled herself on the doorstep and listened while the wanderer gave her a long and detailed account of his journey. Meanwhile, and at every few minutes, his mother would step to his side, take the dasher from his hand and force a bit of food within it. He devoured this greedily, though he made no comment, and resumed his churning as soon as the tid-bit was consumed. Through all, Angelique's face was beaming and her lips fretting, till Margot laughed aloud.

[Pg 244]

"Oh! Angelique Ricord! Of all the odd people you are the oddest!"

"So? Well, then. How many odd people have you seen, my child that you should be so fine a judge? So that evil-come departed to his own, he did? May his shadow never darken this door again! 'Twas all along of him the trouble came."

"No, Angelique, you forget. It must have been the broken glass! How could it possibly have been anything else? Never mind, sweetheart; when I come home from my long journey I will bring you a new one, big and clear, and that has the power to make even plain folks look lovely. If my uncle will let me. Dear, but I do wish you had a bit, this minute, to see how silly you look with that big bonnet on!"

[Pg 245]

Angelique's hand flew to her head in comic dismay. She had carefully removed and refolded the beautiful shawl, but had quite forgotten her other adornment, which she now tore off in a haste that threatened damage to the precious possession.

"Pierre, bid her be careful. That is your wife's bonnet!"

Even the housekeeper had to smile at this and listen patiently while Margot made much of the incident. Indeed, she would have willingly been laughed at indefinitely, if thus she could herself hear these young voices gay with the old-

time unconcern.

"And Adrian was good to the poor, wild things. Well, I have hopes of Adrian. He didn't have the right sort of rearing to know how the forest people feel, but he learned fast. I'm thankful, thankful, Pierre Ricord, that you had to lose those fine antlers. If you'd sold them and made a lot of money by it, you would have forgotten that the moose could suffer and have killed many more. As it is, better one should die than many. And Pierre, I'm going away myself. Now that you've come home, I'm going at once. Old Joseph and I. Clear to that far away New York where Adrian has gone, and to many other places, too."

[Pg 246]

Pierre dropped the dasher with such force that the "half-brought" butter, which Angelique was opening the churn to "scrape down together," splashed out over the step, Margot's lap, and the ground.

Angelique was too indignant to speak, but Margot cried:

"Oh! Pierre! How careless and wasteful. We've none too much butter, anyway."

The lad still stared, open-mouthed. After a minute he asked:

"What's that you said? About that New York?"

[Pg 247]

"I'm going to New York. I'm going in my uncle's place, to attend to my uncle's business. Old Joe is to go with me to take care of me—or I of him—and you are to stay here with the master and your mother. You may bring King Madoc over if you wish; and, by the way, how did you get here, if you have lost your own canoe?"

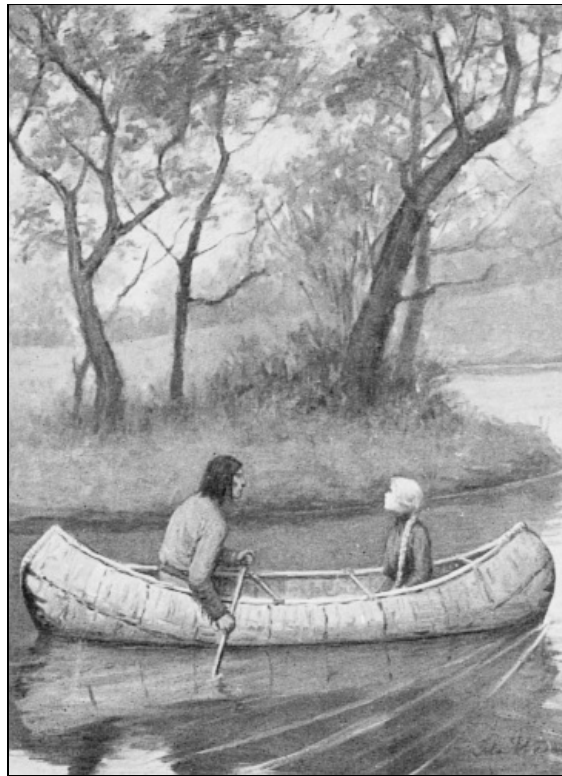
"Helped myself to one of Joe's. Helped myself to a breakfast, too. Joe's stocked up for winter, already. But, I say, Margot. He's no use in a big city. Better take me. I was goin' anyway, only after that—well, that grave, I made up my mind I'd just step back here a spell and take a fresh start. I'm ready, any minute, and Joe hates it. Hey?"

"I wouldn't trust myself with you a dozen miles. You're too foolish and fickle. Joe is steady and faithful. It's settled. I think, Angelique, that we can start tomorrow. Don't you?"

Angelique sighed. All her happiness was once more overclouded. Why couldn't well enough be let alone? However, she answered nothing. She had sometimes ventured to grumble even at the master but she had never questioned his decisions. If it was by his will that her inexperienced darling was to face the dangers of an unknown world, with nobody but a glum old Indian to serve her, of course, there was nothing for it but submission.

[Pg 248]

At daybreak the next morning, Margot stood beside her uncle's bed, clasping his thin hands in parting. His eyes were sad and anxious, but hers were bright and full of confidence. He had given his last advice; she had ample money for all possible needs, with directions upon whom to call for more, should anything arise for which they had not prepared, and she had, also, her route marked out on paper, with innumerable suggestions about this or that stop; and now, there was nothing more to do or say but add his blessing and farewell.



**HIS BIRCH CANOE PULLED
STEADILY AWAY**

“Good-bye, Margot. Into God’s hands I give you.”

[Pg 249]

“The same Hands, uncle, which have cared for me always. I shall come back and bring our loved one with me. Get well fast, to make him happy when he comes.”

A hasty kiss to Angelique who was sobbing herself ill, a clasp of Pierre’s hand, and she was gone. Joe’s birch was pulling steadily away from the Island of Peace into that outside world of strife and contention, of which the young voyager was so wholly ignorant.

Her eyes were wet and her heart ached, with that same sort of physical distress which had assailed her when Adrian went away, but now much sharper. Yet her lips still smiled and Joseph, furtively regarding her, was satisfied. She would give him no trouble.

A few miles’ journey and she had entered what seemed like fairyland. She had then no time for looking back or remembering. The towns were wonderful, and the first time that she saw a young girl of her own age she stared until the stranger made a grimace toward her. This perplexed and annoyed her, but taught her a lesson: she stared no more.

[Pg 250]

Yet she saw everything; and in that little book her uncle had provided for this object made notes of her impressions, to be discussed with him upon her return. Her first ride behind horses made her laugh aloud. They were so beautiful and graceful and their strength so appealed to her animal-loving heart. The rickety buck-board, which was their first vehicle, seemed luxurious, though after a few miles’ jogging over a corduroy-road she confided to Joseph that she preferred a canoe.

“Umm. No shakeum up.”

A stage drawn by four steeds, rather the worse for wear, yet with the accompaniment of fellow-travelers and a musical horn, brought memories of Cinderella and other childish heroines, and made the old tales real; but when they reached the railway and stepped into a car her interest grew painfully intense. When the conductor paused to take their tickets, obligingly procured for this odd pair by the stage-driver, Margot immediately requested to be put upon the engine.

[Pg 251]

“The engine! Well, upon my word!”

“Yes, I’ve never seen one, except the one in front of this car-train. I know how they operate but I would so dearly like to see them working close at hand. Can’t

I?"

The brass-buttoned official made no reply, save to purse his lips and utter another low whistle; but he gave Margot and Joe a critical survey and reflected that of all the passengers he had ever carried these were the most unique. There was something in the girl's intelligent face that was hard to deny, and for all his silence, perhaps because of it, a certain dignity about the Indian that won favor even for him.

It was a way-train on a branch road; one of the connecting links between the wilderness and the land of the "through express" else it might not have happened that, after so long a time had elapsed that Margot felt her request was indeed refused, the conductor returned and whispered in her ear. It was a concession, not to be made general; but she was informed:

[Pg 252]

"I've spoken to the engineer and he says he doesn't mind. Not if you'll ask no questions and won't bother."

"I'll not. And I thank you very much."

"Hmm. She may be a backwoods girl but she can give a lesson in manners to many a city miss," thought the obliging guide, as he led Margot forward through the few cars toward the front; and, at the next stop, helped her to the ground and up again into the little shut-in space beside the grimy driver of this wonderful iron horse.

