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ON HE CAME, CRASHING THROUGH THE BOUGHS.

Page 130.

GULF AND GLACIER

OR

THE PERCIVALS IN ALASKA

BY
WILLIS BOYD ALLEN

Author of the “Lion City of Africa,” “Pine Cones,” “Silver Rags,” “The Northern Cross,” “Kelp,” “Cloud and Cliff,” “John Brownlow’s Folks,” etc., etc.

BOSTON
D. LOTHROP COMPANY
WASHINGTON STREET OPPOSITE BROMFIELD

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TO

The Little Captain

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GULF AND GLACIER.

CHAPTER I.

NORTHERN BOUND.

“All aboard!”

It was a bright July morning, and its gladness was reflected in the faces of the throng that hurried to and fro, like an army of particularly busy ants, in the Boston and Lowell Depot.

Way trains puffed in and out, discharging their loads of out-of-town people, who poured through the doorway in an almost continuous stream, carrying baskets of lunch, bunches of pond lilies and the small parcels that tell of every-day trips to the city.

[Pg 8]

On the opposite side of the station stood a Canadian Pacific train. The massive trucks and heavy English build of the tawny cars distinguished them from the stock required for local traffic. This was the train which was to take a hundred or more passengers, without change, across the broad American Continent. From the windows of those very cars, the travelers were to look out upon the rolling Western prairies, the ravines and snowy summits of the Rocky Mountains, and at last, the blue waters of the Pacific. No wonder the people on this side of the station, those departing, as well as those to be left behind, wore a more serious and anxious look upon their faces than the light-hearted suburbans who chatted gaily on their brief daily trip of a dozen miles.

How curiously the hundred tourists looked into one another’s eyes? “Will he prove a delightful companion, I wonder?” they said to themselves. “Is she to be a life-long friend, dating from this moment when our paths meet for the first time?”

“All aboard!” shouts the conductor again.

It has been well said that a railway station is a fit emblem of human life, with its brief merriment and grief, its greetings and good-bys, its clamor of coming and going.

[Pg 9]

Be this as it may, it is probable that of the half a thousand people in the Lowell Depot that morning, but few abandoned themselves to moral reflections. Certainly Tom Percival was not occupied with philosophical meditation, as he stood on the lowest step of the car “Kamloops,” looking out eagerly over the crowd that surged to and fro on the platform beside the train.

“Halloo, Ran!” he shouted suddenly, waving his hat and beckoning to a young man of about his own age, who was making his way toward the car, valise in hand.

“All right, Tom,” responded the other. “Come along, Fred,” he added to a companion at his

side. “Here’s the ‘old cabin home’ for the next week or so, I suppose.”

The three young fellows—or boys, as it is easier to call them, once for all—shook hands all round, and then, standing on the car platform, turned to the crowd again as the train started and slowly moved out of the station.

“Good-by! good-by!”

“Be sure to write!”

“Bring me a totem pole from Alaska!”

“Hurrah! hurrah!”

And amid a medley of shouts and frantic wavings of handkerchiefs the long train rumbled away, northward bound.

Randolph Burton made his way into the car, followed by his cousin Tom and their chum Fred Seacomb. Randolph had just passed his Sophomore examination successfully at Harvard, while Tom was rejoicing over his admission to the Freshman class, with only one condition. Fred was a pupil in a scientific school at Philadelphia. He was as dignified and scrupulously neat as ever, and his eyeglasses twinkled as of old.

“Where are the girls?” inquired Randolph, turning to Tom.

The car was filled with passengers, all talking at once, and besieging the porter with questions.

“In our ‘drawing-room,’ at the other end of the car,” replied Tom. “You know father and mother have a jolly little room all to themselves, but we shall use it as headquarters, the whole way to Vancouver.”

“Thomas alludes to Vancouver as if it were East Somerville or Braintree,” remarked Fred, eying that young man calmly. “How many times did you say you had crossed the Continent?”

“Don’t you concern yourself about me,” rejoined Tom. “If you’d ground up on this trip as I have, perhaps you’d feel on familiar terms with Assiniboia and Saskatchewan and”—

“Oh! here he comes, talking Indian as usual,” interrupted a merry voice. “Randolph and Fred are with him.”

“Glad to see you, Miss Sibley!” said Fred, with his most elegant bow.

“Oh! please,” laughed the sunny-haired girl, “I’m going to be just ‘Pet’ on this trip, any way. I sha’n’t be seventeen till November, you know.”

The boys seemed relieved at this declaration, and, perching on the arms of the car seats, entered into lively conversation with Pet, as well as Tom’s sisters, Kittie and Bess.

The whole party, it may now be explained, had started on a journey to Alaska. The young people had worked hard at their studies during the winter, and Mr. Percival, being a man of ample means, as well as of good sense and thoroughly kind heart, had included in his invitation Pet Sibley and Fred Seacomb, both of whom are familiar to the readers of the earlier volumes of this series.

 They had been undecided where to go for the summer, when a friend of Mrs. Percival’s told her of this grand “Excursion,” which was to take its patrons from sea to sea, up the coast of Alaska, and back by way of Yellowstone Park, all within the space of seven weeks. Careful inquiries satisfied Mr. Percival and his wife that this was just the trip they were looking for; places were secured, and the start was now fairly made, as we have seen.

“Well, boys,” remarked Mr. Percival, coming up at this moment, “have you found your berths yet?”

“Not yet, father,” said Tom, throwing his arm lovingly over the man’s broad shoulder. They were very near to each other, these two, and the companionship of this long journey was destined to bring them together more closely than ever before.

“Randolph, you and Tom are next to our drawing-room, on the ‘starboard’ side. Fred comes next, taking the upper berth at night. Some gentlemen in the party will probably occupy the lower one. Kittie and Bess are directly opposite, and Miss Pet will come next.”

“How nice! Then we’re all together, right in this end of the car!”

“O, dear! I wish we had Bert and Sue Martin with us this year!” lamented Kittie. “They would just fill those two odd berths, one on each side.”

“Can’t have ’em, Kit,” replied her brother. “The whole family have gone out to Portland, Oregon, with their married sister. You know she and her husband are going to live there, where he is in business, and that left Bert and Sue here with only their grandmother.”

“We pass through Portland, I believe,” added Mr. Percival, “on our return trip. We’ll drop in on them if we can, for a short call.”

By this time the train was running at full speed, and the young people began to explore their surroundings. The country through which they were passing was so familiar that they found more objects of interest within the car than without.

There were a dozen other passengers in the “Kamloops,” all chattering briskly and settling themselves into the cosey quarters they were to call home for the next ten days.

Fred Seacomb, as usual, began making acquaintances at once. Before they reached Lowell he

had raised an obstinate window for one of his nearest neighbors, had found a missing pair of spectacles for a sweet-faced old lady not far away, and had pointed out various objects of interest (though he knew less of them than any other member of his party) to a bashful boy and girl of about ten and twelve respectively, in the front seats.

People began to glance to the Percival end of the car, and their faces relaxed into genial smiles as Tom struck up “Annie Rooney,” the rest chiming in melodiously. Before long their company was increased by the two occupants of the vacant berths. They introduced themselves as Rev. Rossiter Selborne and his sister, Miss Adelaide Selborne. The young clergyman could not have been over thirty; his sister, a tall, pale, timid girl, was apparently of about Kittie’s age. The new-comers were evidently painfully conscious of the questioning glances with which they were greeted, and were anxious not to intrude; Adelaide, in particular, looking very shy and almost ready to cry when she saw what a large party she and her brother had unintentionally joined, and how thoroughly the others all knew one another.

[Pg 15] Mrs. Percival soon broke the ice, however, by inviting Mr. Selborne and his sister into her drawing-room for a call, and in another fifteen minutes they were swept into the current of song. The young minister proved to have a fine baritone voice, and his sister soon won popularity by remembering second verses which everybody else had forgotten.

“Weirs! Weirs!” shouted the conductor. And out flew the young folks to the platform, only to be hustled back again, barely in time to miss being left behind. The train was special, and took no passengers beyond the favored hundred who constituted the Excursion.

The shores of fair Winnepesaukee were soon left behind, and the train drew up at the Pemigewasset House, in Plymouth.

Up the long flight of steps they scrambled, “Tom leading the way, as usual,” remarked dignified Fred, peering through his eyeglasses at the other’s heels, far in advance.

Down again to the train—how familiar and home-like the old “Kamloops” looks, already! “All aboard!” Hurrah! Off we go again! Singing once more—this time the “Soldier’s Farewell”; Tom [Pg 16] striking it a third too high, and going all to pieces on the second “Farewell”—on and on and on, faster and faster and faster, up the beautiful Passumpsic Valley, along the shores of Memphremagog.

“Look!” cries Bess. “There’s a shower on the hills!”

The clouds hang, black and sullen, along the mountain-tops. Dash! comes the rain in long exclamation points all over the window-panes. A glittering flash of lightning, trees bowing in the wind, rain pouring in torrents.

Suddenly a brilliant light strikes again through the windows, resting on Pet’s golden hair—not lightning this time, but the blessed sunshine, in long, slanting rays from the west. Even the boys catch their breath with delight and something like awe as they see the clouds rolling away over the mountains.

At about sunset, the principal “conductor” of the Excursion, whom we will call Mr. Houghton—a jolly, good-natured gentleman, who won first the confidence and then the regard of his hundred charges, at the very outset—came through the car announcing that at about half-past eight they [Pg 17] would be in Montreal, where the train would wait for them forty-eight hours, the next day being Sunday.

In due time the cars thundered over the long steel bridge between Caughnawaga and Lachine, the lights of Montreal twinkled out of the darkness, and our friends were soon on their way to the Windsor, where they were to spend the next two days.

Sunday was as fair as the most exacting traveler could wish. The large party scattered during the forenoon, most of them going to church. Randolph and Tom, with the girls, left the hotel early and walked for a mile or more through the streets of the city.

There were many French inhabitants, as the shop signs showed. In a little common, they saw the sign, “*N’allez pas sur le gazon*”—a polite way of putting our familiar “Keep off the grass.” The names of the streets carried them back to old times, when the whole province was held by France—“*Ste. Monique*,” “*Ste. Genevieve*,” etc. Funny little milk carts went bobbing along over the rough pavements, and funny little babies toddled along the uneven board sidewalks.

[Pg 18] Their walk soon brought them to a lofty granite building with two square towers—the cathedral of Notre Dame.

People were flocking in at the doors, and the young Americans went with them.

It was like entering a great, dimly-lighted cavern. All the walls and pillars and ceiling were glowing with soft, dark crimson and golden colors. The church was crowded with worshipers, not only on the main floor, but in two immense galleries, one above the other. At the further end was the high altar and the figure of the crucified Saviour, beneath which the priests were conducting the service of the Roman Catholic Church. One could just hear their deep voices, mingling with the music of the choir and organ.

In front of the travelers was a swarthy Indian, with long, glossy black hair. Little children knelt on the marble pavement in the midst of the crowd. Members of wealthy French families passed down the aisle to their pews. All around were poor people, many of them following the service with their prayer-books.

[Pg 19] Leaving Notre Dame, the Percivals turned their steps to St. George’s Church near the hotel,

where there was an Episcopal service, and a good sermon by a bluff, hearty Scotchman, one of whose phrases clung to Tom’s memory for many a day.

“If you know of anything you ought to do,” said the good rector, “don’t sit down and think about it, but do ut!”

“‘Do ut!’” repeated Tom to himself as he left the church with the rest. “That’s a good motto for me, any way. ‘Do ut!’”

A quiet drive around Mount Royal—giving them a glorious view of Montreal—filled the afternoon.

As they looked down on the multitude of roofs and steeps, Mr. Percival reminded them that it was the chief city of Canada, with a population about half as large as that of Boston. In 1535 it was a little Indian village called Hochelaga, which was in that year visited by Jacques Cartier. Two hundred and fifty years ago, the French established a trading-post here, and its business has grown, until to-day its docks are lined with warehouses, its river front shows the black hulls of great ocean steamers, and railroads converge from east, west and south.

[Pg 20] We will close this first chapter with an extract from Kittie’s letter to Susie Martin, written late Monday afternoon.

Montreal, *July 21, 18—.*

Dear Sue:

Bess has written you about our starting away from Boston day before yesterday, and the splendid ride we had, and the showers, and everything. We are getting to like that quiet Mr. Selborne a good deal. His sister is dreadfully afraid of everything, and keeps saying, “O, Ross!” whenever he does anything out of the primmest kind of behavior. I guess we girls shock her awfully; but perhaps she needs electricity treatment; she isn’t strong, you know, poor thing.

This afternoon we all went out to Lachine in a queer little train of cars, and then went on board a big steamer for the return trip down the river. Such a scramble for good places! It was really wonderful, dear, going down those rapids. You felt the great ship settle under your feet, and once we headed so straight for a rock in the middle of the river that I said “Ow!” right out loud. The other passengers didn’t laugh much, either, and even Tom, poor fellow, really looked white.

Well, we have repacked our trunks which we sha’n’t open again until we reach some sort of a queer place called Banff, next Saturday. We go on board our train again at half-past seven. Bess and I are expecting lots of fun in our compartment. I do hope we shall see you in Portland....

Affectionately,
Kittie M. Percival.

[Pg 21]

CHAPTER II.

FOREST AND PRAIRIE.

It was a merry party that assembled in the Windsor Station, Monday evening. No sooner had they found their places in the “Kamloops” than out they jumped again, and began promenading up and down the long platform.

“Let’s see what the names of the other cars are,” said Fred; and Bess, thereupon, called them out, as they walked beside the train: “‘Calgary,’ ‘Nepigon,’ ‘Toronto,’ ‘Missanabie.’”

“What do they mean?” inquired Kittie.

“Why, they’re names of Alaskan chieftains,” replied Randolph.

“‘Kamloops’ was the old head one, then,” added Tom.

[Pg 22] But Mr. Houghton, who was everywhere at once, superintending the embarkation, caught the words and explained that the names were those of cities and towns on the line of the Canadian Pacific.

“All aboard!” came the now familiar call, and away went the train, out into the night, bound for the far West.

The Percivals and their neighbors sang for a while, adding several new college songs to their previous répertoire, and then the head of the family announced that it was time to retire. The porter, William, had already arranged the drawing-room, and amid a chorus of “Good-nights,” Mr. and Mrs. Percival withdrew.

“Now, William,” said Randolph, “make up Number Three and Five for the ladies.”

“And Four, for the gentlemen,” added the irrepressible Tom.

Kittie and Bess soon disappeared behind their curtains, and the rest having followed suit shortly afterward, there was silence—for about three minutes. Then came the sound of a bump, and a delighted chuckle from Tom, in the upper berth.

“Coming right up through, Ran?” the girls heard him ask. “I thought the train was off the track.”

[Pg 23]

“You laugh much more, and I’ll get up there, somehow”—

“Boys, boys,” came Fred Seacomb’s voice. “Don’t quarrel.”

“Say, Fred” (from Tom), “lend me your eyeglasses, will you? I’ve lost my pillow.”

At this point Miss Adelaide became fearfully thirsty, and putting her head out between her curtains, timidly called across to her brother to “please get her a drink of water.”

The Reverend Rossiter, who was just settling himself for a nap, dressed again, and staggered off down the car, returning with the welcome draught.

“Anybody else want any?” he asked good-naturedly.

Everybody was thirsty, and the clergyman’s ministrations with his cups of cold water did not cease until he had made several journeys to the ice tank.

During the night the heavy train rumbled steadily along over two hundred and fifty miles of iron rails, and when Randolph awoke next morning, he found they were at Chalk River, a small town on the frontiers of the great forest wilderness of inner Canada, where a fifteen-minute stop was made.

[Pg 24] Breakfast was served in the dining-car. Our friends secured seats close together, and made a jolly meal of it.

“Curious,” observed Fred, “to eat a breakfast twenty miles long!”

“That suits me!” laughed Tom, helping himself to griddle cakes.

“But it’s so pretty outside that I can’t stop to eat,” exclaimed Adelaide, with a nice little flush in her cheeks.

She had lived a very quiet, home-keeping life, the girls found. Everything was new and strange and wonderful to her.

“I should say somebody had been pretty careless with their camp-fires,” Randolph remarked, as they passed mile after mile of burned timber land, an hour or two later.

Mr. Houghton told them that thousands upon thousands of acres of forest near the railroad had been ruined in this way.

“Why,” asked Randolph, “how long has this railroad been built?”

Mr. Houghton thereupon gave them a brief account of the Canadian Pacific, one of the marvels of modern engineering.

[Pg 25] “A railway from Canada to the Pacific,” he said, “laid all the way on British soil, was long the dream of public-spirited Canadians and Englishmen. On the confederation of the British Provinces in 1867, it became a real necessity.”

“I don’t see why,” put in Tom.

“The Queen must have a means of transporting troops, arms and ammunition from the home stores to the extremities of her dominion. Suppose her Pacific cities, existing and to be built, should be attacked by a foreign power. She can now throw fifty thousand men across the Continent in four days; or in less than a fortnight from Liverpool.”

“I should think it must have been a tough job to get through this wilderness,” said Randolph, glancing out of the window at the wild district through which they were passing.

“Much of the route lay through unexplored country. All about Lake Superior the engineers found a vast rocky region which opposed them at every step. You’ll see for yourselves to-morrow. Beyond Red River for a thousand miles stretched a great plain, known only to the Indian and fur trader; then came the mountains, range after range, in close succession, and all unexplored.” [Pg 26]

“When did they really get to work?” asked Fred Seacomb.

“In 1875. The Government undertook the enterprise, and afterward handed it over for completion, to a private company. The explorations”—

At this point in the conductor’s story, the train began to slow up.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, rising from his seat and glancing at his watch, “this is North Bay, on Lake Nipissing. We stop here half an hour.”

“Come on!” shouted Tom, as the train came to a standstill, and down he rushed toward the shore of the lake, only a few rods distant. “Now, Captain Bess, let’s see what you can do for a fire. I’ll have one going before you get your match lighted.”

Bessie evidently accepted the challenge on the spot, for although she said nothing, she began hunting about for kindling at once. There had been a light shower the night before, and every thing was damp.

Tom made a great fuss, scrambling about for chips and twigs, which he threw down in a heap on the pebbly beach, kneeling beside them, and hastily pulling a match from his pocket. It looked as though his sister was beaten.

[Pg 27] “Just wait a bit,” remarked Mr. Percival, who was watching the contest with interest. Several passengers from the other cars also gathered about the fire-builders, applauding each in turn.

Tom’s first match spluttered, and went out.

“Ho! she’s given up,” he cried, as Bess walked away from the group.

But the girl knew what she was about. She stooped down beside a large log which had long ago drifted ashore. From its upper surface she stripped some thin shreds of birch bark, and beneath it she found a handful of chips, perfectly dry.

Back she came, and down she went on the pebbles, at a little distance from her brother.

“Hurry up, Tom!” shouted Randolph.

For Tom’s fire did not seem to progress favorably. Several matches had already been blown out by the fresh lake breeze, and the few twigs that had at last caught, now smoked feebly.

“This is the meanest wood!” labored Tom. “Wet’s water.” And he essayed another match.

All this time Bessie had worked industriously, saying nothing. She had broken and whittled her chips into small pieces, and now pulled off her pretty yachting cap, holding it closely over the bark while she struck her first match. Protected by her dress, and gathering courage in the shelter of the cap, it flared up cheerfully, catching the crisp edges of the bark in grand style. [Pg 28]

Down goes the cap, the girl’s brown hair escaping in little curly tresses that toss in the wind.

“I’ve almost got it!” shouts Tom, blowing at his smoking heap with all his might.

“Go in, old fellow!”

“Hurry, Bess!”

The passengers added their cheers and laughter to the cries of the others.

“There!” said Bess triumphantly, leaning back from her fire.

For fire it was, truly, with the red flames dancing upward gleefully through the twigs, and cracking in a manner that said plainly they had come to stay.

Tom generously joined in the applause that followed, and heaped all his hoarded fuel on his sister’s fire, nearly extinguishing it in his zeal.

“Camp Birch!” said Mr. Percival, naming it, as they named all their camp-fires.

[Pg 29] A few minutes later the coals were scattered, for safety; and the engine giving its preconcerted call, the passengers hurried on board once more.

“Now,” said Selborne, “let’s hear the rest of the railroad story, Mr. Houghton.”

The latter gentleman, by no means averse to the task, accordingly continued.

“The surveys for the road made known the character of the country it had to traverse. In the wilderness about Superior, were found forests of pine and other timber, together with valuable farming land, and mineral deposits of immense value. The prairies beyond Winnipeg proved wonderfully promising for settlers; the mountains were seamed with coal, and sparkling with gold.”

Mr. Houghton’s face became even more radiant than usual, as he told of the wonderful riches of British Columbia.

“In 1881 the company contracted with the Government to finish the road within ten years—for which undertaking they received twenty-five million dollars, twenty-five million acres of agricultural land, and the railroad itself when complete.”

“Whew!” whistled Tom. “Say, Ran, let’s go to railroading.”

[Pg 30] “The end of the third year,” continued the genial conductor, “found them at the summit of the Rocky Mountains; the fourth in the Selkirks, a thousand miles beyond Winnipeg. Sometimes they advanced five or six miles a day, armies of men attacking the mountains with thousands of tons of dynamite. On a certain wet morning—the seventh of November, 1885—the last spike was driven on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway.”

Mr. Houghton’s eloquent peroration was followed by a round of applause, and all hands turned to the car windows once more, with new interest in this great triumph of mind over the forces of nature.

The boys were informed by Mr. Houghton in conclusion, that the country all around the lake was one of the greatest hunting districts on the continent. The forest abounded, he said, in moose, bear and caribou—all of which was extremely tantalizing to these young gentlemen, though the gentler members of the party took little interest in the conductor’s description of the sport.

[Pg 31] We must pass rapidly over the next day or two. Soon after breakfast on Wednesday morning, our travelers found themselves on the shores of Lake Superior, and all day the train kept close beside it, the road curving, rising, descending, around great promontories of red rock, at the base of high cliffs, and across broad tributaries that came sweeping down from far Northern wastes. At times there was a heavy fog, through which the passengers could see the slow waves breaking on the rocks below. Then it would lift, showing new beauties close at hand, and bright, wooded islands in the misty distance. Beside the track grew strange flowers, and against the northern sky was outlined the notched edge of the boundless evergreen forest that stretched away to the Arctic solitudes.

At the little settlement of Peninsula, Selborne called the rest to see a fine, sturdy dog with the Esquimaux showing plainly in his pointed nose and ears, and thick soft fur.

“Doesn’t he look like the pictures in Dr. Kane?” whispered Pet, leaning over Kittie’s shoulder.

Jackfish proved to be a picturesque hamlet of log huts, clustering on a rocky point of land that jutted into the lake.

The train stopped at Schreiber long enough to allow the party to dash up into the town, and make a laughable variety of purchases at the principal store. Postal cards, buttons, candy and fancy pins disappeared in the pockets of the tourists, to the delight of the proprietor, who had not had such a run of custom for many a long day. Captain Bess bought several yards of the brightest scarlet ribbon she could find—for what purpose it will be seen hereafter. [Pg 32]

Near the station at Nepigon was seen the first encampment of Indians—Chippewas they were; half-amused, half-indignant at the curious crowd they attracted.

Port Arthur was the terminus of the Eastern Division of the “C. P. R.,” a thousand miles from Montreal, and watches were all set back one hour to meet “Central Time.” Little girls crowded up to the passengers, selling milk in broken mugs, from small pails with which they darted hither and thither along the platform. I should hardly venture to say how many mugfuls the boys bought and drank, in the kindness of their hearts.

That evening a number of new friends from the “Missanabie” and “Calgary” came back to the “Kamloops,” by special invitation, and the united chorus sang over and over all the songs they did—and did not—know. “Little Annie Rooney,” then a reigning favorite in the East, was the most popular number in the programme. [Pg 33]

I wish I could show the gay little party to you, as I see them now, photographed so clearly upon my memory: the older people in the rear, looking on with smiles, and occasionally joining in a familiar chorus; Kittie and Pet, their faces all aglow; Randolph, Fred and Mr. Selborne singing sturdily along, or pausing when they did not know the tune; Tom, singing at the top of his voice, whether he knew the tune or not, and beating time with a vigor that would have put Carl Zerrahn to shame—ah! how it all comes before me as I write; with one dear, kindly face that was merry and thoughtful by turns, but always tender and loving and good, as the songs rang out; the face I shall see no more until I reach the end of the longest journey of all—the journey of Life!

At breakfast on the following morning, Tom, who had taken upon himself to provide the girls with nosegays on the whole trip, marched into the dining-car with a neat little breast-knot of “squirrel-tail grass” which he had picked at Rat Portage, for each young lady. It was very pretty, but before long the objectionable feature of the grass asserted itself; that is, its clinging qualities, which made it impossible for the wearers to wholly rid themselves of the tiny barbed spires for two days afterward. [Pg 34]

Winnipeg was reached at noon. Nearly all the passengers “went ashore,” and the empty cars were trundled away for a thorough cleaning, English fashion.

In twos and threes our friends wandered off through this strange young city, the capital of Manitoba. Twenty years ago its population numbered one hundred; now it passes thirty thousand!

In the midst of all the progress and modern ideas of bustling Winnipeg, it was curious to notice many rude carts drawn by oxen, which were harnessed like horses.

At the station the “newsboys” were little girls, who plied their trade modestly and successfully.

Mr. Percival took his daughters and Pet to drive for an hour through the city and its suburbs. The only drawback to their enjoyment was the intense heat, and the abundance of grasshoppers who would get tangled up in Bessie’s hair, much to that young lady’s displeasure. [Pg 35]

“Clouds and clouds of them,” she commented indignantly; “and the Winnipeggers don’t seem to mind them a bit!”

Next morning Tom was the first “on deck,” as usual, and out of the cars at the first stop, which was made to water the engine. Prairie, prairie, prairie, as far as the eye could reach. Tom gathered handfuls of flowers and threw them into expectant laps, only to rush out again and gather more. The short grass was starred with blossoms of every color. Harebells, like those on Mt. Willard, grew in abundance beside the track. Then there were queer, scarlet “painted cups,” nodding yellow ox-eyes, asters, dandelions, and others.

What is that little creature, that looks something like a very large gray squirrel with no tail? Why, a “gopher,” to be sure; an animal resembling a prairie-dog, only smaller. They live in burrows all along these sandy embankments. See that little fellow! He sits up on his hind legs and hops along like a diminutive kangaroo, pulling down heads of grass with his tiny forepaws, and nibbling the seeds.

