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By H. A. CODY

THE FIGHTING-SLOGAN

THE MASTER REVENGE

THE TRAIL OF THE GOLDEN HORN

THE KING'S ARROW

JESS OF THE REBEL TRAIL

GLEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

THE TOUCH OF ABNER

THE UNKNOWN WRESTLER

UNDER SEALED ORDERS

IF ANY MAN SIN

THE CHIEF OF THE RANGES

THE FOURTH WATCH

THE LONG PATROL

ROD OF THE LONE PATROL

THE FRONTIERSMAN

THE FIGHTING-SLOGAN

BY

H. A. CODY

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**THE FIGHTING-SLOGAN
—A—
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To the Fathers of Confederation, and especially to

SIR SAMUEL LEONARD TILLEY,

one of the worthiest, this book is dedicated, as a grateful and humble tribute to their far-seeing vision, their outstanding loyalty and patriotism, and their masterly achievement in binding the provinces of Canada into an enduring unity of stability and good-will.

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THE FIGHTING-SLOGAN

"His Dominion shall be from sea even to sea." Zech. 9, 10.

"All the old bitterness of the Family Compact days was imported into the new order of affairs, and few at the present time can realise the venom which was displayed in politics then and for over forty years after.... So isolated were the Maritime Provinces from Old Canada that a visit of prominent citizens of the latter was as much an event as if a deputation to-day came to Canada from South Africa on some important mission."

"The Story of Confederation," by R. E. Gosnell.

"One of the most dangerous and critical periods in the history of Canada, was that which closely followed the termination of the Civil War in 1865. It is strange that Canadian authors and historians do not seem to have fully realised the gravity of the situation that then existed, as the event has been passed over by them with the barest possible mention. Thus the people of the present generation know very little of the Fenian troubles of 1866 and 1870, and the great mass of the young Canadian boys and girls who are being educated in our Public Schools and Colleges are in total ignorance of the grave danger which cast dark shadows over this fair and prosperous Dominion in those stirring days. It was a period of great peril to this rising young Nation of the North, which might possibly have ended in the severance of Canada from the British dominion."

"Troublous Times in Canada," by Capt. John A. MacDonald.

THE FIGHTING-SLOGAN

CHAPTER 1

IN THE JAWS

The jaws of the steel trap leaped together, caught and held Drum Rowan's left hand as if in a vise. With a startled groan he staggered back, and then exerted the entire weight of his free hand and right foot upon the springs, thus forcing the jaws to release their savage grip.

"It's lucky I had my mitt on," he muttered. "My! how my hand hurts." He pulled off the mitten and looked at the red streak across the back of his fingers. "I wonder what made that trap spring, anyway. Such a thing never happened to me before. Hettie would say it's a sign of bad luck, but I don't believe such nonsense."

His manner, however, somewhat belied his words, for he glanced a little anxiously around, and then up at the high hills surrounding him. He was standing in a wooded valley at a spot where two brooks meet. To the right the land rises abruptly until it terminates in a long curved peak, thickly wooded. There is a similar formation on the left of the valley, and owing to this peculiarity the place was commonly known as "The Jaws." Indian tradition told of titanic deeds enacted there in ages past, when the mighty Glooscap, pursuing his enemies, had rent the earth asunder and made a way for himself to the noble river beyond. Even in later days many looked upon the place with a superstitious dread, and related tales of weird sounds heard there at night. Once a man was found dead in the valley in mid-winter, and this naturally increased the fear surrounding the locality.

With these Drum Rowan was well acquainted, and although not superstitious by nature, he was aware of a strange sensation creeping over him as he recalled some of the stories. This soon vanished, however, as he bent to his task of re-setting the trap. He was more careful this time, keeping his hands clear of the pan when sprinkling it lightly with a thin layer of snow. This accomplished, he picked up his gun, which was standing against a tree, turned to the left and moved swiftly forward.

The afternoon of the short winter day was drawing to a close, and shades of evening were stealing slowly over the valley as Drum made his way up the little brook toward a clearing beyond. The walking was not difficult, as a recent rain, followed by a cold snap, had settled and hardened the snow. Several times he stopped to examine tracks of wild animals, especially those of a sliding otter, and then the expression upon his face revealed his satisfaction.

"I'll show Tom and Bill Daggert a thing or two," he mused. "They are always talking about the ill-luck of this valley, and telling scare-yarns. I was foolish to have paid any heed to them, and should have set traps here long ago. Why this is a natural run-way, and I should get something big before long. I'll have the laugh on Tom and Bill yet, see if I don't."

Pressing onward, he came in a few minutes to a rough narrow wood-road. This surprised him, for he had no idea that anyone did any lumbering in the valley where the trees were of little value. But here was a road with old marks showing that a sled had passed over it. There were also human footprints, evidently made some time before the last thaw. At this spot the road touched the little brook and then swerved off to the right, straight toward the steep bank beyond.

Drum's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused. What reason could there be for a road in such a rough place? He must see where it led, and if possible solve the mystery. Hastening along, it took him but a short time to come close to a great ledge of rocks which rose abruptly from the valley to an irregular height of from twenty to forty feet. A heavy thicket of trees surrounded the base, through which the road wound. Drum noted that a number of trees had been recently cut and their tops left lying upon the ground. This at first led him to believe that someone had been lumbering there, the Daggert brothers, perhaps, who needed those trees for some special purpose. He changed his mind, however, when he noticed that the trees had been dragged toward the ledge instead of away from it. That was certainly remarkable, as there was no possible outlet for the logs ahead.

A few rods beyond he came in sight of the flinty wall, and instead of the road ending there it turned sharply to the right. Following this, he ere long saw something which caused his eyes to open wide in amazement. It was a cabin, cosily situated in an opening in the ledge. Rocks formed part of the two sides upon which several small logs had been laid to increase the height. The roof was made of poles, well covered with large strips of birch bark to shed the rain. Stout portions of logs, about eight feet long, placed on end, enclosed the front of the building. Here was a door, made of sawn boards, fastened on the outside with a wooden latch.

Drum examined this structure most carefully before venturing near. He was more puzzled now than ever. He had never heard of anyone camping here, and he knew the woods and the country for many miles around. It was a wonder that the Daggert brothers had never mentioned it, as the ledge was so near their house. But perhaps they knew nothing about it, and if so it was strange for there was little that escaped their ferret-like eyes. Drum smiled as he pictured their astonishment when he told them of his discovery.

Seeing no one near the cabin, he slowly, and warily advanced until he reached the building. Lifting the latch, he opened the door and peered in. All was dark inside, with no sign of life. Drawing forth a piece of candle from a pocket in his jacket, he lighted it, and then stepped cautiously within. A small stove and a rough table surrounded by several blocks of wood to serve as seats were all the articles the cabin contained. There was no floor, merely the bare ground, while at one side were some old fir and spruce boughs which evidently had been used for a bed. He searched carefully, but could find no clue whatsoever as to the occupants of the place.

Drum's curiosity was now fully aroused. There was something strange about this cabin situated in such a concealed spot. What did it mean? he asked himself. Stepping outside, he noticed that the road he had followed did not end here, but continued along the foot of the rocky ledge. Extinguishing the candle, he hurried forward, hoping to find some solution to the mystery. Perhaps, after all, the road might wind around to the brook farther down, and had been used by some nearby farmer. But why would anyone in the parish need such a cabin as the one but a short distance away? It was all very puzzling.

Rounding at length a sharp bend where an exceptionally large mass of rugged rocks jutted forth, the road suddenly ended. Drum stopped and peered in every direction, but for a minute or two he looked in vain for any enlightenment to the problem. No one had been lumbering there, for the trees which crowded almost up to the base of the ledge were untouched. There was merely the narrow bare space close to the cliff which the road followed.