Margot never forgot that ride; nor the man at the lever his unknown passenger. She had left her obnoxious bonnet upon the seat beside old Joseph and her hair had broken from its unaccustomed braid to its habitual freedom, so that it enveloped her and streamed behind her like a cloud. Her trim short skirt, her heelless shoes, her absence of "flummery" aroused the engineer's admiration and he volunteered, what he had previously declined to give, all possible information concerning his beloved locomotive. He even allowed her, for one brief moment to put her own hand on the lever and feel the thrill of that resistless plunging forward into space.

[Pg 253]

It was only when they stopped again and she knew she ought to go back to Joe that she ventured to speak.

"I never enjoyed anything so much in my life, nor learned so much in so short a time. I wish—I wish—have you a sister, or a little girl? Or anybody you love very much?"

"Why, yes. I've got the nicest little girl in the United States. She's three years old and as cute as they make 'em."

"You've given me pleasure, I'd like to give her as much. May she have this from me, to get—whatever a town child would like?"

"Sure, miss, it's too much; but——"

[Pg 254]

Margot was gone, and on the engineer's palm shone a bright gold coin. All Mr. Dutton's money was in specie and he had given Margot a liberal amount of "spending money" for her trip. Money being a thing she knew as little about as she did traveling he had determined to let her learn its value by experience; yet even he might have been a trifle shocked by the liberality of this, her first "tip." However, she saw only the gratitude that leaped into the trainman's eyes and was glad that she had had the piece handy in her pocket.

Yet, delightful as the novelty of their long journey was, Margot found it wearisome; and the nearer she reached its end the more a new and uncomfortable anxiety beset her. Joseph said nothing. He had never complained nor admired, and as far as sociability was concerned he might have been one of those other, wooden Indians which began to appear on the streets of the towns, before shops where tobacco was sold. She looked at Joe, sometimes, wondering if he saw these effigies of his race and what were his opinions on the matter. But his face remained stolid and she decided that he was indifferent to all such slight affairs.

[Pg 255]

It was when they first stepped out of their train into the great station at New York, that the full realization of her undertaking came to her. Even Joseph's face now showed some emotion, of dismay and bewilderment, and her own courage died in that babel of noises and the crowding rush of people, everywhere.

"Why, what has happened? Surely, there must have been some fearful accident, or they would not all hurry so."

Then she saw among the crowd, men in a uniform she recognized, from the description her uncle had once given her, and remembered that he had then told her if ever she were in a strange place and needed help it was to such officers she should apply. When this advice had been given, a year before, neither had imagined it would so soon be useful. But it was with infinite relief that she now clutched Joseph's hand and impelled him to go with her. Gaining the side of an officer, she caught his arm and demanded:

[Pg 256]

"What is the matter? Where are all the people hurrying to?"

"Why—nowhere, in special. Why?"

The policeman had, also, been hastening forward as if his life depended upon his reaching a certain spot at a certain time, but now he slackened his speed and walked quietly along beside this odd girl, at the same moment keeping his eye upon a distant group of gamins bent on mischief. It had been toward them he had made such speed, but a brother officer appearing near them he turned his attention upon Margot and her escort.

"Oh! I thought there was something wrong. Is it always such a racketty place? This New York?"

"Always. Why, 'tis quiet here to-day, compared to some."

"Are you an officer of the law? Is it your business to take care of strangers?"

[Pg 257]

"Why, yes. I suppose so."

"Can I trust you? Somebody must direct me. I was to take a cab and go—to this address. But I don't know what a cab is from any other sort of wagon. Will you help me?"

"Certainly. Give me the card."

Margot handed him the paper with the address of the old friend with whom her uncle wished her to stop while she was in the city; but the moment the policeman looked at it his face fell.

"Why, there isn't any such place, now. All them houses has been torn down to put up a sky-scraper. They were torn down six months ago."

"Why, how can that be? This lady has lived in that house all her life, my uncle said. She is a widow, very gentle and refined: she was quite poor; though once she had plenty of money. She took boarders, to keep a roof over her head; and it isn't at all likely that she would tear it down and so destroy her only income. You must be mistaken. Won't you ask somebody else, who knows more about the city, please?"

[Pg 258]

The officer bridled, and puffed out his mighty chest. Was not he "one of the finest"? as the picked policemen are termed. If he didn't know the streets of the metropolis, who did?

Margot saw that she had made a serious mistake. Her head turned giddy, the crowd seemed to surge and close about her, and with a sense of utter failure and homesickness she fainted away.

CHAPTER XXI

[Pg 259]

IN THE GREAT RAILWAY STATION

"THERE, dear, you are better. Drink this."

Margot opened her eyes in the big waiting-room for women at the great station. A kind-faced woman in a white cap and apron was bending over her and holding a cup of bouillon to her lips, which obediently opened and received the draught with grateful refreshment.

"Thank you. That is good. Where am I? Who are you?"

The attendant explained: and added, with intent to comfort:

"You are all right. You will be cared for. It was the long going without food and the sudden confusion of arrival. The Indian says you have not eaten in a long time. He is here, I could not keep him out. Is—is he safe?"

[Pg 260]

The hot, strong soup, and the comforting presence restored the girl so far that she could laugh.

"Joe safe? Our own dear old Joseph Wills? Why, madam, he is the very best guide in all the state of Maine. Aren't you, Joe? And my uncle's most trusted friend. Else he would not be here with me. What happened to me that things got so queer?"

"You fainted. That's all."

"I? Why, I never did such a thing in my life before."

Joe drew near. His face seemed still impassive but there was a look of profound concern in his small, black eyes.

"Wouldn' eat. Get sick. Joe said. Joe hungry, too."

Margot sat up, instantly, smitten with remorse. If this uncomplaining friend admitted hunger she must have been remiss, indeed.

"Oh, dear madam! Please get him something to eat, or show him where to get it for himself. This last part of the road, or journey, was so long. The train didn't stop anywhere, hardly, and I saw none of the eating places I had seen on the other trains. We were late, too, in starting, and had no breakfast. My own head whirls yet, and poor Joe must be famished. I have money, plenty, to pay for everything."

[Pg 261]

The station matron called an attendant and put Joe in his charge. She, also, ordered a tray of food brought from the restaurant and made Margot eat. Indeed, she was now quite ready to do this and heartily; and her appetite appeased, she told the motherly woman as much of her story as was necessary; asking her advice about a stopping place, and if she, too, thought it true that the widow's house had been demolished.

"Oh, yes, miss. I know that myself, for I live not so far from that street. It is, or was, an old-fashioned one, and full of big houses that had once been grand but had run down. The property was valuable, though, and no doubt the widow bettered herself by selling. More than that, if she is still in the city, her name should be in the directory. I'll look it up and if I find it, telephone her. After we do that will be time enough to look for some other place, if she is not to be found."

[Pg 262]

Margot did not understand all this, and wondered what this quiet, orderly person had to do with the starting of trains, which she could hear continually moving out and in the monster building, even though she could not see them from this inner room. But this wonder was soon lost in a fresh surprise as, having consulted a big book which was chained to a desk in one corner, the matron came forward, smiling.

"I've found the name, miss. Spelled just as you gave it to me. The number is away up town, in Harlem. But I'll ring her up and see."

Again the matron crossed the room, toward a queer looking arrangement on the wall; but, a new train arriving, the room so filled with women and children that she had no more leisure to attend to Margot. However, she managed to tell her:

[Pg 263]

"Don't worry. I'll be free soon again, for a minute. And I'll tell that Indian to sit just outside the door, if you wish. You can sit there with him, too, if it makes you feel more at home. You're all right now, and will not faint again."

"No, indeed. I never did before nor shall again, I hope."

Yet Margot was very thankful when she and Joe were once more side by side, and now amused herself in studying the crowds about her.

"Oh! Joe, there are more 'types' here in a minute than one could see at home in years. Look. That's a Swede. I know by the shape of his face, and his coloring. Though I never saw a live Swede before."

"Wonder if she ever saw a dead one!" said a voice in passing, and Margot knew she had been ridiculed, yet not why. Then, too, she saw that many glances were turned upon the bench where she and Joe sat, apart from the crowd and, for almost the first time, became conscious that in some way she looked not as other people. However, she was neither over-sensitive nor given to self-contemplation and she had perfect faith in her uncle's judgment. He had lived in this great city, he knew what was correct. He had told her to ask the widow to supply her with anything that was needed. She had nothing to do now but wait till the widow was found, and then she could go on about the more important business which had brought her hither.

[Pg 264]

As she remembered that business, her impatience rose. She was now, she must be, not only within a few miles of her unknown father, but of the man who had wronged him, whom she was to compel to right that wrong. She sprang to her feet. The crowd that had filled the waiting-room was again thinning, for a time, and the matron should be free. Would she never come?