On and on, over the rolling prairie, rattled the hot, dusty train. They were in Indian country now, and at every station a dozen or more dark-faced Crees crouched on the platform, offering buffalo horns for sale. [Pg 36]

And this reminds me that I have not mentioned one very important portion of Tom’s outfit. It was a fine No. 4 Kodak, of which he was very proud, and which he “snapped” mercilessly at all sorts of persons and things on the journey. There were other amateur photographers on the Excursion—a dozen or more in all—and great was the good-natured rivalry in securing good views. Indians were bribed, soldiers flattered and precipices scaled in this fascinating pursuit. As to the hundred travelers, the photographers snapped at them and one another with hardly an apology; and as the subject usually looked up and smiled broadly at the critical moment, the

general result must have been a collection of portraits of the most marvelously and uniformly merry company that ever boarded a C. P. R. train, or kodaked a Siwash canoe.

[Pg 37] Each wielder of this terrible weapon had a different way of holding the camera and doing the deed. Mr. Selborne focused from under his right arm, that embraced the instrument firmly. Pet, who had a little No. 1, always winked hard, and occasionally jumped when she “pressed the button”; thereby, as she afterward discovered, giving her characters a peculiar misty effect, which she declared was enchanting. One indefatigable lady from Kalamazoo invariably held her kodak out in front of her at arms-length, and took aim over the top of it before firing; a proceeding which never failed to disconcert and terrify the subject beyond description.

At a settlement called Swift Current, Tom undertook to photograph an old Cree squaw, who stalked away indignantly around the corner of the freight house. Away went crafty Thomas in the opposite direction, meeting the squaw just half-way around the building. Tom tried to purchase a sitting with a silver quarter, but the wrathful Indian woman poured out a torrent of Cree invective, and hooked at him with a pair of buffalo horns she held in her hands. Finally, he turned his back to her, and holding the camera backward under his arm, pressed the button and so obtained one of his best negatives on the trip.

[Pg 38] It must be confessed that he felt rather shabby in thus procuring her portrait against her will; and to atone for his conduct, Bessie knelt beside two little Indian girls and tied bright red ribbons on their arms, to their intense delight.

At Moose-Jaw (which Mr. Houghton said was an abridgment of the Indian name meaning, “The-creek-where-the-white-man-mended-the-cart-with-a-moose’s-jaw-bone”), the travelers were shown a villainous-looking Sioux, who was one of Sitting Bull’s band that massacred General Custer and his troops a few years before. The Indians in that whole section of Canada are kept in order by mounted police—fine-looking fellows, sauntering about the station platforms with whip and spur, and by no means averse to having their pictures taken, Pet found.

All this is very pleasant, but as the day wears on, the green hills and flowery meadow-land give place to scorched, parching, alkali desert, stretching away in dry, tawny billows as far as the eye can reach. Here and there is a lake—no, a pool of dry salt, like the white ghost of a lake. The air [Pg 39] in the cars becomes insufferably hot. Look at the thermometer, where the sun does not shine, and the air blows in through the open window. It marks full 105°. Mr. Selborne wins popularity by contracting for a large pitcher of iced lemonade, which he passes through the car. Dust and cinders pour in at doors and windows with the hot air. Waves of heat rise from the shriveled grass. Will night ever come?

Yes, it comes at last, as God’s good gifts always come, to refresh and sweeten our lives. The sky flushes with sunset light. Shadows creep up from the east; a cool breeze touches the fevered faces. Night, beautiful, restful, kindly night, spreads its wings over the weary travelers, and, still flying onward through the darkness, they sleep peacefully and dream of the dear New England hills and of home.

[Pg 40]

CHAPTER III.

A HOME LETTER.

Banff, *July 26, 189—*.

Dear mother:

I know you will want to hear from your children as often as possible, so I write to-day, for both Adelaide and myself, to tell you of our wanderings, and of the wonderful scenes in the midst of which we are resting this bright Sunday.

In my last letter mailed at Brandon, I told you about the railroad ride from Montreal, north of the Great Lakes, through the country where the Jesuit missionaries labored so nobly two centuries ago, and across the green prairies and scorched alkali desert of Manitoba.

On the morning after that terribly hot day, we looked westward—and our journey seemed likely [Pg 41] to come to an end then and there. A mighty barrier stretched across our path from north to south. Rising dimly, through the morning mists, their summits hidden among the clouds, their tawny flanks scarred with ravines and whitened with snow, rose the Rocky Mountains.

Soon the train stopped, and we were told of a cascade in the woods near by, bearing the Indian name of Kananaskis. Off we tramped across a bit of flowery upland, snatching handfuls of aster, painted cup and harebell as we went; then down through a thicket of blue-tipped firs, until we heard the voice of many waters calling softly to us.

Another moment and we stood on the brink of the foaming, dashing, sparkling cataract, pouring grandly down its rocky path, as it had done in the days of Paul and Barnabas of Joshua; yes, and of Ahasuerus the king. At the very moment when Queen Esther, the “Star,” stood before the haughty monarch pleading for her people, the stars above shone above the white falls of Kananaskis as they do to-night; the rushing waters lifted up their voice and hastened to their work in the lonely forest; while the Father of all looked down on the silent firs, the silver stream,

and the proud walls of Shushan, patient and loving, waiting for his children to know him and his wonderful works, and to love and serve him with gladness of heart. [Pg 42]

Oh, the mountains! How we climbed and climbed, the train winding, and roaring, and straining every iron nerve to bear us to the high places! At noon we were in the midst of them. They looked down upon us with kindly faces, yet their granite peaks were awful in their grandeur, uplifted thousands upon thousands of feet above us.

I wandered with a bright young girl in our party, Miss Bessie Percival, whom the boys call "Captain Bess," down a steep path to the river's brink. Beneath a sheltering fir which stretched its tiny crosses above our heads, we stopped, and with a tiny, crackling fire beside us, watched the snowy heights, and the hastening river. The harebells, frailest and gentlest of flowers, were there too, to remind us that the same Hand which which—

"Set on high the firmament,
Planets on their courses guided,
Alps from Alps asunder rent,"

was his who said to the storm, "Peace, be still!"—who "considered the lilies," and who took little children in his arms and blessed them. [Pg 43]

The waters of the large river which ran past us were turbid with soil from their far-off source; but a small stream entered the larger one near our little fir-shaded hearthstone, and this new-comer was fresh from the snowy hill-tops, "clear as crystal." As far down as we could see, the rivulet never lost its brightness, but swept onward with the larger stream, sweetening and purifying it, yet "unspotted," like a true and simple life in God's world.

There, I won't tire you any more to-night, dear mother. How it would add to our pleasure if you were here! Adelaide gains strength every day, the wholesome, hearty companionship of these young people doing her quite as much good, I think, as the novelty and grandeur of the scenes in which she finds herself. As for me, I ought to preach better sermons all my life, for this trip. This afternoon while I was sitting on the rounded piazza of the hotel, looking out upon the valley and snowy mountain-tops, a bit of blank verse came into my mind. I'm going to write it out for you. A fellow can send his mother poetry (?) which he wouldn't show any one else, can't he? [Pg 44]

Within thy holy temple have I strayed,
E'en as a weary child, who from the heat
And noonday glare hath timid refuge sought
In some cathedral's vast and shadowy nave,
And trembles, awestruck, crouching in his rags
Where high up reared a mighty pillar stands.
Mine eyes I lift unto the hills, from whence
Cometh my help. The murmuring firs stretch forth
Their myriad tiny crosses o'er my head;
Deep rolls an organ peal of thunder down
The echoing vale, while clouds of incense float
Before the great white altar set on high.
So lift my heart, O God! and purify
Its thought, that when I walk once more
Thy minister amid the hurrying throng,
One ray of sunlight from these golden days,
One jewel from the mountain's regal brow,
One cup of water from these springs of life,
As tokens of thy beauty, I may bear
To little ones who toil and long for rest.

Affectionately, your son,
Rossiter.

P. S. I wish you knew that little "Captain Bess."

She is one of the freshest, sweetest, most unselfish girls I ever met. Hardly an hour passes when she is not doing something for another's comfort—adjusting old ladies' shawls, reading aloud, holding a tired child, or something of the sort. In fact, she's the most like you, mother, of anybody I ever met! [Pg 45]

CHAPTER IV. [Pg 46]

THE GLACIER AND THE BEAR.

Thus far the trip had been free from special adventure beyond the ordinary happenings in the course of an extraordinary journey. But on the day following the departure from Banff, one or two incidents occurred to break the monotony. In the first place, there was Tom's affair with the bear. But I must retrace my steps slightly, before introducing Bruin.

The Excursion left Banff on the ninth morning from Boston. The road now lay through a wilderness of mighty hills. Onward and upward labored the train, following the curves of mountain streams, rattling in and out of tunnels, and creeping cautiously over high trestles that creaked ominously beneath the heavy cars.

An observation car had been added, and here the Percivals gathered, defying cinders and wintry air. Far above the ravine through which the stubborn Canadian Pacific had pushed its way, they caught glimpses of snow-banks and glaciers, which sent foaming torrents down the mountain-side to join the Kicking-Horse River. [Pg 47]

Late in the afternoon they whirled around the last dizzy curve, plunged into a snow-shed and out again, and halted for the night beside a picturesque little hotel in the very heart of the Selkirks.

Most of the party, including all the Percivals except Tom, at once started along a forest path for new wonders that were said to lie beyond. Adelaide Selborne was too tired to go, and her brother, having seen her comfortably resting in a delightful little room in the hotel, hurried off to join the rest.

Bessie, who had lingered behind a moment to pick a handful of starry wild flowers, heard his steps and turned to greet him with a bright look of welcome. "I'm so glad you've come," she said, in her frank way. "You see, Randolph has gone ahead with Pet Sibley, and Kittie is with Fred, so I was kind of rear-guard, all alone." [Pg 48]

"What kind of a flower is that?" he asked.

Bess did not know, nor did her companion.

"It seems so strange to find real wild wild-flowers," she exclaimed. "The little home violets and mayflowers seem as tame as possible, compared."

"This forest has never been cut into," observed Rossiter, as they sauntered along the narrow path. The lofty trees, unscarred by axe or fire, towered high above them; beside the path waved tall ferns, starred here and there with boughs of the white blossoms the little Captain had been picking. An unseen stream, hastening downward from far-away rocky heights, called softly through the dim aisles.

After a mile or two of this thick wood, they emerged upon rough, open ground, over which they hurried, crossing a rude bridge which spanned the torrent, and—there was the Great Glacier of the Selkirks!

Bessie caught her breath, in the wonder and grandeur of it.

For in comparison with this mighty stream of ice, the glaciers of Europe are but frozen rivulets. All the Swiss glaciers combined would not reach the bulk of this monster, which covers thirty-eight square miles of mountain-side with a moving mass of ice five hundred feet thick. It is fitly guarded by the solitary peak of "Sir Donald," whose top is lost in clouds eight thousand feet above the valley. [Pg 49]

They moved forward at length, climbing to the edge of the glacier, and even mounting upon its wrinkled back.

The advanced division of the party were already quite at home with the big glacier, and sang their gay songs as merrily as in the cosey "Kamloops." Fred and Randolph caught tin cupfuls of water from an icy rill, and passed it to the rest.

"I wish," said Bessie, "that I could run up to that next corner. The view would be splendid."

Kittie and the rest were just starting downward. Mr. Selborne heard the Captain's remark, and instantly was at her side.

"Come on," he said. "We can do it and catch up with the rest before they reach the hotel."

Bessie, remembering her experience on Mount Washington the year before, hesitated. But the opportunity was too tempting.

"I'll go," she said hastily, "if you'll hurry, please. Mother will worry about me if I stay up here too long." [Pg 50]

Aided by a strong hand and arm, she clambered up over the bowlders which lay along the mountain slope in a confused mass.

"There!" she exclaimed, in the same tone of triumph with which she had announced the success of her fire on the shores of Nipissing, "we've done it, haven't we?"

After all, it was hardly worth the climb, for the newly gained position only disclosed further reaches, each promising a better outlook than the next below. Rossiter glanced at the gathering clouds.

"Perhaps we'd better start, Miss Bessie," he said, "if you've got your breath."

If truth be told, Bess would have liked a little longer rest; but she did not like to confess the fatigue she felt. Besides, it was all down hill now, so she held out her hand to her companion without misgiving.

Before they had gone twenty yards, moving cautiously down from bowlder to bowlder close beside the ice, the air darkened and a fine rain set in.

SHE CLAMBERED UP OVER THE BOWLDERS.

“That will hurry the rest along,” thought Bessie, “for they’re already in the easy part of the path, and they can run.” But she said nothing to distress her escort, who was already troubled enough by the prospect.

“Be careful!” he called suddenly, as he saw Bessie spring over a mimic chasm, and barely miss losing her balance on the further side. “The rain makes these rocks slippery, and”—

He was interrupted by a cry from Bess. She sank down on a bowlder and lifted a white face to him.

“My ankle,” she said. “I’ve turned it, and it hurts—dreadfully!”

“Let me help you, dear.”

He was used to calling his sister that, you know.

Bessie clung to his arm and tried to rise, but sank back with a sharp little moan of pain.

“It’s no use,” she gasped. “I can’t stand. You’ll have—to go—and send somebody up—for me.”

She looked so white that he thought she was going to faint. But the little Captain had no idea of giving way, if she could possibly help it.

“Go, please,” she repeated, clutching the rough rim of the rock to control herself.

Rossiter looked around, above, below. Not a living creature was in sight. It was no use to call for help, in that grim solitude. The rain drifted across the black forest in gray columns.

“Won’t you leave me?” pleaded Bessie again.

For reply he stooped, and lifting her in his arms as if she were a child, began to pick his way downward, slowly and cautiously.

At the end of half a dozen rods his breath was gone. He placed his burden gently on the rocks.

“O, Mr. Selborne!” cried Bess, with quivering lips, “it’s hurting you worse than me. Please”—

But he had rested enough, and just smiling for reply, started along the path once more.

It was now raining heavily, and the traveled way became more and more difficult to distinguish in the gathering dusk. Bessie was a strong, healthy young girl, and no light weight for a man to carry.

The bridge was reached at last, and, narrow and slippery as it was, stretching above a deep and swift mountain stream, crossed in safety.

In a few moments they were at the edge of the forest; but Rossiter, little used in late years to active sports or athletic exertion of any kind, felt his strength leaving him. Great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead, though the air was bitter cold and the rain like ice.

He staggered and saved himself with difficulty from falling, with Bessie in his arms. As he placed her on the ground at the mossy foot of a huge tree, he spoke to her, but she did not answer. This time she had fainted in earnest.

But it is time to return to the solitary representative of the Percival family—or at least of the

younger portion of it—who found more attraction at the base of the mountain than on its lofty and ice-clad slopes. Mr. and Mrs. Percival had gone to the hotel at once, and were glad to rest there while the tireless young people "explored."

The moment the train had stopped and the passengers began to pour out of the cars, Tom had caught sight of an animal which by this time had become pretty familiar to the travelers; namely, a bear. At almost every station they had passed, since leaving Winnipeg, was one or more of these furry friends in captivity. Tom had made overtures to all of them, sometimes barely escaping a dangerous scratch or bite from the half-tamed animals. The boy was just now an ardent naturalist, in his impulsive way, and felt a great interest in every strange creature on four legs—especially bears. [Pg 54]

Here was a good chance then, to cultivate Bruin's acquaintance. While Tom was providing himself with lumps of sugar at the hotel, his sisters and the rest of the party started up the forest path for the Glacier, as we have seen.

"Feed the black bear all you want to, but don't fool with the cinnamon," called the clerk after heedless Tom, who was already out of hearing.

Blackie was within a few rods of the hotel, and Tom was soon having great fun with him, tossing him lumps of sugar, and then holding them up while the bear, who was only a half-grown cub, stood clumsily on his hind legs and, supporting himself against the boy's shoulders, stretched out his little gray snout for the coveted sweets.

They were in the midst of their frolic when Tom heard a chain rattle, up toward the woods. Something was moving among the stumps—another bear.

"Good-by, Pomp," shouted Tom, letting his shaggy playmate down rather unceremoniously on all fours. "I must call on your cousin, over there." [Pg 55]

Pomp gazed at him with what Tom afterward declared was a most meaning look in his twinkling eyes, and galloped after him—only to be jerked sprawling at the end of his tether. Then he sat down, after the manner of his kind, and watched the retreating form of the dispenser of sugar, shaking his head gloomily.

"I'll save a lump for you and be back before long, old fellow," called Tom encouragingly over his shoulder.

The cinnamon proved to be double the size of his black neighbor. Instead of ambling up to his visitor as the other had done, he retreated a pace or two, and eyed him with such an unpleasant expression that Tom stopped short.

"Come, Brownie," said he, in his most cajoling tones. "Here's some sugar for you." And he tossed him a lump.

Cinnamon stretched out his paw, raked the lump nearer, and bolted it. The taste was pleasing, and he slowly advanced, dragging his heavy chain after him.

"Friendly enough," said Tom to himself. "I'll try him with a lump in my hand." [Pg 56]

The bear took it rather too greedily for the comfort of the holder, but seemed in nowise inclined to hostile measures.

"Stand up!"

Bruin clumsily erected himself on his haunches, and caught the sugar tossed to him.

Tom was delighted.

"Now put your paws up on my shoulders and get it." He stood back to the animal and looked at him over his shoulder.

Up came Cinnamon again, though rather sullenly, and reaching both paws around Tom's neck from behind, clasped them on the boy's breast.

"There, there!" cried Tom; "that'll do, old fellow. You're too heavy for me. Get down!"

A low growl from a shaggy throat within three inches of Tom's ear, was the only reply.

Tom held up his last lump of sugar, and while his unwelcome comrade-in-arms was crunching it, strove to wriggle himself from the bear's embrace.

It was of no use. The big, furry necklace only clasped the more tightly, and the menacing growl came again deeper than before.

The boy's courage began to fail him. He looked down at the two great paws on his chest, armed with long, sharp claws. The bear's breath came hot and fast on the back of his neck. [Pg 57]

"Halloo! help!" shouted Tom desperately.

A savage snarl from the rear told him that a repetition of the cry might be fatal to him. The bear's patience began to give out. The growls came nearer together, and more angrily. Every moment Tom expected to feel those long, white teeth in his scalp. To make matters worse, he now seemed to remember the words the hotel man had shouted after him, though he had paid no attention to them at the time.

If Randolph and the rest would only come! It was not like a fight with a wild bear. That would be bad enough. But to be killed by a chained beast, as a result of his own folly!

Both hope and courage were at the lowest ebb, and the danger really very great, when Tom's

hand felt in the lining of his coat a hard bunch.

Cautiously, with trembling hands, he ripped out the lining and extracted—a solitary lump of sugar which had slipped down through a hole in his pocket.

[Pg 58]

He held it out at arms-length. After a fruitless attempt to support himself with one paw and reach the sugar with the other, the bear relaxed his hold and dropped upon all fours.

To fling down the sugar and dart out of the radius of that hard-trodden circle was the work of a moment. Tom was safe!

The bear sprang after him, his little eyes twinkling with rage; but the chain held fast, and his late captive left him sprawling among the stumps.

I am not sure that Tom would have told this story at all, had not Randolph, one or two nights later, caught sight of ten red marks on his room-mate's breast. Then it all came out, as you have it.

During the struggle with Bruin the sky had darkened, and it now began to rain heavily.

[Pg 59]

CHAPTER V.

A KING'S DAUGHTER IN A FREIGHT CAR.

When Randolph and his party came rushing with shouts of laughter from the woods, they were joined by Tom, who was in an unusually meek mood. Fred looked at him suspiciously, but forbore to ask any questions.

The rain was coming down smartly, and all hands gathered, panting and laughing, around the generous fire in the little hotel office. "Where's Bessie?" asked Mr. Percival, as soon as he could make his voice heard above the merry clamor.

"Oh! she's just behind, with Mr. Selborne," said Kittie. "Randolph, look out of the door to see if they are in sight."

[Pg 60]

"They'll get dreadfully wet," remarked Pet. "Why didn't they keep up?"

"Oh! Bess wanted to go up the glacier a little farther. I saw her pointing to a big rock"—

"And of course he went," added Fred demurely.

Mr. Percival looked worried. His nephew reported that the missing couple were not in sight.

"It's growing darker every moment," he remarked anxiously. "I must go and look for them."

Two strong young fellows who were employed about the hotel went with him. Leaving the jolly group around the fire, we will accompany the relief party. Those who prefer cosiness and warmth may stay behind!

The contrast was sharp, indeed, as Mr. Percival stepped out-of-doors with his two companions.

The sky was filled with black clouds, that rolled down the valley or hung in threatening masses along the lofty mountain slopes.

As they entered the forest they had to step carefully, lest they should stumble on some root or stone, half-hidden in the darkness. Through the boughs of the trees the rain dripped drearily.

They plodded on for over a mile, when they caught sight of a flickering light, appearing and vanishing, like a will-o'-the-wisp.

[Pg 61]

The two men from the hotel did not know what to make of it, but Mr. Percival guessed the source of the strange flame in a moment.

"They've built a fire," he said quietly. "Or, at least, Bess has. I don't believe the minister could do it, this wet night, if he tried!"

He could, though, as Captain Bess soon found out, when he had stopped to rest in the edge of the forest. About fifty feet from the path was a huge bowlder draped with ferns, with the top slightly overhanging its base.

To the shelter of this great rock the young clergyman had borne his charge, placing her on a dry cushion of moss and fir needles, where the faintness soon left her, though the pain did not. He had then busied himself in a wonderfully handy way, collecting dry stuff from beneath the bowlder, and in five minutes had a glorious fire snapping and crackling, right in the midst of the rain.

"That will be a comfort to us," he remarked, eying the blaze with great satisfaction, "and will signal the party they are sure to send out for us."

[Pg 62]

"O, yes!" cried Bess. And then, of course, she had to tell him, often pausing as the sharp twinges of pain shot more and more fiercely through her ankle, all about the lost party in Maine, and the exploit which had earned for her the title of Captain.

She had hardly finished her story when a shout was heard, and presently the relief party came hurrying into the firelit space.

“What is it, dear? Are you hurt?” asked Mr. Percival, hastily kneeling down beside his daughter and throwing his arms around her. He had not realized until that moment how deeply anxious he had been during that dismal walk.

“Only a little, father. It’s just my ankle. I turned it on the rocks.”

“How did you get here?”

“Mr. Selborne—carried me.”

Her father turned and clasped the young man’s hand, saying simply, “I thank you.” But each of the men knew the already strong friendship between them was deepened.

“Now for getting home,” called out Rossiter. “Too bad to leave the fire, though, isn’t it?”

“You can spend the night here if you like,” laughed Bess, rising painfully and clinging to her father’s arm.

It was clear that she could not walk a step. [Pg 63]

The fire was cared for; then the two sturdy young backwoodsmen made an arm-chair with their hands and wrists, and tramped off with Bess between them as easily as if she were a kitten.

Very slowly though, and with great skill and care, feeling the ground carefully with their feet at every step. So they made their way back to the hotel, where there was a general jubilee over their return.

The train was side-tracked that night, close by the station. It was great fun for the young people to climb aboard, and, after a good-night sing, clamber into their berths to be lulled to sleep, not by the rumble of iron wheels, but the rushing waters of the Illicilliwaet.

Bessie, it should be said, was carried to the cars by her father. There was a physician in the party, and by his advice the strained ankle received such wise and timely treatment that by bed-time it was far less painful. In two or three days, the doctor said, she could use it again, though care would be necessary for a fortnight or more.

On the following morning the rain was still falling, but by ten o’clock the sky brightened a little, [Pg 64] and the Percivals, with the exception of Bess, set out for a walk down the track. There was a long snow shed not far away, from which Tom hoped to get a good operating field for his kodak.

Hardly had they clambered to the top of the structure and “pressed the button” once, when a flying gust of rain, backed by a portentous black cloud, sent them flying down again.

“Let’s come in under the shed,” proposed Tom. This, however, was so cold and damp, that Fred and Randolph, seeing some detached freight cars, a few rods up the track, started off to explore for a better shelter.

A minute or two later they were beckoning and shouting to the rest of the party.

“Run for it!” they called out. “Plenty of room here for all hands!”

Pet distanced the other girls, and was mounting a short flight of steps to the end of the nearest freight car, when what was her surprise to be met at the door by a fresh-faced, modest-looking young woman.

“Come in,” she said simply. “I hope you haven’t got wet,” and led the way to the interior of the car. [Pg 65]

“It’s like a fairy story,” whispered Pet to Kittie, as the latter scrambled up the steps. “Is she a princess in disguise?”

“Only so far as she is a true ‘King’s Daughter’ in her hospitality,” said Mr. Percival, catching Pet’s question, and replying in the same tone.

In trooped the excursionists, a dozen or more of them, all looking about them in amazement.

The car was divided into two compartments: one small one for a sleeping-room, the larger—in which the strangers were received—serving as kitchen and “living room.” A fire snapped and purred comfortably in the stove; before the tiny windows (against which the rain was now dashing in good earnest) were draped red curtains, and on the sill were pots of geranium and ivy.

Cheerful prints hung upon the walls, and altogether the old freight car, settled down at last after its many wanderings, was as cosey a home as heart could desire.

The bright little hostess proudly exhibited a photograph of her husband, a manly-looking fellow, and one or two other views which comprised her art treasures. Her modest and quiet demeanor [Pg 66] would have done credit to a high-bred lady, and none of the Percivals, I think, will soon forget their hearty welcome, or the warm good-by with which she sped her parting guests.

Before leaving, it should be added, Randolph made the rounds of the car, and left a substantial remembrance in the hands of this far away “King’s Daughter.” But the train was ready, and the old locomotive in a flurried way calling her brood of one hundred chickens together.

Away went the cars once more, curving around the mountain spurs, crossing torrents, clinging to the rugged slopes of granite; now descending to the level of the Columbia, now climbing again to Eagle Pass, ever westward toward the Pacific.

That night, it should be mentioned, they passed through Kamloops, not a remarkable town in itself, but ever memorable from the fact that it gave its name to the car in which the Percivals crossed the Continent. A great celebration had been planned for the occasion; but as everybody

was asleep at the time (about two in the morning), it didn't come off. The titles of all the cars had by this time become very familiar, and the girls spoke of calling on a friend in the "Missanabie," or stepping back to the "Nepigon," as they would mention Newbury Street or Louisburg Square. [Pg 67]

One morning they found themselves rolling along the high bank of the Fraser River, famous in the history of the gold fever of 1849; its muddy waters, laden with the wealth of empires, rushing past the train toward the ocean. On the shore Chinamen and Indians could be seen, dredging for gold, or fishing for salmon.

On the further side of the river ran the old Government wagon road, curiously built and buttressed with logs in many places, leading to the Cariboo gold country.

At Yale—an outfitting point for runners and ranchmen—there was a stop to water the engine. Children crowded up to the cars with small baskets of berries and nosegays.

Randolph brought in to Bessie—who was patiently bearing her lameness—a bunch of exquisite white pansies, a strange product for this wild, half-civilized country.

It was high noon when the conductor opened the door of the car and shouted:

"Vancouver! Vancouver!"

CHAPTER VI. [Pg 68]

VICTORIA AND "THE QUEEN."