Drum was about to return for another more thorough search of the cabin, but before doing so he stepped to the extreme end of the road. As he did so, his eyes caught sight of old footprints in the snow in a deep crevice between two large overhanging rocks. Here was something needing investigation, so leaving the road, he scrambled up over a heap of stones from which the thaw had melted the snow. The footprints beyond were plainly visible and led to the left around a sharp point of rock. A few steps brought him in view of something which arrested his immediate attention. It was the thick top of a green spruce tree lying close to the base of the ledge. It was strange for this to be in such a position as it could not have fallen so far from any tree on the opposite side of the road. It must have been dragged there for some definite purpose. Just what that was Drum could not tell until he had pulled it aside, when an opening of several feet in extent was exposed, leading right into the wall of rock. Drum gave a low whistle of surprise, certain now that he had come upon something of real importance. That this hole led into a cave he felt sure, so stooping, he peered within. But nothing could he see, for all was in darkness. Again lighting his candle, he crawled in through the opening on his hands and knees, keeping the candle well in front of him. When inside, he stopped, squatted on the ground and peered around. His gun he held in readiness, not knowing what to expect next. The roof of the cave was only about five feet high and seven wide, but how long he could not tell. A creepy feeling possessed him as he crept cautiously forward. The air was oppressive and he longed to turn back. But he did want to find out what lay beyond, and also the size of this rocky tunnel. When he had advanced about five yards, he noticed a number of objects lined along the right wall. By the light of the candle, he soon noticed that they were powder kegs, and a large number of them, at that. Stooping, he was enabled to see the letters "P" upon some and "B" upon others.

"Powder and bullets!" he exclaimed. "Now, what in time are they doing here? Who can have any use for so much ammunition? I wonder how many kegs there are?"

He began to count, but had not proceeded far when a piece of torn paper lying near one of the kegs attracted his attention. This he at once picked up, held it close to the candle and began to read. As he did so, he understood the meaning of that rough road, the cabin among the rocks, and the ammunition concealed in the cave.

"To the People of America," so ran the writing. "We come among you as the foes of the British. We have taken up the sword to strike down the oppressor's rod, to deliver Ireland from the tyrant, the robber. We have registered our oaths upon the altar of our country in the full view of heaven, and sent up our vows to the Throne of Him who

inspired them. Then, looking about us for an enemy, we find him here, here in your midst where he is most accessible and convenient to our strength, etc.

"The spirit of our organization is running like an electric current in the east, north, and west where hundreds of thousands warn England that her tyranny over our native country must end."

Drum's hands trembled with excitement, and his eyes blazed with anger. The whole mystery was now solved. Strange that he had not thought of it sooner. He knew of the anxiety throughout the country caused by the threatened Fenian Raid from across the Border. It was household talk, and everywhere soldiers were being drilled to repel the invaders. So the storing of these kegs of powder and bullets was but a part of the preparation in the general scheme of attack. Unexpectedly he had come across this cave, and how was he to use the knowledge in his possession? To whom should he take that piece of paper? He looked at it again, and his eyes rested upon the words, in big letters, "On to Canada," followed by the doggerel lines,

"We are a Fenian Brotherhood, skilled in the arts of war,
And we're going to fight for Ireland, the land that we adore,
Many battles we have fought, along with the boys in blue,
And we'll go and capture Canada, for we've nothing else to do."

Here the paper was so torn that Drum could read no further. But this was enough for his purpose. He knew that he had made an important discovery, and the sooner he acted the better it would be.

Leaving the cave, he replaced the tree-top and then went back to the road. Here he stood and looked around, hoping that some of the enemy who threatened his country would suddenly make an appearance. And truly Drum Rowan would have made a formidable opponent. Strong and supple as a wild cat, inured to life in the open, and trained to great endurance, all who reckoned with him would have been forced to contend with one hundred and seventy pounds of hard spare flesh, bones and sinewy muscles. He was greatly stirred now by the discovery he had just made. So the Fenians were planning to capture Canada, were they? Perhaps even now they had numerous caves all over the country where they had ammunition stored ready for the time of invasion. Could he frustrate their plans? Would this one hiding-place be the clue to others? To whom should he first impart his information? There was one he longed to tell, for he knew how interested she would be, and he pictured her sparkling eyes and animated face as she listened to his story. But, no, he would not speak to her now, as she could give him no advice as to the course he should pursue. Some person in authority must be consulted, one who would be able to take immediate action. And where could he find such a man? Ah, he knew one in the city, and he would go to him at once.

Drum walked swiftly back over the road until he came to the cabin. He looked upon it in a new light now. It was the stopping-place of the plotters. But how had they managed to erect that abode and bring in so much ammunition without any of the neighbours knowing anything about it? They must have been working there for some time, and it was strange that no word of their doings had been reported throughout the country. The more Drum thought about this as he hurried onward the more puzzled he became. Anyway, he had made a great discovery, the thought of which thrilled his entire being.

CHAPTER 2

THE DIVIDING LINE

The Valley of The Jaws lay shrouded in darkness as Drum Rowan stood on the summit of the hill above and looked back over the route he had just travelled. The spear-like points of innumerable pines, firs, and spruces were still faintly visible in the deepening gloom. A slight breath of wind winging up from the river caused them to tremble, which seemed to the watcher like an involuntary shudder. Perhaps it was a sigh drawn by that great lung of Nature. Anyway, it smote him in an ominous manner. The pain in his hand reminded him of the gripping jaws of the deadly steel trap. Was there a meaning in that accident? He thought of the rough cabin, and the cave with its store of ammunition. The entire valley, dark and silent, assumed a sinister aspect. There also came to his mind the weird stories told by Indians and old people of the neighbourhood. Was there something in such ideas, after all? He could not believe there was, and yet a peculiar sensation affected him such as he had never experienced before. It made him angry at himself, so with one more sweeping glance down over the valley, he left the ridge and plunged into the forest behind.

He walked rapidly, in keeping with the agitated state of his mind, until he reached an open space where wood-choppers had been at work. Here he stopped and looked around.

"Tom and Bill haven't done much of late, it seems to me," he remarked aloud. "Why, they haven't a cord of wood cut. We'll never get the boat loaded at this rate."

"I'm going to see what's the matter with them. Hettie may be able to do something for my hand. She'll have liniment, anyway."

Crossing to the opposite side of the little clearing, he entered upon a well-beaten wood-road. This he followed, and ere long came in sight of a small house nestling close to the edge of the forest. Smoke was pouring forth from the one chimney, and a feeble glimmer of light struggled through the only window on the northern side of the building. Nearby was a barn, in front of which was a sled loaded with cordwood.

It took Drum but a few minutes to reach the house, and in response to his rap, the door was slowly opened and a girl peered forth. Seeing the young man standing there, her eyes brightened, and a smile overspread her thin face. She pulled the door wide open, and stepped aside.

"Oh, it's you, Drum, is it?" she accosted.

"Yes, that's who it is, Hettie, and I hope supper is ready."

"It's a'most. I've jist got some more pancakes to fry. But, come in an' walk careful on that line."

She pointed to the floor, and Drum noticed a chalk mark extending from the door right up to the middle of the large open fire-place. The surprised expression upon his face caused the girl to laugh outright.

"Ye wonder what it's thar fer, I s'pose?"

"I certainly do, Hettie. Have you been learning to draw?"

"Should say not. Dad done it. Him an' Unc have fit, an' that line's thar to keep 'em apart."

"Het, what are ye yangin' 'bout?" an angry voice from near the fire asked. "Shet the door; us is freezin'."

Drum at once stepped inside, and the door was closed.

"Keep on the line," the girl reminded as he started to go forward. "Dad or Unc'll be mad; one or t'other, if ye don't."

Drum laughed as he obeyed and carefully watched his steps. He stopped when almost near the fire-place and looked at the two Daggert brothers, Bill seated on the left and Tom on the right. They were a queer looking pair, startling and ghoulish in appearance, with their long hair, unkempt beards, and black, bead-like eyes peering out from under great bushy eyebrows. Drum was never sure of the reception he would receive from these odd men. Sometimes they were effusive in their welcome, and again sullen and silent. But so accustomed was he to their varying moods that he treated

them almost like children. He knew that they were always glad to see him, for with the exception of Andy Dooner, the shoemaker, known up and down the land as the "cat-whipper," he was the only visitor to their house. From him they heard some of the latest news of the parish for which they were always eager. This new freak of dividing the house by means of the chalk line was very amusing to Drum. He pretended to be most anxious lest he should make a mistake, so when he stopped, he looked first at Tom and then at Bill. As neither spoke, he turned to the girl who was following him.