[Pg 265]

"Then I'll go to her! Stay right here, Joe. Don't leave this place a minute now till I get back. Then we'll not lose each other. I'll come for you as soon as I can."

Joe grunted his assent and closed his eyes. He, too, was conscious of staring eyes and indignant at them. Had nobody ever seen an Indian before? Were not these clothes that he was wearing the Master's gift and of the same sort all these other men wore? Let them gaze, if that suited the simple creatures. As for him he was comfortable. The bench was no harder than the ground. Not much harder. He would sleep. He did.

But Margot found the matron doing a strange thing. She had a long pipe running from a box on the wall, and sometimes she was calling into it, or a hole beside it, in the most absurd way: "Hello! Hello, Central!" or else she was holding the tube to her ear and listening.

"What is it? What are you doing?"

[Pg 266]

"The telephone. I'm ringing up your friend. I'll tell you what I hear, soon."

Even the matron rather objected to having this oddly-dressed, inquisitive girl continually at hand, asking questions. She was busy and tired, and Margot understood that she was dismissed to her bench and Joe.

There she settled herself to think. It was time she did. If this friendly widow, whom her family had always known, could not be found, where should she go? To some hotel she supposed, and wondered which and where.

She was still deep in her musings when the matron touched her arm.

"I got an answer. The number is all right. It is the lady's home when she is in town, but she has been in the country all summer. The boarding-house—it's that—is closed except for the janitor, and he doesn't know where she has gone. That's all."

It might be "all," but it made the woodlander's heart sink. Then she looked up and saw a vaguely familiar profile, yet she knew nobody, had seen nobody at home, and not even on her journey, whom she could remember to have been just like this.

[Pg 267]

It was the face of a young man, who was dressed like all these other city men about her, though with a something different and finer in the fit and finish of the light gray suit he wore. A slight moustache darkened his upper lip, and he fingered this lovingly, as one might a new possession. A gray haired lady leaned lightly on his arm and he carried her wraps upon his other. Suddenly she spoke to him, as they moved outward toward a suburban train, and he smiled down upon her. It was the smile that revealed him—Adrian.

"Why, how could I fail to know him! Adrian—then all is right!"

She forgot Joe and all else save that retreating figure which she must overtake, and dashed across the room regardless of the people who hindered her progress, and among whom she darted with lightning-like speed.

[Pg 268]

"Adrian! Adrian! ADRIAN!"

Their train was late, the lady had been helped to the last platform, and the young man sprang after her just as it was moving out. He heard his own name

and turned, wondering and startled, to see a light-haired girl fiercely protesting against a blue-coated official, who firmly barred her passage beyond the stile into the dangerous region of a hundred moving cars.

"Your ticket, miss! Your train—which is it?"

"Ticket! It's Adrian I want. Adrian, who has just gone on that car—oh, so fast, so fast! Adrian!"

"Too bad, miss, and too late. Sorry. The next train out will not be many minutes. Likely your friends will wait for you at your station. Which is it?"

"My friends? Oh! I don't know. I guess—I guess I haven't any."

She turned away slowly, her heart too heavy for further speech, even had there been any speech possible; and there was Joe, the faithful and silent, laying his hand on her shoulder and guiding her back to their own bench.

[Pg 269]

"One girl runs away, get lost. Joe go home no more."

"Poor Joe, dear Joe. I had no idea of running away. But I saw somebody, that boy who was at the island this summer, and I tried to make him see me. Too late, as the man said. He has gone, and now we, too, must go somewhere. I'll ask that nice woman. She'll tell us, I think," and she again sought the matron.

"Yes. I do know a good place for you, if—they'll take you in. Meaning no harm miss, but you see, you aren't fixed just the same, and the Indian——"

"Is it a question of clothes? It's not the clothing makes the character, my uncle says."

"No, miss, I suppose not. All the same they go a mighty long way toward making friends, leastways in this big city. And Indians——"

[Pg 270]

"Joe Wills is just as noble and as honest as any white man ever lived!"

"Maybe so. Indeed, I'm not denying it, but Indians are Indians, and some landladies might think of tomahawks."

Margot's laugh rang out and the other smiled in sympathy.

"Joe, Joe! Would you scalp anybody?"

Then, indeed, was the red man's impassivity broken by a grin, which happily relieved the situation, fast becoming tragic.

"Well, I'm not wise in city ways but I know that I can find a safe shelter somewhere. I'm going to ask that policeman, yonder, to find us a place."

"That's sensible, and I'll talk with him myself. If he isn't on duty likely he'll take you to my friend's himself. By the way, who was that you ran after and called to so loud? You shouldn't do that in a big, strange station, you know."

[Pg 271]

"I suppose not; yet I needed him so, and it was Adrian, who's been at my own home all summer. If he'd heard, or seen me, he would have taken all the care, because this is where he's always lived. The same familiar spot that—that dear Peace Island is to Joe and me," she said, with a catch in her voice and laying her hand affectionately upon his sleeve.

"Adrian? A Mr. Adrian?"

"Why, no. He is a Wadislaw. His father's name is Malachi Wadislaw, and my business here is with him."

"Wadislaw, the banker? Why then, of course, it's all right. Officer, please call a cab and take them to Number — West Twenty-fifth Street. That's my friend's; and say I sent them."

CHAPTER XXII

NUMBER 526

[Pg 272]

"MOTHER, that was Margot!"

Mrs. Wadislaw heard but did not comprehend what Adrian was saying. She was flushed and panting from her rush after the retreating train and her nerves were excited.

"I'll never, never—run—for any car—in this world, again!" she gasped. "It's dangerous, and—so—so uncomfortable. My heart——"

"Poor mother! I'm sorry. I'll get you some water."

The young fellow was excited himself but on quite a different matter; yet he knew that nothing could be done for the present and that the disturbed lady would take no interest in anything until her own agitation was calmed.

"No, no. Don't you leave me. Touch the button. Let the porter attend—I—I am so shaken. I'll never, never do it again."

[Pg 273]

He obeyed her and sat down in the easy-chair beside her. She had been compelled to run else they had been left behind, and she had been hurried from the platform of that last car through the long train to their own reserved seats in the drawing-room car.

"It was foolish; doubly so, because trains are so frequent. There was no need for haste, anyway, was there?"

"Only this need: that when anybody accepts a dinner invitation one should never keep a hostess waiting."

"But when the hostess is only your own sister, and daughter?"

"One should be most punctilious in one's own family. Oh, yes. It is no laughing matter, my son, and since you have come home and regained your common sense, you must regard all these seeming trifles. Half the disagreements and discomforts of life are due to the fact that even well-bred people treat their own households with a rudeness they would not dare show strangers. Now that you have given up your careless habits I shall take care to remind you of all these details, and expect to see you a finished society man within a twelvemonth."

[Pg 274]

"No, indeed!"

"Adrian! How can you trifle so? Now when you've so lately been restored to me?"

"Dearest mother, I am not trifling. I should be, though, if I meant to shine nowhere else than at a fashionable dinner-table. There, don't look worried. I'll try not to disgrace you, yet—— Well, I've learned a higher view of life than that. But can you hear me now? That was Margot—woodland Margot—who saved my life!"

"Nonsense. It couldn't be."

"It surely was; and I'm going to ask you to excuse me from this one visit so that I can go back and find her."

"Find her? If it were she, and I'm positive you are mistaken, of course she is not in the city alone. Her uncle must be with her, and your sister will be deeply hurt if you fail her this first time. At a dinner, you know, there are a certain and limited number of guests. The failure of one leaves his or her partner in an awkward position. You must keep your engagement, even if—— But, Adrian?"

[Pg 275]

"Yes, mother."

"You must not exaggerate your obligations to those people. They did for you only what anybody would do for a man lost in the woods. By their own admission you were worth a great deal to that farmer. Else he never would have parted with eighty dollars, as he did. I shall always prize the gold piece you brought me; indeed, I mean to have it set in a pin and wear it. But this Maine farmer, or lumberman, or whatever he is, just drop him out of mind. His very name is objectionable to me, and you must never mention it before your father. Years ago there was a—well, something unpleasant with some people; and, please oblige me by—by not being disagreeable now. After all my anxiety while you were gone and about your father's health, I think—I really——"

[Pg 276]

Adrian slipped his arm across the back of the lady's chair and smiled upon her,

lovingly. He was trying his utmost to make up to her and all his family for whatever they had suffered because of his former "misdeeds." He had come home full of high resolves and had had his sincerity immediately tested by his father's demanding that:

"If you are in earnest, if you intend to do a son's part by us, go back into the bank and learn a good business. This 'art' you talk about, what is it? But the shifty resource of a lot of idle fellows. Get down to business. Dollars are what count, in this world. Put yourself in a place where you can make them, and while I am alive to aid you."