"Vancouver," began Mr. Percival that afternoon, "is the baby city of the Northwest." They were in a barouche, five of them, driving through Stanley Park.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" asked his nephew.

"Why, it's less than six years old, Randolph. Yet it has a population of over fifteen thousand. Six years ago to-day there was a dense forest where these great brick and stone buildings now stand."

"Wasn't it burned once, father?" asked Tom, anxious to show the result of his reading.

"When it was two months old," replied Mr. Percival, "every house but one was destroyed by fire. Now it is one of the most prosperous and well-managed cities in the Dominion." [Pg 69]

"I noticed in the Canadian Pacific time-tables," put in Fred, "that there is a regular line of steamers running from Vancouver to Japan and China."

"What kind of trees are these, driver?" asked Randolph.

"Douglas fir and cedar, mostly," said the driver, who proved to be a Vermont man. "The big ones are cedar."

Big ones they were, truly; with trunks, or, in some cases, mere stumps, twenty to forty feet in diameter. The driver explained that in the early days of the city these magnificent trees were often ruthlessly destroyed, merely to get them out of the way. At last the city authorities took the matter in hand, and preserved a large tract of forest land, now called Stanley Park, for the permanent enjoyment of the people.

The road was a beautiful one, and in some places the travelers could catch glimpses of the broad Pacific, true to its name, breaking in slow, gentle waves on the beach just below.

At sunset the whole party boarded the steamer *Islander*, and the six hours' moonlight sail that followed was more like fairy-land than anything they had yet seen. [Pg 70]

The calm waters of the Gulf of Georgia, silvered and peaceful in the midsummer moonlight, stretched away on every side, broken only by wooded islands and the jutting promontories of Vancouver's; while far away to the southwest Mount Baker's snowy peak rose, pale and serene, among the clouds.

The young people sang all their "Kamloops" songs over and over, the music adding the one needful touch to the scene.

On arriving at the wharf in Victoria, they were glad to make their way through the noisy crowd of hackmen to the carriages reserved for their party, and take refuge in the Driard, where they were to rest for the next two days.

"Have you a piece of string, pa?"

It was a simple, kindly-faced little woman who asked the question, looking up to her husband, the gardener.

Randolph and Pet had taken a long walk through the streets of the city of Victoria, and out among the scattered houses and fields that border the way. Presently they reached a pretty cottage almost hidden from sight by a mass of climbing honeysuckle. In the garden beside it grew a profusion of old-fashioned flowers—stocks, sweet mignonette, geraniums, and many others. [Pg 71]

A bed of lovely pansies attracted Pet’s attention.

“Oh! do you suppose they would sell some?”

“We’ll soon see,” and sure enough, there was “Ma” upon the little piazza, beaming with hospitality and pleasure at the approach of visitors.

She set to work at once gathering pansies, and while she arranged her nosegay, the two Bostonians talked with her husband, who, it seemed, was an Englishman, and earned his living from his garden, which he was just watering. He took especial pride in his fuchsias, which grew in lovely abundance and variety all around his door. Sweet peas were there, too, the vines nearly as high as your head, all covered with dainty “painted ladies.”

“Pa” having furnished the string, Randolph received (for twenty cents) a great bunch of pansies. The little saleswoman then added a stalk of gillyflower and a scarlet geranium for buttonholes, and with a smiling face said good-by.

The pansies were soon transferred, Pet keeping the gillyflower in her dress until she was out of sight, “so as not to hurt Ma’s feelings,” and then replacing it by the pretty “thoughts.” [Pg 72]

Later in the day they visited the Chinese quarter of the city, in company with Tom and his inseparable kodak.

There was a delightful baby in one of the shops, and Tom begged hard to be allowed to “snap” it, but the parents said “No,” and could not be moved to relent, though they did offer the photographer a live gold-fish as some compensation for the refused privilege.

Mr. Percival also took his charges to the splendid naval station of Esquimault, where the Pacific Squadron of English ships were lying at anchor.

The Percivals hired a man (from Connecticut) to row them out in a boat to the great *War Spite* over which they were shown by a smart British sailor boy in blue. They were deeply interested in her great cannon, throwing a three hundred pound ball, her massive machinery, and her vicious-looking steel torpedoes, which run under water, and are guided by an electric wire connected with the ship. “You can guess the size of the vessel,” wrote Randolph to a friend that night, “when you learn that six hundred men are now quartered in her.” [Pg 73]

Just at dusk, on the second day in Victoria, they went on board the good ship *Queen*, which was waiting to bear them northward to the rugged coast, the island-studded gulfs and bays, and the eternal ice-rivers of Alaska.

For a long time that evening they walked the deck, Kittie pacing side by side with Fred Seacomb, Randolph telling Pet of his Freshman struggles and triumphs and pleasures at Harvard, Tom talking eagerly with his father, whose arm he took as they went to and fro, or paused to look out over the quiet waters, or the twinkling lights of Victoria. Adelaide, Bess, Rossiter and Mrs. Percival formed a cosey group reclining in their steamer-chairs in the shelter of the staterooms which they were to occupy that night.

At six the next morning the passengers felt the first thrill which told that the *Queen* had begun her voyage. Hastily they dressed, and emerged one by one from their staterooms, to gain every moment of this enchanted day.

The voyage northward led through narrow channels, where one could almost toss a biscuit ashore on either side; across open stretches of the blue Pacific, whose great waves rocked them gently; along the base of lofty mountains, with wild, untraveled forests growing on the water’s very edge. [Pg 74]

Soon they began to see Indian encampments, or solitary natives, paddling their queer-shaped, dug-out canoes. Whales rose solemnly and spouted with deep sighs. Porpoises showed their glistening backs above water, raced beside the ship, and threw themselves out into the sunlight. Eagles winged their way from shore to shore, and ducks paddled merrily in every small bay. On masses of floating timber hovered snow-gulls, their beautiful wings lifting and closing as their rafts were rocked in the steamer’s wake.

The second day on board was Sunday. There was an Episcopal service in the saloon in the forenoon, nearly all the excursionists assembling and joining in the hymns. The afternoon passed quietly, many of the passengers writing letters to home friends, some reading, some walking or reclining in steamer-chairs on deck.

In the evening the Percivals gathered for a sing in a sheltered place near the wheel-house. Never before did the old church tunes sound so sweetly. At nine o’clock the sky was all golden with sunset colors, reflected in the smooth waters of the Sound. [Pg 75]

Just before that hour there had been a little silence. When two bells were struck, Mr. Percival was seen to smile with a curious expression.

“What is it, father?” asked Bess, who was nestling close to his side.

“Why, it reminded me first of church bells, and then of an odd little affair in a Maine town, not far from your uncle’s farm.”

“Oh! tell us about it,” cried two or three voices at once. “A story, a story!”

“Well, I should hardly like to turn this pleasant little Sunday evening meeting into a story-telling circle,” said Mr. Percival after a moment’s pause; “but as it’s all about a church, and is a sort of Christmas story, perhaps it will do no harm. Are you warm enough, Bessie?”

"Plenty, father," replied the little Captain. "Do give us the story. I've heard you tell it before, but I always did like to see you tell."

You must fancy, as you read the next few pages, that you are on the steamer, with collar turned up, or shawl muffled about your shoulders. Just in front of you is the story-teller, a man of about sixty, with iron-gray hair and full beard, kindly eyes and broad shoulders. His right arm is thrown over Bessie's shoulder as she leans against him, the little injured foot on a camp-stool before her. Mr. Selborne, quiet and grave, with rather a thin face, but fine dark eyes and firm mouth under a brown mustache, comes next. Kittie and Tom are seated on the bench that runs around the whole deck, their backs to the rail. Pet is in a steamer-chair, and Randolph, Adelaide and Mrs. Percival are grouped together, completing the circle. Half a dozen other friends have drawn near, and are comfortably reclining, sitting or standing just behind Pet. [Pg 76]

A radiant path leads over the waters toward the west, where the wooded islands throw their dark, rugged summits against the sky.

The muffled splashing of the steamer's great wheels, mingled with the low whispers of wind and sea, fill the pauses of the speaker's voice.

Overhead a brood of ocean fowl, a flock of slender-winged gulls, or a single eagle sweep silently across the bright field of gold.

It would be impossible, as there was no shorthand writer present, to give the narrative that followed in Mr. Percival's exact words; or to reproduce the kindly twinkle of his eye as he dwelt upon the more humorous phases of it. These you must yourself supply as you read. [Pg 77]

THE STORY OF THE CRACKED BELL.

There was no doubt whatever of its melancholy condition. Cracked it was, and cracked it had been for the last two years. Just how the crack came there, nobody knew. It was, indeed, a tiny flaw, long ago covered by green rust, and apparently as harmless as the veriest thread or a wisp of straw, lodging for a moment on the old bell's brazen sides. But when the clapper began to swing, and gave one timid touch to the smooth inner surface of its small cell, the flaw made itself known, and as the strokes grew louder and angrier, the dissonance so clattered and battered against the ears of the parish, that after two years' patient endurance of this infliction (which they considered a direct discipline, to humble their pride over a new coat of white paint on the little church), one small, nervous sister rose in prayer meeting and begged that the bell be left quiet, or at least muffled for one day, as it disturbed her daughter, whom all the village knew to be suffering from consumption. [Pg 78]

Emboldened by this declaration of war, a deacon declared that it was an insult to religion and its founder, to ring such a bell. It was the laughing-stock of the village, he added, and its flat discords were but a signal for derision on the part of every scoffer and backslider in the parish.

Other evidence of convincing character was given by various members of the congregation; the bell was tried, condemned and sentenced; and more than one face showed its relief as good old Dr. Manson, the pastor, instructed the sexton publicly to omit the customary call to services on the following Sabbath.

"I hope," he further said, looking around gravely on his people, "that you will all make more than usual effort to be in your pews promptly at half-past ten."

For a time the members of the First Congregational Society of North Penfield were noticeably and commendably prompt in their attendance upon all services. They were so afraid that they should be late that they arrived at the meeting-house a good while before the opening hymn. Dr. Manson was gratified, the village wits were put down, and the old bell hung peacefully in the belfry over the attentive worshipers, as silent as they. Snow and rain painted its surface with vivid tints, and the swallows learned that they could perch upon it without danger of its being jerked away from their slender feet. [Pg 79]

There was no other meeting-house in the town, and as the nearest railroad was miles away, the sound of a clear-toned bell floating down from the summer sky, or sending its sweet echoes vibrating through a wintry twilight in an oft-repeated mellow call to prayers, was almost forgotten.

Gradually the congregation fell into the habit of dropping in of a Sunday morning while the choir were singing the voluntary, or remaining in the vestibule where, behind the closed doors, they had a bit of gossip while they waited for the rustle within which announced the completion of the pastor's long opening prayer. It became a rare occurrence for all to be actually settled in their pews when the text was given out. The same tardiness was noticeable in the Friday evening meetings; and, odd to say, a certain spirit of indolence seemed to creep over the services themselves. [Pg 80]

Whereas in former days the farmers and their wives were wont to come bustling briskly into the vestry while the bell was ringing, and the cheerful hum of voices arose in the informal handshaking "before meeting," soon quieting and then blending joyously in the stirring strains of "How Firm a Foundation," or "Onward, Christian Soldier," followed by one brief, earnest prayer or exhortation after another, in quick succession, in these later days it was quite different. It was quite difficult to carry the first hymn through, as there were rarely enough good singers present to sustain the air. Now it was the pianist who was late, now the broad-shouldered mill-owner, whose rich bass was indeed a "firm foundation" for all timid sopranos and altos; now the young

man who could sing any part with perfect confidence, and often did wander over all four in the course of a single verse, lending a helping hand, so to speak, wherever it was needed.

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The halting and dispirited hymn made the members self-distrustful and melancholy at the outset. There were long pauses during which all the sluggish or tired-out brothers and sisters nodded in the heated room, and the sensitive and nervous clutched shawl fringes and coat buttons in agonized fidgets. The meetings became so dull and heavy that slight excuses were sufficient to detain easy-going members at home, especially the young people. It was a rare sight now to see bright eyes and rosy cheeks in the room. The members discussed the dismal state of affairs, which was only too plain, and laid the blame on the poor old minister.

“His sermons haven’t the power they had once, Brother Stimpson,” remarked Deacon Fairweather, shaking his head sadly, as they trudged home from afternoon service one hot Sunday in August. “There’s somethin’ wantin’. I don’t jestly know what.”

“He ain’t pussonal enough. You want to be pussonal to do any good in a parish. There’s Squire Radbourne, now. Everybody knows he sets up Sunday evenin’s and works on his law papers. I say there ought to be a reg’lar downright discourse on Sabbath breakin’.”

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“Thet’s so, thet’s so,” assented the deacon. “And Brother Langworth hasn’t been nigh evenin’ meetin’ for mor’n six weeks.”

From one faulty member to another they wandered; forgetting, as they jogged along the familiar path side by side, talking eagerly, the banks of golden-rod beside them, the blue sky and fleecy clouds above, the blue hills in the distance, and all the glory and brightness of the blessed summer day.

The next morning, North Penfield experienced a shock. The white-haired pastor, overcome by extra labor, increasing cares, the feebleness of age, or a combination of all these causes, had sunk down upon his bed helplessly, on his return from the little white meeting-house the afternoon before, never to rise again until he should leave behind him the weary earth-garments that now but hindered his slow and painful steps.

The townspeople were greatly concerned, for the old man was dearly loved by young and old. Those who of late had criticised now remembered Dr. Manson’s palmy days, when teams came driving in from Penfield Center, “The Hollow,” and two or three other adjoining settlements, to listen to the impassioned discourses of the young clergyman.

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A meeting of the committee was called at once, to consider the affairs of the bereft church—for bereft they felt it to be—and take steps for an immediate supply during the vacancy of the pulpit. Two months later Dr. Manson passed peacefully away, and there was one more mound in the little churchyard.

The snows of early December already lay deep on road and field before the North Penfield Parish, in a regularly called and organized meeting, was given to understand that a new minister was settled. Half a dozen candidates had preached to the people, but only one had met with favor.

Harold Olsen was a Norwegian by parentage, though born in America. Tall and straight as the pines of the Norseland, with clear, flashing blue eyes and honest, winning smile, the congregation began to love him before he was half through his first sermon. His sweet-faced little wife made friends with a dozen people between services; by nightfall the question was practically settled, and so was the Rev. Harold Olsen, “the new minister,” as he was called for years afterward.

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At the beginning of the second week in December, Harold ascended the pulpit stairs of the North Penfield meeting-house, feeling very humble and very thankful in the face of his new duties. He loved his work, his people, his wife and his God; and here he was, with them all at once.

Sleigh bells jingled merrily outside the door; one family after another came trooping in, muffled to the ears, and moved demurely up the central or side aisles to their high-backed pews.

The sunlight found its way in under the old-fashioned fan-shaped blinds at the tops of the high windows, and rested upon gray hair and brown, on figures bowed with grief and age, on restless, eager children, on the pulpit itself, and finally upon the golden-edged leaves of the old Bible.

Still the people came in. A hymn was given out and sung. While Harold was lifting his soul to Heaven on the wings of his prayer, he could not help hearing the noise of heavy boots in the meeting-house entry, stamping the snow. His fervent “Amen” was the signal for a draft of cold air from the doors, followed by a dozen late comers.

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After the sermon, which was so simple and straightforward that it went directly to the hearts of the people, he was eager to confer with his deacons for a few minutes.

“The bell didn’t ring this morning, Brother Fairweather. What was the matter?” he asked, after a warm hand-grasp all round.

“Why, the fact is, sir, there ain’t no bell.”

“That is, none to speak of,” put in Deacon Stimpson apologetically. “There’s a bell up there, but it got so cracked an’ out o’ tune that nobody could stan’ it, sick or well.”

The Rev. Harold Olsen’s eyes twinkled.

“How long have you gone without this unfortunate bell?”

“Oh! a matter o’ two or three years, I guess.”

“Weddings, funerals, and all?”

“Well, yes,” reluctantly, “I b’lieve so. I did feel bad when we follored the minister to his grave without any tollin’—he was master fond o’ hearing that bell, fust along—but there, it couldn’t be helped. Public opinion was against that ’ere particular bell, and we jes’ got laughed at, ringin’ it. So we stopped, and here we be, without it.”

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Mr. Olsen’s blue eyes sparkled again as he caught his little wife’s glance, half-amused, half-pained. He changed the subject, and went among his parishioners, inquiring kindly for the absent ones, and making new friends.

At a quarter before three (the hour for afternoon service) he entered the meeting-house again. The sexton was asleep in one of the pews. He was roused by a summons so startling that a repetition was necessary before he could comprehend its import.

“R-ring the bell!” he gasped incredulously. “W-why, sir, it hasn’t been rung for”—

“Never mind, Mr. Bedlow,” interrupted Harold, with his pleasant smile. “Let’s try it to-day, just for a change.”

Harold had attended one or two prayer meetings, as well as Sunday services, and—had an idea.

On reaching the entry, the sexton shivered in the cold air, and pointed helplessly to a hole in the ceiling, through which the bell rope was intended to play.

“I put it up inside out of the way, so’s the boys couldn’t get it,” he chattered. “D-don’t you think, sir, we’d better wait till”—

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But it was no use to talk to empty air. The new minister had gone, and presently returned with a long, heavy bench, which he handled as easily as if it were a lady’s work-basket.

“Just steady it a bit,” he asked; and Mr. Bedlow, with conscientious misgivings as to the propriety of his assisting at a gymnastic performance on Sunday, did as he was bid.

Up went the minister like a cat; and presently down came the knotted end of the rope. “Now, let’s have a good, hearty pull, Mr. Bedlow.”

The sexton grasped the rope and pulled. There was one frightened, discordant outcry from the astonished bell; and there stood poor Mr. Bedlow with about three yards of detached rope in his hands. It had broken just above the point where it passed through the flooring over his head.

“Now, sir,” expostulated the sexton.

“Here, Dick!” called Mr. Olsen, to a bright-faced little fellow who had put his head in at the door and was regarding these unwonted proceedings with round-eyed astonishment; “won’t you run over to my house and ask my wife for that long piece of clothes-line that hangs up in the kitchen closet?”

Dick was gone like a flash, his curiosity excited to the highest pitch.

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“What does he want it for?” asked pretty Olga Olsen, hurrying to produce the required article.

“Don’t know,” panted Dick. “He’s got Mr. Bedlow—in the entry—an’ he sent for a rope, double quick!”

With which bewildering statement he tore out of the house and back to the church.

Five minutes later the population of North Penfield were astounded by hearing a long-silent, but only too familiar voice.

“It’s that old cracked bell!” exclaimed half a hundred voices at once, in as many families. “Do let’s go to meetin’ an’ see what’s the matter.”

The afternoon’s congregation was, in fact, even larger than the morning’s. Harold noted it with quiet satisfaction, and gave out as his text the first verse of the sixty-sixth Psalm.

At the close of his brief sermon he paused a moment, then referred to the subject in all their thoughts, speaking in no flippant or jesting tone, but in a manner that showed how sacredly important he considered the matter.

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“I have been pained to notice,” he said gravely, “the tardiness with which we begin our meetings. It is perfectly natural that we should be late, when there is no general call, such as we have been accustomed to hear from childhood. I do not blame anybody in the least. I do believe that we have all grown into a certain sluggishness, both physical and spiritual, in our assembling together, as a direct consequence of the omission of those chimes which to us and our fathers have always spoken but one blessed word—‘*Come!*’ I believe,” he continued, looking about over the kindly faces before him, “I believe you agree with me that something should be done. Don’t think me too hasty or presuming in my new pastorate, if I add that it seems to me vitally important to take action at once. Our bell is not musical, it is true, but its tones, cracked and unmelodious as they are, will serve to remind us of our church home, its duties and its pleasures. On Tuesday evening we will hold a special meeting in this house to consider the question of purchasing a new bell, to take the place of the old. The Prudential Committee, and all who are interested in the subject are urged to be present. Let us pray.”

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It was a wonderful “season,” that Tuesday evening conference. The cracked bell did its quavering best for a full twenty minutes before the hour appointed, to call the people together; and no appeal could have been more irresistible.

Two thirds of the sum required was raised that night. For ten days more the old bell rang on every possible occasion, until it became an accusing voice of conscience to the parish. Prayer meetings once more began sharp on the hour, and proceeded with old-time vigor. The interest spread until a real revival was in progress before the North Penfield Society were fairly aware of the change. Still the "bell fund" lacked fifty dollars of completion.

On the evening of the twentieth of December, in the midst of a furious storm, a knock was heard at the parsonage, and lo, at the hastily opened door stood Squire Radbourne, powdered with snowflakes, and beaming like a veritable Santa Claus.

"I couldn't feel easy," he announced, after he had been relieved of coat and furs, and seated before the blazing fire, "to have next Sunday go by without a new bell on the meeting-house. We must have some good hearty chimes on that morning, sure; it's the twenty-fifth, you know. So here's a little Christmas present to the parish—or the Lord, either way you want to put it."

The crisp fifty dollar note he laid down before the delighted couple was all that was needed.

Harold made a quick calculation—he had already selected a bell at a foundry a hundred miles away—and sitting down at his desk, wrote rapidly.

"I'll mail your letter," said the squire. "It's right on my way—or near enough. Let's get it off to-night, to save time."

And away he trudged again, through the deepening drifts and the blur of the white storm.

On Saturday evening, after all the village people were supposed to be abed and asleep, two dark figures might have been seen moving to and fro in the old meeting-house, with a lantern. After some irregular movements in the entry, the light appeared in the belfry, and a little later, one queer, flat, brassy note, uncommonly like the voice of the cracked bell, rang out on the night air. Then there was absolute silence; and before long the meeting-house was locked up and left to itself again on Christmas Eve—alone, with the wonder-secret of a new song in its faithful heart, waiting to break forth in praise of God at dawn of day.

How the people started that fair Christmas morning, as the sweet, silvery notes fell on their ears! They hastened to the church; they pointed to the belfry where the bell swung to and fro in a joyous call of "*Come! come! come! come!*"

They listened in rapt silence, and some could not restrain their sobs, while others with grateful tears in their eyes looked upon the old, rusty, cracked bell that rested, silent, on the church floor; and as they looked, and even passed their hands lovingly over its worn sides, they thanked God for its faithful service and the good work it had wrought—and for the glad hopes that filled that blessed Christmas Day.

CHAPTER VII.

SOLOMON BARANOV.

"All ashore!" sung out Tom as the *Queen* touched the wharf at Fort Wrangell, at nine o'clock the next morning. "Come on, all of you. We have four hours here, the captain says."

Mounting the rail for a jump, the boy brought upon himself a sharp rebuke from the officer; but the ship was soon safely moored and the gangplank run down to the wharf.

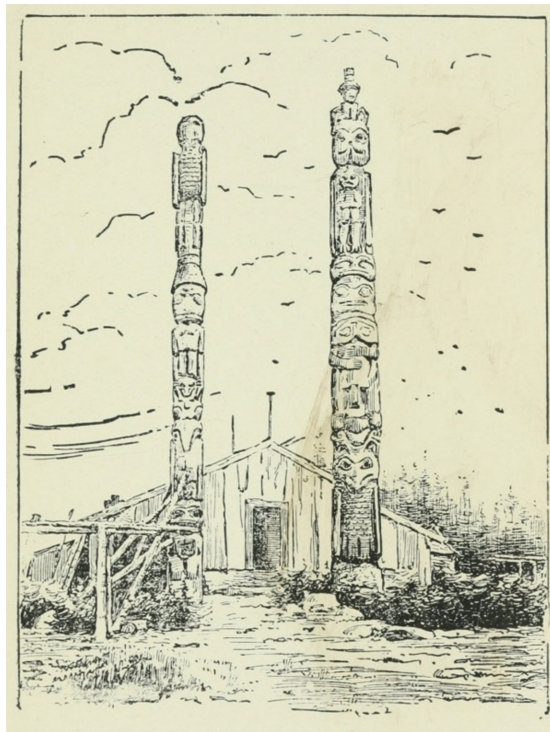
The excursionists straggled ashore in twos and threes, and began an eager inspection of their first Alaskan town.

The Percivals and their friends stroll down the single street of the village, which borders the shore with a row of low wooden houses.

Here are three or four squaws in gaudy blankets, crouching on a little wooden platform in front of their hut. Their favorite position is that of a seal, or a pussy cat—half-reclining, face downward. Spread out on the platform are baskets made of cedar-root, fiber and bark; carved wooden knives and forks; spoons of horn; little stone images, silver bracelets, and other curiosities of home manufacture.

Mr. Percival purchased one or two of these trinkets for friends at home, and continued his walk, followed by a pack of yelping dogs.

A singular object now came in view—a pole about twenty feet tall and two feet in diameter, carved in strange and fantastic shapes. There were the figures of a bear, a raven, a fish and a frog, with a grotesque human head at the top of all. This was one of the famous "totem poles," which indicate the tribe to which the owner belongs, and generally display an image of one or more ancestors. A thousand good American dollars could hardly purchase this ugly, worn, weather-beaten old pole from the natives who live in squalid poverty in the log hut behind it.



TOTEM POLES AT FORT WRANGELL.

Here was another totem pole belonging to the chief of the Bear tribe. It had simply the figure of a crouching bear on the top, with prints of his feet carved in the wood leading up to it. Another had a raven in the same way. There was a huge wooden wolf set on the tomb of a prominent member of the “Wolves”—once a powerful Alaskan tribe. [Pg 95]

“Do you suppose they would let us go inside their house?” whispered Adelaide to her brother, glancing timidly in at one of the open front doors.

“I’ll see,” he replied, and soon returned, laughing. “They don’t object in the least,” he said. “They seem used to visitors.”

Entering the door, the party found themselves in a large square room, which comprised the whole interior of the house. The floor was of earth, beaten hard, but a wooden platform, raised about two feet, ran around three sides. In the exact center was a smouldering fire of logs, the smoke finding its way out through a hole in the roof.

“Where do you sleep?” asked Rossiter.

Only one of the half-dozen natives who were seated around the fire could understand English.

“Bed,” she said, pointing to a heap of blankets lying on the raised platform in one corner of the room.

On the dingy walls of the little hut there hung a colored print of the Saviour’s face. All around were the strange heathen carvings and rude implements of the Alaskan native. The four posts which supported the roof were “totems,” representing in hideous caricature the tribe to which the inhabitants of the hut belonged. The natives themselves, slow of movement and speech, their dull eyes hardly glancing at the strangers, were grouped on the raised margin of the floor. [Pg 96]

I said the faces were dull. There was one exception. A young mother bent over a solemn brown baby who lay, round-eyed and contented, in her lap. The girl’s eyes shone with mother-love; her dark hand was gentle as she smoothed Baby’s tumbled little blanket, and looked up shyly and proudly at the new-comers.

The child in its mother’s bosom; the Christ face upon the wall: these were the two points of light in that shadowy home. Christ, who came as a little child to Bethlehem, had sent a baby to Fort Wrangell, and a thought, vague and unformed though it was, of the Saviour whose face looked down upon the little group, from its rude frame upon the wall.