"Bring me a chair, Hettie," he ordered. "I am going to stay right on this line and act as a judge between your father and uncle. You might also pull up that little table so I can eat my supper here."

When Hettie had complied with this request, she disappeared into an adjoining room, leaving Drum alone with the two brothers. His hand was hurting him, so pulling off his mitten, he examined the red mark caused by the jaws of the trap. The fingers were swollen, and these he rubbed with his right hand. The brothers watched him intently, but neither spoke. Their curiosity, however, was aroused, and this Drum knew.

"Have you any liniment?" he presently asked, turning to Tom. "I've hurt my hand."

"Lin'min? Yaas, got little," was the slow, drawling reply. "Het," he called, "where's that bot' lin'min?"

In another minute the girl reappeared. She wore a clean apron now, and her hastily-combed hair was adorned with a bright-red ribband. There was a slight flush in her white cheeks as she placed a bottle upon the table.

"My! you look fine, Hettie," Drum complimented. "Expecting your young man to-night?" he asked, as he pulled out the cork and bathed his injured hand.

"How did ye hurt it, Drum?" the girl inquired, while the flush on her cheeks deepened.

"Oh, caught it in a trap I was setting over there in the Jaws. I never did such a thing before."

A sudden expression of fear appeared in the girl's eyes, and her hands trembled, although she said nothing. She turned quickly away and began to stir some batter in a pan. Drum did not notice her peculiar manner, but continued rubbing his fingers.

"What's the matter with you men, anyway?" he asked looking straight at Tom.

"Us have fit," was the reply. "Us can't agree, so us part."

"What have you been fighting about?"

"Work. Bill won't do nuthin' but set in the house all the time."

"Tom's a liar," Bill retorted. "Tom won't work, so us fit."

The two men relapsed into silence and glared at each other across the room. Drum did not know what to say. He watched Hettie holding the griddle over the hot coals, and noticed how deftly she turned the pancakes by giving them a slight toss into the air.

"You do that well, Hettie," he remarked. "I suppose you get plenty of practice."

"Lots of it, Drum. Too much, I guess. But Dad an' Unc kin do their own cookin' after this if they don't behave theirselves. I'm sick of so much fightin'. They're jist like two babies."

"Het, you shet up," her father sternly ordered.

"I won't shet up, Dad. I've shet up too long a'ready, an' now I'm goin' to have my say."

The girl had risen from her stooping position and was standing in a defiant attitude with her back to the fire. She held the hot griddle in her right hand which she waved in a threatening manner.

"Be careful, Hettie, or you'll lose that pancake," Drum warned. "I'm as hungry as a bear, so don't quit before you give me something to eat."

"I'll give you yer supper, Drum," and a softer light came into the girl's eyes as she spoke. "But I don't care if Dad an' Unc

gits any or not. It's a good starvin' they need."

Drum was not surprised at these words, for he was well aware of Hettie's temper and sharp tongue. He had heard her make similar threats before, but they had never amounted to anything. What did give him cause for wonder, though, was the little that her father said in reply, while Bill never opened his mouth. This was unusual, for when Hettie became excited there was generally a regular babel of words, until the three ceased for want of breath. Then when the blow-out ended they seemed to be perfectly satisfied, and forgot all about their squabble. But now it was different. Tom and Bill were not inclined to talk. They ate their supper in silence, keeping, however, a keen watch upon each other. When through they filled and lighted their black clay pipes, and appeared to pay no more heed to their visitor.

Drum enjoyed the pancakes, and Hettie reserved the largest and the well-browned ones for him. Although the molasses was black and not of the best quality, and the tea very strong, he ate with a hearty relish, and when he had finished he thanked the girl for the meal.

"If I'd a knowed ye was comin', Drum, I'd had some moose steak fer supper," she informed him. "But I didn't want to git it jist fer Dad an' Unc. They never thank me. All they do is scold."

The girl was seated now opposite the young man, with her elbows resting upon the table, and her hands supporting her chin. She was looking into Drum's face, and her inmost soul was expressed in her large dark eyes. Those eyes she had inherited from her mother, and they were the only marks of outward beauty that Hettie Daggert possessed.

Drum, however, was not thinking about the girl at all, although he was looking straight at her face. He was thinking how he might arouse Tom and Bill from their moody silence. He longed to tell them of the discovery he had made in the valley. That surely would excite them. But he was determined not to divulge the secret until he had reached the city and consulted with the one man upon whom he felt he could rely for sound practical advice. He wondered if he could scare these men into conversation. He would try, anyway. Rising to his feet, he turned to Tom.

"I must be going now before it gets too dark," he announced. "Some of those Fenians might be prowling around, and no one can tell what might happen. They are getting very lively across the Border, so I hear. Now, I don't like the appearance of that valley to-night, and wouldn't be a bit surprised if some of the Fenians come that way. It's always been a spooky place to me, but never so much as to-night. It was shivering and shuddering just like a frightened creature."

These words had the desired effect, for the two brothers at once left their chairs and came up close to the chalk line. Hettie also rose and stood leaning against the table, her body trembling violently and her face white with fear.

"Did ye say the Fenyuns are in the valley?" Tom asked in a voice that was little more than a hoarse whisper. "Did ye see 'em? Was 'em comin' this way?"

"Now, don't get frightened," Drum advised, amused at the excitement his words had caused. "I didn't say that the Fenians are there, remember. I only meant that it was a likely route for them to take when they attack us."

"Will 'em attack us?" Bill asked. "Will us have to fight 'em?"

"I cannot say, but it is just as well to be prepared. Have you any guns?"

"Yaas, us has three guns an' an ol' pistol," Tom replied. "But us have big fists, an' us hit hard." He waved his clenched hands in the air to give emphasis to his words.

"That's good, Tom. But you and Bill had better use your fists against the Fenians instead of against each other."

"Tom hit first," Bill declared, touching his right eye which was somewhat swollen.

"And then you two went at it. Who won?"

"Us both fit an' us both won," Tom replied.

"They fit until they couldn't fight any longer," Hettie explained. "I had to pull 'em apart. It was right out thar by the barn. They're both fools, that's what they are."

"So the chalk line was made there to keep them apart, eh? Look here, why don't you men quit such nonsense?" Drum

suggested. "Rub out that line and be friends again. The sooner you unite and get ready to fight the Fenians, the better it will be."

"Us kin fight jist as well as us be," Tom replied. "If us be friends an' the Fenyuns don't come, us'll have to fight, anyway. Us couldn't live without fightin'. Us have fit ever since us was babies, an' it comes nat'ral."

"What a glorious time you must have, Tom."

"Yaas, it does liven things up a bit. Then when Het takes a hand thar's somethin' doin', a'right. Het's got claws like a cat when it comes to scratchin'."

"What a happy family, Tom. How proud you must be of yourselves."

Drum looked upon the three standing near him, and his heart stirred with anger at the two creatures in the forms of men. For the girl he had only sympathy, knowing full well the hardness of her lot.

"When do you expect to get busy cutting that cordwood?" he abruptly asked. "You haven't delivered any for three days. The boat will never be loaded at that rate."

"Us'll never get the wood cut," Tom sullenly replied. "Bill won't work."

"Tom won't work," Bill growled, glaring over at his brother. "Us'll never do nuthin'."

"But you agreed with us to cut the wood, and we are supplying you with provisions. You get what you want at the store, don't you?"

"Deed we do," Hettie declared. "An' I tote everything we eat. I go twice a week, while Dad an' Unc jist set in the house. If they ain't fightin' with their fists, they're fightin' with their tongues. I'm sick of 'em both."