Adrian's whole nature rebelled against this command, yet he had obeyed it. And he had inwardly resolved that, outside the duties of his clerkship, his time was his own and should be devoted to his beloved painting.

[Pg 277]

"After all, some of the world's finest pictures have been done by those whose leisure was scant. If it's in me it will have to come out. Some time, in some way, I'll live my own life in spite of all."

It had hurt him, too, a little that his people so discouraged all history of his wanderings.

All of his sisters were married and well-connected, and one of them voiced the opinion of all, when she said:

"Your running away, or your behaving so that you had to be sent away, is quite disgrace enough. That you are back safe, and sensible, is all any of us care to know."

But because he was forbidden to talk of his forest experiences he dwelt upon them all the more in his own mind; and this afternoon's glimpse of Margot's sunny head had awakened all his former interest. Why was she in New York? Was the "master" with her? He, of whom his own mother spoke in such ignorant contempt, as a "farmer," a "lumberman," yet who was the most finished scholar and gentleman that Adrian had ever met.

[Pg 278]

"Well, I can't get home till after that wretched dinner, and I should have to wait for the next train, anyway, even if the 'mater' would let me off. I've promised myself to make her happy, dear little woman, if I can, and sulking over my own disappointments isn't the way to do that," he reflected. So he roused himself to talk of other matters, and naturally of the sister at whose home they were to dine.

"I don't see what made Kate ever marry a warden of state's prison. I should think life in such a place would be hateful."

"That shows how little you know about it, and what a revelation this visit will be to you. Why, my dear, she has a beautiful home, with horses and carriages at her disposal; her apartments are finely furnished and she has one comfort that I have not, or few housekeepers in fact."

[Pg 279]

"What is that?"

"As many servants as she requires, and at no expense to herself. Servants who are absolutely obedient, thoroughly trained, and never 'giving notice.'"

"I do not understand."

"They are the convicts. Why, they even have an orchestra to play at their entertainments, also of convicts; the musical ones to whom the playing is a great reward and treat. I believe they are to play to-night."

"Horror! I hope not. I don't want to be served by any poor fellow out of a cell."

"You'll not think about that. Not after a little. I don't at all, now, though I used to, sometimes, when they were first in office. It's odd that though they've lived at Sing Sing for two years you've not been there yet."

"Not so odd, little mother. Kate and I never get along together very well. She's too dictatorial. Besides, she was always coming home and I saw her there. I had no hankering after a prison, myself. And speaking of disgrace, I feel that her living in such a place is worse than anything I ever did."

[Pg 280]

"Adrian, for a boy who has ordinary intelligence you do say the strangest things.

The office of warden is an honorable one and well paid."

The lad smiled and his mother hastily added:

"Besides, it gives an opportunity for befriending the unhappy prisoners. Why, there is a man——"

She hesitated, looked fixedly at her son as if considering her next words, then concluded, rather lamely:

"But you'll see."

She opened her novel and began to read and Adrian also busied himself with the evening paper; and presently the station was reached and they left the train.

A carriage was in waiting for them, driven by men in livery, and altogether quite smart enough to warrant his mother's satisfaction as they stepped into it and were whirled away to the prison.

[Pg 281]

But as he had been forewarned, there was no suggestion of anything repulsive in the charming apartments they entered, and his sister's greeting was sufficiently affectionate to make him feel that he had misjudged her in the past.

All the guests were in dinner dress and Adrian was appointed to take in his own mother, Kate having decided that this would be a happy surprise to both parties. They had been the last to arrive and as soon as greetings were over the meal was immediately served; but on their way toward the dining-room, Mrs. Wadislaw pressed her son's arm and nodded significantly toward the leader of the palm-hidden orchestra.

"Take a look at that man."

"Yes. Who is he?"

"A convict, life sentence. Number 526. He plays divinely, violin. But——"

Again she hesitated and looked sharply into Adrian's face. Should she, or should she not, tell him the rest? Yes. She must; it would be the surest, shortest way of curing his infatuation for those wood people. Her boy had spoken of this Margot as a child, yet with profound love and admiration. It would be as well to nip any nonsense of that sort in the bud. There was only a moment left, they were already taking their places at the elegantly appointed table, and she whispered the rest:

[Pg 282]

"He is in for robbery and manslaughter,—your own father the victim. His name is Philip Romeyn, and your woodland nonpareil is his daughter."

CHAPTER XXIII

[Pg 283]

FATHER AND SON

"MOTHER!"

Adrian's cry was a gasp. He could not believe that he had heard aright; but he felt himself pulled down into his chair and realized that though his spiritual world had been turned upside down, as it were, this extraordinary dinner must go on. There was only one fact for which to rejoice, a trivial one: he had been placed so that he could look directly into that palm-decked alcove and upon this convict, Number 526.

Convict! Impossible. The fine head was not debased by the close-cropped hair, and held itself erect as one upon which no shadow of guilt or disgrace had ever rested. The face was noble, despite its lines and the prison pallor; and though hard labor had bowed the once stalwart shoulders, they neither slouched nor shrunk together as did those of the other poor men in that group.

[Pg 284]

"Adrian! Remember where you are."

Even the bouillon choked him and the fish was as ashes in his mouth. Courses came on and were removed, and he tasted each mechanically, prodded to this duty by his mother's active elbow. Her tact and volubility covered his silence,

though there was nobody at that table, save herself, who did not mentally set the lad down as an ignorant, ill-bred person, oddly unlike the others of his family. Handsome? Oh! yes. His appearance was quite correct and even noticeable, but if a man were too stupid to open his mouth, save to put food into it, his place at a social function were better filled by a plainer and more agreeable person.

But all things end, as even that intolerable dinner finally did, and Adrian was free to rise and in some quieter place try to rearrange his disordered ideas. But he noticed that Kate signaled her mother to lead the guests from the room while she, herself, remained to exchange a few words with her chief musician. Adrian, also, lingered, unreprieved, with an intensity of interest which fully redeemed his face from that dulness which his sister had previously assigned to it. She even smiled upon him, reassuringly:

[Pg 285]

"You'll get used to society after a bit, brother. You've avoided it so much and lived so among those artists that you're somewhat awkward yet. But you'll do in time, you'll do very well. I mean to make it a point that you shall attend all my little functions."

But Adrian resolved that he would never grace, or disgrace, another in this place, though he answered nothing. Then the lady turned to Number 526, and the boy's eyes fixed themselves upon that worn face, seeking resemblances, trying to comprehend that this unhappy fellow was the father of his sunny Margot.

Kate was speaking now with an accent intended to be kind, even commendatory, but her brother's ear detected, also, its tone of condescension. Did the convict notice it, as well? If so, his face showed no sign.

[Pg 286]

"You did well, my man, very well. I think that there might be a bit more time allowed for practice, and will speak to the warden about it. But you, personally, have a remarkable gift. I hope you will profit by it to your soul's good. I shall want you and your men again for a time this evening. I have the warden's consent in the matter. A few arias and dreamy waltzes, perhaps that sonata which you and 1001 played the other day at my reception. Just your violin and the piano. You will undertake it? The instruments shall be screened, of course."

Adrian was leaning forward, his hands clenched, his lips parted. His gaze became more and more intense. Suddenly the convict raised his own eyes and met the youth's squarely, unflinchingly. They were blue eyes, pain-dimmed, but courageous. Margot's eyes, in very shape and color, as hers might be when life had brought her sorrow. For a half-minute the pair regarded one another, moved by an influence the elder man could not understand; then Adrian's hand went out invitingly, while he said:

[Pg 287]

"Allow me to thank you for your music. I've never heard a violin speak as yours does."

The convict hesitated, glanced at the warden's lady, and replied:

"Probably because no other violin has been to any other man what this has been to me."

But he did not take the proffered hand and, with a bow that would have graced a drawing-room rather than a cell, clasped his instrument closely and quietly moved away.

Kate was inured to prison sights, yet even she was touched by this little by-play, though she reproved her too warm-hearted brother.

"Your generosity does you credit, dear, but we never shake the hand of a prisoner, except when he is leaving. Not always then."

[Pg 288]

"Kate, wait a minute. Tell me all about that man. I thought the prisoners were kept under lock and key. I thought— Oh! it's so awful, so incredible."