The girls waved their hands to the round little brown berry of a baby, and the mother laughed and looked pleased, just as a New England mother would. Mr. Selborne left in her hand a silver coin—“two bits,” everybody in Alaska called a quarter—and said good-by. [Pg 97]

“What tribe do they belong to?” asked Randolph, as they emerged from the gloomy hut.

“Stickeen,” promptly replied Tom. “Let’s give ’em a sing.” And sing they did, until the solemn faces of the natives gathering about them on the beach, actually relaxed into the semblance of a smile.

Reaching the steamer once more, they displayed their treasures before Bess, who could not yet quite venture on a long walk.

There were toy paddles, with ravens’ and bears’ heads painted in red and black; horn spoons, dark and light, with finely carved profiles on the handle; great rough garnets, of which Tom had purchased half a handful for a song, and many other oddities. Of course the kodak army had been busy, but the results could not yet be seen. Many a Stickeen portrait and ugly totem lay snugly

hidden in those black leather boxes, to be "developed," printed and laughed over in gay city parlors the coming winter. [Pg 98]

Just as the boat cast off her moorings, an Indian, fantastically dressed, appeared on the wharf, and gave a dance for the benefit of the departing passengers, who threw down bits of silver as the *Queen* once more started on her course.

As the heart of the great ship began to throb and she swung slowly out toward the sea, one tall, quiet-faced man stood upon the old wharf among the Indians, silently watching the departure of all that meant home and friends. He waved his hand and lifted his hat to some one on deck, then turned gravely, and with firm step walked back toward the straggling row of huts which sheltered the poor, degraded natives of Fort Wrangell.

"Who is that?" queried some one carelessly, and the answer came: "The missionary."

It was Mr. Selborne who spoke last. He explained that he had just been talking with the man, who was doing noble work in this squalid, miserable community. His pay was a mere pittance, and the society supporting him were in sore need of funds for the establishment of a school or home for native children. [Pg 99]

Rossiter paused.

"Let's give them a helping hand," said Mr. Percival, passing over a bill. Another and another fell into the hat that was sent around, and a few days afterward that missionary's eyes filled with glad tears as he opened a package containing one hundred and thirty dollars for the needed Home, from the passengers of the *Queen*.

Another wonderfully beautiful evening followed the Wrangell experience. At half-past nine fine print could be read by daylight, and at eleven it was by no means dark.

The next day the steamer touched at Douglas Island, giving its passengers time for a run up to the richest gold mine in the world. In the early afternoon the *Queen* steamed across the strait to Juneau, only a few miles distant, and stopped there for the night.

It was a larger town than any they had yet seen in Alaska, and curved around a fine bay at the base of high mountains, on whose high slopes could be seen patches of snow and "young glaciers," as Fred called them.

Mr. Selborne and his sister at once hunted up the Mission House, and had a long talk with Mrs. Willard, the brave and gentle lady who gave up a happy and comfortable home life in the East to help the Alaskan natives. [Pg 100]

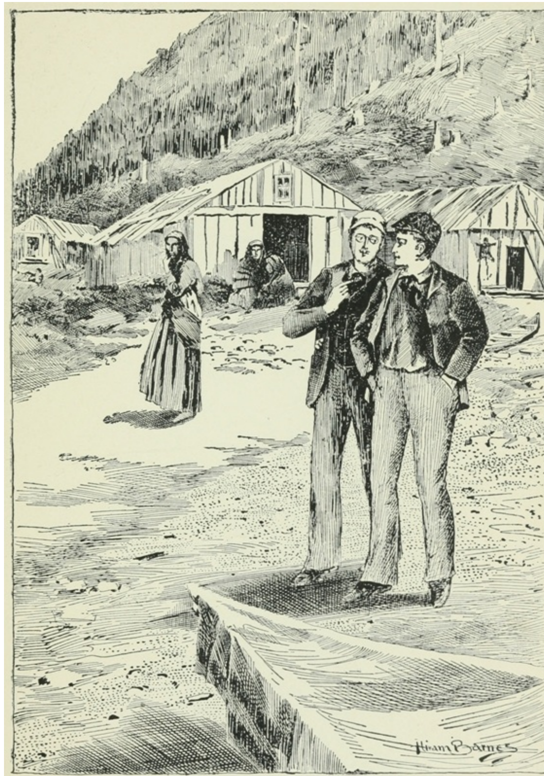
"One could listen to her stories all day and not tire of them," said Rossiter to Mr. Percival afterward. "The sufferings and the superstitions of these poor creatures are almost incredible."

Shortly after returning from the Mission, he mailed to Fort Wrangell the valuable letter of which we have spoken.

The young people scattered through the village as soon as the steamer was moored. Mr. Percival rode off with two gentlemen who met him upon the wharf, to look at the Silver Bow Basin gold mines, of which he was part owner.

Tom and Fred strolled along arm in arm, in front of the houses and stores that lined the beach, now and then stopping to speak to a native, or examine the trinkets and furs that were everywhere exposed for sale.

They were handling an unusually fine brown bear rug, when a curious-looking man, perhaps fifty years of age, halted by their side.



TOM AND FRED AT JUNEAU.

His hair and beard were long and rough, and his garments seemed to have been made for a wearer much shorter and stouter than himself. He was over six feet in height, and had a kindly, almost child-like look in his blue eyes, which, however, were keen as a hawk's, looking out from under a pair of shaggy eyebrows.

"Pretty good pelt, that," he remarked, running his hand over the skin. "Thinkin' o' buyin'?"

There was no mistaking the New England "Down East" accent, which reminded Tom of Ruel at "the Pines."

"Well, hardly that," answered Fred, taking the man for the proprietor of the store. "We thought we might price some of these rugs, though. How much do you ask for this one?"

"Bless ye!" exclaimed the other, with a good-natured laugh; "I don't know nothin' 'baout selling 'em. Ask the storekeeper in there."

"Oh! I thought"—began Fred, blushing a little at his mistake.

"I see," laughed their new friend; "ye took me for the owner. Wall, you war'n't so fur aout o' the way, either. I was the owner o' that pelt, last fall."

The boys waited for more; seeing which the hunter—for such he seemed to be—went on: "I shot that 'ar b'ar up 'n the Yukon valley, last September. He was jest lookin' fer a place to den up, I reckon, when he run foul o' my rifle," he added, with a silent chuckle.

"What kind of a bear is it?" asked Tom. "A cinnamon?"

"Reg'lar cinnamon. Braown b'ar, some folks call 'em. They're's thick's squirrels back in the maountings. But this was an extra fine one, an' no mistake."

Just then the storekeeper came out and greeted the party. "How do you do, gentlemen? Won't you walk in? Finest skins in Juneau—no harm looking at 'em, whether you want to buy or not. Halloo, Solomon! round again? How soon do you start North?"

"Wall, in 'baout a month, I reckon. The musquiters are too thick to make it more'n half-comf'table in the woods jest naow."

"That is Solomon Baranov, the best shot in these parts," explained the storekeeper, leading the way into his shop. "He shoots and traps all the time except in the hottest months of the year. He could tell you some good bear stories, I reckon!"

"'Baranov'? He's not a Russian, is he?"

"Father was Russian, and mother a Yankee. She came from somewhere East, I'm told. Now, what can I show you in the way of furs or Indian curios, gentlemen? Look at that for a fox robe!"

The boys purchased a good gray wolf skin, handsomely mounted, knowing that Juneau was the best place in Alaska for buying fine furs. But they hurried out again as soon as this piece of business was transacted, anxious to renew their acquaintance with Baranov.

He was sitting on a raised platform at a little distance, smoking an old brierwood pipe, and talking seriously to a couple of black cubs, who gamboled clumsily about him, tugging at their chains and pushing their snouts into his capacious jacket pockets for eatables.

"Seems to me," he was saying gravely as the boys came up, "I'd think o' somethin' else besides eatin' all day. Haven't ye got any ambition? Don't it wear on ye bein' tied up, instead o' rootin'

raound in the woods I took ye from last March? Halloo, boys! Find a pelt ye liked?” [Pg 104]

Tom opened his package and displayed the wolf skin.

“Very good, very good,” said the old hunter, running his hand through the fur. “An auk brought that in last winter. He got clawed up putty well, too, killin’ the critter.”

“I wish you’d tell us something about the hunting around here,” said Tom, as he and Fred flung themselves down beside the man.

“Tell ye somethin’! I’d show ye somethin’ ef we only hed time. Why, thar’s b’ars within three gunshot o’ this very spot, like’s not, back a piece on the maounting. How long d’ye stay here?”

“Only to-night.”

“Stoppin’ on the *Queen*?”

“Yes; with a big Excursion from Boston.”

“Wall, then, your Excursion won’t get away from Juneau before day after to-morrow evenin’, at the arliest.”

“What do you mean? How’s that?” cried both boys at once.

“Somethin’s given aout in the steamer’s machinery. I heard Cap’n Carroll say an hour ago that he must stop here to fix it, and ’twould take two days at least.” [Pg 105]

“Then we could go with you. Will you take us?”

“Why, ef your folks is willin’, and you ain’t afraid of a long tramp, an’ wet feet, and mebbe a b’ar or two—an’ musquiters,” he added in a comical tone, “we could fix it so’s to git away arly to-morrow mornin’, camp one night, and be back before noon Thursday, ef nothin’ happened.”

“But we haven’t any guns”—

“Oh! two rifles is all we’d want in this craowd. Thar’s my piece at home, and I’d borrow one somewhars in Juneau.”

“Well, I tell you what, Fred,” shouted Tom, “if father’s willing we should go, we can have a big time, and perhaps kill a bear!”

“That’s so!” said Fred, catching fire from the other’s enthusiasm. “That’ll be seeing a bit of Alaska that isn’t down on the programme, eh?”

“Is your father raound?” asked Solomon, with a meditative puff at his pipe.

“He’s gone off to look at some mines.”

“H’m—‘Silver Bow,’ I s’pose. When d’ye expect him back?”

“Before supper, he said. Where can we find you, Mr.—Mr.”— [Pg 106]

“You c’n call me Solomon or Baranov, jest’s ye please,” said the hunter. “There ain’t no ‘mister’ to it. I’ll meet you here, or what’s better, I’ll be daown on the wharf at eight o’clock to-night. What’s your names?”

“Tom Percival and Fred Seacomb. I’ll bring my father with me.” And with mutual good-bys they parted for the afternoon.

Tom could think of nothing but the coming tramp, and dignified Fred displayed a degree of excitement which was, to say the least, unusual. The girls looked anxious when they heard the plan, but admitted that if they were boys it would be great fun.

“Of course,” remarked Tom, “you’ll be awfully lonesome without us, that day and a half. But you must bear up under it.”

“We’ll try,” said Kittie demurely. “But if you go, we shall expect a good bear skin apiece, to pay for the lonesomeness.”

“Don’t let ’em put their paws on your shoulders, Tom,” counseled Randolph solemnly.

“Nor try to pacify them with sugar,” added Pet, to whom Randolph had basely confided the story of his cousin’s adventure at Glacier Station.

In the midst of the laughter, Mr. Percival arrived. [Pg 107]

“Father, we want to go off on a bear-hunt,” began Tom, all in a breath. “Of course you’re willing, aren’t you, sir? And Solomon says”—

“Wait, wait,” laughed Mr. Percival, taking a seat on a stool—for this conversation took place on the deck of the *Queen*, just in front of the open stateroom doors—“who is it that wants to go on a bear-hunt? Bess, I suppose, and Miss Selborne?”

They all shouted at this, Adelaide as merrily as the rest.

“Oh! I don’t want to hunt bears, Mr. Percival,” she cried. “Nothing short of elephants will do for me.”

Then they all began talking at once, and at last Mr. Percival obtained some clear idea of the plan. He looked grave.

“I’ll see Captain Carroll first,” he said, “and then I’ll talk with your friend, Baranov.” And that was all the satisfaction he would give the eager young hunters.

The captain, who seemed to know all the old miners, traders and hunters on the coast, must [Pg 108]

have given Mr. Percival a good report of Solomon, for the father's face cleared as he talked with the bluff commander of the *Queen*.

Supper over, all the interested parties descended to the wharf, where, in due time, the old hunter made his appearance.

Tom performed the necessary introductions, and for ten minutes there was an earnest conversation between the two men, as to the proposed trip. The boys watched every turn and gesture, as they talked. Randolph had been asked to join the party, but he was greatly interested in the new works at the mine, and preferred to spend the day in visiting the Basin and going through the great half-mile tunnel in which the gold was to be drawn off by the "placer" process.

"Tom," said Mr. Percival, wheeling around suddenly on his heel, "I have decided to let you go. Baranov says he will take good care of you; and Captain Carroll tells me he always keeps his word."

Solomon inclined his head gravely, but smoked in silence.

"You will start at three o'clock to-morrow morning," added Mr. Percival. "Solomon will bring all the necessary outfit for the trip, including an extra rifle." [Pg 109]

"Good-night," said Baranov, moving off in a leisurely manner, as if he had engaged to step across the street, rather than take charge of two inexperienced city boys on a twenty-mile tramp over the mountain.

CHAPTER VIII. [Pg 110]

ALIVE OR DEAD?

It seemed to Tom that he had hardly been asleep five minutes, when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Wake up, my boy! Baranov is on the wharf, waiting for you."

With only half his wits about him, and a vague remembrance of his experience the previous year, Tom sprang up hastily, crying out, "Is there a fire?" Then he saw his father's expression, amused, but a little anxious, and remembered the plan for the day.

"What are you up for, father?" he asked, as he scrambled into his thick traveling suit. "You ought to be sound asleep in your berth."

Mr. Percival smiled, in reply. "I wanted to see you start," he said simply. Ah, these patient, loving, anxious fathers and mothers who get up early to see their children start, and sit up late to welcome them home! How little we think of it when we are boys—how the recollection of it all, and of our own heedlessness comes to us, in after years! [Pg 111]

Fred was already up, as he shared Tom's stateroom on the steamer. In a few minutes more they were out in the sweet morning air, and, stepping softly and speaking in low tones, not to disturb the sleepers, they passed through the gangway and down to the wharf, accompanied by Mr. Percival.

The sun was just rising, and the whole sky was golden with its coming, over the dark eastern hills. It would be an hour or more before his first rays would rest on the house-tops of Juneau.

There was the old hunter, leaning against one of the mooring-posts, and looking off over the quiet Sound, to the dim blue mountains beyond. At his feet lay a large pack, two tin dippers and an ax. In the hollow of his left arm he held two guns.

As the travelers left the steamer, he turned toward them with an alert air that belied his previous slouching attitude and straggling, iron-gray hair. The first greetings over, he proceeded at once to divide the luggage. [Pg 112]

"I'll take the pack," said he, "and my ax. You two boys take the guns—we sha'n't need to load 'em much before noon. Tie a tin dipper around your waist, each of ye. Here's some twine."

"Have you got provisions?" asked Mr. Percival.

"Plenty," replied Solomon. "All ready, boys?"

"Good-by! good-by!" they said, still speaking quietly. While Fred, seeing a crimson handkerchief—which looked remarkably like one worn by Kittie the day before—waving from one of the little stateroom windows, waved his in return.

"Good-by, Fred. My dear boy," turning to Tom, "take care of yourself. Remember, if you are delayed, I shall not leave Juneau without you. Allow plenty of time for the return trip. Be very careful of the guns. Good-by!"

The anxious father pressed both the boys' hands. They turned away, and passing around the buildings at the head of the wharf, were soon out of sight.

Once more he saw them, as they climbed the first low hill, back of the town. They waved their hats to him, then disappeared in the edge of the forest. [Pg 113]

All the party were rather grave at the breakfast table, that morning. Mrs. Percival had been greatly disinclined to consent to the hunt, but she was a strong woman, and was afraid of trusting her feelings in a matter where she admitted her husband was the best judge.

In the forenoon Randolph accompanied his uncle to the Silver Bow Basin, and inspected for himself the marvelous valley whose sands are so filled with precious metal that miners for years have worked in it here and there, successfully washing out gold with the rudest contrivances.

The superintendent in charge of the principal works showed them the tunnel, and the process of sluicing out the sand by a powerful stream of water, or “hydraulicking,” as he called it. The stream plunged into the sand in a deep pit, and then rushed off rapidly through a long tunnel which had been dug and blasted through the rocky heart of the mountain toward the sea.

“What takes the gold out?” asked Randolph.

“Why, we place those cross pieces, or riffles, at short distances all the way down, in the sluice-way which runs the whole length of the tunnel. On the upper side of the riffles is placed a quantity of quicksilver for which the gold has such an affinity (it sinks to the bottom of the stream), that it combines with it. Every week or so we have a ‘clean up,’ when a good many thousand dollars’ worth of gold is taken out and shipped South.”

“When do you begin to work?” asked Mr. Percival.

“Well, we calculate to commence operations about the first of May. It’s according to the season. Of course we can’t get our power until the snow melts on the mountains, and we get a good head of water.”

After a thorough examination of these mines, they returned to the village, and in the afternoon took the ferry boat to Douglas Island, where they once more inspected the great treadwell mine which sometimes turns out a hundred thousand dollars’ worth of gold in a single month.

ALASKAN BASKET WEAVERS AT HOME.

The ore here is imbedded in quartz, which is crushed in an immense stamp-mill where the noise of the crushers was so great that the loudest shout could not be heard. Randolph and Mr. Percival could only communicate with the guide and with each other by signs, as they walked through the building.

While these two were off on their mining tour, Bessie managed, with the help of a cane and Mr. Selborne’s arm, to walk slowly along the main street of Juneau. There were a number of fur stores, and others with beautiful displays of Chilkat blankets and baskets, the latter in many odd varieties of shape and color.

Native women sat in groups, with their wares spread out on the sidewalk before them; baskets, carvings, silver bracelets, and a queer kind of orange-colored fruit which the visitors found were the famous “salmon berries” of Alaska.

Rossiter bought a silver spoon, finely carved, with some sort of a bird’s-head design.

“What kind of a bird is it?” asked the minister.

The Alaskan shook his head, to show he did not understand.

“What kind?” asked Rossiter again, very slowly, and a little more loudly, as one is apt to speak, in trying to converse with a foreigner.

The native seemed now to gather the meaning of the question, but was at a loss to express himself in reply.

Suddenly with a quick smile he flapped his arms like wings, and cried “Caw! caw!”

“Ah,” exclaimed Selborne, “it’s a raven!” and the vendor nodded his head violently, much gratified at the success of his pantomime.

Next morning the sole topic was, How soon will they return? Have they found any game? Won’t they be tired!

Captain Carroll pinned up a notice in the main saloon, stating that the steamer would sail at three in the afternoon, the repairs having been completed more quickly than he had expected.

Mr. Percival looked troubled at the change of plan, but there was no help for it. Every hour of delay was an additional expense to the company; and besides, certain perilous straits ahead had to be passed at exactly such a tide, and the captain had made his calculations accordingly.

Noon came, but with it no sign of the hunters.

One o'clock. All the Percival party, and indeed most of the steamer's passengers who knew the situation and were acquainted with the boys, gathered on deck, gazing anxiously toward the high slopes which rimmed the town. Still no indication of the returning party.

Mr. Percival now packed his own valise, as well as those of his son and Fred, and told his family he should remain in Juneau if the boys did not return in time for the boat. The *Queen* was to touch here, contrary to its usual custom, to take a shipment of bullion on its way back to the States. The party could manage quite well on board ship during the intervening four or five days; and although Mrs. Percival's heart was torn with anxiety, she could see no better plan.

At three o'clock, therefore, Mr. Percival stood on the wharf with the three portmanteaus, and the *Queen*, giving a long blast of its whistle, moved majestically northward.

The head of the family who had thus remained behind soon found comfortable lodgings for himself near by, and then repaired directly to the wharf, where he was sure the belated hunters would hasten at once, on their return.

Supper-time came, and a poor meal he made of it, at his lodging-house. Returning to the wharf he vainly paced the planks in the golden twilight until nearly midnight, when he slowly retraced his steps to his lodgings, full of forebodings and self-reproach for his weakness in consenting to indulge his heedless boy in such a reckless undertaking.

In the morning he was astir at sunrise, but his repeated and anxious inquiries failed to reveal any news of the absent ones.

Looking haggard and old, he set about raising a relief party, to start up the mountain at once. Alive or dead, they must be found!

CHAPTER IX.

THE SILVER-TIP.

On leaving the wharf, Baranov had led the way directly up through the settlement, past the Mission School, until he reached the very outskirts of the village, where, in a half-cleared patch of ground, the boys stopped to get breath and wave a last good-by to their father.

"Naow," said the guide, with some emphasis, "comes the tug of war. You've both got good thick boots on, I s'pose?"

Tom was well-equipped in this respect, and Fred's shoes were heavy enough for ordinarily rough walking and weather.

"I've got a blanket apiece *cached* here," continued Baranov, looking about him, and presently drawing out two bundles from beneath a big stump, where he must have hidden them the night before. "They'll be pretty heavy for ye to lug, but thar's no tent, and it'll be cold enough before mornin' to make you glad you brought 'em."

He thereupon produced some twine and straps, and arranged a blanket on the back of each of the two boys, so as to make the loads as easy as possible.

"I've got my blanket and a rubber to put under us," he added, "in my bag."

"Ho, this isn't any load!" shouted Tom. "It's light's a feather."

Solomon smiled grimly as he swung his fifty-pound pack over his shoulder, picked up his ax, and started into the woods.

"It'll grow a leetle heavier before night," he remarked. "It's a way them blankets have, in this country."

"Which way are you going?" asked Fred, adjusting his eyeglasses for the tenth time, as he stumbled over a mossy log.

"Wall, I think we'll strike into the old trail that leads up to the Silver Bow, and foller that fer a piece. Then—I'll see."

A rough tract of land lay between the clearing and the path. Baranov went right ahead, striding along over fallen trees and bowlders, with smoke-wreaths from his pipe floating back over his broad shoulders.

The forest was carpeted with deep, wet moss, into which the boys often sank to their knees; and more than once they tripped and nearly fell. The mountain-side was thickly wooded with spruce, yellow cedar and hemlock, the tough branches of which, wet with dew, twisted around

their legs and swished into their faces.

“I say—Thomas,” sung out Fred, after ten minutes of this sort of work, “is that blanket—any lighter—than ’twas?”

“Not much! It’s gained—five pounds.”

“What do think—of the—scenery?”

The emphasis on the last word was caused by his setting foot on the slippery surface of a rock concealed by moss, and sitting down with great firmness.

“Well, it’s a pretty good fall landscape,” gasped Tom, leaning against a stump, weak from laughter.

But lo! the stump, like many others of its kind thereabouts, was decayed, and over it went, carrying Tom with it.

When the boys had struggled to their feet, they found that Baranov had stopped just ahead of them, and was chuckling over their mishaps. [Pg 122]

“Look here, old fellow,” cried Tom, “is it going to be this way all day?”

“No, no,” said Baranov. “Mebbe I oughtn’t to hev laughed at ye. But I saw no harm was done. Ye’ve got good pluck, both of ye, not to ask me to slow up before naow. P’r’aps I put on a leetle extra steam, to see what ye was made of—with that ar light blanket”—

“O-oh!”

“But the wust on it’s over, for quite a spell. Thar’s the reg’lar Basin trail jest ahead. We can follow that for a mile or two, before strikin’ off up the side of the maounting.”

It was a relief to walk in a traveled path once more, although it was a very rough one.

It was just five o’clock when Solomon called a halt, and announced that they were something over three miles from the wharf at Juneau, having been a little more than an hour and a half in reaching this point.

“Isn’t this a glorious spot!” exclaimed Tom, throwing himself down beside the path.

The ground was clear for a little way in front of them, and just beyond lay the Silver Bow Basin, narrowing and winding far up among the mountains. On every side the forest-clad slopes rose in grand sweeps from the Basin, and curls of smoke here and there floated up from camps hidden among the trees. [Pg 123]

“What’s that noise?” asked Fred, as a metallic clicking not far away fell upon their ears.

“Oh! thar’s always somebody prospectin’ raound with his pick,” remarked the hunter. “You’ll hear ’em all over the maountings, pretty much.”

Close beside them a stream of crystal clear water rushed over its stony bed, across the path toward the valley. The boys unfastened their dippers and drank deeply.

“Have some salmon berries?” asked Solomon. And he threw down a branch of the orange-colored fruit he had just broken off.

“Naow,” he said, after a few moments’ silence, “we must take to the woods. I gave ye that leetle piece of rough travelin’ to kinder harden ye fer what was comin’. Are ye ready, boys?”

“All ready!” they cried, springing to their feet. “Lead the way, Solomon!” [Pg 124]

The hunter now left the beaten path and followed up the bed of the stream, which crossed it at right angles. It was hard climbing, and the boys had to stop for frequent rests. Their tramp proceeded, however, without special incident for a couple of hours more, when Baranov threw down his pack and called out “Breakfast.”

I ought to have mentioned that a cold lunch had been prepared the night before, and the three trampers had partaken sparingly of it before starting. Now, however, they had a sharpened appetite, and ate ravenously of the doughnuts, hard bread and sandwiches which Solomon brought out of his stores.

This halt occupied about an hour, so that it was nearly nine when they resumed their walk.

Their progress now became very slow. The picks of the miners were no longer heard, and they realized that they were in the veritable Alaskan wilderness. The rush of the little brook was the only sound that broke the silence of the moss-draped and carpeted forest.

They had passed beyond the brow of the mountain immediately overlooking Juneau, and, while the grade was not quite so steep, the evergreens grew more densely, and the stream was so narrow as to barely afford them a pathway. Of course their feet had been soaked during the very first hour of their climb. There was now not a dry stitch on either of the boys, below the waist. [Pg 125]

For a few rods, Solomon had been peering here and there; Tom afterward declared he fairly sniffed the air for game, like a hound.

“What is it, Solomon?” called out Tom, picking himself out of a crevice between two wet rocks.

The hunter held up his hand for silence; then stooped and carefully examined a log just in front of him. Calling the boys, he pointed to it with one of his silent chuckles.

Fred adjusted his glasses and eyed the log critically. “It seems just a common, every-day log, don’t it, Tom?” he remarked in a guarded voice to that young man.

It was a fallen hemlock, lying directly across their path. Baranov laid his finger lightly on a small reddish spot, where the bark had been scraped off.

"A b'ar did that," he whispered. "An not long ago, neither." [Pg 126]

The boys instinctively clutched their empty guns.

"Give me my rifle," the hunter said, in the same tone. "I must load her an' hev her ready in case we come on the critter sudd'nly. But I'll let you do your own shootin' ef I can. Fred, you must take the ax naow, an' be awful keerful of it. Carry it blade aout from ye, an' not over your shoulder. Naow foller me as easy's you kin."

They crept along, Indian file, for half an hour or more.

Tom's foot sank into something that crunched under the moss.