"Perhaps the Fenians will stir them up, Hettie. I guess it will need some shock like that to make any change. I'm going now, but let me tell you men this, that you will get nothing more at the store through us until you hurry up and deliver that wood as fast as you can. My father will agree with me in this, for he has lost all patience with you."

Drum turned and walked to the door. He did not try to follow the line now, for he was greatly annoyed. Much depended upon getting the boat loaded while the hauling was good, and now the two men upon whom they relied were falling down on the job. Hettie followed him, and when outside, she shut the door behind her, and laid her right hand lightly upon his arm.

"Don't go 'way mad, Drum," she pleaded.

"And who wouldn't be mad, Hettie, at such men?"

"I know it, Drum, I know it. But ye'll come ag'in, won't ye? It's awful lonesome here."

"Perhaps so."

"An', Drum——"

"Yes? What is it?"

"Keep away from The Jaws. Don't go thar, oh, don't!"

"Why?"

"Cause 'tain't safe. Something might happen thar."

Drum laughed at these words, but the girl clutched his arm with a firmer grip, and looked up into his face.

"The cranes had their nests thar last summer, Drum, an' that means bad luck."

"That's all nonsense."

"'Tain't, Drum, I tell ye. The summer afore ma died the cranes was thar. They didn't come ag'in until the year Joe Slater

shot himself when huntin'. An' they was thar last summer. Oh, I know it means bad luck, so stay away."

"What makes you think that anything will happen to me if I go there, Hettie?"

"I can't tell ye, Drum. But keep 'way from The Jaws."

Her hand dropped from his arm, she shivered, and with a partly-suppressed sob, she darted back into the house and closed the door.

CHAPTER 3

THE MAN AND THE VISION

The morning sun beamed in through the frost-covered window and rested upon the head of a man bent over an open book lying upon the table. He was reading aloud the words "His dominion shall be from one sea to another." He repeated this line several times, with his attention especially centred upon the word "dominion." Then he raised his head, and the light upon his strong intellectual face was more than that caused by the rays of the sun. It was the outward expression of a great idea that was thrilling his soul by the words he had just read. His eyes resting upon the frosted window kindled with animation. He was a lover of the beautiful, but now in the scene before him he saw a meaning such as he had never noticed before. He beheld there the work of a mystic unseen artist, who with a touch lighter than the softest down had traced upon each common window pane pictures of matchless beauty. Forms he saw, fancies rich and rare, and visions such as old masters of renown had often sought to capture, but had always sought in vain. These fairy traceries, touched by the benignant sun, glowed and sparkled with an entrancing glory. They held spellbound the lone watcher, for to him they were symbols of wonderful things which he hoped would shortly come to pass.

Samuel Leonard Tilley was a worthy leader in a great Cause, but so far he had met with discouraging defeat. The land of his birth, stretching three thousand miles from sea to sea, was divided. Canada was not at unity with itself, for each province managed its own affairs, and cared little or nothing about its nearest neighbour. Such a condition was not conducive to the strength and prosperity of the entire body, nor of the various parts, and of this Mr. Tilley was well aware. He, together with a band of noble far-seeing men, desired to bring about a lasting union, so that the land would be one from the Atlantic Ocean on the east to the Pacific on the west, and from the Border line on the south to the unknown and mysterious regions of the north. For such a country to have one main government, with each province having its own rights and privileges, but all under one flag, and all firmly united to the Motherland across the sea, was the vision which inspired the minds and souls of the leaders of this great movement. Thus the union of Canada, or "Confederation" as it was generally termed, became the vital issue during the early sixties. Only the eastern provinces were involved in the struggle, for the vast sweeping prairies, and the Pacific slope beyond the Rocky Mountains were but little known.

After many meetings had been held, and much eloquence poured forth by numerous speakers, the Province of New Brunswick was chosen for the testing out of the scheme. The election was held in 1865 when the hope of union was crushed by an overwhelming majority. To many this seemed the death of the movement. But Mr. Tilley, the dauntless leader, was of a different mind. He reorganized his broken and scattered ranks, and started forth upon a new campaign of the entire province. He did not spare himself in the least degree, but gave addresses in cities, towns, and villages in his efforts to instruct the people. But nearly everywhere he met with strong opposition, and sometimes downright hostility. Notwithstanding his abounding optimism, he was almost forced to acknowledge that he could never win the battle for Confederation in his native province.

Such was the state of his mind as he sat in his study looking upon the frosted window. He had returned the previous evening from one of his trying lecture tours in the country, and he was unusually tired. But he had been greatly inspired by some words he had read that morning in the seventy-second psalm. There had been discussion for several years as to the name of the country should union come to pass. Various names had been suggested, an outstanding one being the "Kingdom of Canada." This, as well as the others, did not meet with general approval. Mr. Tilley had given the matter very earnest consideration, so when he came across the word "dominion" in the line he had just read, he knew that the question was solved so far as he was concerned. The "Dominion of Canada." It sounded well, and so appropriate—"His Dominion shall be from one sea to the other." And the great land must be His dominion, built upon true foundations, and filled with a God-fearing people.

And following this came the scene upon that frost-bespangled window. There he beheld beauty and harmony, section upon section, separated by delicate lines, and yet all wonderfully interwoven, with no discord to mar the complete perfection of the whole. It suggested to him the vision of what Canada should be, a land filled with people, all actively engaged in various pursuits, and yet all working in such a spirit of harmony and good-will that the dividing-lines would be as slight and as evanescent as the frosty filaments upon the glass before him. Such was Mr. Tilley's lofty ideal. But how could he bring it before the people of the province? So antagonistic were they that their eyes were blinded to their own good. Speeches such as had been given, seemed to have little effect. Arguments were all in vain. Something else was needed to arouse them, and to cause their eyes to be opened. What could be done? What further argument could he

offer that would induce them to rise as one, rush forward and embrace the Cause that would lead to a glorious victory? He must have some new slogan, and where could he find one?

He rose to his feet and paced up and down the room. He was a fighter of no mean mettle, as his enemies had learned to their sorrow in his great battle against the liquor traffic a few years before. He naturally thought of that now, and the keen interest that had been aroused on all sides. He had a banner then, and a mighty slogan, which had proved most effective. But now he had apparently nothing to stem the tide of opposition. His opponents had raised the cry of "ruin and treachery." They had charged him with betraying and selling his country for eighty cents, the price of a sheepskin, and this ran like wildfire up and down the country. What could he do to counteract their lies and misrepresentations?

He returned to the table, sat down and buried his face in his hands. He had only a few minutes to spare in his quiet study ere leaving for his busy office down town. Here he could think and plan as nowhere else. But now he felt helpless. A knock upon the door aroused him. It was the maid who announced a visitor.

"Who is it?" Mr. Tilley inquired.

"I don't know, sir. He's a young man, and says he must see you at once."

"Some office-seeker, I suppose. But I can do nothing now. Anyway, send him in."

The next minute Drum Rowan entered, and walked at once across the room. Always courteous, Mr. Tilley rose to his feet and held out his hand. It was no formal grip that he gave, but a handshake that was an inspiration in itself.

"You don't know me, sir," Drum began, smiling at the keen searching expression in his leader's eyes. "I am Captain Rowan's son, Drum."

"Ah, now I remember," and Mr. Tilley's face brightened. "You have grown greatly since I saw you last. Pull up that chair and tell me about your father. He has been a good friend to me, and I wish I had more like him. Interested as ever, I suppose, in ships? It's too bad he is forced to stay on land when his heart is on the sea."

"Yes, my father does miss the water," Drum replied. "But he gets some pleasure in summer watching the boats upon the river, and in winter talking about his old sailing days. Just now, though, he is much taken up with the coming election. He is a great Confederation man, you know."

"Indeed I know it, my boy, and I wish there were more men of his stamp along the river. It is going to be a hard fight, and sometimes I am almost in despair of ever winning. I have spoken in all the cities and towns in the province and in many of the country places, but something more is needed to arouse the people. I am at my wit's end."