"Why, Adrian! How foolish. Your artistic temperament, I suppose, and you cannot help it. No. They are by no means always kept so close. This one is a 'trusty.' So were all the orchestra. So are all whom you see about the house or grounds. This man is the model for the whole prison. He is worth more, in keeping order, than a hundred keepers. His influence is something wonderful, and his life is a living sermon. His repentance is unmistakably sincere, and his

conduct will materially shorten his term, yet it will be a dark day for the institution when he leaves it. I cannot help but like him and trust him; and yet— Dear, dear! I must not loiter here. I must get back to my guests."

"Wait, wait. There's something I want to ask you. To tell you, too. Do you know who that man is?"

[Pg 289]

Kate shivered.

"Do I not? Oh! Adrian, though I have brought myself to look upon him so indulgently now, it was not so at first. Then I hated the sight of his face, and could scarcely breathe in the room where he was. He is under life-sentence for manslaughter and—I wonder if I ought to tell you! But I must. The situation is so dramatic, so unprecedented. The man whom Number 526 tried to kill, and whom he robbed of many thousands, was—our own father!"

He was not even surprised and her astonishing statement fell pointless, except that he shivered a little, as she had done, and withdrew his hand from her arm, where it had arrested her departure.

"I have heard that already. Mother told me. But I don't believe it. That man never, never attempted or committed a crime. If he were guilty could he lift his eyes to mine so steadfastly, I, the son of my father? There is some horrible, horrible mistake. I don't know what, nor how, but there is. And I will find it out, will set it right. I must. I shall never know another moment's peace until I do. Those eyes of his! Why, sister, do you know that it was little Margot, that man's daughter, who saved me from starvation in the forest? Yes, saved my life; and whose influence has turned me from an idle, careless lad into—a man."

[Pg 290]

If any of those critical guests could have seen his face at that moment they would not have called him stupid; and his excitement communicated itself so strongly to his sister, that she passed her hands across her brow as if to clear her startled thoughts.

"Impossible. Fifteen years has Number 526 lived a prison life, and if there had been any mistake, it would, it must, have been found out long ago. Why, the man had friends, rich ones, who spent great sums to prove his innocence and failed. The evidence was too strong. If he had had his way we two would have long been fatherless."

[Pg 291]

Kate turned to leave the room but Adrian did not follow her. The place had become intolerable to him, yet he blessed the chance which had brought him there to see this unhappy fellow-man and to learn this amazing story. Now he could not wait to put distance between himself and the hateful spot, and to begin the unraveling of what he knew, despite all proof, was somebody's terrible blunder.

As cautiously as any convict of them all, escaping from his fetters, the lad made his way into the street and thence with all speed to the station. He had picked up a hat somewhere, but was still in full dress, and more than one glance fell with suspicion upon his heated countenance and disordered appearance. However, he was too deep in his own thoughts to observe this, and as the train rushed cityward he grew more calm and better able to formulate a plan of action.

[Pg 292]

"I begin to understand. This yearly visit of the 'master' has been to Number 526. They were close friends, and brothers by marriage. This year he has brought Margot with him. Will he, I wonder, will he let her see this convict in stripes? No marvel that my question as to her father's burial place was an unanswerable one. Mother desired me not to mention the names of my forest friends before my father, but in this I must disobey her. I dare not do otherwise. I must get the whole, complete, detailed history of this awful affair, and there is nobody who could so well remember it as its victim. But I believe there were two victims, and one is suffering still. I only hope that father's head will not be troubling him. I can't think of him without these queer 'spells' yet he has always been capable of transacting business, and I must get him to talk, even if it does confuse him. Oh! hum! Will we never reach the city! And where is Margot now? If I knew I should hurry to see her first; but—what a welcome her uncle would give me if I succeeded in clearing her father's name. No wonder he disliked me—rather I am astonished that he let me stay at all, knowing my name, even if not my parentage. After that, of course, I had to go. Yet he was kind and just to the

[Pg 293]

last, despite his personal feeling, and this poor Number 526 looks just as noble.”

The house on Madison Avenue was dark when Adrian reached it, but he knew that his father’s private room was at the rear of the building and, admitting himself with his latch-key, went directly there.

The banker sat in an attitude familiar to all his family, with his hands locked together, his head bent, and his gaze fixed upon vacancy. He might have been asleep for all appearances, but when Adrian entered and bade “Good-evening, father,” he responded promptly enough.

“Good-evening, Adrian. Has your mother come home?”

[Pg 294]

“No, father. I left—well, I left rather suddenly. In any case, you know, she was to stop for the night with Kate. But I came, right after dinner, because I want to have a talk with you. Are you equal to it, to-night, sir?”

The banker flashed a suspicious glance upward, then relapsed into his former pose. Memories of previous disagreeable “talks” with this, his only son, arose, but Adrian anticipated his remark.

“Nothing wrong with me, this time, father, I hope. I am trying to learn the business and to like it. I—”

“Have you any money, Adrian?”

“A little. What is left of my salary; more than I should have if mother hadn’t fitted my wardrobe out so well. A clerk even in your bank doesn’t earn a princely sum, you remember; not at first.”

It was a well-known fact, upon the “street,” that the employees of “Wadislaw’s” received almost niggardly payment. Wadislaw, himself had the reputation of penuriousness, and that his family had lived in the style they had was because Mrs. Wadislaw’s personal income paid expenses.

[Pg 295]

“Put it away. Put it away where nobody can find it. There are more robbers than honest men in the country. Once I was robbed, myself. Of an enormous sum. I have never recovered from that set-back. We should not have gotten on at all but for your mother. Your mother is a very good woman, Adrian.”

“Why, yes, father. Of course. The very best in the world, I believe. She has only one fault, she will make me go into society, and I dislike it. Otherwise, she’s simply perfect.”

“Yes, yes. But she watches me too closely, boy. Don’t let your wife be a spy upon you, lad.”

“No, I won’t,” laughed he. “But speaking of robberies, I wish you would tell me about that great one which happened to you. It was when I was too young to know anything about it. I have a particular reason for asking. If you are able, that is.”

[Pg 296]

“Why shouldn’t I be able? It is never out of my mind, night nor day. There was always a mystery in it. Yet I would have trusted him as I trusted myself. More than I would dare trust anybody now, even you, my son.”

The man was thoroughly aroused, at last. Adrian began to question if he had done right in saying what would move him so, knowing that all excitement was apt to be followed by a “spell,” during which he acted like a man in a dream, though never sleeping.

But he resumed the conversation, voluntarily, and Adrian listened intently.

“He was a poor boy from a country farm. Your mother and the girls, were boarding at his home. I went up for Sundays, for I liked his horses. I never felt I could afford to own one— Don’t buy a horse, Adrian!”

[Pg 297]

“No, father. Not yet. I’m rather more anxious to buy a certain moose I know and present it to the city Zoo. King Madoc. You remember I told you about the trained animal, who would swim and tow a boat, and could be harnessed to draw a sleigh?”

“Umm. Indeed? Remarkable. Quite remarkable. But I wouldn’t do it, boy. The gift would not be appreciated. Nobody ever does appreciate anything. It is a selfish world. A selfish world, and an ungrateful one.”

"Not wholly, father, I hope."

"We were talking. What about? I—my memory—so much care, and the difficulty of keeping secrets. It's hard to keep everything to one's self when a man grows old, Adrian."

"Yes, father dear. But I'm at home now to stay. You must trust me more and rely upon me. Believe me, I will deserve your confidence. But it was the boy from the farm you were telling me of, and the horses."

In all his life Adrian had never drawn so near his father's real self as he was drawing then. He rejoiced in this fact as a part of the reward of his more filial behavior. He meant wholly what he had just promised, but he was still most anxious to hear this old story from this participant's own lips, while they were together, undisturbed.

[Pg 298]

"Yes, yes. Well, I thought I could drive a pair of colts as well as any jockey, though I knew no more about driving than any other city business man. Of course, they ran away, and I should have been killed, but that little shaver— Why, Adrian, that little shaver just sprung on the back of one, from where he'd been beside me in the wagon, and he held and pulled and wouldn't let go till they'd quieted down, and then he was thrown off and nearly trampled to death. I wasn't hurt a bit, not a single bit. You'd think I'd befriend such a brave, unselfish little chap as that, wouldn't you, lad?"

In the interest of his recital Mr. Wadislaw had risen and paced the floor, but he now sat down again, flushed and a bit confused.

[Pg 299]

"What did you do for him, father?"

"Hmm. What? Oh! yes. Found out he wanted to come to New York and put him to school. Made a man of him. Gave him a place in the bank. Promoted him, promoted him, promoted him. Till he got almost as high as I was myself. Trusted him with everything even more than myself for he never forgot. It would have been better if he had."