"Snow!" he exclaimed; and indeed they all were standing on the edge of a huge snow bank.

Something about this appeared to please Solomon very much, though the boys could not tell why. But now he was stopping and pointing again. Ah! that was why the old hunter was gratified by finding that the trail crossed a snow bank. Master Bruin could pass through the thick scrub of the forest so deftly that even the keen eye of the best guide in Juneau could hardly distinguish the course of his journey. Not so when he crossed the snow. There was his track, plain enough. [Pg 127]

"My! don't it look like a boy's barefoot mark?" exclaimed Tom, quivering with excitement. "Is he near here, do you think, Solomon? What sort of a bear is it? Is he a big one?"

Baranov answered at once, as he shouldered his pack and rifle again:

"The trail's abaout an hour old. He's a purty good-sized black b'ar, I should say. An' it's my opinion we can fetch him afore night."

On they went, faster than before. Indeed, the boys soon noticed that they were now following a sort of beaten track—no other, Solomon assured them, than one of the famous "bear-paths," thousands of which thread the deepest and loneliest jungles of Alaska.

They halted for a hasty dinner and then pressed forward. Baranov could not be positive that the same bear was before them on this hard track, but it seemed highly improbable that *Ursus Americanus* had left his easy highway for the almost impenetrable growth of evergreens on either side.

It was about three in the afternoon when Baranov halted so suddenly that Fred, who was next behind him, fairly tumbled against him, nearly upsetting the hunter. The latter, however, paid no attention to this. He was too much occupied in examining half a dozen hairs, which he had picked from a low spruce bough projecting across the path. [Pg 128]

"What is it?" the boys whispered eagerly, their fatigue gone in a moment.

"Look at them ha'rs!"

"Why, they're almost white! They are white at the tips."

"The animil that went through here ahead of us, left 'em behind," said the guide. "An' it wa'n't no black b'ar, neither, as you can see for yourselves."

"What was it—not grizzly?"

The idea was not wholly a pleasant one, and the young hunters looked nervously around.

"No, no; it's no grizzly. It's my opinion that a big silver-tip, a glacier b'ar, some calls 'em, is just beyond," rejoined Baranov.

"A glacier bear? I never heard of one before," whispered Fred.

"They're ugly fellers, an' mighty scarce raound these parts. The trappers north of here call 'em Mount St. Elias b'ars, because there's more of 'em there. The pelt's wuth double a black b'ar's. It'll be great luck ef we find one." [Pg 129]

This whole conversation was carried on in an undertone, and without further noise or delay, the party pushed on.

At the end of half an hour's forced march they found themselves on a sort of level tableland, at a great elevation above the sea. Here and there were patches of snow, and small glaciers could be distinctly seen on distant mountain slopes, toward the east and north.

The scene near at hand was utterly desolate and forbidding. The bear path, too, had "ended in a squirrel track and run up a tree," Tom declared. He was on the point of proposing a halt for a rest, if not for the night, when he caught sight of a grayish patch in a clump of low spruces about a hundred yards distant. He was sure it had moved while he was looking. His heart beat violently as he gave a low whistle to attract Baranov's attention.

The guide's eye no sooner rested on the object than he sank as if he had been shot. The boys did the same, and cautiously crawled to his side.

"Slip a cartridge into that rifle quick," he whispered to Fred. "That's old Silver Tip, sure, an' ef we work it jest right, we can drop him. Naow don't you move for five minutes. Before long, you'll see him start this way. When he gets up to that rock over thar between them two leetle spruces, Tom, you let drive. Don't you fire, Fred, till Tom gets another cartridge in. An' ef you miss him, run fer your lives." [Pg 130]

Before the boys could ask where he was going or what his plans were, the old hunter had

disappeared in the undergrowth, taking his ax with him.

The wind was blowing freshly from Bruin toward them. In the course of a few minutes, which seemed hours, they saw the animal push his snout out from the boughs and sniff the air curiously. There was a strange scent, he thought, lingering about this mountain-top. What could it be?

Whatever its nature, it evidently acted like the reverse end of the magnet to the shaggy beast; for after a moment's uneasy moving about, he started off in a line which would carry him very near the ambushed hunters.

On he came, crashing through the boughs and clambering nimbly over mossy bowlders.

Fred could feel that his companion was trembling from head to foot from excitement. [Pg 131]

"Rest over that twig, Tom," he whispered in his ear. "You can't get a shot if you don't."

The two spruces were reached. Bang! slam! went two rifles; for forgetting Solomon's injunction, Fred pulled the trigger almost at the same instant with Tom.

"Hooray!" shouted a welcome voice in the direction from which the bear had come. "You've done it, boys! Wait till I come before you go near him!"

With arms and legs flying like a windmill, and ax ready, Solomon came floundering along the bear's track.

"Dropped him, fust shot!" he called out again. "He's dead, sure enough—look out!" For at that very moment the bear struggled to his feet and made a mad rush toward his assailants.

Fred had thrown down his rifle at Solomon's last shout, but Tom had the presence of mind to level his reloaded piece and fire. Then he turned to run, but Bruin, making one last plunge, threw out his big paw.

Tom felt a sensation like a shovelful of red-hot coals dropped down his right boot-leg, and with a howl of pain and fright, tumbled headlong. [Pg 132]

Had not Solomon reached the scene at that very moment with his ax, this story might have had a sad ending. One mighty sweep of that terrible weapon, and the battle was finished.

"Are ye hurt, boy?" cried the hunter. "Your last shot did the business, but I had to kinder second the motion. Whar are ye?"

Tom sat up straight, shouted: "Here I am! Hurrah!" and with a very queer feeling in his head, rolled over on the moss.

When he came to himself, the first thing he saw was Solomon bending over him, chafing his hands and trying to force some kind of hot liquor down his throat. There was the tinkling of a tiny stream somewhere among the moss close by, and a big Douglas fir stretched its boughs overhead.

"Where—where are we?" he stammered, trying to rise.

"Naow don't ye go to rushin' raound," counseled Baranov. "I've lugged ye off a piece to a first-rate leetle campin' graound, an' all you've got to do is to lay still whar ye be, while Fred an' I fix things a leetle." [Pg 133]

"Is the bear"—began Tom, trying to remember, and wondering what made his head swim.

"He's right whar we left him, an' thar he'll stay I reckon, till we get ready to borrer his coat. Got some kindling, Fred?"

"Here you are!" called that genteel young man, staggering up with an armful of dry boughs. His hands were covered with pitch and his eyeglasses dangled from the cord.

"Halloo, you scarred old veteran, you!" he cried, dropping on his knees beside Tom. "Feeling better? What a clip he did give you!"

Tom, beginning to feel conscious of a score or two of bees stinging his right leg, looked down at that member, and was surprised to find his boot was removed and its place supplied by bandages.

"You won't be lame more'n a few days," said Baranov consolingly. "He only jest raked you with his claws. But the bleeding made ye faint, most likely. You're all right naow."

It was very pleasant lying there and watching the other two in their preparations for the night. A roaring fire was kindled, and although the sun was still high, the warmth of the red flames was by no means unwelcome.

Slash, slash! went Solomon's keen ax, and tree after tree came swishing down before its strokes. Some of them he trimmed with a dozen clips to each, and bade Fred carry the boughs into camp. As if by magic a framework of crotched sticks, props and rafters grew under the sheltering fir, boughs were piled on and across them, and by six o'clock there was a snug brush camp ready for occupancy, with a bed of fragrant fir boughs two feet deep. Then came the firewood—larger trees, felled and cut into six-foot lengths. [Pg 134]

When a good pile of these had been provided, and not before, Solomon drove his ax into the trunk of the fir, pulled on his coat, and sitting down on a small log which, running across the front of the camp formed a sort of seat and threshold to it, opened his bag and drew out a black coffee-pot. This being placed on the fire, he started off for the scene of the late battle.

“I ’low we’ll have a good b’ar steak to-night,” he said, as he went. “I’ll be back in a minute.”

While he is preparing supper for the two tired and hungry boys, we will return to the gentler portion of the family, and follow the *Queen* northward on its voyage.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE MUIR GLACIER.

“Away up here!”

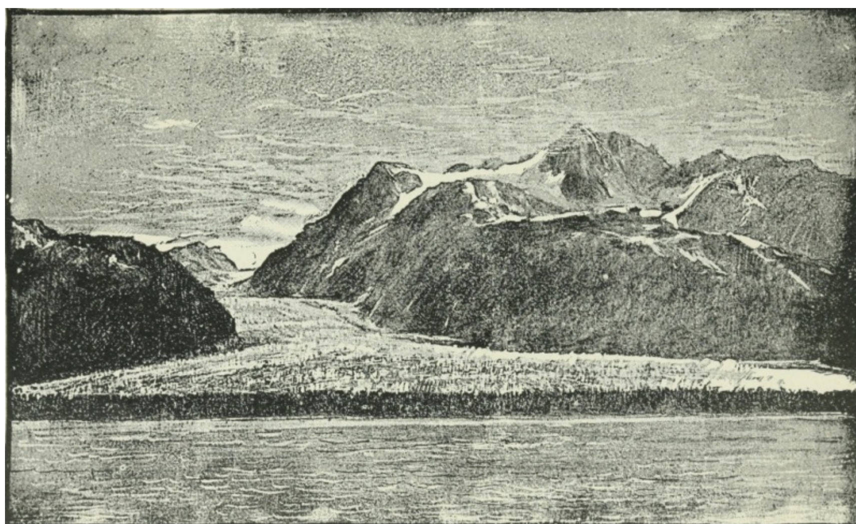
It was Bessie who was speaking her thoughts aloud, as she leaned upon the rail of the good steamer *Queen*, and looked dreamily out over the blue water toward the mountains on the mainland.

“’Way up here, in Alaska! Really in Alaska! I can’t realize it!” she went on, turning to Rossiter Selborne, who was seated by her side. “Just think, that shore over there is a part of the pink patch in the map of North America, in the very upper left-hand corner. And I’ve come all the way from Boston, across the whole continent.”

It was indeed hard to realize that they were in those strange, far-away waters. Near the ship, porpoises leaped merrily through the sunlit spray of the waves. Now and then a queer-looking canoe shot by, paddled by dark-faced natives. On shore they could see only the pathless, boundless forest that stretched away for a thousand miles—an unbroken wilderness—towards the North Pole.

It was late on the afternoon in which they sailed from Juneau. Whatever anxieties had been harbored in Mr. Percival’s own mind, he had been at some pains to conceal them from the rest of the party. “The hunters had simply tramped farther than they had expected,” he said, “and found themselves too tired, after their first night in the woods, to reach the ship at the time agreed upon. For his part, he was glad they were not hurrying.”

Although Mrs. Percival was by no means reassured by these remarks, and her husband’s indifferent manner, she did allow herself to be somewhat comforted; and the younger folk easily fell in with his method of accounting for the prolonged absence of the boys. With real pleasure, therefore, all but one settled themselves to a thorough enjoyment of the new scenes constantly opening around them.



THE DAVIDSON GLACIER.

On leaving Juneau the steamer passed around the lower end of Douglas Island, and then headed northward once more, toward what is called the “Lynn Canal.”

The sun came out, warm and bright, so that although there was a strong southerly breeze, it was calm and comfortable even on the hurricane deck.

An old Alaskan traveler had come on board at Juneau, taking passage to a cannery in which he was interested, farther north. There was also a family of Thlinket Indians, bound for the same port.

The stranger pointed out various objects of interest, as they passed, including many glaciers which sent their white tongues of ice down to the sea front, dividing the dark forest that clothed both mainland and islands as far as the eye could reach.

“That is the largest glacier hereabouts—the Davidson,” he said, “and the most interesting. It’s something like three miles wide at the foot.”

“Oh! that doesn’t seem possible,” exclaimed a passenger standing near by. “It doesn’t look over a dozen rods wide. Are you sure you are right about that, sir?”

“Do you see that dark strip lying between this end of the glacier and the open sea?”

"Where—O, yes! What is it—moss, or low bushes?"

"Those bushes are tall trees. There is a great terminal moraine two miles from front to rear, pushed out by the Davidson, and a whole forest grows upon it. Here, take this glass, and you can see for yourself."

The skeptical passenger was obliged to own himself in the wrong, and the great, silent glacier—so motionless, yet forever moving toward the ocean—seemed more mysterious and terrible even than the enormous ice-stream of the Selkirks.

The *Queen* now made her way past the Chilkoot Inlet, where, said Randolph, who had followed Tom's example in "reading up" Alaska, Schwatka started to cross the mountains and explore the head-waters of the Yukon.

Pyramid Harbor, at the head of Chilkat Inlet, was now reached, and at this point, the farthest northing of the route, or, to be exact, at latitude 59° 13´, the steamer stopped her wheels, while the obliging stranger and the Thlinkets went ashore in a small boat, which tossed perilously on the choppy waves of the Inlet. [Pg 139]

Slowly the steamer swung round, and, having picked up the boat on its return, began its southward course. The wind now swept the decks with stinging force, driving the tourists below or into sheltered corners.

Against the western sky towered the mighty peaks of Fairweather and Crillon, lifting their white summits nearly sixteen thousand feet above the sea.

Until late in the evening the Percivals talked, laughed and sang, while the never-ending day still glowed brightly, and the waves tossed their foam caps in the golden twilight.

Thump! Bump! The girls woke next morning to find the ship trembling from stem to stern. Had the *Queen* run ashore? No, they were going smoothly enough now. It must have been a dream, that that—

Thump!

That was no dream, any way, for they were wide-awake now. Out of her berth jumped Kittie, and, drawing aside the curtain from their little stateroom window, looked out. [Pg 140]

What a sight it was! The ship was moving cautiously, at half-speed, up a narrow bay—Glacier Bay, they afterwards heard it called—surrounded by bare and desolate mountains, along whose upper slopes lay dreary banks of never-melting snow, and whose splintered summits were hidden in dull gray clouds. Across the bay, at its upper end, miles away, stretched an odd-looking line of white cliffs. They could not yet make out what gave them that strange, marble-like look. The surface of the water was all dotted over with floating ice, of every size and shape imaginable. Just in front of Kittie's window (which overlooked the bridge), the Captain, in thick coat and fur cap, was pacing to and fro. Even while she looked, the ship's bow struck against a good sized iceberg. Again the steamer shuddered, and the girls knew now what it was that had waked them.

"Sta-a-arboard a little!" called Captain Carroll sharply, as another great berg loomed up, just ahead.

"Starboard, sir," repeated the quartermaster and the second officer.

"Stead-a-a-ay!" [Pg 141]

"Steady, sir!"

"Port a bit!"

And so it went on, as the *Queen* dodged now this way, now that, under the direction of the best pilot and captain on the dangerous Alaskan coast.

It did not take long, you may be sure, for the girls to finish their toilet and rush out on deck to see the fun. One by one the passengers joined them, wrapped in all sorts of heavy ulsters and coats. The air was like that of mid-winter, and the wind blew sharply.

The *Queen* steamed up as near as the captain dared, and there, about an eighth of a mile distant from the head of the bay, she waited.

Now, indeed, was discovered the true nature of that line of marble cliffs. They were of solid ice, rising to the awful height of three hundred feet above the fretted sea, and stretching across the bay in a mighty wall.

As the passengers gathered, shivering, on the forward deck, and gazed at this wonderful ice-river—the great Muir Glacier of Alaska—some one gave a sudden cry, and pointed to an ice pinnacle just abreast the ship. With a majestic movement the huge mass of glittering ice, larger than a church building, loosened itself from the cliff, and with a crash like thunder, plunged into the sea. A few moments later and the staunch ocean steamer rocked like a little boat on the waves made by the falling berg. [Pg 142]

Again and again the ice came tumbling down. Sometimes immense pieces which had broken off from the bottom of the glacier, seven hundred feet below the surface, rose slowly and unexpectedly from the depths, throwing the water high in air. These bottom fragments were not white, but as blue as indigo. From their gleaming sides the water poured in roaring cataracts.

"What are those sailors up to?" sung out Randolph suddenly, pointing to a boat's crew that was

leaving the side of the ship.

"Going to fill the refrigerator, sir," replied a steward, who caught the question as he passed.

Randolph thought he was joking; but sure enough, the men in the boat grappled a huge floating cake of ice, towed it to the gangway, and made it fast to a tackle and fall, which picked it up and swayed it over on the deck—a fine young berg of beautiful clear ice weighing something over two tons. Quickly it was stowed below, and other pieces followed. Although it was floating in salt water, the ice coming from the glacier was perfectly fresh. In this way about forty tons were taken on board and stored. [Pg 143]

After breakfast all who wished to do so went ashore in the steamer's boats, landing on a gravelly beach about a mile from the foot of the glacier. Bessie was obliged to remain on board with her mother, the rest joining the shore-going party.

Leaving the beach they walked up over slippery rocks, gravel and protruding bits of black ice, until, before they knew it, they were on the glacier itself. Its surface was roughened and stained, and every now and then they came to a wide crack or "crevasse" in the ice, with sloping, treacherous sides, its shadowy depths reaching no one knew how far below. To fall into one would have been almost certain death.

"I wonder how thick this glacier is?" asked some one, peering down into one of these terrible crevasses.

"About a thousand feet," was the answer. "The front of the glacier is over three hundred feet high, above the sea; that gives about seven hundred beneath the surface." [Pg 144]

"Do you know how long it is, from the source to the front?"

"Upwards of forty miles, I believe. And a mile wide at the mouth."

They could look up into the far-away, misty mountain valleys, and still the ice stretched beyond the utmost bound of sight.

As the party retraced their steps, the gentleman who had volunteered the information regarding height and distance, narrated the interesting story of the discovery of the glacier by Professor John Muir. He told them how the intrepid Scotchman, on reaching Cross Sound, had hired an ancient native guide and two or three Indians to paddle his canoe up Glacier Bay. As the mountain slopes surrounding the glacier were known to be bare of fuel, the voyagers filled their canoe with dry cedar and pine boughs, that they might have camp-fires to keep them alive in that almost Arctic atmosphere, and to cook their food.

When the Percivals reached the head of the moraine, they were so fortunate as to find the professor himself standing there, talking with friends. He was spending the summer, it seemed, in a rude hut not far below, and in company with some hardy young college students, pursuing new investigations in this marvelous land of ice and granite. [Pg 145]

Leaving Professor Muir, after an introduction and a pleasant word or two from the famous explorer, Randolph and the rest descended to the beach, not by the long muddy path by which they had come, but by striking downward through a deep gulley, which brought them scrambling, sliding and laughing to the sand below.

On this narrow strip of seashore, where were lying great blocks of ice stranded by the ebb tide, they walked a mile or more beneath frowning ice-cliffs, to the very foot of the glacier, and indeed under it, for there was a sort of cave formed by the huge pinnacles of clear blue ice, and into this dismal opening the young people penetrated for a few yards, when a crackling sound in the gleaming walls made them rush for the open air again in mad haste. They were just in time to escape an ugly fragment of ice, weighing at least threescore pounds, which had become detached from the ceiling.

After this experience they were glad to walk back to the ship, which was now whistling a recall to its absent children. On the way Kittie stopped to trace, with the tip of her parasol, her name on the smooth sand. She began another, but after printing a large F, rubbed it out, and with a little addition of color to her cheeks, joined the rest, who were now tiptoeing across a narrow plank to the boat. [Pg 146]

Steam was up, and the *Queen* began at once to work southward.

For fifteen miles she wriggled her way out of the icebergs as cautiously as she had wriggled in. Then the broad Pacific came in view, and as the bell in the engine room rang, "Ahead, full speed!" and the ship emerged from the narrow channels and gloomy, landlocked inlets of the North, the great billows softly rocked in their arms the *Queen* and its passengers, while they sang merrily,

> "Out on an ocean all boundless we ride,
> We're homeward bound, homeward bound!"

"What shall we see next?" was the question on every tongue that night; and "Sitka! Sitka!" was the answer.

It was a comfort to get out into the open ocean again. They had sailed so long through narrow passages and between dark, lofty sweeps of mountains, frowning with cliffs of bare rock, or shadowy with silent ranks of pine and fir, that, like the Delectable Mountains in "Pilgrim's Progress," the hills seemed about to fall on them and bury the good *Queen* out of sight under avalanches and icebergs. [Pg 147]

All that night the waves of the Pacific rocked them gently, as the ship made its steady way southward. What a volume it would make, if we could have the dreams of this party of a hundred souls on board the *Queen* for that one night printed—and illustrated!

At six o’clock next morning Randolph went on deck. The steamer was motionless, anchored about half a mile from shore. She was in a bay, which was thickly sprinkled with pretty, wooded islands, as far out as the eye could reach. Fourteen miles away westward, rose the peak of Mount Edgecumbe, its slopes reddened with ancient streams of lava. It was of that exact cone-shape, with its top cut squarely off or “truncated,” that marks a volcanic formation; and indeed, [Pg 148] Edgecumbe was smoking away furiously only a generation or two ago.

The shore line was rugged, like all the southern Alaskan coast, with a narrow strip of level land running along the margin of the sea. Following this line the eye presently rested upon a collection of houses—quite a town, it seemed, just ahead. One large, square building was a hundred feet or more above the rest. A sharply-pointed church steeple rose from among the lower roofs of the other buildings. Then Randolph knew it was Sitka, the capital of Alaska.

He had hardly recognized the place when he heard his name called from the water.

Rushing to the side of the vessel, he spied a boat coming swiftly toward the *Queen*, rowed with a sharp man-of-war stroke by four sailors in neat suits of blue.

In the stern sheets sat—could it be?—yes, Mr. Percival, Tom and Fred, all three waving their caps and shouting wildly.

In another moment the boat was alongside, the gangway steps were let down, and Fred sprang on board. Mr. Percival came more slowly, assisting Tom, who was observed to limp. The sailors [Pg 149] passed up several pieces of baggage, the officer in charge touched his cap, and away went the boat toward Sitka. As she receded, Randolph could read on the stern the single word in gilt letters, *Pinta*.

What wild handshakings and congratulations and volleys of questions followed on the deck of the *Queen*, you can well guess.

But we must let Tom explain for himself his adventures, his return to civilization, and his unexpected appearance in Sitka harbor that morning.

[Pg 150]

CHAPTER XI.

FAIR SITKA.

“It was pretty dark and lonesome up there, I can tell you,” said Tom, having described his long tramp and the death of the bear. “The wind rose at about nine o’clock, and cut like knives. Solomon had built the camp so as to face away from the wind, and after supper Fred and I were glad to curl up in our blankets on the fir boughs. Solomon threw half a dozen of his big logs on the fire, and then sat down on our front doorstep to have a smoke.

“I wish you could have heard some of his stories, Randolph! Some years ago, before there was any Canadian Pacific, or even a Northern Pacific railroad, he guided a party across the Chilkoot Pass and down the Yukon. They were on a hunt for a ‘mountain of cinnabar,’ a ‘Red Mountain,’ [Pg 151] which an Indian had told about, somewhere in the interior. There were women in the party, and how they ever got through the woods, I don’t see.

“Well, they struck off from the Yukon, after having a brush with the Indians, followed a native map, had to winter in the woods, almost starved to death, and at last found the ‘Red Mountain’ was Mount Wrangell—a volcano, you know, twenty thousand feet high.”

“Did they find their cinnabar?” asked Randolph.

“Only a small quantity. But there was enough outcrop of copper and gold to pay them for the trip. They rafted down the Copper River, after leaving Solomon to locate, and a year or two later sold out at a big profit to some San Francisco capitalists. So far as Solomon knows, the mines have never been worked yet, they are so far inland.”

“Now tell us about your getting home,” broke in Kittie. “We’re more interested in that than in your ‘Red Mountain.’ Did you sleep any, poor boys?” [Pg 152]

“Not very much,” laughed Fred. “The mosquitoes settled down to business pretty soon after midnight, and made things lively. Baranov had some pieces of netting, and we put them over our heads, but they didn’t seem to do much good.”

“They say the Alaskan mosquitoes are so intelligent,” remarked Rossiter, “that two of them will hold the wings of a third close to his body, and push him through the meshes of a net. That accounts for their neighborliness in your camp. Go on with the story.”

“My leg hurt so that I couldn’t sleep much,” said Tom, taking up the narrative again. “Whenever I did dose for a few minutes, I would wake up with a start and see Solomon putting on another log. I don’t believe he slept a wink all night.

“Toward morning Fred and I both got a good nap of nearly an hour. When I opened my eyes, I

looked for Solomon, but he wasn't in sight"—

"Then of course he must wake me," interrupted Fred, "and I had to get up and put wood on the fire, lest that His Royal Highness should feel cold. I had just got a good blaze going when Baranov hove in sight, with a big bear steak in one hand and a string of trout in the other.

"'Where in the world did you get those fish?' Tom sung out. [Pg 153]

"'Oh! back here a piece, in a leetle pool I knew about,' says Solomon. 'I 'lowed we'll have a dish o' fried traouts fer breakfast, ef the brook hedn't dried up.'"

There was a shout at Fred's imitation of Baranov's tone.

"The trout were delicious," said Tom, when he could make himself heard; "and the flavor of the bear meat was all right, but 'twas tough as leather. After breakfast Solomon skinned the bear in good shape"—

"Where is the skin now?" put in Bess. "I didn't see it in your bundles."

"It's at Juneau," said Mr. Percival. "Solomon said he'd have it nicely dressed, and as soon as it was cured and prepared for mounting, he would ship it to our Boston address. Tom wanted it for a rug with the head on, and Fred generously yielded all claim to it."

Kittie smiled such warm approval at his generosity that the young student blushed, and gave Tom a dig to go ahead with his account of their adventures.

"I was so stiff and lame that I could just hobble when we first started, right away after dinner. I knew father and all of you would be worried, but it couldn't be helped. We managed to get down about three quarters of the way, before it was time to stop for the night. Of course it was ever so much easier going down than up, but it hurt some, you can believe! Solomon helped me over the bad places, and Fred took a double load. [Pg 154]

"We camped right beside the brook we had followed up the day before, and started on again before sunrise next morning. Just as we reached the clearing above Juneau, we met a dozen men, with father at their head, starting up the mountain after us."

"What I want to know," broke in Randolph, "is how you ever got to Sitka as soon as we did?"

"Why, father made inquiries for a doctor, and was told the best one in Juneau was the surgeon of the *Pinta*. She's a Government steamer, you know, stationed on this coast to look after our sealing and fishery interests and the like. Dr. Parks was awfully kind, and a splendid doctor, I guess, by the way he treated my bear scratch. He put some kind of a liniment on, then bound it all up in good shape, and wouldn't take a fee, either—not a cent. When he heard our story, he told father the *Pinta* was going to run over to Sitka that very day, starting before noon. If we liked, he believed the captain would take us on board, and we could meet you there instead of waiting for you at Juneau, and leaving you to worry all that extra time. [Pg 155]

"We said good-by to Baranov—I don't know how much father insisted on paying him—went on board the little *Pinta*, arrived safe and sound at Sitka, and here we are!"