"They are more aroused, sir, over the Fenian scare than they are about Confederation," Drum declared. "Why, I know a number of people who can talk of nothing else. They expect the Fenians to burst upon them at any time. And I guess there is good reason for their fright. Read that," and Drum laid the piece of torn paper he had drawn from a pocket of his jacket upon the table.

Picking it up, Mr. Tilley began to read, and as he did so his eyes opened wide in amazement. His hands trembled with excitement, and when he had finished, he turned to his visitor.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded. "What have you done with the rest of the paper?"

As briefly as possible Drum told of the discovery he had made in the Valley of The Jaws, of the cabin, and the ammunition hidden in the cave in the rocky ledge.

"It was there I found that piece of paper," he said in conclusion. "I have brought it to you, thinking you might like to see it."

"You did perfectly right, young man. There is much talk, I know, about a threatened invasion of Canada, but I believed such a thing was ridiculous. Your discovery, however, and this scrap of paper, cause me to consider the matter in a new light. I knew that the Fenians had many of their Circles formed in this land, but I had no idea that they have gone so far in their preparations. Their boldness astonishes me. How do you suppose they managed to get so much ammunition there without the people in your neighbourhood knowing something about it?"

"It's a lonely place, sir, and seldom anyone goes there," Drum explained. "There is an old lumber-road down the valley to the river, and they must have brought in the ammunition over it. If the people up there knew about those supplies in the cave wouldn't they be scared. I believe that Tom and Bill Daggert would clear out at once. They are terribly afraid of the Fenians. I guess everybody will have to stop quarrelling about Confederation and unite to defend their country."

At these closing words Mr. Tilley jerked back his chair, rose quickly to his feet, and laid a firm right hand upon Drum's shoulder. He was unusually excited.

"You have suggested an idea to me, young man, of the greatest importance," he said. "I have been groping for some kind of a slogan to arouse the people of this province. And now I have it. They must unite to drive back the Fenians and save their country. And they will need the assistance of the other provinces. This threatened attack may fizzle out, as I sincerely hope it will. But it will be a warning to all that in order to defend Canada in case of any future trouble, there must be unity, and that will mean Confederation for which I have been striving. Young man, you have done a great thing to-day. You have given me a fighting-slogan."

His hand dropped from Drum's shoulder, and he paced rapidly up and down the room. His animated face, and the glow in his eyes told of his intense interest.

"Yes," he continued, more to himself than to his visitor, "this slogan of the Fenian raid will do more good than all the many speeches that have been given. It will open the eyes of all to the great necessity of union. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia will need the aid of Upper and Lower Canada as they will need ours. But without unity little can be done. I shall put it to the test, anyway, in the coming election."

He returned to the table, and sat for a few minutes lost in deep thought.

"Did you come down river this morning, Drum?" he at length questioned.

"Yes, on the ice. The skating is good."

"Have you told anyone about your discovery?"

"You are the first one, sir."

"That is well. We must keep the secret between us for a while until we learn more about the plans of the enemy. There may be other places where they have supplies of ammunition stored. I want you to watch that cave you have discovered, and inform me at once if you learn anything more of importance. I know I can trust you, for you have good Bluenose blood in your veins. It is such blood as yours that will never allow the Fenians to capture this country, and will at last bring about Confederation."

"My father is very proud of his Loyalist descent," Drum replied.

"And so am I, young man. My grandfather came here with the Spring fleet in 1783, and received a grant of land and built a house and a store on what is now King street. My Loyalist descent is one of the strongest arguments I use in my efforts to counteract the lie of my opponents that I am a traitor to my country and wish to sell it for the price of a sheepskin. I love the land of my birth, and would die for it if necessary. But we will show our opponents that the old Bluenose blood can be relied upon. Let us now get on with our business. Did I understand you to say that you skated down river this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the ice is good?"

"I never saw it better."

"Well, then, how would you like to skate to Fredericton? I have a message which must be delivered there as soon as possible. Will you take it?"

"Certainly. Let me have it, sir, and I shall start at once."

"It is not ready yet, but if you will call at my office down town at one o'clock you can get it. I shall then give you all the

instructions you will need. The message has to do with the threatened Fenian Raid, and as you are the one who suggested to me the new idea, I want you to be the first to carry it to my faithful colleagues at the Capital."

"Thank you, sir," Drum replied as he rose to his feet. "I shall go like the wind, travel all night, and reach Fredericton as soon as possible."

"Be careful, young man," Mr. Tilley warned. "There are dangerous places along the river, and I do not want anything to happen to you and to my message."

"You needn't worry, sir. I know the river well and all the treacherous places in the ice. I wouldn't undertake the journey if I didn't."



CHAPTER 4

AN ICY SPILL

There was ice everywhere. It stretched up and down the river farther than the eye could see. It shimmered and sparkled beneath the sun, a veritable miniature of the "sea of glass" in the Apocalypse of Patmos John. Even the trees along the shore reflected forth a glistening glory from their bending ice-laden branches. It was a fairy world thus presented to view, a striking contrast to the grim desolation of rain, sleet, and wind of a few days before.

It was hard ice, for the day was cold, with a keen wind whipping in from the west. The sharp steel caulks of two horses struck the glassy-like surface with rhythmical resounding thuds. They were farm horses, noble animals, sleek and well-kept, the nigh a jet black, and the off a dark bay. Flakes of froth flew from their champing mouths as they lowered and tossed their heads in their steady swinging onward movement. The big sled they were drawing was heavily loaded, but it slipped along the ice with scarcely any effort on their part.

Squire James Andrews was proud of these horses. He had raised them from colts, and had broken them to harness. He knew all their quirks and fancies, and seldom let anyone else handle the reins. Next to his family they were nearest to his heart, although his wife once remarked that she believed he thought more of his horses than he did of her and the children.

But on this cold winter afternoon Squire Andrews' mind was not so much upon his horses as formerly. He was thinking about some disturbing news he had heard that day in the city. His daughter, seated by his side, noticed that he was unusually restless, but not until they had left the land and were well out upon the river did she make any comment.

"Are you cold, father?" she asked.

"Cold! Why, no. What makes you think I am, Nell?"

"From the way you have been pulling down your cap and pounding your hands together."

"Oh, it's not the cold, Nell, that's bothering me, but something I heard in the city this afternoon about the Fenians. They're coming, and no mistake. Why, they're getting ready to attack us, and even now have supplies of ammunition stored in this province."

"Where, father?"

"I do not know, but the news is all around the city. I couldn't find out where the stores are kept, for that seems to be a secret. I don't know what this country's coming to, Nell. It's bad enough having Tilley and his gang ready to betray us with their union scheme, but now with the Fenians about to land upon us, things look blacker than ever."

"But will not our soldiers be able to drive the Fenians back, father? They have been drilling for some time, have they not?"

"Umph! little good will they be against those trained men from across the Border who have had so much experience in the Civil War. It is reported that the Fenians are the most dare-devil fighters that ever handled gun or sword. They love fighting, and now that they are out of a job in their own country, they want to come and capture Canada. They tried to take Ireland, but Old England was up to their tricks and stopped them. They then turned their eyes upon us as the next best thing. Dear me! dear me! I never expected to see such times."

"Don't feel too badly, father," Nell replied. "I am sure that our soldiers will be able to defeat them. The young men up our way are good marksmen."

"Oh, they'll run like a flock of sheep when the Fenians get after them."

"Tom won't, anyway, and there are others just like him," Nell stoutly defended.

"No, Tom's not a coward, Nell, and that's what's worrying me. They'll take him, my only son, and most likely he'll get killed the first thing. If they'd take the useless ones and leave the others home, I wouldn't mind. Now, there's Drum Rowan, for instance. I met him on the street to-day, and he was doing nothing as usual, just sauntering along, gazing in at

the shop windows. If they'd take good-for-nothings like him, and leave hard-working boys like Tom at home there would be some sense."