A long silence that seemed intolerable to Adrian's impatience.

"Then, father, what next?"

"How curious you are! Well, what could be next? except that I went one night—or day—I don't remember—he went— The facts were all against him. There was no hope for him from the beginning. If I had died, he would have hanged, that boy—that little handsome shaver who saved my life. But I didn't die, and he only tried to kill me. They found him at the safe—we two, only, knew the lock—and the iron bar in his hand. He protested, of course. They always do. His wife came— Oh! Adrian, I shall never forget her face. She was a beautiful woman, with such curious, wonderful hair, and she had a little baby in her arms, while she pleaded that I would not prosecute. The baby laughed, but what could I do? The law must take its course. The money was gone and my life almost. There was no hope for him from the beginning, though he never owned his guilt. But I didn't die, and—Adrian, why have you asked me all this to-night? I am so tired. I often am so tired."

[Pg 300]

The lad rose and stood beside his father's chair, laying his arm affectionately around the trembling shoulders, as any daughter might have done, as none of this stern father's daughters dared to do.

"I have asked you, father, and pained you because it was right. I had to ask. To-day I have seen this 'little shaver,' a convict in his prison. I have looked into a face that is still noble and undaunted, even after all these years of suffering and shame. I have heard of a life that is as helpful behind prison bars as the most devoted minister's outside them. And I know that he is innocent. He never harmed you or meant to. I am as sure of this as that I stand here, and it is my life's task to undo this wrong that has been done. You would be glad to see him righted, would you not, father? After all this weary time?"

[Pg 301]

"I—I—don't—I am ill, Adrian, I— Take care! The money, the bonds! My head, Adrian, my head!"

A HIDDEN SAFE DEPOSIT

UPON reaching the New York railway station, Adrian had stopped long enough to send his mother an explanatory telegram, so that she might not worry over his sudden disappearance. He had also urged her in it, to "make a good visit, since he would be at home to look after his father."

In this new consideration for the feelings of others he was now thankful that Mrs. Wadislaw was away. "She gets so anxious and frightened over father's 'spells,' though he always comes out of them well," he reflected; then did what he remembered to have seen her do on similar occasions. He helped his father to the lounge, loosened his collar, bathed his head, and administered a few drops of a restorative kept near at hand.

In a few moments the banker sat up again and remarked:

[Pg 303]

"It is queer that no doctor can stop these attacks. I never quite lose consciousness, or rather I seem to be somebody else. I have an impulse to do things I would not do at other times—yet what these things are I do not clearly remember when the attack passes. But I always feel better for some days after them. For that reason I do not dread them as I would, otherwise. Strange, that a man has to lose his senses in order to regain them! A paradox, but a fact."

"Do you have them as often as formerly?"

"Oftener, I think. They are irregular. I may feel one coming on again within a few hours or it may not be for weeks. The trouble is that I may be stricken some time more severely and fall senseless in some unsafe place."

"Don't fear about that, father. I am at home again, you know, and shall keep you well in sight. If you would only give up business and go away to Europe, or somewhere. Take a long rest. You might recover entirely then and enjoy a ripe old age."

[Pg 304]

"I can't afford it, lad. If those stolen bonds—but what's the use of recalling them? Your talk has brought my loss so freshly before me. I wish you hadn't asked me about it. However, it's done, and it's late. Let's get to bed. I must be early at the bank, to-morrow. The builders are coming to look things over and estimate on the cost of safe deposit vaults in the basement. Ours is one of the oldest buildings in the city and every inch of space has increased in value since it was put up. The waste room of that basement should bring us in a princely income, if the inspector will give the permit to construct the vaults. My head must be clear in the morning, if ever, and I must rest now. Good-night."

Adrian saw his father to his room and sought his own, resolving to be present at the next day's interview with the builders, and to give the banker his own most watchful care. But his thoughts soon returned to the startling knowledge he had gained concerning Margot's history, and when he fell asleep, at last, it was to dream of a prison on an island, of his mother in a cell, and other most distressing scenes. So that he awoke unrefreshed, and in greater perplexity than ever as to how he could find Margot or be of any help to Number 526.

[Pg 305]

But Mr. Wadislaw seemed brighter than usual, and was almost jovial in his discussion of the proposed alterations of his property.

"You will be a rich man, Adrian, a very rich man, as I figure it. Money is the main thing. Get money and—and—keep it;" he added with a cautious glance around the breakfast room.

But there was nobody except the old butler to hear this worldly advice and he had always been hearing it. Adrian, to whom it was given, heard it not at all. He was thinking of his island friends and wondering how he should find them. However, when they reached the bank, he rallied his wandering thoughts and gave strict attention to the talk between the banker and the builders, trying to impress upon his mind the dry facts and figures which meant so much to them.

[Pg 306]

"You say that this wall will have to be torn down. To reach bottom rock. Why, sir, that wall has stood—Adrian, what is that racket in the outer office? Stop it. The porter should not allow— But, sir, that wall is as thick as the safe built

into it. I mean——”

Mr. Wadislaw passed his hand across his forehead and Adrian, seeing this familiar sign of impending trouble, felt that his place was at his father's side rather than in quelling that slight disturbance in the adjoining room. He took his stand behind the banker's chair and rested his hand upon it.

Mr. Wadislaw cast a hurried, appealing glance upward, and the son smiled and nodded. The contractor moved about the place, tapping the walls, the floor, and the great chimney beside the safe; pausing at this spot and listening, tapping afresh, listening again, with a marked interest growing in his face.

[Pg 307]

But nobody noticed this, for, suddenly, the door slid open and there stood in the aperture a girl with wonderful, flowing hair and a face strangely stern and defiant.

“Margot!”

But it was not at Adrian she looked. At last she was in the presence of the man who had ruined her father. And—he knew her! Aye, knew her, though they two had never met before and, as yet, she had spoken no accusing word. For he had sunk back in his seat, his face white, his eyes staring, his jaw dropped. To him she was an apparition, one risen from the dead to confront him with the darkest hour of all his past, when a broken-hearted wife had kneeled to him, begging her husband's life. Yet it was broad daylight and he wide awake.

“Are you Malachi Wadislaw?”

[Pg 308]

“I—I—thought you were dead!”

“No, not dead. Alive and come at last to make you right the wrong you did my father. To make you open his prison doors and set him free.”

“Are you Philip Romeyn's wife? Her hair—his eyes—I—I—am confused—Adrian!”

“Yes, father. I am here. Margot!”

Her glance passed from the father to the son but there was no relenting kindness in it. When the young suffer it is profoundly, and the inmost depths of Margot's nature were stirred by this first sight of her father's enemy.

“Philip Romeyn's wife lies in the grave, whither your persecution sent her. I am her daughter and his, come to make you do a tardy justice. To make you lead me to the place where you have hidden the bonds, the gold, you said he stole! For if stealing was done it was by your own hands, not his.”

“Margot—MARGOT! This is my father!” cried Adrian, aghast.

“Yes, Adrian, and my father—my father—wears a convict's garb this day because of yours!”

[Pg 309]

“No, no! No, no. I tried to save him, but he would not save himself! I begged him, almost on my knees I begged him, the little shaver, to confess and get the benefit of that. But he would not. There was no hope for him from the beginning. None. They found me all but dead. The money gone. He by me, the steel rod in his hand with which we used to fasten the—that very safe. I—— Why, I can see it all as if it were to-day, even though they lifted me for dead, and found him standing, dazed and speechless. When they questioned him about the money he said: ‘Ask Malachi Wadislaw. I never touched it.’ That was all. But they proved it against him. I was dead—almost—and I was beggared. Beggared!” his voice rose to a scream, “by that brave little shaver who had once—once saved my life. Robbed and murdered—his benefactor, who had made him rich and prosperous. Should he not suffer? Aye, forever!”

[Pg 310]

The silence that followed this speech was intense. The builder ceased his inquisitive tapping and listened spellbound. Old Joe stood rigidly behind the girl whom he had followed. Adrian scarcely breathed. Accused and accuser faced one another, motionless.

Then: “Where—was—it?” demanded Margot. “Show me—the place.”

“Here. Here, in this very sanctum to which nobody had the entrance but us two. There—is the monster safe that was robbed. With such another rod of steel”—he

pointed to a bar resting above the safe—"was I struck—here." His hand touched for an instant a deep scar on his temple and an involuntary shudder passed over the girl's frame.