As soon as Tom had finished his story, he was showered with questions, and it was an hour longer before the party, having taken breakfast, assembled on deck to witness the approach to the wharf. Another boat from the south, much smaller and dirtier, headed for her moorings at the same time.

The *Queen*, like a true King's Daughter, permitted the other to pass her and make fast to the wharf. In stately wise, Her Majesty then moved quietly up beside her companion, and the Percivals landed over the latter's decks.

I will not try to describe Sitka for you; in the first place, because other people have written and printed a great deal about it, which you can find for yourselves in the books on Alaska on the third shelf of the fourth alcove of your Public Library; and secondly, because Rossiter Selborne gave his mother so concise an account of his impressions of the place, that I shall put a part of his letter into this chapter, as I did at Banff. [Pg 156]

After describing the buildings about the wharf, he told how he and one or two others walked directly up the main street to the famous church of Sitka; continuing as follows:

"The little church, long ago built by the Russians (from whom, you know, the United States bought Alaska for about seven million dollars in 1867), was a quaint building, with a solemn guardian, who demanded a small fee before he permitted us to enter. There was an altar arranged after the requirements and ceremonies of the Eastern Catholic church; some fine priestly robes, and a really beautiful painting of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Services are still held in the church every Sunday.

THE GREEK CHURCH AT SITKA.

“Coming out of the church we walked along the narrow streets, looking at the houses built of squared logs by the Russians many years ago. The building on the hill was of logs like the rest, and proved to be the castle of stern old Governor Baranov. I found pieces of bear’s fur still sticking to the walls, where the great hides had once been nailed up, to keep out the bitter cold of winter.

“Such funny times we had buying trinkets of the Indians, squatting in a long row on the broad sidewalk! All the English the Indian squaws seemed to know was, ‘One tollar!’ ‘Two tollar!’

“I must not forget to tell you about the Mission School. You walk to it along the curving, sandy beach, near which the school buildings stand, about half a mile from the wharf. Such fine, intelligent faces the boys and girls have, compared with the natives outside! It is beautiful to see the human, the divine, driving the animal look out of the dark faces, the eyes kindling with light, the whole, God-given soul waking up before your very eyes. The old fairy story of the fair princess, Sleeping Beauty, brought to life by the kiss of a prince, is pretty; but it will hardly move one, after seeing the wonderful awakening of a poor, Sitkan woman-child, at the touch of loving hands—at the sound of her Father’s voice, speaking through the noble men and women who are doing his work in these desolate Northern lands.

“A little paper, the ‘Northern Star,’ is printed at the school, and gives all the latest items of news concerning it. It costs fifty cents a year, and the gentle lady who conducted us through the buildings was so pleased when two or three of us subscribed. Of course the paper comes irregularly in the winter, when the sea-passages are dangerous with fogs and icebergs; but you are sure to get all your numbers sooner or later.

“I wish you could have seen Mr. Percival sitting in the Mission Parlor, holding a dot of a Thlinket child on each knee! One of them was named Marion, and the other had a long, funny Indian name that I forgot the beginning of, before she’d got to the end of it.

“The scholars had a prayer meeting at the close of day, and sang our dear, familiar hymns with strange words to them. Here is one verse of ‘I am so glad that Jesus loves me,’ in the Thlinket tongue:

“‘Hä ish dickeewoo ŭhtoowoo yŭkeh
Hä een ukkonniknooch dookoosăhŭnne,
Thlēkoodze ut dookookwoo kädā häteen:
Uh yŭkeh klŭh hutsehunne Jesus.

Cho. Uhtoowoo yŭkeh Jesus hŭtsehŭ,
Jesus hutsehun, Jesus hutsehun;
Uhtoowoo yŭkeh Jesus hutsehun;
Jesus kluh hutsehun.’

“It seems as if Our Father must smile tenderly when he hears such uncouth sounds. Yet he understands them all, and answers each shyly murmured Sitka prayer, just as he does the ‘Now I lay me,’ lisped by New England baby lips.

“The long, beautiful Northern day drew to a close. We left the bustling town, and walking past the Mission School, kept on around the shore of the bay. Now the path wound in and out of the forest; now it emerged upon the beach, where the ripples softly patted the sand and laughed and played together. Before long we reached the banks of Indian River, and crossed it by a rustic foot-bridge. The air was fragrant with odors of balsam fir and all the cool, delicious scents of the forest. We turned back toward the ship. Although it was near the hour of ten, the western sky was all golden with sunset. Against it rose the delicate spire of the Russian church, and the sturdy bulk of the castle. Out across the bay the gulls and ravens wavered their slow way among the islands.”

CHAPTER XII.

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THE “CHICHAGOFF DECADE.”

“We have two whole days before us,” said Kittie the next morning, as she promenaded up and down the deck with Fred, “and the steamer is going right over the same path we took in coming. Can’t we get up something new so as to have some fun?”

“We might have charades, or tableaux,” suggested Fred. “But we should have to stay below, getting ready for them.”

“And we’ve had ’em all before,” interpolated Tom, who was stretched out at his ease in a steamer chair.

“It’s going to be pretty foggy, I’m afraid,” said Randolph, joining the group. “They say that will delay us, for we shall have to run half-speed, or stop altogether. Do you see how thick it begins to look ahead?”

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They had left Sitka in the early morning, and had only Juneau to touch at—probably in the night—before reaching the coaling station of Nanaimo, on Vancouver’s Island.

“Why don’t you get up a paper?” suggested Mr. Percival. “That’s what Arctic explorers do, I believe, when they are frozen in for the winter.”

“Good, good!” cried Pet. “And everybody in our party must contribute—except me!”

There was a laugh at this, and Kittie, seizing her friend around the waist, gave her a little impromptu waltz which set her hair flying and eyes dancing more merrily than ever.

“What shall we call it?” was the next question.

“‘The Alaskan Herald.’”

“‘The Northern Light.’”

“‘The Illustrated Totem Pole’”—this from the wounded warrior in the chair.

All these names being rejected, they decided to leave the choice of names to the editor, to which position Mr. Selborne was unanimously chosen.

“All contributions,” he announced, “must be in my hands at five o’clock this afternoon. The paper will then be put to press, and will be read aloud at precisely eight o’clock, on deck, in front of Stateroom 2 (Mr. Percival’s), if the weather permits; if not, in a corner of the lower cabin, after the supper table has been cleared.”

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All that day the literary circle thus suddenly formed were hard at work at their manuscripts; and many were the gales of laughter in which the girls indulged, as they compared notes from time to time. The editor, it should be said, had laid down the rule that any contribution might be in verse or prose, but if the latter, it should not contain over twelve hundred words.

One by one in the course of the afternoon, the manuscripts, signed by fictitious names, were dropped into a box provided by the editor, who was busy, meanwhile, not only with his own contribution, but in arranging an artistic heading for the sheet which was to form the first page of the paper. He had also furnished all the aspiring authors and authoresses with sermon paper of uniform size, so that the whole collection might afterward be bound together, if desired.

Evening came at last, and to the gratification of all concerned, the fog lifted, so that there was a bright sunset, which would render out-of-doors reading easy until after ten o’clock. The party accordingly met at the appointed spot on deck, having kept their plan a profound secret among themselves, so as not to have strangers present at the reading.

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Mrs. Percival sat just within the door of her stateroom, while the rest grouped themselves outside in various comfortable attitudes. The editor, with a formidable-looking flat package in his hand, took his position on the seat by the rail, where the light was favorable for reading.

“I will first,” he said, “pass round the title page of this unique periodical, merely premising that its simple and musical title was suggested in part by the name of the island, the wood-clad shores of which we were passing when the idea of the paper was first promulgated.”

The title sheet was accordingly inspected and praised, with shouts of laughter, by the circle of authors. Fortunately it has been preserved, and can be given here in fac-simile, just as it came from the hand of Rossiter and of his sister, who, he admitted, had helped him by drawing the lifelike designs with which it was embellished.

The title chosen, as you see, was the “Tri-Weekly Chichagoff Decade.”

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“Why ‘Tri-Weekly’?” asked Pet and Mr. Percival together.

“Because,” replied Mr. Selborne, in his gravest tones, “it has greatly interested your editor to see you all *try weakly* to produce”—

The rest of the sentence was drowned in a chorus of outcries and laughter.

“But,” persisted Mr. Percival, “do you expect to sail these waters again, in just ten years from now? Else, why is it the ‘Decade’?”

“Oh! that, sir, merely indicates that it is a *deck aid* to cheerfulness.”

Here Tom collapsed and fell over upon Randolph, murmuring that it was enough to give a *weakly-chick-a-cough* to hear such puns. But such ill-timed levity was promptly suppressed.

Mr. Selborne now squared his shoulders, and opened the reading with a short editorial, which he called his

SALUTATORY.

[Pg 165] It is seldom that an editor finds himself in the position of one who greets his friends with one hand and bids them farewell with the other; who combines, as it were, his welcoming and his parting bow; who enters the room and backs out of it simultaneously; who, in short, is obliged to write at one and the same moment, his Salutatory and Valedictory.

Such is the novel and mildly exciting task of the present incumbent of the editorial chair of the "Decade." We greet most heartily the host of subscribers who are sure to flock to its standard; and we beg to assure them of the integrity of its aims, and the sound financial basis of this enterprise. We pledge ourselves to endeavor, at any cost, to maintain the high standard we have set up, and so long as the "Decade" is published, to suffer no unworthy line to disgrace its fair pages.

At the same time we feel obliged to give notice that this is the last issue of the paper. Circumstances over which we have no control compel the proprietors to suspend its publication. The editor, in resigning his position, wishes to express his deep sense of the obligation under which his readers have placed him, in the universal and constant support they have given him and his assistants, from the very inception of the enterprise, and the kindly criticism with which [Pg 166] he has always been favored.

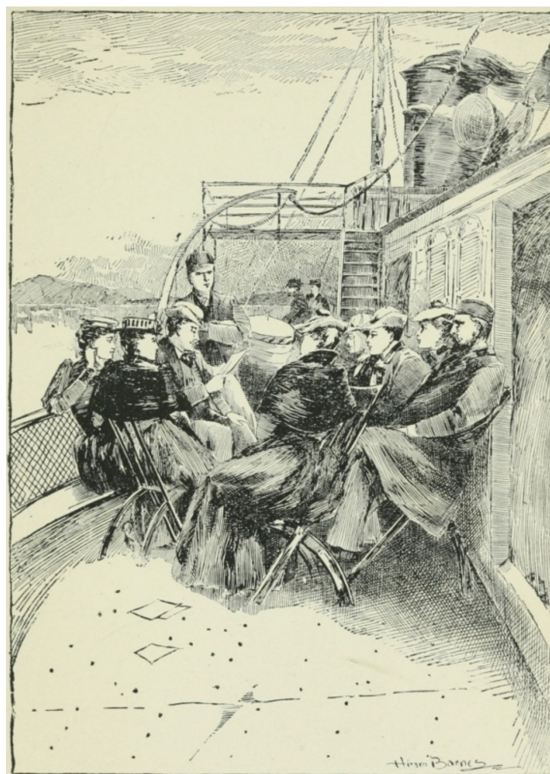
The editorial was received with a round of subdued applause, which subsided the more quickly that the little circle around the reader saw curious eyes cast in their direction, and an evident inclination on the part of other passengers to share in the fun, which was, however, of too personal a nature to admit a general public.

"The opening piece," remarked Mr. Selborne, "is contributed by a noted historian, who of late seems to have given his most serious attention to verse. I am glad to have the opportunity of laying before you this exquisite production, which gives an accurate review of our travels thus far, and, as the dullest reader must admit" ("Don't look at me!" put in Tom), "blends instruction with poetry with the most delightful result. The poem is entitled—with no reference, I believe, to the farming interests of the Territories—

WESTWARD, HO!

AN HISTORICO-POETICAL REVIEW.

BY HERODOTUS KEATS MACAULAY, A. E.



READING THE "CHICHAGOFF DECADE."

[Pg 167] "What does 'A. E.' stand for?" asked Mrs. Percival.

"'Animated Excursionist,' I presume, ma'am."

"Alaskan Editor," "Expatriated Amateur," and various other suggestions were kindly offered by

the boys, but were frowned down by the older members, who now called for the poem itself.

"One bright summer morning in early July
Our party assembled in Boston, to try
Of travels abroad an entirely new version
Afforded by Raymond & Whitcomb's Excursion."

"Hold on!" shouted Tom, who was privileged by his lameness. "That's an ad. Herodotus Keats wants a free ticket next year. Who is he, I wonder?"

"Thomas," remarked Fred, eying him severely through his glasses, "don't display your ignorance of the great authors, nor interrupt with ribald comments. Go on, please, Mr. Selborne."

"I know now, any way," muttered the Irrepressible. The editor paid no further attention to him, but resumed the reading:

"The train was on hand in a place you all know well,
The Causeway Street depot marked "Boston & Lowell";
It started, and cheers rose above lamentation
As, waving our hands, we rolled out of the station.
The daisies were white in the fields around Boston,
Like meadows in autumn with garments of frost on;
And fair were the skies over Merrimac's stream,
As onward, still onward, with rattle and scream,
We flew o'er the rails ever faster and faster,
With never a thought of impending disaster."

"But there wasn't any disaster—unless the historian foresaw, in his prophetic soul, a certain bear"—

"Oh! let up, Ran. That's poetical license. Macaulay couldn't find anything else to rhyme with 'faster.'"

"Arriving at Weirs, on Lake Winnepesaukee,
Our iron steed stopped, and became sort of balky,
Backed, snorted and started again with such speed
That some of us nearly 'got left' then, indeed!
At the Pemigewasset we halted to dine,
Then northward we sped to the Canada line,
Where Thomas was homesick until pretty soon he
Began to sing sadly of dear 'Annie Rooney.'
In Montreal all the attractions were seen;
We dizzily whirled down the falls of Lachine
Till we hardly knew whether 'twas Memphremagog or
The turbulent rapids of far Caugnawauga."

"Oh!" groaned Tom.

"And now came the splendid Canadian Pacific—
Through scenes now sublime, now tame, now terrific,
Past forests of fir, and along the wild shore
And storm-beaten crags of Lake Sup-e-ri-or.

There was such an outcry at this that the captain, who was facing the bridge, looked back to see what was the matter.

"All right, Captain," sung out Randolph. "No iceberg in sight—only a queer kind of ore."

"I'm glad it isn't mine," remarked Tom.

"The Winnepeg grasshoppers followed Miss Bess
Entangling themselves in each silken tress,
Nor struggled for freedom, for when they were caught
They thought them but meshes the sunbeams had wrought.

"We halted at Banff, where the Bow and the Spray
Come leaping from cradles of snow far away;
And joining white hands, the bridegroom and bride
Glide silently down toward the sea side by side.

"Again we have entered our palace on wheels,
And cry out anew, 'How homelike it feels!'
The 'Nepigon' broad and the stately 'Toronto'
We can never forget, not e'en if we want to;
Nor 'Calgary' sturdy, and fair 'Missanabie';
But nearest our hearts, there can no better car be
Throughout the whole world, whatever befall,
Than faithful old 'Kamloops,' the dearest of all.

"At Glacier we saw the great river of ice,
And a bear almost ate up a boy in a trice;
While one of the girls gave her poor little ankle
A twist and a wrench, whose twinges still rankle!
At last we arrive at our long journey's end;
The continent crossed, at Vancouver we send
One glance of regret and a farewell combined
O'er the car we are leaving forever behind.

"At our next stopping place we had to try hard

To pronounce the name of our hotel ‘Dri-árd’;
Victoria’s awfully English, you know,
And nothing that’s ‘Yankee’ was found high or low,
Except our excursionists, everywhere seen
Until they embarked, northward bound, on the *Queen*.
We sailed and we sailed, through channels and reaches,
Past wild, rocky shores and verdure-clad beeches,
Until we emerged from the tortuous tangle
And moored at the dreary old wharf of Fort Wrangell,
Where many a totem pole reared its proud head,
Once gorgeous in trappings of sable and red.

“At Juneau we halted—ah! how can I tell
Of all the adventures that shortly befell
Two hunters, who started out boldly to kill
Any sort of a beast that roamed on the hill.
Their perils and hardships, when distant from Juneau
And lost in the woods, I am sure that you do know
Enough that on meeting the enemy there,
Venerunt, viderunt, vicerunt—a bear!

“Since then our startling events have been fewer;
We’ve mounted the glacier that’s named after Muir,
And trembled to see its blue pinnacles fall
In fragments before us, like Jericho’s wall.
We saw all we could in the fair town of Sitka,
But could not go far for want of a fit car,
And now we’re sailing o’er Frederick’s Sound,
On board the good *Queen* safe and well,
Homeward bound!”

The applause which followed this effusion was tremendous. It was suggested that the last half of the journey had been rather slighted; but Mr. Selborne explained that he had it direct from the author that this disproportionate treatment was caused by lack of time in which to fill out the poem as originally sketched.

“The next piece,” he continued, “was in the nature of an epic. It was certainly personal in its bearings; but so was every epic, and too much delicacy in an editor always results in an insipid periodical.”

The curiosity of his auditors having been thus aroused, he gravely read:

THE BEAR-HUNTER’S FATE.

BY AN OLD SUBSCRIBER.

Tom, Tom, the valiant one,
Shot a bear and away he run;
The bear was fleet,
Poor Tom was beat,
And Bruin stepped upon his feet.

“Is that what Kittie manes by my ‘fate’?” shouted Tom, laughing good-naturedly with the rest. “Sure I knew something was brewin’ when I saw her writing!”

“The contribution I have now to read,” said the editor, as soon as silence was restored, “is accompanied with an apology from the author, stating that for lack of original material he has drawn largely upon such printed sources as were at his command, in giving you a brief account of

MYSTERIOUS ALASKA.

BY DARWIN FITZ-AGASSIZ THOMPSON.

The interior of Alaska is at present one of the few remaining habitable spots on the surface of the globe, which remain practically unexplored by the white man.

A few years ago Central Africa held this distinction, but Speke, Grant, Du Chaillu, Livingstone, Stanley, and dozens of others have now penetrated those somber jungles, the land of mystery, the fabled abode of hideous monsters, giants and dwarfs, and soon a transcontinental railroad will connect Zanzibar with Stanley Pool and the mouth of the Congo.

Within half a dozen years, Alaska has been similarly assailed, and at this very moment there are bands of intrepid men camping here and there in that lonely interior, and calling upon the hitherto impenetrable forests and desolate tundras to deliver up the secrets they have held for untold ages.

Doubtless many wonderful discoveries await these explorers and their successors. New plants will be found, mountains of precious ore, a vast wealth of timber and water-power, and, it may be, strange creatures hitherto unknown to science.

It is believed by many that the mastodon, whose skeleton rears itself high above the elephant’s, in our museums, is not entirely extinct, but actually roams the tangled thickets of inner Alaska. It is stated that Professor John Muir himself lends countenance to this belief, asserting that he has seen the bones of these mighty animals, with the fresh flesh adhering to them. Certain it is that

the great, curved tusks of the mammoth (as it is sometimes called) are found all over the southwestern slope of Africa, and that natives report encounters with huge living animals with similar tusks.

An animal which is unnamed, save by the coast hunters hereabouts, is the “Mt. St. Elias bear,” such as was shot by members of our party last week.

The head is very broad, and the fur a silvery gray. The skin is highly prized, not only for its rarity, but for its beauty, and Indians have been known to refuse a hundred dollars for one. They sometimes hang up such a skin in front of the “big house” of their village, as a talisman to aid them in future hunting, such is its magic power.

Within a few years the American bison, once so familiar in all stories of Western adventure, has become almost wholly extinct. A few individuals are said to lurk in the meadows and high tablelands of Alaska; but soon they must rank with the mastodon.

I have had time to but touch upon the mysteries of our great Northwestern Territories. Little by little its marvels, its wealth, its beauties will unfold to modern research, and the schoolboy of a generation hence will look back with incredulous wonder upon the maps, the charts and the scientific works upon Alaska that alone are available to-day.

“I know who wrote that,” said Randolph, looking meaningly at the editor.

The latter, however, took no notice of the implication, and, turning over the next sheet in the pile, read aloud the following poem, which was unsigned:

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Only a bird on a bough of fir—
Look, can you see his feathers stir,
And hear his wee notes, soft and low,
Echoes of songs of long ago?

I am not bearing my cross, you see,
For the cross itself is bearing me.
When birds are frightened, or suffer loss,
Alone in the darkness, they fly to a cross,
And never are heard to moan, “I must,”
But always twitter, “I trust! I trust!”
For not a fluttering sparrow can fall
But into His hand, who loveth all.

Lord, hear thy children while they pray,
Make us thy sparrows this Christmas Day.

“Bessie wrote that,” whispered Pet, glancing at the little Captain, who did not deny the authorship, but smiled a little as she nestled closer to her father’s side.

“While I am reading verse,” remarked Mr. Selborne, “I may as well read, though a little out of course, another short poem about sparrows.

SPARROWS.

From the orchard, sweet with blossoms,
From the waving meadow-grasses,
From the heated, dusty pavement
Where a tired city passes,

Rise the happy sparrow-voices,
Chirps and trills, and songs of gladness—
Bits of sunshine, changed to music,
Brightening, scattering clouds of sadness.

At the first fair flush of dawning,
At the twilight’s last faint shining,
Sparrows sing, through storm and darkness,
Never doubting nor repining.

Fluttering to and fro, wherever
Faith is fainting, life is dreary,
Bear they each his little message
To the hopeless and the weary:

“Sparrows trust their Heavenly Father;
Centuries ago he told us
We should never fall unheeded;
In his love He would enfold us.

“So we cast our care upon Him,
Never fearing for to-morrow;
And we’re sent by Him to help you,
When your sky is dark with sorrow.”

“I think the assistant editor knows who wrote that,” said Mr. Percival, glancing toward Adelaide with a smile. “Mr. Selborne, it is getting rather late. How many more articles have you in the——?”

“Three, sir; and one of them is very short, being a four-line poem or quatrain. Shall I read it now?” [Pg 177]

“If you please.”

“This poem is printed so neatly that the writer has evidently spent as much time upon it as the producers of some of the longer pieces,” the editor remarked, holding the sheet for all to see.

EXCELSIOR.

BY A. M. ATEUR.

’Tis said that in life the most exquisite rapture
Lies not in possession, but striving to capture.
Be sure that the proudest success is in vain
That helps not a loftier conquest to gain.

“Very well, Tom,” said Fred Seacomb approvingly. “The sentiment does you credit, my son. I recognize the authorship, however, by the style of print rather than the high moral tone of the poem.”

Tom laughed with the rest, and to cover his retreat called for the next piece, which he knew must be by Pet, as every one else but Mr. Percival was accounted for; and his was pretty sure to be a story.

Mr. Selborne’s voice became very gentle as he read the story of

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THE THREE WISHES.

“O, dear! I wish I were a tall palm-tree on the borders of a desert, where caravans and missionaries and pilgrims would rest in my shade. Then I should really be of some use in the world.” That is what the Pine said.

“O, dear! I wish I lived away up on a mountain-top, where the wind always blows cold and clear, and the snows lie deep in winter. People would come from far countries to visit the mountain, and I would be a guide by the way. Then I should really be of some use in the world.” That is what the Palm said.

“O, dear! I wish I were a palm-tree down in the valley, where birds might build their nests in my boughs, and artists would make beautiful pictures of me. Then I should really be of some use in the world.” That is what the little stunted Fir said, on the mountain-top.

Days and weeks came and went. The Pine waited impatiently, and rustled all its branches in the autumn winds, and let fall its brown needles, until a thick carpet of them lay about its trunk on the mossy ground. And out from the moss peeped a few rough green leaves. The Pine noticed [Pg 179] that they were shivering in the November wind, and pityingly dropped a few more needles around them.

When the storms of winter came, it stretched its broad, evergreen boughs above the leaves, and sheltered them with its shaggy trunk.

The long, cold months passed at last, and it was spring. Still the Pine grieved and sighed because it could be of no use in the world.

To be sure it had protected the timid, furry leaves so well that they had lived, and now bore in their midst a cluster of small pink blossoms.

Just before sunset a man with coarse, roughened features and a bad look in his face, came and threw himself down on the ground beneath the Pine. His fists were clenched, for he was very angry about something, and, although the Pine never knew it, he was being tempted to a terrible crime.

As the man lay there thinking evil thoughts, and almost making up his mind to the wicked deed, he caught a breath of fragrance which made him for a moment forget his anger.

[Pg 180] It reminded him of home, of his boyhood, of a wee sister with blue eyes and waving golden hair, with whom he used to wander into the pine-woods near the old farmhouse and gather flowers.

He looked about him, and his eye fell upon the pink flowers.

“Mayflowers!” he murmured half-aloud. And stretching out his hand he gathered them and held their pure, sweet faces up to his own.

The fierce look left his eyes, and a strange moisture came instead. His lips quivered. He was thinking now of his mother. She had left her children for a far country while they were still tiny creatures. But he could remember her face as she lay in the darkened room, resting so peacefully.

And some one—was it the little blue-eyed sister?—had placed a bunch of Mayflowers—

The man rose, and placing a small green spray of pine with the blossoms, carried them away in his big rough hand.

And the wicked deed was never done.

The Palm sheltered many weary travelers; but the greatest good it did was after it died.

One day a stranger arrived and cut the tall tree down. From its broad leaves a hundred fans were made, and many were the fevered, throbbing brows that were cooled by the Palm as its leaves, now hundreds of leagues apart, waved to and fro above the sufferers. So the Palm, although it never knew it, was permitted to do the work of the Master, refreshing and healing those who were sick with all manner of diseases. [Pg 181]

As to the Fir, it tried to keep a brave heart, but it became more and more discouraged as not only months but years rolled by, and it grew no bigger, and could not see that it was of any use in the world.

"So homely am I, too!" it whispered to itself, glancing down at its little thick, gnarled trunk and crooked boughs.

Its only comfort was in giving a shelter to such small birds, and even insects, as were blown about on these heights by the fierce mountain tempests. Once it had a whole night of real joy, when a white rabbit, caught by the storm miles away from home, crouched under its boughs and lay there snugly, a warm, sleepy ball of white fur, till the sun called it home in the morning.

"*O, Schwesterchen, seh 'auf! 'S ist ein Tannenbaum!*"

Of course all firs understand German, and our little friend knew the child said, "O, little sister, look here! It's a fir-tree!" [Pg 182]

The next word it heard filled it with delight. It was the girl who spoke this time, hardly above her breath, "*Weihnachtsbaum!*" which was only a queer way of saying, "Christmas-tree!"

They were, in fact, the children of a German peasant, who lived in a small hut far down the mountain-side.

The Fir did not know it, but in reality the peasant had been unfortunate of late, and had grown so cross and surly that he declared he would have no Christmas in his house that year. And Hans and Gretchen had wandered away mournfully on the mountain-side to talk it over.

The Fir was so glad they talked German! If it had been French, now, I don't believe it could have understood them at all.