Nell made no reply, but a flush of indignation came into her cheeks which her father did not notice owing to the hood which partly covered her face. She, too, had met Drum that day, and the memory of their conversation as they walked along the street was still fresh in her mind. She resented the words she had just heard, for no matter how idle and careless Drum might be, his upright manliness always appealed to her. She understood him better than did her father and others who criticised him. Perhaps if people were in the habit of speaking more kindly about him, it might have made a difference. But Nell Andrews had a mind of her own, so the fact that Drum Rowan was considered somewhat wild by the steady-going people of the neighbourhood tended to enhance him all the more in her estimation.

"I hear there's going to be a political meeting up our way next week," Mr. Andrews remarked after a few minutes' silence. "Some able speakers are coming to Glendale, and I hope they'll open the eyes of some of our neighbours."

"Is Mr. Tilley coming?" Nell asked.

"Tilley! I should say not. He knows better than to come there with his Confederation twaddle. He's been almost everywhere in the province except at Glendale."

"I should like to hear him, father, for I believe he is a good man, and has the welfare of his country at heart. He is a fighter, too, and that is the kind of a man I like."

"Why, Nell!" her father exclaimed in surprise, "what's come over you, anyway? I never heard you talk this way before. But, then, you're only a woman, so you can't understand things as men do."

"Perhaps not," and the girl gave a slight sigh. "But I know that Mr. Tilley is a man to be trusted, and that is more than can be said about some of his opponents."

"Trusted!" Mr. Andrews spoke the word so sharply that the horses pricked up their ears and quickened their pace. "Would you trust a man who is trying to betray his country, and bring dire ruin upon us? What will become of us all if his Confederation scheme is carried? We'll be beggars, turned out of house and home."

Their attention was now diverted by the sound of a great jingle of bells, and looking back, they saw four horses following them at a high rate of speed, drawing a sleigh loaded with men. Intuitively Mr. Andrews lifted his whip, for the sporting instinct was strong within him, and he disliked the idea of being passed by the approaching team. He resisted the temptation, however, and lowered his whip-hand.

"It's only a bunch of idiots out on a spree," he growled. "Listen to their yelps."

Nell was already listening, and what she heard was pleasing to her ears. Strong male voices were lifted up in the chorus of the popular song,

"Thou art going far away,
Far away from poor Janette."

The four steaming horses seemed to enter into the spirit of the singers, and with outstretched necks were clipping along at a rapid pace. When opposite the slow-moving farm team, the men ceased their song, and waved their mittened hands.

"Want a lift?" one laughingly asked.

"We can't keep dinner waiting," another called out.

"Good-bye," several shouted, as the sleigh swept past.

"Why, they're a bunch of city lawyers," Mr. Andrews declared. "They're out for a time, and it looks to me as if they've been drinking. That's all the good Tilley's liquor bill did."

"But it shut up two hundred taverns in the city, didn't it, father?" Nell asked. "That must have been some good."

"Umph! Oh, yes, they were closed for a short time, but it didn't stop people from drinking. You have an example there in

that bunch of lawyers. They're off for The Three Elms, I suppose, to have a regular blow-out. I wish we didn't have to stop there, for I don't want to meet them. But the horses must be fed, so it can't be helped. But hello! what's up now?"

Nell lifted her eyes at her father's exclamation and noticed that there was trouble among the gay party ahead. The cause was soon apparent. The driver had swung his horses somewhat sharply to the left to avoid striking a log frozen into the ice. And as he did so, the sleigh began to slue, and swept by the wind, it was circling sideways over the ice. The driver made frantic efforts to straighten out his team, and the horses struggled desperately to hold their load. But the momentum of the sleigh was too great and they were nearly carried off their feet as they staggered helplessly to the left. Then suddenly there came a sharp impact against the embedded log. There was crash, and in another instant the right side of the sleigh dropped, crumpling up beneath it the splintered knees of the long, lean steel-shod runner. At the same time the men shot forth from their seats, some like swimmers taking to water, and others resembling bears rolling and tumbling over one another in a confused heap.

When the crash came Nell gave a cry of fright, and impulsively clutched her father's left arm. But when she saw the lawyers sprawling upon the ice, a smile overspread her face. The men did look so funny as they scrambled to their knees and tried to stand upright. But the ice was so slippery and the wind so strong, that when they attempted to walk they went down again with vigorous bumps. And there they sat, some glaring at one another, and others berating the driver for his carelessness. The latter, however, paid no heed to their abuse, for his attention was taken up entirely with restraining his excited horses.

In the meantime Mr. Andrews had pulled up his team close by the scattered men, and watched them for a minute or two in amused silence. He was enjoying this unexpected outcome to the merry sleighing party.

"What are you trying to do?" he asked in apparent surprise. "Holding Court, eh? It's a funny place, it seems to me. And all legal lights, too! My, what a happy time you are having."

Instead of being annoyed at these bantering words, the lawyers laughed heartily. They now saw the humor of the situation, and were ready to make the best of their awkward and humiliating predicament.

"We have just concluded the evidence for the defence and have decided to adjourn," one of the men replied. "Our appetites require something more nourishing than legal disputations, so if you will convey us to the hostel, commonly known as 'The Three Elms,' where our repast is awaiting us, we shall be greatly obliged."

"Want a lift, eh?" Mr. Andrews queried. "Well, as you so kindly offered one to me a little while ago, I can't refuse you the same courtesy. You'll have to hang on to the sides, though, for there is no room on top of this load."

The lawyers at once started for the sled, some crawling on their hands and knees, and others walking precariously over the slippery ice. Dignity was out of the question, and Mr. Andrews watched them with twinkling eyes.

"Oh, if poor Janette could only see you now," he remarked. "A few minutes ago you were all yelping about being so far away from her. But I guess you're mighty glad she isn't anywhere in sight at this present minute."

With considerable difficulty the lawyers reached the sled, where they stood on the thick runners and held fast to anything upon which they could get a firm grip with their hands. And there they clung, with the wind whipping about their bodies and chilling them to the bones. They shivered, and their teeth chattered as they begged Mr. Andrews to drive faster.

"I thought you men had enough of fast driving," he replied. "These horses are not accustomed to speeding. They only know a good steady walk, and if more people would follow their example there wouldn't be so much trouble in life. But they'll get us there, all right, so just tighten up your belts, keep your teeth in your jaws, and stick to the sled."

CHAPTER 5

"WHICH CUT, GENTLEMEN?"

The genial keeper of The Three Elms was in a quandary. It was hard enough for the specially-prepared dinner to be so long delayed, but to have Squire Andrews and his daughter arrive with the belated lawyers placed him in an awkward predicament. He felt that the city men would not care to have country people with them at dinner. The presence of strangers might interfere with their hilarity and restrain their conversation. On the other hand, the Andrews were so respectable, and such firm friends of his, that he disliked the idea of seating them at a separate table. In his perplexity he referred the matter to several of the lawyers who were warming themselves before the big open fire-place.

"You needn't worry about that, Mr. Harris," Tom Rodgers replied. "Let them have dinner with us. We need a woman to grace the table, and from the glimpse I had of Miss Andrews she'll be most acceptable company. Don't you think so, Dick?"

His question was directed to the youngest member of the party, who was standing at one end of the fire-place. He flushed a little at being thus addressed.

"Oh, Dick's too hungry to be interested in women just now," another laughingly remarked. "Wait until he has had his dinner. It's turkey he wants, and I guess the rest of us are of the same opinion. Hurry up and serve us, Mr. Harris. We'll look after the rustics."

"Why not let the farmer do the carving?" Dick asked. "It would be great fun. He will be sure to get excited when he sees so many hungry lawyers waiting to be served."

"That's a fine idea," Andrew Stobart agreed. "We're out for fun, so we might as well get all we can. It will make up somewhat for our mishap on the ice. Squire Andrews had the laugh on us when we were dumped on the ice. It will be our turn next."

The matter was thus settled, and in anticipation of a good dinner and considerable amusement at the farmer's expense, the men filed into the dining-room.