But her face did not change nor the defiance of her eyes grow less. She moved a step forward, and, as if to make way for her, the builder, also, stepped aside. As he did so his hammer caught upon the little ledge of the chimney projection which he had been testing and whose hollow sound had aroused his curiosity. The small slab of marble slipped and fell, though it had seemingly been securely plastered in the wall. It left an aperture of a few inches, and the contractor ejaculated:

[Pg 311]

"Pshaw! That's queer. Must have been loose, I never saw just such a hole in such a place. I'm sorry, sir, yet—" He turned to address the banker but paused, amazed. What had he done?

The effect of that trivial accident upon the owner of the building was marvelous. He sprang to his feet, clasped his head with his hands, and gazed upon that tiny opening with the fascination of horror. For a moment it seemed as if his staring eyes would start from their sockets and he gasped in his effort to breathe.

"Father! What is it? What ails you?"

But the distraught man tossed off his son's arm like one who needed no support, and to whom each second of delay was unendurable.

[Pg 312]

"Look, look! What they told me—I believed—look, look!" then he swayed and Adrian caught him.

But Margot's anxious love leaped to a swift comprehension of what merely amazed the others.

"That hole! The bonds—the bonds are in that hole! That's what he means. Look, look!"

Incredulous, but impelled by her insistence, the builder peered into the opening. It was too small to admit his head and his gaze could pass no further than its opposite side.

"There's nothing there, miss, but a hole, as he said."

She tossed him aside, not noticing, and thrust her arm down as far as it would reach.

"A stick, a string, something—quick! It is deep."

Nobody moved, till she turned upon the Indian.

"For the master, Joe! a string and a weight. Quick, quick!"

[Pg 313]

The empty-handed son of the forest was the man who filled her need. A new, well-leaded fishing line that had caught his fancy, passing down the street, came from his pocket. She seized, uncoiled, and dropped it down the hole.

"Oh! it is so deep. But we must get to the bottom. We must, even if I tear that wall down with my own hands. You'll help me, Joe, dear Joe, won't you? For the master?"

He moved forward, instantly, but Adrian interposed. He was colorless with excitement yet his voice had the ring of hope and expectation, as he bent and looked into Malachi Wadislav's eyes.

"Is she right, father? Do you hear me? Is there anything in that small place?"

"I remember—I remember. The bonds. The bonds are safe. Always—always keep your money in a hidden—"

"God forbid!" groaned the lad. Then to the builder, "Get your men. Tear down that wall. Quick. A man's life is at stake, or more than life—his honor."

[Pg 314]

The contractor hesitated, then remarked:

"Well, it won't weaken the building, as I see; and we had decided on the work. It would have to come down anyway."

He stepped to the street and summoned a waiting workman. They were skilled

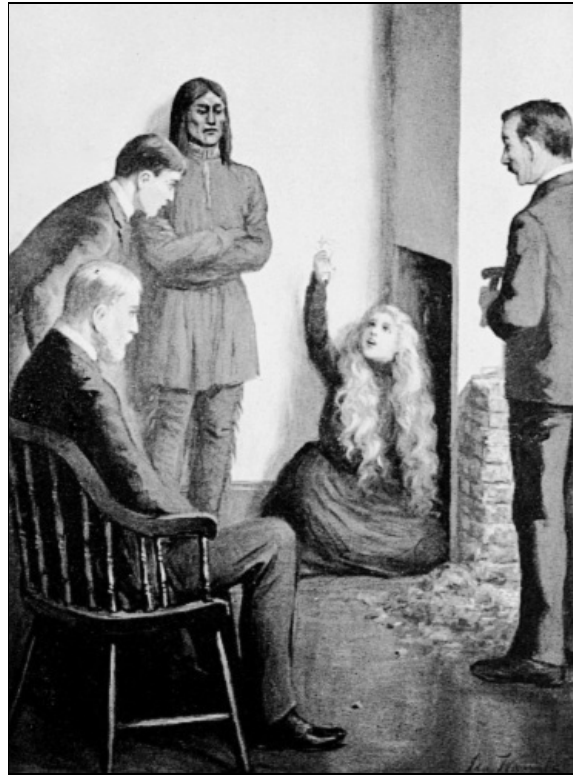
and labored rapidly, with little scattering of dust or mortar, though Margot would not move aside even from that, but gave them room for working only, standing with gaze riveted on that deepening shaft. A mere shell of single bricks, plastered and painted as the remaining wall, had hidden it; and its depth was little below the thick-beamed floor.

At last the workman stood up.

"I think I see the bottom, sir, and there seems to be stuff in it. Would you like to feel, young man?"

"No, no! I! It is I—to me the right—to find them!" cried Margot, flinging herself between, and downward on the floor.

[Pg 315]



**SHE STOOPED AND FLUNG THEM
OUT**

"But, Margot, little girl, don't be so sure. It's scarcely probable——" began Adrian, compassionately, shrinking from sight of her bitter disappointment, should disappointment come. Alas! it would be almost as great to him, and whether a glad or sorry one he could not yet realize.

"His face! Look at your father's face. That tells the story. The bonds are there, and 'tis Philip Romeyn's daughter shall bring them to the light."

Indeed, the banker's expression confirmed her faith. Its frenzied eagerness had given place to a satisfied expectation, and a normal color tinged his cheeks. But he still watched intently, saying nothing.

"Catch them, Adrian, catch them! But hold them fast, the horrible, accursed things!"

One after one, stooping, the exultant daughter lifted and flung them out. The folded papers seemingly so worthless but of such value; the little canvas bags of gold; the precious documents and vouchers, hidden from all other men by one unhappy man, in his miserly aberration. The price of fifteen years of agony and shame. Now, fifteen years to be forgotten, and honor restored.

[Pg 316]

In that far past Philip Romeyn's story had been simple and it had been true. He had been unaccountably anxious and had risen in the night and gone to the bank. He believed that the safe had not been locked, though he had been assured it should be by Mr. Wadislaw, the only other person who had a key to it. To his surprise he had found the banker in his office, but in dire mishap. He was lying on the floor, unconscious, bleeding from a wound upon his temple. The safe was open, empty. The steel bar which, at night, was padlocked upon it for extra security lay on the floor, beside the senseless man. Mr. Romeyn had

picked this up and was standing with it in his hand, horrified and half-stupefied by the shocking affair, when the watchman, discovering light and noise, had entered and found them. It was his hasty, accusing voice which started the cry of robbery and murder; and the circumstances had seemed so aggravated, the circumstantial evidence so strong, that the judge had imposed the heaviest penalty within his power. The hypothesis that Mr. Wadislaw had himself put the contents of the safe away, had even perverted them to his own use; and that he had injured himself by falling against the sharp corner of the safe's heavy and open door, had been set aside as too trivial for consideration.

[Pg 317]

The hypothesis had been correct, the circumstantial evidence incorrect; yet in the name of justice, the latter had prevailed.

"Count them! have you counted them, Adrian?"

"Yes, Margot. It is all here. The very sum of which I have so often heard. Thank God, that it is found!"

"My father! Come, Joe, we're going to my father."

[Pg 318]

"And I go with you. In my father's name and to begin his lifelong reparation."

CHAPTER XXV

[Pg 319]

THE MELODY AND MYSTERY OF LIFE

SWIFT the way and joyous now, that same road over which Adrian had journeyed on the day before, so grudgingly. Yet not half swift enough that through express by which they left the city limits for the little town of Sing Sing, or as would have better suited Indian Joe, of Ossining. Scene of so many tragedies and broken hearts; to be, to-day, a scene of unutterable gladness.

Margot's eyes were on the flying landscape, counting the lessening landmarks as one counts off the stitches of a tedious seam, and with each mile of progress her impatience growing.

"Oh! Adrian! shall we never be there! I can hardly breathe. My heart beats so—I cannot wait, I cannot!"

In the seat behind them Joe still carefully held the old-fashioned shawl and bonnet, which Angelique had decided her young traveler should—but never would—wear. Her hair was out of that decorous plait which had been commanded, and there had been neither time nor friend to substitute new clothes for old. Therefore, it was just as she looked in the woodland that Margot looked now when she was first to meet her father's eyes; and neither she, nor even Adrian, cared one whit for the curious glances which scrutinized her unusual, comfortable attire.

[Pg 320]

What were clothes? Money could soon buy those, if they were needed, and there would be money abundant, Adrian thought, fingering the "specimens" which the girl desired old Joseph to produce from that wonderful pocket of his, which held so few, yet just the very things that were important.

"Copper, Margot. I'm sure of it. I have a friend, a man who deals in mining stocks, and I've seen samples at his office which do not look as pure to me as this."