"It is such a little one!" said Hans.

"And it has such lovely crosses at the end of its boughs!" said Gretchen.

(The Fir never knew before that it had crosses. But there they were, sure enough.)

"Let's cut it down and try," said both together.

So Hans swung his small ax sturdily, and down came the tree. That is, it was too short to fall. It just tipped over on its side a little. [Pg 183]

Well, to make the story short, the Fir was carried down and decked out in such simple ways as they could provide without spending any money.

When the peasant saw it for the first time on Christmas Eve—they had kept it for a surprise—he clapped his hands with delight, in spite of all his surliness. And that night, for the first time for many weeks, he brought out the old leather-covered Bible and read a chapter before bed-time.

And what chapter was it?

Why, the story of the first Christmas Eve, when Christ was born in Bethlehem.

As there was now but one article left, all knew that it must be Mr. Percival's.

They therefore composed themselves to listen with much interest to the story entitled

GETTING SQUARE WITH HIM.

BY THE OLDEST INHABITANT.

"Let that girl alone!"

The speaker was a tall, slightly-built boy of perhaps sixteen. His eyes flashed, and his fists clenched nervously. [Pg 184]

"Let that girl alone, I say, or"—

"Well, or what?" sneered a coarse-looking fellow, some two or three years older than the first. "You needn't think you own this town, Winthrop Ayre, if you did come from Boston!" And he once more advanced toward a neatly-dressed girl, who was timidly cowering in a corner by a stone wall and a high fence, to avoid the touch of her rough tormentor. The latter was supported by two more of his kind, and all three were evidently trying to frighten her by their fierce looks and rude words.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mort Lapham!" exclaimed Winthrop indignantly, placing himself directly in front of the frightened girl. "Deacon Lapham's son might be in better business than insulting girls in the street."

"So you want to put your finger in the pie, do you? Here, fellows, let's give him a lesson!"

Winthrop noticed that the attention of all three was now upon him alone, and motioned to the girl to run. She moved slowly a few steps down the street, and then stopped. Meanwhile the big bully raised his hand and tried to slap the city boy in the face. Winthrop warded off the blow easily, and retreated into the corner where the girl had been. “You’d better keep away, Mort,” he said quietly, though his cheeks were hot; “and you, too, Dick and Phil. I don’t want to fight, and now you’ve let the girl go, there’s nothing to fight about, that I know of.” [Pg 185]

“Coward!” cried Mort, enraged at missing his blow. “Don’t you wish you had your Sunday-school teacher here to take care of you! She wouldn’t let any one hurt you, would she, Sonny?”

The color in Winthrop’s face deepened, but he said nothing. He was rapidly turning over the question in his mind, whether Miss Kingsbury would want him to turn his cheek if three boys struck him at once.

A tingling blow on that exact spot put to flight his meditations. His fist drew back impulsively, but he would not strike yet. He was in splendid training, this boy, and still stood entirely on the defense, knowing that the true hero is not he who fights for himself, like a brute creature, but for somebody else.

“Coward!” hissed Mort Lapham once more, cautiously keeping out of reach of the other’s arm. “Hit him again, Phil!” [Pg 186]

As the three closed about him, a determined look in their ugly faces, the girl who had lingered irresolutely at a few paces distance, gave a low cry for help, and rushed up to the group as if to protect her protector.

“Take that!” shouted Mort, throwing out his hand and striking her, perhaps harder than he really meant to, full in the face.

Before he had time to see the effect of his blow, there was a crash between his eyes, and the earth seemed suddenly flying up into the sky. As he lay on the ground half-stunned, Winthrop, who felt that it was at last time to act, turned fiercely on his other opponents. Surprised by the suddenness of his attack, they forgot the superiority of their numbers, and started backwards. Another nervous blow from the slender young athlete, and Phil was on his back beside his leader, while Dick Stanwood, tripping over a stone—purposely or not the boys never knew—went down ingloriously with the rest. Above them stood young Ayre, like Saint Michael over his enemies, panting and glowing.

“Oh! are you hurt?” asked the girl, hurrying up to “Saint Michael,” and laying her hand on his arm. [Pg 187]

Winthrop laughed. “Well, I’m able to walk,” he said reassuringly. Then: “Let’s leave these rascals to come to their senses. May I see you home?”

The girl flushed prettily in her eagerness. “You are so kind,” she said. “I live just the other side of that hill, and if you’ll come in a few minutes and see grandpa, I’ll be very much obliged.”

“But your forehead,” added Winthrop, as they walked along the dusty road side by side, leaving their three late assailants to sneak off in the opposite direction; “I’m afraid that fellow hurt you, though I don’t believe he meant to strike you so hard.”

“Oh! it isn’t much. I haven’t told you who I am,” she added shyly. “I know about you and your sister Marie, over at the Elms. Your Uncle Ayre and my grandfather are dear friends.”

“Then you must be ‘Puss’ Rowan!”

“Yes,” she laughed; “though it’s rather saucy for you to say it. My real name is Cecilia.” [Pg 188]

“Excuse me, Miss Cecilia.”

“O, dear me! Don’t call me that, or I shall think you are speaking to somebody else. ‘Puss’ I’ve always been, and ‘Puss’ I must be, I suppose!” And she gave a comical little sigh, ending in another ripple of laughter, which was very pleasant to hear.

“Yes,” she went on, more soberly, “I’ve heard how your sister was ill, and you brought her here for her health, to stay all summer. May I come and see her? She’s just about my age, grandpa says.”

“Do! It will do her good, I’m sure,” replied Winthrop warmly, glancing at his companion’s pretty face and sunny curls.

Puss blushed a little, and suddenly became very demure. “Here’s grandpa’s, where I live,” she said, pausing before an old, gambrel-roofed house. “Won’t you come in?”

All the houses in Taconic were pleasant inside and out. This one looked particularly so.

“Thank you; just for a minute,” said Winthrop, walking up with Puss between two rows of lilac bushes. The girl led him into a cool, old-fashioned parlor, which had shells on the mantel-piece, and great, irregular beams in the ceiling.

Mr. Rowan, a silvery-haired gentleman, with much stately dignity and kindly manner, soon entered, and talked pleasantly with the boy, of his uncle’s younger days and Winthrop’s own affairs. Altogether a half-hour passed very quickly, and Winthrop was sorry to feel obliged to take his leave. [Pg 189]

Puss went down to the gate with him.

“Be sure to tell your sister I am coming to-morrow,” she said. “And you’ll call again here

yourself, won't you? I shall not soon forget how you took care of me!"

Winthrop drew himself up and lifted his hat in elegant city fashion; which, however, only made Puss laugh and shake her curls.

"It's no use to be the least bit dignified with me," she said merrily, "for I don't know what to do back. We just shake hands, here in the country, and say good-by."

"Good-by," said Winthrop, taking her little brown hand with mock solemnity.

"Good-by," laughed Puss, "that's better. Don't forget your message!"

As Winthrop walked rapidly toward his uncle's house, he went over and over the exciting events of the afternoon. He had only arrived about a week before, but he had already come in contact with the three boys who had been amusing themselves by rudely teasing Miss Cecilia Rowan, the gentlest and prettiest girl in the village. They were notorious, he had soon found, for their ill-behavior and rough manners, and had even been suspected of certain petty thefts in the neighborhood. Winthrop could not help feeling that he should hear from them again. [Pg 190]

The meeting between his sister and Puss Rowan took place the very next day, and the two girls were almost immediately warm friends. As Winthrop had predicted, Puss's bright face and winsome ways won the heart of the pale city maiden at once, and "did her good," too.

One or two pleasant afternoons they passed together, and several delightful trips were planned. One of these was a small lunch party, to a favorite spot for the village young folks, called "Willow Brook." It was about four miles from Taconic Corner, and the road to it lay through deep woods, adding an enjoyable drive to and fro, to the pleasures of the day.

[Pg 191] Willow Brook is a noisy little stream that comes dancing down from a spur of the White Mountains, finding its way through a heavy growth of spruce and fir, over half a dozen granite ledges, and so onward until it reaches the upper Taconic meadows, where it suddenly becomes demure and quiet; but, nevertheless, is all dimples when the wind whispers to it through the sedges, or teases for a romp under the shadow of the birch-trees that line its bank here and there. At length it reaches a small picturesque valley, where the hills, though by no means lofty, perhaps remind it of its mountain childhood; for there it pauses, and holds in its bosom the pictures of the gently rising uplands, with their peacefully browsing flocks of lambs—and gathers white lilies, and so rests a while from its journey. At times, it is true, a dimple of the old-time fun, or an anxious shadow as it hears the roar of machinery and busy life beyond, hides the treasured secrets of its heart, but as the ruffled brow smooths, you can see again in those quiet depths, lambs, lilies, fleecy clouds, alike snowy white and beautiful.

The mill had stood at the foot of "Lily Pond," where the road crossed the stream, nobody knows how long. There was an old-fashioned dam, built of a few logs and a good deal of earth and rock, now overgrown with grass and bushes up to the very sluiceway of the mill. The waste-board, over which the water flowed in a thin, glistening sheet in the early spring when the pond was high, was scarcely more than ten feet long. About a hundred feet further down the stream was a shady grove of willows and other trees, growing down close to the water's edge. Toward this spot Winthrop with his sister, Puss and her father rode merrily enough that hot July day. Mr. Rowan did not go down to the grove at once, but, having let the young people jump out with their baskets at the Lily Pond Bridge, drove on to a neighbor's to transact some business, promising to join the party at lunch a half an hour later. Winthrop assisted his sister carefully down over a steep embankment to the willows, Puss springing ahead and calling to her companions that she had found "a lovely place right beside the water." [Pg 192]

Baskets and shawls were soon safely stowed away, and Winthrop, with the help of the girls, arranged a sort of shelter of boughs. When a small fire had been kindled on a flat rock just in front, Puss laughed with delight, and Marie's delicate face showed a glow of healthy pleasure, which her brother noted with quiet satisfaction. Plainly Taconic life was bringing the frail invalid back to strength and health. [Pg 193]

Leaving the girls to chatter over the beauties of the place and their plans for the coming weeks, Winthrop strayed down stream a few rods, following a cat-bird, whose whimsical calls led him to suspect a nest among the alders which lined the river at that point.

The bird kept persistently out of sight, but repeated its cry in a more and more distressed tone, until Winthrop reached the very heart of a thicket.

"I've got you now!" he said aloud, as he stooped and thrust aside a mass of foliage. Then he started to his feet. He had very nearly laid his hand on—not the pretty, rounded nest of the gray-winged thrush, but the evil, grinning features of Mort Lapham.

"I rayther guess we've got you this time, my Boston daisy," said Mort, rising in his turn. "Tie him up, fellows!"

The ugly youth's two boon comrades sprang forward from the rear, and before Winthrop could offer the slightest resistance, entangled as he was in the tough, slender stems of the alders, he was bound, hand and foot. [Pg 194]

"What are you going to do with me, Phil Bradford?" asked the prisoner quietly, though his heart sank as the three cowardly assailants hurried him roughly through the underbush.

"You'll find out soon enough," growled the other, who had not forgotten the blow given in defense of the girl by the roadside. They emerged presently in a little opening that crowned a bluff, some half a dozen feet or more above the surface of the river, where it here made a sudden

bend toward the steep bank forming at its base a deep, black pool, with here and there a few pine needles turning slowly in its eddies.

In all this time Winthrop had not uttered a cry. He would not alarm the girls unnecessarily, and might include them in his own dangerous situation.

“Now,” said Mort, with a cruel leer, “we’ll square up our accounts. The next time I’m having a little fun on my own account, I reckon you’ll mind your own business!”

With these words he proceeded to tie his victim firmly to a stout young pine that grew close to the edge of the bluff. [Pg 195] They placed his face to the trunk, and clasping his hands around it, lashed them tightly together.

“I say,” interposed Dick, as he saw the cords cut into the captive’s wrists, “you needn’t pull ’em so tight! Don’t you see—you’re hurting him awfully!”

Winthrop set his lips together, and said nothing.

“Hurting him!” repeated Mort savagely. “I guess he’ll wish he wa’n’t hurt any more’n that, before I get through with him! Gimme that whip!”

“Don’t whip him!” cried Dick again. “We’ve scared him enough, now. You said you only wanted to frighten him, Mort.”

“Git out o’ the way, will you? I’m running this job, and this slim Sunday-school chap from the city has got to have a little more scarin’ yet.”

“But”—

“If you don’t want a taste yourself, you’ll keep quiet, Dick Stanwood. Phil an’ I’ll duck ye in the river, ’f you say much more!”

“All right,” said Dick, who evidently regretted his part in the matter. “If that’s all the thanks I get, I’m off!” And turning suddenly on his heel, he walked away through the woods.

[Pg 196] “Hold on! Stop him, will you, Phil?” cried Mort angrily. But Dick had hastened his steps and was already out of sight.

Still Winthrop said never a word. His face was white, and the two guards thought he was too frightened to speak.

“Strip off his coat and vest,” commanded Mort, brandishing the whip. Phil obeyed his leader like a lamb, untying the captive’s hands cautiously, and, with Mort’s aid, fastening them again more securely than ever.

“Now, then, here’s one for interfering between me and the girl!”

Down came the leather lash across the thinly clad shoulders.

“One more for the lick you gave me between the eyes!”

Again the stinging, burning blow. Still Winthrop did not cry out.

“You want some more, do you?” cried Mort, enraged at his victim’s silence.

The lash was raised again. As Mort raised and swung it, to give the full force of the blow, he stepped backward. [Pg 197] The embankment, long ago undermined by the river, crumbled under the bully’s feet; with a shriek of terror he toppled over, and disappeared beneath the black eddies of the pool. Winthrop could not see what had happened, for his back, now smarting as if living coals were bound to it, was toward the bank. From the sound of the falling earth, the cry of his tormentor, and the loud splash that followed, he guessed what had occurred.

“Untie me, quick!” he shouted to Phil, who stood gazing stupidly at the whirling bubbles where his leader had disappeared. “No, cut the rope—take my knife out of my pocket!”

Phil, who was always ready to follow the party in power, obeyed mechanically. In a few seconds Winthrop was free.

“Can’t he swim?” he cried, kicking off the last coils of the rope, as Mort rose, screaming and splashing to the surface, and went under again.

“Not a stroke,” said Phil stoically. “Serves him right, don’t it? Say, Win, I’m awful sorry”—

But he was apologizing only to the pine-tree and the cut cords. Winthrop had sprung into the pool, and even now had his late assailant by the collar and was striking out for the shore lower down, where the bank was not so high.

[Pg 198] “Don’t drown me!” yelled Mort, rolling up his eyes. “I didn’t mean”—

“Stop kicking—you’re all right!” gasped Winthrop. “There—put your feet down—can’t you touch bottom?”

“Winthrop, my lad! Here—give me your hand!” cried a new voice; and Puss’s father leaned perilously far over the bank to assist the boy. At the same time Phil and Dick—the latter of whom had brought Mr. Rowan to the scene—helped the choking, crest-fallen, dripping Mort to his feet.

“What does this mean?” demanded the older man sternly, surveying the cords and whip.

“O, Winthrop!—brother!” and the two girls came hurrying down to the river’s edge. Winthrop tried to toss on his coat, but did not succeed before the stains on his poor, smarting back told the story to his sister’s anxious eye.

Of course the picnic was ended for that day. The whole party hurried to the wagon and drove home. On the way, Winthrop begged Mr. Rowan not to have either of his late captors prosecuted, or punished in any way.

"I'm satisfied," he said, "if they are."

"Well, I'm not!" burst out Mort suddenly, "and I sha'n't be, till I get square with you somehow!" [Pg 199]

The girls turned and looked at him in new amazement and terror. But Winthrop understood him better.

"All right, old fellow," he replied simply, holding out his hand to the other.

Mort grasped it and said no more.

"Good story, father!" called out Tom, whose voice, whether for approval or criticism, was never wanting. "I'd like to know how Mort got square with him, though."

Mr. Percival laughed as he rose. "That is not of so much consequence. In such a case, 'the readiness is all.' Does that finish the paper, Mr. Editor?"

"It does," said Selborne gravely. "And the publication of the 'Tri-Weekly Chichagoff Decade' is suspended until further notice."

[Pg 200]

CHAPTER XIII.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

The voyage southward proceeded without special incident. "Glaciers" were gradually left behind, but "gulfs" and bays, channels and narrow passages were still a part of the programme. The day following the reading of the "Decade" was Sunday. Mr. Selborne at the request of many of the passengers, preached in the cabin, the Percivals organizing a choir which led the singing with their clear young voices.

On Monday the *Queen* reached Nanaimo, a city and coaling-station for ships, on the east shore of Vancouver's Island. Tom and Fred hired a team and drove half a dozen miles inland to a trout-brook of which they had heard. Tom could not walk about much, but he enjoyed the ride [Pg 201] immensely, and when they reached the brook he limped along the bank to a shady spot, from which he shouted various comments, disparaging and otherwise, on his companion's methods of angling and rather limited success. They returned tired but happy, with a dozen silvery little fish as trophies. In the late afternoon Randolph and Pet headed a party to explore the city, which they found a hot and dusty one, but, in its upper portions, abounding in wonderfully bright flowers.

At one garden they stopped and bought a great ball of nasturtiums. It was nearly twilight, and as the travelers leaned against the fence, idly watching the owner of the garden as he gathered the nosegay, they saw whole flocks of evening primroses opening their wings like yellow butterflies, one by one.

This gardener, it seemed, was a blacksmith, employed by day in a coal mine which ran out half a mile under the sea. His business, he said, was to keep the mules shod.

The shaft of this great mine came up in the outskirts of the town, and the Percivals, earlier in the day, had seen the huge buckets come rushing up from the bowels of the earth, six hundred and forty feet below, laden with coal and streaming with water. [Pg 202]

The evening was memorable for a row in the harbor to an Indian burying-ground, where strange and hideously carved figures kept watch over the neglected graves.

Until a late hour, after their return from this boating excursion, the party remained on deck, talking over the events of the day.

"Do you know," asked Tom, "how this place started?"

"Well?" said Mr. Percival, who was always pleased to have his boy thorough in looking up the history of a place.

"An Englishman named Richard Dunsmuir, was riding horseback along a trail back on the mountain. The horse stumbled, and when Dunsmuir came to look at the log or stone, it was coal. He started a big mine, with two partners who put in about five thousand dollars apiece. A few years later one of them sold out to Dunsmuir for two hundred and fifty thousand, and afterward the second one sold for seven hundred and fifty thousand."

"Whew!" whistled Randolph. "I say, Tom, let's give up Latin and go into the coal-mining business." [Pg 203]

"All right," says Tom cheerfully. "You buy a horse and gallop through the woods till you both tumble down. Then I'll pick you up, point out the coal—if it doesn't turn out to be a stump—and we'll go halves. Or I'll sell out now for ten dollars and fifteen cents!"

Just as the steamer cast off her fasts and started her paddles, Selborne announced that the bright sky had, as usual, cajoled them into keeping late hours, for it was now nearly eleven, and

in four hours it would be daylight again. Whereupon the deck party broke up.

Next morning they found themselves at Victoria, where they stopped long enough to complete their purchases of miniature totem poles and other Indian curiosities, which were displayed for sale upon the wharf.

All through that bright day the *Queen* ploughed her way southward through a blue, sunlit sea. It was Puget Sound, said Tom, the cartographer of the occasion. They touched at Port Townsend and at Seattle. At the latter port the ship left half her passengers, as the Excursion was too large to be quartered at one hotel. The rest, including the individuals in whom we are specially interested, kept on to Tacoma. Here they said good-by to the *Queen*—now as homelike as the "Kamloops"—and took up their abode in a large hotel which they found to be delightfully situated on high ground, with a broad, cool veranda overlooking the Sound.

Immediately after supper Tom rushed out to have his kodak refilled. He had already taken nearly a hundred pictures, and reveled in anticipation of showing them, especially the instantaneous and surreptitious views of his unconscious relatives and friends, together with many captive bears, to an admiring circle during the coming winter.

The following day was spent in riding about the city, the planked streets and sidewalks of which struck them as very odd, and in visiting the Indian reservation at Puyallup, a few miles distant. The country was very dry, and forest fires were smouldering all along the road.

At Seattle, the next stopping-place, the historian ("I'm a regular 'Pooh Bah' on this trip," exclaimed Tom) was called on for statistics concerning the city.

"Be accurate, my son," added Fred; "but above all, be brief."

"Population rising forty thousand," rattled off Tom, who had his lesson well this time; "twice destroyed by fire, the last time in 1889. Now nearly rebuilt again. Situated between a big body of fresh water called Lake Washington, and Puget Sound. Always fighting, good-naturedly enough, with its rival Tacoma."

Oh! the dust, the dust. It lay in the streets four inches deep. It filled the air at every step, and powdered the pretty traveling dresses of the girls.

But it was a wonderful city, with its push and rush and fever of building and money-getting. To-day a vacant lot, to-morrow an eight-story bank building; to-day a peaceful bit of upland pasture, to-morrow a huge hotel, crowded with guests from all parts of the world.

"Nobody can stop to walk, or even ride in carriages," observed Bess. "It fairly takes away my breath here. You get into a cable car and whirl off at ten miles an hour, up hill and down dale. Do they ever sleep, do you suppose?"

The Percivals had a really enjoyable excursion to Lake Washington, where they sailed and steamed to their hearts' content. A cable car took them to and from the lake, and beside the road they could see lots of land offered for sale at high foot-rates, with tall forest-trees still standing in them; others, partly built upon, and occupied by fine dwelling-houses, with the back yard full of charred stumps.

The busiest streets of the city, like those of Tacoma, were "paved" with four-inch planks. Electric cars, as well as those run by cable, dashed to and fro with startling speed. The air was so filled with smoke from forest fires that ships in the harbor could hardly be distinguished from the shore. A day's ride through a wonderfully fertile country brought them to Portland, Oregon, where Randolph's first move was to hunt up Bert Martin.

Bert and Susie were overjoyed to see their old friends. They lived in a pretty cottage not far from the railroad station, and Randolph had to bring Kittie, Pet, Tom, Fred and Bess to take tea with them.

When supper was finished, and the young people had talked over the dear old Latin School days, and the gay summer at the Isles of Shoals, Bert got a step-ladder and gathered handfuls of red roses from the trellis over the front door, where they grew in true Oregonian abundance.

Tom and Susie got on marvelously well together, and the former showed a singular eagerness to have Bert correspond with him, after he should have arrived home in the East.

From Portland the managers had provided their travelers with a little two-day side trip to the Dalles.

They rode in the cars all one afternoon along the southern shore of the Columbia, stopping to scramble up a steep hillside to the foot of the beautiful Multnomah Falls, and arriving at Dalles just after dark. Randolph and Fred were the only ones who cared to explore the town, which they conscientiously did, traveling miles, they averred, over the plank sidewalks, and hopelessly losing their way on several occasions; but turning up in good season at last at the depot.

The train was side-tracked here, and tooting and puffing engines, shifting freight cars, kept sleep from the eyes of most of the party. At daybreak they rose and made their way sleepily down to the river, where a steamer was waiting for them. Back they went, down the river to Portland. A thick fog hid the "mountainous and precipitous cliffs" and "bold headlands" which the guide-book promised them.

Wearily they boarded the cars standing ready at the Portland depot, and took possession of their comfortable compartments and drawing-rooms for their Eastward journey.

The next morning found them at Tacoma, and then on the Northern Pacific, striking across the

new State of Washington. The Cascade Mountains—a long and insurmountable barrier between East and West—had to be crossed, and up went the train, curving, groaning and winding, as the Canadian Pacific had through the Rockies.

"Longest tunnel in America except the Hoosac!" screamed Tom above the din of the cars, as they plunged into the "Stampede." "Nearly two miles from end to end, and half a mile above the level of the sea."

And now came the most wearisome part of the homeward journey. The sun rose in a cloudless sky, and disclosed only hot, treeless, rolling prairie as far as the eye could reach. In the cars the mercury stood at ninety-six degrees, and linen dusters were once more brought to light.

In the evening they reached Spokane Falls, and set forward their watches one hour. It gave the travelers a queer sensation to arrive at a station at nine o'clock, stop half an hour, and start on at half-past ten.

The following day they recrossed the Rocky Mountains and descended the eastern slope, through a pleasant farming country, to the city of Helena. Here there was a stop of several hours, and the boys had a good swim in the great tank which was fed by hot springs.

When they were on board the train and in motion once more, Tom was called on for the "probabilities."

"To-morrow morning," he announced, "we shall be in Cinnabar, seven miles from the Mammoth Hot Springs. There we shall divide up into parties, and 'do' the Yellowstone Park in four-horse mountain-wagons, taking about five days for the job. It's going to be one of the biggest things on the whole trip, too."

But we must leave Yellowstone Park, surnamed "The Wonderland of America," for another chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

WONDERLAND.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom, who had now fully recovered from his recent unpleasantness with the silver-tip. "Hurrah! Here we are in Cinnabar." He had jumped from the car, and was tapping at Kittie's curtained window.

Kittie waved her hand to signify assent and keep him quiet, and before long all the passengers were hurrying through their breakfast and preparing for the long coach journey through the park. While this is going on, in the now motionless Northern Pacific train, we have time for a few words regarding the great reservation itself.

About one thirtieth of the new State of Wyoming—the extreme northwest corner—is reserved by the United States Government for the "Yellowstone National Park." Nearly the whole area thus set apart remains a virgin wilderness, traversed only by rough and narrow carriage roads, and hardly affording shelter to the increasing number of tourists each summer in its hastily erected hotels. The whole park is about the size of Rhode Island and Delaware combined.

The Government, through the Secretary of the Interior, has issued certain regulations regarding the conduct of travelers in the park. These relate chiefly to camping, destroying trees, etc. One of the most stringent rules forbids the discharge of firearms within the limits of the Reservation. Mounted soldiers of the regular United States Army are scattered all through the park, doing police duty; and if you are caught firing a gun, or even having one (unsealed) in your possession, good-by to your fowling-piece and good-by to the park. The former is at once confiscated, and you are marched out of the latter without ceremony. Those travelers who wish to take firearms are obliged to have the lock sealed by a Government official, at the entrance of the park.

The result of this wholesome regulation is that wild game of all sorts is on the rapid increase, in this favored spot. About one hundred and fifty buffalo, the remnant of the immense herds that once roamed the Western prairies, are peacefully quartered somewhere among these wild hills—nobody knows exactly where.

Most of these facts Tom hastily repeated to his companions in the "Broadwater," as the dining-car was called. The ride over to Mammoth Hot Springs was full of interest, the road following a wild mountain-stream, and finding its way farther and farther into the wilderness.

At one point an exclamation from Randolph called the attention of the rest to an eagle's nest on a jutting cliff that almost overhung the road. The heads of the young eagles could be plainly seen over the edge of the nest, and far overhead soared the parent birds.