In the meantime Nell was alone in a room upstairs. She had laid aside her hood and warm coat and was arranging her hair before a small mirror over a bureau. It was luxuriant hair, dark-brown, and rippling like a wind-touched pool in midsummer. Carefully she brushed back several filmy tresses that had wilfully strayed over her glowing cheeks and unwrinkled brow. A sense of dignity was revealed in her shapely well-poised head, and her face exhibited more than an ordinary wealth of beauty and intelligence. Her lustrous brown eyes bore a slight expression of worry as she lowered them from the mirror to the dress she was wearing. Although it was a homespun dress, it was most becoming, and fitted to perfection her well-formed body. But she was thinking of the lawyers downstairs, and of her appearance before them at dinner. She wished that she had worn the dress she kept for special occasions instead of this one which seemed so coarse and mean.

With another glance into the mirror, she ere long left the room and reached the dining-room just as the last lawyer was entering. Her father was already seated at the table, and he motioned her to a chair by his side. He was sitting very erect, silent and grim. He watched the men as they took their seats, and in his eyes was a peculiar expression, almost of triumph.

Squire Andrews truly surmised the reason for his position at the head of the table. Words of explanation were unnecessary, for the expectant look upon the faces of the men before him was all that he needed. He knew that they were waiting for the fun to begin, and he was determined that it should not be at his expense, at any rate. He was too old and shrewd a man to be caught in such a palpable trap. When at length the last chair had been scraped into place, and silence reigned, he looked calmly down over the table.

"Gentlemen," he began, "as you wish me to take the head of the table, I shall, as is my custom in my own house, ask a blessing upon this food."

He bowed his head, and in a clear voice repeated his customary words:

"For these and all other blessings, O Lord, give us thankful hearts."

This ended, he lifted his head, seized the big carving-knife and fork, and looked quizzically at the assembled men.

"Now, gentlemen, which will you have, a bushman's cut or a lumberman's cut?"

A complete silence followed this unexpected announcement, for the lawyers were taken by surprise. They looked at one another, each waiting for some one else to reply.

"What is the difference between the cuts?" Tom Rodgers at last found voice to ask. "Suppose we let you decide."

"No, it's your move, not mine. You lawyers have the credit of knowing everything, so you'll have to settle it yourselves."

Squire Andrews then deliberately carved off a choice piece of the turkey, and transferred it to the top of the pile of plates in front of him. He next helped himself to the vegetables, and then paused before beginning to eat.

"Have you made up your minds yet, gentlemen?" he asked. "You had better hurry up, for this bird is getting cold."

In the meantime the lawyers had been discussing the difference between the "cuts," and finally decided in favor of the one suggestive of a larger helping.

"We'll take the lumberman's cut," Rodgers announced. "We don't know what it's like, but we must have something, for we're almost starved."

There was a note of irritation in his voice, for he, as well as his companions were becoming annoyed at the delay. The farmer was not proving such an easy mark as they had fondly imagined.

"All right, gentlemen," the Squire replied, "let every man help himself. That is the lumberman's cut."

He shoved the turkey over to Nell, who carved off a small slice for herself, and then moved it toward a man seated at her left. She was greatly embarrassed at what had just taken place, and wished that her father had not been so stern and abrupt. She knew that a young man on the opposite side of the table was looking intently at her, and this added to her confusion. Her appetite almost left her, and she longed to leave the room. In a few minutes, however, she regained her composure, for the lawyers had entered into the spirit of the farmer's joke, and were talking and laughing in the most animated manner. Their gaiety was mostly due to the rough usage the turkey was undergoing as it passed from man to man. Some were adept at carving, but several had evidently never handled a carving-knife and fork before, so their sorry efforts met with nothing but disaster. The bird would slip provokingly off the platter, and at times it was more active than it had ever been when alive. Many were the comments and jibes hurled at the exasperated and unskilled carvers before the last man had served himself. The fowl was a wreck, and only the skeleton remained as a mute witness to its unusual dimensions.

Squire Andrews watched with interest all that was taking place. He listened to the various remarks, and at times joined in the laughter. But not until the legless, wingless and fleshless bird had once more reached the head of the table and rested again in front of his plate did he vouchsafe any comment.

"Alas! poor bird! The lawyers have stripped you, all right," he remarked. "They haven't left a scrap of flesh upon your bones. And you're not the only two-legged creature they've treated in the same manner. It's natural with them, I guess."

"Come, come, Squire, you must not be too hard on us," Peter Dobson laughingly protested. "We're not as bad as all that."

"I'm only judging, sir, by the way some of you fellows treated Andy Dekker and Bill Parker up our way. Why, you stripped them cleaner than you did that turkey."

"Don't blame the lawyers for that, Squire," Dobson replied. "I remember that case very well. But it wasn't our fault that your neighbours quarrelled."

"No, I suppose not. But it was mighty fine pickings you got, for all that. And you want to do the same with our country. If that fool Confederation scheme carries, it won't be long before our province will be just like that bird. It will be so picked to pieces that no one will recognize it. And you lawyers will get most of the pickings."

Impulsively Nell lifted her right hand and touched her father's arm.

"Don't talk that way," she pleaded in a low voice.

"Oh, it's all right, Nell," was the reply. "I'm only having a little fun. These men don't mind what I say. They're too busy with the turkey."

"But we're not too busy to listen to what you have to say, Squire," Rodgers declared. "What have you against Confederation, anyway?"

"A great deal, sir. Yes, a great deal, for it will mean the ruination of this province. We're prospering now down here by the sea, with our ship-building, lumbering, and farming. Upper and Lower Canada have been casting greedy eyes upon us for some time back. They want to take all of our revenue, and give us eighty cents a head in return for every man, woman, and child. Why, it means that they'll take a cow from us at every jump, and only give us back a sheepskin."

"Oh, it won't be anything like that, Squire," Edward Benson, a rising young lawyer, replied. "We shall be one big family, and so all the provinces will share alike. We are too provincial now, and think only of ourselves, but if Confederation carries there will be a greater progress, as well as an additional strength and unity."

"Unity! H'm! It will be the unity of rogues picking this province to pieces, just like you picked that turkey. Look at the poor thing now."

Squire Andrews rose to his feet and looked down upon the men before him. The stern expression passed from his face and he was smiling upon them.

"I must be away now, gentlemen," he announced. "But before I go, I want to thank you for this dinner and the enjoyable time you have given us. I'm mighty glad to have taken a little part in your shindy. I hope you will get safely home, and don't get another spill upon the ice. You are all true sports and took your mishap like men. So, good-day, and the best of luck to you all."

"Let us drink to the health of Squire Andrews and his daughter," Tom Rodgers cried, rising to his feet and lifting his glass.

"To the Squire and his daughter!" all responded, as they, too, rose and drained their glasses. This was followed by three rousing cheers and a tiger.

Nell was trembling with excitement as she went upstairs for her coat and hood. Her face was still flushed when she came down a few minutes later, and stood near the fire-place awaiting her father who had gone for the horses. She could hear the lawyers making merry in the dining-room, and knew that they were now drinking more than was good for them.

And as she stood there, the young man who had been observing her so intently across the table, came to her side.

"Excuse me, Miss Andrews," he began. "I am Richard Mason, and I wish to apologise for the way we treated your father to-day. It was really my fault that he was placed at the head of the table. I made the suggestion."

"You need not worry about that, Mr. Mason," Nell brightly replied. "My father is well able to take care of himself, as you have already seen."

"Indeed he is, and that was a great joke he played upon us. We deserved it, too. I am sorry you have to leave so soon, Miss Andrews. But I expect to be up your way next week, and then I hope to see you again."

Nell hardly heard these closing words, for happening to glance toward the kitchen on the right, she saw Drum Rowan seated at a table, intently watching her. She smiled at him, but he gave no sign of recognition, and in another minute he was gone. Nell wondered why he had not come to speak to her, and this was in her mind as she once again took her place on the sled by her father's side. She thought, too, of the young lawyer who had spoken to her, and she mentally compared his neat well-fitting clothes and gentlemanly appearance with Drum's coarse suit and somewhat rough manner. The snap of the whip and her father's voice aroused her.