[Pg 321]

"These pieces came from the deep cave under the island. Where I was that day during the great storm, the day you came to us. I don't see why there shouldn't be plenty of the metal there, for we're in nearly the same latitude as the copper regions of the great lakes. I hope we may find it in large enough quantities to pay for getting it out."

Adrian was surprised and not wholly pleased by what seemed a mercenary taint upon her fine character, but was ashamed of his momentary misjudgment when she added:

"Because, you see, we've suffered so much for money's sake that we want to use it ourselves to make other people happy. I know what I will do with it, if I ever

have much, or even little.”

“What is that?”

“I will use it to defend the wrongfully imprisoned. To help the poor men when they come out, even if they have been wicked once. To comfort the families of those who suffer disgrace and poverty. To forward justice—justice. Oh! Adrian, how far now?”

[Pg 322]

“Fifteen minutes, now. Only fifteen minutes!”

“They will never pass! They are longer than the fifteen years of my ignorance, when I didn’t know I had a father. My father. My father.”

Over and over, she said the words softly, caressingly, as if she could never have enough of all they meant to her; and the listening lad asked once, a trifle warningly:

“Are you not at all afraid, Margot, that this unknown father will be different from your anticipations? Remember, though so close of kin, you are still strangers.”

“Why, Adrian! My mother loved him and my uncle. I love him, too, unknowing; but I tell you now, this minute, if I found him all that was bad and repulsive, I should still love him and all the more. So love him that he would grow good again and forget all the evil he must have seen in that evil place. For he is my father, my father.”

[Pg 323]

“Have no fear, I only meant to try you. He is all that you dream and more. He has the noblest face I ever looked on; yes, not even excepting your uncle’s.”

“What? you—have seen him?”

“Yes. Yesterday;” at which she sat in silent wonder till he said: “Now come. We’re there!”

When they stepped out at the final station Adrian called for the swiftest horses waiting possible fares, and burst in upon his sister’s presence with the demand, almost breathlessly spoken:

“Number 526, at once, Kate. This is Margot— Ah! mother! Margot! The money’s found—Number 526—quick!”

The excitement was all his by then. The girl to whom this moment was so much more eventful stood pale and quiet, with a luminous joy in her blue eyes that was more pathetic than tears.

“Adrian, are you crazy? Upon my word, I almost believe you are! Running away as you did last night and coming back again to-day, in this wild fashion. What do you mean? Who is this—this young person? And what in the world do you, can you, possibly, want of Number 526?”

[Pg 324]

He paid no attention to her many questions, nor even to his mother who clutched his arm in extreme agitation. He had caught the tones of a violin played softly, tenderly, and oh! so sadly.

“Yes, that’s Number 526, since you wish to see him, though it’s quite against the rules and—he’s practicing with his men—”

“Come, Margot. Come.”

The player was in the little alcove behind the screen and palms, and did not even look up as the two entered his presence, for his own soul had floated far away from that dread place, on the strains of that music which no prison bars could confine.

“Father!”



“MY FATHER! I HAVE COME”

The music ceased, but only for an instant. Once the player had heard a voice like that—clear, sweet, exquisitely modulated. The voice of the wife he had loved, silent in death these many years. But the tone had been sufficient to stir his soul to even deeper harmonies: and he stood there forgetful of his shaven head, his prison stripes, once more a man among men.

[Pg 325]

“Father! My father! I have come! Margot, baby Margot! Come to set you free!”

Her arms were about his neck, her wet face pressed close to his, her tender kisses poured upon his lips, his dazed, unseeing eyes, his trembling shoulders.

Then he put out his hand and held her from him, that he might the better see her fairness, hear her marvelous story—told in few words, and comprehend what was the merciful, the Heaven-sent bliss that had come to him.

“Cecily! Margot! My daughter with her mother’s face! Free! Free! Oh! God, support me!”

[Pg 326]

The indomitable courage which suffering had had no power to weaken failed in this supreme moment; and as, in his hours of darkness, he had clung to his music for sustenance so he turned to it now. He pressed his violin to his shoulder, leaned his cheek upon it, and from its quivering strings drew out in melody the story of his fifteen years. All the bitterness, the sadness, the sweetness; and that exalted faith which had made the mystery of his life, and his shame, almost divine.

Blinded by their own tears, one by one, the others left them, and when the last strain ended in a burst of joyous victory, there were but two to hear it—parent and child.

Adrian watched the train that bore them homeward roll away, with a heart both heavy and glad. In fancy he could see them reach that journey’s end; with brother clasping the hand of brother, the silent, wonderful forest receiving them into its restful solitude. He could see that great room which had waited for its occupant so many years, and which was now all aglow from its flame-filled fireplace, and redolent with wild flowers. He could see the wide couch drawn up before the hearth and a toil-worn man, who had not rested before in fifteen years, lying there with grateful, adoring eyes fixed upon that pictured Face of The Man of Sorrows.

[Pg 327]

There was a girl in the room, moving everywhere in needless, tender care that

nothing should be wanting. As if anything ever could be wanting where Margot was! The innocent, great-hearted child of nature, whose love no obstacle could overcome, and who hesitated at no danger for love's sweet sake.

Best Books

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS



A SERIES of books for young people that contains the latest and best works of the most popular writers for boys and girls. The stories are not only told in an interesting and charming manner, but most of them contain something in the way of information or instruction, and all are of a good moral tone. For this reason they prove doubly good reading; for, while the child is pleasantly employing his time, he is also improving his mind and developing his character. Nowhere can better books be found to put into the hands of young people. They are profusely and handsomely illustrated by the best artists and are well printed on good paper with exceedingly handsome and durable bindings.

Sold by the leading booksellers everywhere, or sent prepaid on receipt of price.

Cloth, each, \$1.25

The Penn Publishing Company

923 ARCH STREET

PHILADELPHIA

STORIES FOR GIRLS

Earning Her Way

*By Mrs. Clarke
Johnson*

*Illustrated by Ida
Vaugh*

A charming story of an ambitious girl who overcomes in a most original manner, many obstacles that stand in the way of securing a college course. While many of her experiences are of a practical nature and show a brave, self-reliant spirit, some of her escapades and adventures are most exciting, yet surrounding the whole there is an atmosphere of refinement and inspiration that is most helpful and pleasing.

Her College Days

*By Mrs. Clarke
Johnson*

*Illustrated by Ida
Vaugh*

This is a most interesting and healthful tale of a girl's life in a New England college. The trustful and unbounded love of the heroine for her mother and the mutual and self-sacrificing devotion of the mother to the daughter are so

beautifully interwoven with the varied occurrences and exciting incidents of college life as to leave a most wholesome impression upon the mind and heart of the reader.

Two Wyoming Girls

*By Mrs. Carrie L.
Marshal*

*Illustrated by Ida
Waugh*

Two girls, thrown upon their own resources, are obliged to "prove up" their homestead claim. This would be no very serious matter were it not for the persecution of an unscrupulous neighbor, who wishes to appropriate the property to his own use. The girls endure many privations, have a number of thrilling adventures, but finally secure their claim and are generally well rewarded for their courage and perseverance.

The Girl Ranchers

*By Mrs. Carrie L.
Marshal*

*Illustrated by Ida
Waugh*

A story of life on a sheep ranch in Montana. The dangers and difficulties incident to such a life are vividly pictured, and the interest in the story is enhanced by the fact that the ranch is managed almost entirely by two young girls. By their energy and pluck, coupled with courage, kindness, and unselfishness they succeed in disarming the animosity of the neighboring cattle ranchers, and their enterprise eventually results successfully.

A Maid at King Alfred's Court

*By Lucy Foster
Madison*

*Illustrated by Ida
Waugh*

This is a strong and well told tale of the 9th century. It is a faithful portrayal of the times, and is replete with historical information. The trying experiences through which the little heroine passes, until she finally becomes one of the great Alfred's family, are most entertainingly set forth. Nothing short of a careful study of the history of the period will give so clear a knowledge of this little known age as the reading of this book.

A Maid of the First Century

*By Lucy Foster
Madison*

*Illustrated by Ida
Waugh*

A little maid of Palestine goes in search of her father, who for political reasons, has been taken as a slave to Rome. She is shipwrecked in the Mediterranean, but is rescued by a passing vessel bound for Britain. Eventually an opportunity is afforded her for going to Rome, where, after many trying and exciting experiences, she and her father are united and his liberty is restored to him.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE:

Minor changes have been made to correct typesetters' errors; otherwise, every effort has been made to remain true to the author's words and intent.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DAUGHTER OF THE FOREST ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or

PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other

format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a

defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.