On making up the wagon parties at the hotel, the Percivals found to their delight that all could go in one team, including Mr. and Miss Selborne. Off they went with shouts and cheers, leaving the wonders of the "Mammoth" district for their return trip.

Up and up, along the edge of frightful precipices, where the road was built of planking, with great props, sheer out around promontories of rock; up and up, to the high tablelands of the

park; through evergreen forests, along silent lakes, haunted by beavers and strange water-fowl; beside black cliffs of volcanic glass, or “obsidian”; across unbridged streams where the horses plunged into the swift-running waters, and the wagon lurched from side to side, hub-deep in the flood. So onward until they had covered twenty-two miles, and reached the Norris Geyser Basin, where dinner was served in a long, shed-like structure called a hotel.

As soon as the meal was over, the young people hurried ahead on foot, to see their first geysers. A quarter of a mile walk, and a sudden turn of the road brought them into view. Strange, uncanny things they were, bursting upward at intervals through the treacherous and chalk-like “formation,” and throwing their jets of steaming water into the air with hollow gurgles and growls from their hot throats.

The atmosphere was charged with sulphurous odors, and while the travelers were fascinated with the novelty and mystery of the scene, they were glad to enter their wagons once more and press forward on their journey. They all felt the rarity of the air, being about a thousand feet higher than the summit of Mt. Washington, above the level of the sea. It became very cold, too, as the sun went down. The girls were glad to don their sealskin capes, and the boys turned up their coat-collars.

Eighteen miles over the wildest country they had yet seen, brought them to the Lower Geyser Basin.

That night the hotel was so crowded that each room was shared by three or four occupants. Tom, Randolph, Fred and Rossiter were allotted to a chamber in an outbuilding. They had to reach it by an outside stairway, and I grieve to state that all four—not excepting the Reverend Rossiter Selborne—told stories and laughed over them until very nearly midnight.

Next morning Rossiter left the room before the boys were up, and walked out in the clear, cold air. He had not taken a dozen steps when he saw Bess and Kittie emerging from the main building, which was dignified by the term “hotel.” Hailing them merrily, he was soon at their side, and the three walked down to the Firehole River, from whose sulphurous waters there arose a warm, faint odor, as it foamed along its white-and-yellow-streaked bed.

Over they went, one by one, on a narrow log bridge to the further bank, which they followed down to a little fir grove. There they had a tiny camp-fire, taking great precautions to keep the blaze down and use only dry twigs, so as not to make a smoke.

After breakfast the teams were ready again, and the journey was resumed. For twelve miles they rode among geysers and springs, through low fir woods, over chalky formation, to the Upper Basin, where they were to spend the night.

On the way, it should be mentioned, they stopped to view a singular mud spring, called the “Mammoth Paint Pot.” There was a bowl-shaped crater nearly filled with gray, pasty mud, through the surface of which great bubbles slowly forced themselves, as in a boiling kettle of molasses candy, nearly done. As one of the guide-books said, there was “a continuous bubbling up of mud, producing sounds like a hoarsely whispered ‘plop, plop.’” Travelers were further informed that these bubbling circlets of mud fell into beautiful floral forms; but Kittie could find in them no resemblance to anything but electric bell knobs; while her mother plaintively declared they looked like nothing so much as old-fashioned doughnuts.

That evening Tom caused great merriment at the supper-table by gravely asking Mrs. Percival to “pass the plops,” he having previously ordered doughnuts for that purpose.

But if I were to tell you of all the wonders the Percivals visited and heard with their ears and saw with their eyes, I might be accused of writing a guide-book myself. I can only add that during the next forty-eight hours our friends became intimately acquainted with a dozen or more great geysers, knowing their names and the times for their appearance to the hour, if not the minute.

There was the “Excelsior” (this was passed on the right between the Lower and Upper Basins), the largest geyser in the world; the “Giant,” throwing a huge volume of scalding water high into the air every eight days; the “Grotto,” with a crater of strange, irregular walls as if built by gnomes; the “Castle,” to the brink of which two of the girls climbed and gazed fearlessly down into the terrible throat; and “Old Faithful” which spouts a hundred feet once every sixty-five minutes, and has probably been as prompt as a clock, scientific men tell us, for the last twenty thousand years.

A comical incident occurred as the party were standing near the last-named geyser waiting for it to “erupt.” Tom had timed it by his watch, and had given out word that it would begin to play in just three minutes and a half.

While the words were on his lips, a man was seen approaching from a camp near by, carrying a bucket and some clothes which he evidently intended to wash in warm water from one of the many pools near the crater’s mouth. It was then merely a hole, some four or five feet in diameter, from which came occasional wreaths of steam, and an ominous gurgling growl which the new-comer disregarded altogether.

“You wait!” cried Tom to the rest. “He isn’t near enough to get hurt, but he’ll be about the most astonished man in Wyoming in just one minute and three quarters.”

The camper proceeded to dip up a bucket full of water with great coolness, and, having taken a comfortable seat on a ridge of “formation,” was just proceeding to immerse his wash, when up came “Old Faithful’s” head. In less time than it takes to tell it, the great, roaring, boiling jet was hurling itself far aloft, and descending in floods of hot, sulphurous water. The man had given one

startled look over his shoulder at the first outbreak, and then fled like a deer, leaving his property to be reclaimed later in the day. The sight of his ludicrously startled face and flying heels was irresistible, and the boys screamed with laughter.

Beside the great, active geysers, there were multitudes of hot springs, some of them many feet wide and deep, with treacherous, overhanging banks and exquisitely tinted depths of turquoise and sapphire, through which arose a continuous train of silvery bubbles. There was a story told, that summer, of a lady who had neglected the precautions which others took, and straying carelessly among these springs, broke through the thin crust of sulphurous deposit. She was instantly drawn out, but not before she was terribly scalded.

While the Percivals were at the "Upper Geyser Basin," they were invited to witness a queer sight in the edge of the woods about a quarter of a mile from the hotel, just at dusk. One of the men employed about the place began to call coaxingly, "Barney! Barney!" And now a dark form appeared among the pines, and out came a huge black bear. He approached timidly within a few feet of the silent group, now advancing, now bounding lightly away at the cracking of a twig, and took several pieces of raw meat from a stump near by. When his silent meal was finished, he gave the spectators one inquiring look, and wheeling round, disappeared in the shadow of the forest.

All this time it was very cold, especially at night when, although it was in August, ice formed over pools about the hotel.

Reluctantly the tourists left the wonders of the "Upper Basin" behind, and drove on toward the next point of interest, Yellowstone Lake.

"Give us the points, Tom," Randolph sings out, as the driver cracks his whip and the wagon rattles down the road. "Tell us about the Lake."

"Nearly eight thousand feet above the sea," rejoins Tom. He is so ready with his figures that skeptical Kittie declares he makes them up, whenever his memory fails him.

"Perhaps you think," rejoins Thomas, with dignity, "that the Lake doesn't cover one hundred and thirty-nine square miles, and hasn't a hundred miles of shore line, and isn't chock-full of splendid trout, and hasn't a beautiful beach of obsidian five miles long, 'reflecting the sun's rays like brilliant gems,' and doesn't"—

"Oh! stop, stop, Davy; I'll come down," cried Kittie; while Fred strikes up "Annie Rooney" at the top of his voice. It was afternoon when they drove down into a pretty valley where were clustered three or four large white tents.

"What's this—a circus?" shouted Tom.

"It's Larry Matthews' hotel," replied the driver.

Out came Larry himself, as the teams drew up with a flourish, before the door of the principal tent.

"Glad to see yez, ladies an' gintlemen!" he cried, with broad, rich brogue. "Step right into me parlor, but be careful of the carpet, av ye plase!"

As the tent knew no floor but turf, this raised a laugh, and this was followed by another and another at Larry's quaint observations, which he showered without stint on his guests.

When they were all seated at long tables, he was everywhere at once.

"Milk, sor? Milk it is. Eggs? there's wan the little speckled hin laid for you, mem! Coffee? Do take another cup! There's plenty more to be had—the geyser's playin' right along."

The meal was eaten in a gale of merriment, and all hands declared that sandwiches, boiled eggs and coffee—for of these viands it largely consisted—had never tasted so good.

After dinner there was an hour or two of leisure, during which the travelers strolled about on the hillside overlooking "Trout Creek" (for which this little encampment was named), securing kodak views, and enjoying life generally.

"Good-by, sor! Good-by, mem!" shouted Larry to his guests, as they at length clambered to their seats and rode off. "Long life to yez all! Come ag'in!"

They now had a dozen miles of beautiful prairie, river and mountain scenery before reaching the Lake. The ride was not without attractions also, that bordered on the perilous.

At one point they were told by the driver that only three weeks before, a huge buffalo had suddenly emerged from the woods, and with lowered head galloped across the road. The six horses of the team immediately in front had been thrown into wild panic, and wheeling about, had dashed off, dragging a broken wagon after them.

"So I had to dodge a buffalo and a runaway team," concluded John grimly.

The wheel-tracks showed plainly in the turf where he had lashed his own horses out of the road. He added that one of the passengers, a lady from the East, was quite severely injured in jumping from the forward wagon.

They saw deer feeding quietly beside the road. Great white pelicans floated on the calm surface of the river; eagles flew overhead in full view. There are many pumas, or "mountain lions," as they are called there, in the lonelier tracts of the park, and bears, brown, black and grizzly, roam to and fro unmolested.

But the great feature of the ride was presented about five miles further on—when they were

driving close to the banks of a clear flowing stream.

"What's that creature down by the water?" asked Adelaide carelessly. "A calf?" [Pg 223]

They all glanced toward the river, when Tom—who was unquestionably authority on the subject—sung out, "A bear! A bear!"

The driver pulled up his horses with a jerk, and none too soon. Up scrambled a huge brown, or "cinnamon" bear from the bank of the river, not a hundred yards ahead of them. She jumped a log which lay along the embankment, and crossing the road, began to climb the steep, wooded hill on their left.

Presently a woolly cub, about the size of a half-grown Newfoundland dog, came hurrying after her. He tried to climb the log as she had done, but after straining to get over, exactly like a boy endeavoring to mount a horizontal bar, tumbled backward into the brush.

Fred and Tom cheered him on, and the second attempt succeeded. Down he went, head over heels, into the dusty road, and then how he did scramble up hill after his mother! The boys laughed and shouted to him until both bears were out of sight among the pines, far up the mountain slope.

The horses had acted bravely during this scene, merely standing with quivering limbs and alert ears until little Bruin and his mother had passed. [Pg 224]

At Yellowstone Lake the boys hastily organized a fishing excursion, and came back with a fine string of trout, averaging a pound to a pound and a half apiece. In the evening they took the girls out on the lake for a moonlight row. The songs they sang were of a gentler and more plaintive character than usual; for they realized that the beautiful journey over gulf and glacier, and through Wonderland, was fast drawing to a close.

"Row, brothers, row!" rang out Pet's sweet soprano; and even Fred's "Jolly boating weather" had an undertone of sadness, as the chorus came in, full and strong, at the end of each verse. Ah! how far ahead a "good-by" casts its shadow. How will it seem to reach a land where the word is not known!

"The rapids are near, and the daylight's past," sang Pet; while the moonlight quivered on the waters of the strange, wild mountain lake.

I must hurry on, myself, in my story of those fair, sweet days and silvery nights; for I find myself lingering only too long among the hills—dreading perhaps, as I trust some of you do, my boy and girl readers, the parting from the glad young lives that, in the course of these six volumes, have become a part of my very own. Yes, my manly Randolph, impulsive, good-hearted Tom, merry Kittie, golden-haired Pet, and sweet, gentle "Captain Bess," I must leave you all too soon, in the fair morning-land where hearts beat warmly and young faces glow with mirth and noble resolve; whither in very truth, I have tried, poorly and feebly but most earnestly, to take the real, living boys and girls who have gathered around the pine-cone fires and many a time have sent me words of cheer from their own far-away firesides, year after year. God bless them, every one! [Pg 225]

Randolph and Fred were loath to leave the fine fishing-grounds of the Lake, but the word was "Onward!" and another day's ride took the party away from those picturesque shores to the Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone.

On horseback they rode slowly along the banks of this mighty ravine, whose tawny flanks have given the river its name. One moment the girls were speechless with laughter over Tom's dismay as his horse began to slide down a steep descent; the next they caught their breath with wonder and awe, as they came out on the brink of the mighty cañon, and, making their way on foot to the very edge of a jutting promontory, gazed downward into the fearful depths of a sheer thousand feet below. [Pg 226]

A few rods from their narrow perch was an eagle's nest, and it made the head giddy and the pulse beat fast to see the great birds float out over the abyss. Coiling along the very base of the precipices was the river, a silken thread of twisted white and emerald.

But oh! the Falls. Here the Yellowstone gathered itself, at the head of the Cañon, and leaped abroad into the air, falling three hundred feet before it knitted together its torn threads on the rocks below.

"In His hands are the deep places of the earth," murmured Mr. Percival, half to himself.

"The strength of the hills is His also!" finished the young clergyman, involuntarily baring his head, as if in the visible presence of the Creator.

"How can He—how can He think of our little every-day-nesses, and of that!" said Bess, not turning to the last speaker, but knowing that he heard. [Pg 227]

Rossiter stooped, picked a single blade of grass from the brink of the awful cataract, and handed it to her without a word. And she understood, and was grateful.

CHAPTER XV.

[Pg 228]

WHITE LILIES.

"Home again, from a foreign shore!" sang the Percival Glee Club, as the mountain wagon rattled down a long hill, across a dusty plain, and whirled up to the front door of a great hotel. It wasn't home, really, but only the Mammoth Hot Springs, which they had left nearly a week before.

Half of the Excursion had taken the circuit through the Park in the opposite direction, and now that all were united once more, many were the handshakings, and loud and eager the exchange of experiences.

"Did you take dinner at Larry's?"

"I almost tumbled into the 'Morning Glory'"—

"Oh! what a funny hotel that was at the Upper Basin—walls of pasteboard between the rooms, and all peeling off, you know"— [Pg 229]

"Weren't you awfully cold?"

"How many trout did you catch, Doctor?"

"My! wasn't Mary's Hill steep? We got out and walked. The horses just went up hand over hand, as if 'twas a ladder"—

"Did you see a bear?" This last from Tom, who became the center of a knot of eager questioners, and assumed airs of importance accordingly.

The attractions of the Mammoth Springs, marvelous though they were, were rather slighted by the tourists, who were sated with "formations" and boiling pools. That afternoon the train bore them over the branch road to Livingston, where fine furs were purchased by several parties, this little frontier town being a regular emporium for such articles.

At nightfall they had a jolly supper in the car, and afterward made their Pullman ring with "The Soldier's Farewell" and—well—"A. R.!"

All the next day they rode at thirty-five miles an hour through the "Bad Lands" and across North Dakota, reaching Minneapolis the following morning.

"I tell you, it's good to see green grass again, after those scorched-up prairies!" exclaimed Tom; and the rest echoed his words. For weeks not a drop of rain had fallen in the Northwest, and our New Englanders had longed for a sight of the fresh verdure of their own homeland. [Pg 230]

There was plenty of sightseeing in Minneapolis to crowd the few hours allowed there. The younger Percivals, in particular, rushed furiously about the city, visited the Falls of Minnehaha, "which were extremely interesting," Fred Seacomb remarked, "except that there were no falls there"—only a narrow rivulet trickling over some mossy rocks in a park; and climbed (by elevator) to the top of a twelve-story building on the roof of which was a flourishing garden, as well as an elegant restaurant. Later in the day they hurriedly inspected one of the great "Pillsbury" mills, which turn out seven thousand barrels of flour a day.

"I like this better than even the Falls in the Grand Cañon," whispered Bess to Kittie, as they watched the flour pouring down through the boxes in a beautiful white flood. "There it was a great Power, you know; as if you were somehow seeing the world made; but here is where He makes answers for prayers for daily bread—just think, seven thousand people a day getting a whole barrel apiece, somewhere!" [Pg 231]

I am glad Mr. Selborne happened to hear that last sentence. He was learning to know the little Captain better and better every day; and he understood what she meant, perhaps even better than bright, saucy Pet did.

"It is pleasant to remember, Miss Bessie," he said, taking up the conversation very simply, "that the power and the giving are not separate, but each a part of the great, lovely Plan that guides the world's living. 'He watereth the hills,' you know, 'from His chambers,' and the flood that roared over the brink of that precipice is sure to fall somewhere on the earth, at some time, in gentle rain."

"I know," said Bess, catching her breath a little, as she has a pretty way of doing when she is deeply moved; "and there was the blade of grass!"

She might have said "is," for don't I know that that self-same blade was safely pressed in her little Testament, in the steamer trunk that she had shared with Kittie throughout the journey?

They "finished" Minneapolis and its sturdy rival St. Paul, and hurried on to Chicago. Several in the original hundred of the Excursion had left them, and strangers had taken their places. It began to seem like breaking up in earnest. [Pg 232]

There was one thing that disturbed Randolph; namely, that he had been unable to fulfill a laughing request made by Pet at almost the outset of the journey. He had competed with Tom in securing wild flowers for the girls, and, it must be confessed, the finest specimens had somehow found their way into Miss Pet's lap. One variety had followed another during the passage by rail, across New England and Canada, until Pet had cried out, "You've given me everything!"

"Not every kind," he replied, breathing hard after a run he had just made for some great golden

daisies. “Isn’t there some special flower you want, that you haven’t had?”

“Well, let me see—a water lily!” said the girl merrily, choosing the most unlikely flower she could think of at the moment.

Randolph had laughed, too, but had resolved in his inmost heart to procure just that particular white blossom, if it could be had for love, muscle or money. But no lilies could be found. All through Manitoba, Assiniboia and Alberta he had looked in vain. Alaska yielded fir and spruce in abundance, but no water lilies. Nor was he more successful during the homeward-bound trip, across the States. Pet said nothing more about it—indeed, I think she forgot her careless suggestion almost the moment it was made; but Randolph felt himself put on his mettle, and failure stared him in the face. [Pg 233]

No, I am not writing a “love story,” unless you grant that all true stories are that, in which pure, sweet young lives are thrown together, and drawn to one another by finest and frankest sympathy, looking ahead no farther than the sunset of that day or the sunrise of the next.

What might come in the future, these honest, joyous young people did not try to fathom. Perhaps for some of them the sacredness of a life-long companionship was waiting—who could tell? but now they just took the sweetness and comradery of To-day, and were satisfied.

As for Randolph’s failure to procure the lily, more of that by and by.

For there was one marvel, familiar to some, but new to most of the party, yet to come—the Falls of Niagara. [Pg 234]

Chicago, with its never-ceasing stir of business activity, its broad streets, its huge “Auditorium” building, twenty stories high, its art galleries and its good-natured Western hurry and hospitality, was left behind, and one misty morning in early September the Excursion train deposited its passengers at the Niagara depot, from which they were whirled round to the Cataract House for breakfast.

“Tom hates to waste his time eating in the vicinity of Niagara Falls,” said Fred at the table, “but I am glad to see that he is going through the form, at any rate.”

A glance at the latter’s heaped-up plate was convincing.

“Certainly a splendid imitation of a hungry boy,” remarked Kittie. “Take another biscuit, won’t you, Tommy?”

But when at last they did enter Prospect Park, and huddled together at the brink of the mighty American Falls, there were no more jests. All the world seemed sweeping onward and over, into that white uproar. The solid rock beneath them trembled in the thunderous fall of many waters.

Some of the party walked over the little rustic bridge to Goat Island, and out to the bit of rock where Terrapin Tower once stood. But it was all too terrible to invite a long stay. Glad they were to reach the quiet of the grove again, where moss and furrowed bark and waving fern told their simple story of peace, and the sparrow’s twitter was heard against the deep undertone of the Fall. [Pg 235]

In the afternoon half a dozen of the bolder spirits went down the Inclined Plane to the shore below the Falls, and embarked on the *Maid of the Mist*. They had to encase themselves in rubber coats and tarpaulin hats, while the little boat steamed up into the verge of the boiling caldron until its awe-struck passengers were deafened and drenched by the columns of rolling spray from the cataract.

Evening came, and for the last time the Percivals, with their special friends, gathered in the car for a final “concert.” Nearly one half of the Excursion party had left them at Niagara, waving handkerchiefs and singing, “Should auld acquaintance be forgot?”

Mr. Rossiter and his sister were to reach their journey’s end at a little town in Western Massachusetts, and would leave the train in the early morning, while their comrades were still asleep. Altogether, despite the anticipation of getting home once more, it was a sad evening, as “good-by” evenings must always be. [Pg 236]

Next morning all was eagerness and bustle, for when breakfast was over the train was within twenty miles of Boston.

Alaskan paddles and totem poles were lashed together, and the sharp noses and bright eyes of stuffed foxes from Mandan peered from their paper wrappings as their owners prepared for the last disembarkation.

Near historic Concord the train stopped for a local freight to pull out of the way. Randolph carelessly strolled out to the car platform, and cast his eye along a little stream which was crossed by the track at that point. Something made him start suddenly and beckon to a group of boys who were idling near.

“A silver dollar for the boy that brings me a pond lily before the train starts!” he cried, pointing to the river.

How those boys did scatter, some up stream, some down! One bright little fellow, who had just divested himself for a bath, plunged in and swam lustily for the prize. Another waded in, waist-deep, regardless of clothes. Half a dozen more threw themselves on to a rude raft, capsized it, and scrambling on board again, poled it toward the white beauties, floating serenely on the dark waters of the Assabet. [Pg 237]

Randolph stood waiting eagerly, with the dollar in his hand, expecting every moment to hear

the signal-whistle for starting. A group of workmen engaged in repairing the bridge left off working and cheered the boys on, laughing, and shouting to the little fellows.

"Go it, Dick! Now, Billy, there's a big one in front of you—no, to your right, to your right! Hurry, Pat, you'll get it! Good for you!"

"Off brakes!" rang out the whistle sharply. The train started. Four boys scrambled, panting, up the steep, sandy bank. Randolph jumped on the lowest step of the car and stretched out his hand.

"Here they are, Mister!" and four snowy, perfumed blossoms were thrust by grimy little fingers into his own.

"Catch!" he shouted, throwing out four bright silver quarters for which he had hastily changed the dollar. "Thank you, boys. Good-by!" and the train rolled on.

Randolph entered the car, his eyes shining. Evidently no one within had witnessed this little episode.

"Almost home," he said, coming up behind Pet. "Too bad I couldn't"—

"Oh! that lily," laughed the girl. "Well, Randolph, perhaps it will do you good to fail just once. It's a sort of discipline, you know."

"I'm afraid I shall have to get my discipline some other way," said Randolph demurely; and he deposited the lilies in the lap of astonished Pet.

Just what she saw in those exquisite, fragrant things, all dripping from the cool depths from which they had come to greet her, I cannot say. She looked her delight at Randolph, and then buried the pretty pink of her own cheeks in the white petals. I believe she did not even thank the giver; but he was satisfied.

Twenty minutes later the train thundered into the Fitchburg depot in Boston, and the long, ten-thousand mile journey was at an end.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

I have entitled this chapter "Conclusion," because it seems necessary to have the last chapter of a book named in that way. But the author might as well have named it "Beginning," for there is no such thing in life as a "conclusion," unless, indeed (as Randolph, looking over my shoulder, and fresh from the classic shades of Cambridge, suggests), we take the literal meaning of the word, a "shutting together"—of the covers of this book!

No; life is full of beginnings, and stories can never, never, to all eternity, "conclude." Because the "Pine Cone Stories" can have but just six volumes, of so many pages each, we must let the story go on without us. But it will not conclude, any more than your life or mine forever. With which little "preachment," as Miss Alcott's young people somewhere call it, let us take a last look at the friends whose stories are drifting away out of our sight.

More than three years have passed since Tom delivered that lucky shot at old Silver-Tip; since Bessie gazed thoughtfully down into the mighty cañon in the Yellowstone, and took in her hand the slender ribbon of grass for a token.

It is Christmas time, and we are in an old mansion house in the depths of a deep forest in the Pine Tree State. You recognize the room at once, I hope—for it is Uncle Will's little secret chamber at the Pines.

It is night, and the North Wind is smiting grandly his "thunder harp of pines," while the window panes whiten and rattle with the sheets of snow that are flung against them by the storm.

There is a glorious fire in the fireplace, throwing great billows of flame far up the chimney, crackling, snapping and purring, sending a ruddy glow into every corner of the room and over its inmates.

For the chamber is not empty; the fire is not talking to itself, but to a goodly company that gather around it, with all the old-time cheer.

Uncle Will is there, sturdy and broad-shouldered as ever, with hair only a little whiter than when we first met him, standing beside his good horses at the Pineville depot years ago.

Aunt Puss, too, is not far away, and her husband's occasional "Eunice" is even more full of tenderness than in earlier days, when they met by the lilac bushes.

Close by her side nestles golden-haired Pet, who turns, however, as she talks, to a tall youth with a dark curling mustache, whom she addresses as Randolph. The flush on her cheeks and the brightness in her happy eyes is not alone borrowed from the dancing fire; for Randolph has just stooped down and whispered to his aunt—Pet knew perfectly well, too, what he was saying, sly puss!—that the wedding-day was set for the first of May.

In another corner of the room Tom, now a grave senior at Harvard, is reading by the fire-light a letter postmarked "Portland, Oregon." I don't believe Bert Martin wrote it, though there is a

great deal in the letter about him; for the handwriting is decidedly feminine. Can it be that Bert employs his sister as an amanuensis?

The young lady in navy blue, next to Tom, must be Kittie, whose engagement to Fred Seacomb "came out" simultaneously with Randolph and Pet's. She tells me privately that she can not help teasing him, he's so dignified with his new instructorship in the University of Pennsylvania; but then he's good-natured and don't seem to mind it a bit—"'so long as he has me,' he says—foolish fellow!"

"Have you heard from Bess lately?" asks Uncle Will.

"Only last week," replies Tom, throwing a handful of cones on the fire, and then trying to get the pitch off his white hands. "She and Ross were in Geneva, and having a glorious time."

"I shall be glad when she is back in this country again," remarks Aunt Puss, stroking Pet's bright hair. "If all my girls should run away so far, as soon as they were married, I don't know what I should do!"

Pet laughs and blushes a little, and assures her aunt that "there's no danger!" For she and Randolph have talked it over, you see, and have resolved on another Alaskan trip, where they can renew their memories of that bright summer among the gulfs and glaciers of the far Northwest.

"Just for the sake of old times" Uncle Will tells a story, while the red blaze crackles around a plentiful supply of cones and curling sheets of "silver rags." Without, the northern crosses all through the wood are white with snow, and the wind rises until in its continuous voice can be heard a roar as of the kelp-laden surges around the lonely reefs of Appledore.

There is silence in the little chamber as young folk and old gaze dreamily into the heart of the fire, their thoughts full of dear old days, yet looking forward, strong, trustful, hopeful, to the shelter that shall be for them in the heart of every storm that may assail them; to the work and the joy and the gladness of life that is set before them.

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