"Say, Nell, that was the best fun I've had in a long time. A bushman's cut or a lumberman's cut! Ho, ho! That stuck them, all right. They didn't get ahead of an old hayseed after all, Ho, ho!"

CHAPTER 6

A NIGH-GO

It was a clear night and countless stars twinkled overhead. Scarcely a breath of wind impeded Drum Rowan as he glided down the river on his sharp "Long-Reachers." He was a strong skater, as many a worthy opponent had learned to his sorrow. He seemed almost tireless, and now on the last lap of his journey from Fredericton he was apparently as fresh as when he had sped by the mouths of the Oromocto and the Washademoak. His body, powerful and lithe as a young panther, bent and swayed in rhythmical motion as he drove forward the biting steel blades. During the day he had met or overtaken many teams, and he had always gone past them like a whirlwind with head lowered and hands firmly clasped behind his back. When night shut down, he beheld a number of fires on the ice in coves along the shore, around which young people were circling and having a merry time. He halted at none of these, for a great inward urge was impelling him onward.

Drum had not remained long in Fredericton after delivering Mr. Tilley's message. The thought of that cave in the Valley of The Jaws filled his mind with a sense of deep responsibility. He longed to be back that he might watch the place and keep a sharp lookout for the Fenians. Down in his heart was a strong desire to capture the enemy himself. What a glorious thing it would be, and he believed that Nell would be proud of him. He wished to serve his country, and yet he well knew that it was the girl he loved who inspired him more than the spirit of patriotism. In a way, New Brunswick meant little to him. Canada was something vague, a name and nothing else. But Nell was a living, breathing personality, a combination of charms and contradictions. To him the ground on which she walked was almost sacred; her smile ravished him with joy; her frown filled him with despair.

It was this latter spirit which possessed him as he swept down the river. He could not forget that scene at The Three Elms when Nell had stood talking with the lawyer. He knew how impressed she must have been by the well-dressed young man, and no doubt she was thinking about him now. He had heard her express a desire for the city and a life different from that of the country. This was but a natural longing, he was well aware, and he did want her to be happy. But it brought to his heart a feeling of discouragement, akin to despair. What had he to offer such a girl? He was rough, and led a rough life, for running a wood-boat on the river in summer and trapping in winter were not the occupations of a man suited to a woman of Nell's disposition. The idea annoyed him, and the blood surged madly through his veins. He skated faster now, every ringing stroke telling of the agitated state of his heart and brain.

Ere long he came to a stretch of the river where the ice was weak, so it was necessary for him to keep close to the right bank. Unwary skaters had been entrapped there in the past, and careless drivers had lost their teams by venturing too far from the shore. Although daring by nature, Drum was most cautious when travelling upon the ice in winter. He knew that the river was a treacherous monster, subject to strange freaks, booming and roaring at times like an imprisoned spirit, and opening up a great yawning mouth here or there to drag down some helpless victim. Suddenly and unexpectedly such a crack would appear, several yards in width. A skater might pass over firm ice during the afternoon, and upon his return at night might have his way barred, and if not cautious, would find himself struggling for life in the icy water.

There were other places where the river was frozen only in extreme cold weather. This was due to smaller streams flowing into the larger one. Here the current was swift, and when the ice did form it was generally thin and deceptive. Such was the death-trap on Drum's left as he now moved very carefully forward. He had reached the lower end of the treacherous spot, and had struck out once more on his long swinging strides. A light far ahead had arrested his attention, and he knew its meaning. The young people of Maple Cove were enjoying themselves upon the ice directly in front of Squire Andrews' house. He surmised that Nell was there, for of all sports in which she indulged skating was her chief delight. Drum pictured her encircling that blazing pile, her companion, no doubt, being Seth Sloan, his most persistent rival for her affections.

Suddenly from the left came a wild cry for help. It rang out again and again, causing Drum to stop so quickly that the blades of his skates were in danger of being wrenched from their wooden tops as they ground sidewise along the ice and brought up with a sharp jerk. Keenly he peered through the darkness, and when another cry, fainter now, reached his ears, he leaped impetuously forward. Someone was over there in great danger, so he must do what he could to save him.

A few strong strokes brought him to a spot where he knew the ice was weak, so dropping upon his hands and knees he crept cautiously along. He called out for the distressed person to hold on as he was coming to his aid. In a few minutes

he was able to detect an object in front of him which he soon learned was a small hand-sled. Beyond this came the voice, pleading for him to make haste. This he recognized as that of Andy Dooner, the old travelling shoemaker.

"Hold on, Andy," he shouted. "I'm almost there."

"Quick, quick," came the reply. "Oh!"

Drum knew that there was not a second to lose, so dropping full length upon the ice he worked himself forward until his right hand grasped the sled. This he pushed toward the unfortunate man, whose head and shoulders he could now discern.

"I can't go any closer, Andy," he said. "Hold fast to the sled and I shall try to pull you out. But don't get excited or you might pull me in."

Turning himself around as carefully as possible, Drum scored the blades of his skates into the thin ice and braced himself for a strong steady pull. Not a word was spoken, for both men realised the seriousness of the situation. Had the skates slipped, or had the bending ice given way, the two would have gone down to a watery grave. The perspiration stood out in beads upon Drum's forehead as he held firmly to the sled, pulling steadily all the time. Gradually it was drawn toward him, and soon he saw Andy's shoulders rising higher out of the water, then his body, and in another minute his entire length was sprawling upon the ice. Ordering the dripping man not to rise, Drum drew him as swiftly as possible over the smooth surface, well toward the shore. He then stopped and went to Andy's side.

"That was a close call," he remarked, looking down upon the prostrate form. "I thought you had more sense than to come here."

"It was a nigh-go, Drum, an' no mistake," Andy feebly replied. His body was shaking and his teeth chattering. "I was crossin' from Kingston an' thought I was funder down."

Seeing that he was suffering greatly from the cold, and that the water was freezing upon his clothes, Drum lifted him bodily and laid him upon the sled. He then stripped off his own outer coat and placed it around his shivering form.

"There, that will help a little," he declared as he picked up the sled-rope. "I must get you away from here at once."

"T-take me to S-squire A-andrews', Drum. N-nell'll f-fix me up."

He paused, lifted his head, and looked around.

"W-where's me f-fiddle?" he cried. "Ah, t-there it is!"

He pointed to a black object dimly discernible on the left.

"G-get it, b-oy. I remember s-scootin' it thar w-when I w-went in."

Dropping the rope, Drum skated carefully back, picked up the box and returned to the sled.

"Here, take your precious fiddle," he laughingly said. "You were bound to save it, anyway."

Andy seized it eagerly and held it close.

"I-it's me b-best f-friend, me b-best f-friend," he murmured. "I c-couldn't lose me f-fiddle."

Drum knew that no more time was to be wasted, so again picking up the rope, he started forward at a rapid pace. Down the river he sped with the swirling sled at his heels, straight toward the fire still burning brightly in the cove. Ere long he was able to discern moving forms, and he felt certain that Nell was there. Nearer and nearer he approached, and finally glided into the flame-illuminated circle. His presence, and the strange bundle on the sled, produced considerable interest, which was succeeded by much excitement when Andy Dooner's ice-clad form was exposed to view.

Drum hardly heard the questions that were being asked, as his eyes were searching the crowd for Nell. But she was nowhere to be seen, and he did not like to inquire for her. He was disappointed, and his thoughts flashed at once to the young lawyer he had seen at The Three Elms. Perhaps he had come for her, and they were off somewhere together. A light touch upon his arm caused him to glance quickly around. Standing by his side was Hettie Daggert, looking up into his face.

"She ain't here, Drum," she whispered. "She's out on the ice with Seth."

Drum started slightly at these words, astonished and annoyed that the girl had so truly read his thoughts. He made her no reply, however, but bidding several of the young men to help him, he started for the shore. He had barely reached the land, when Nell appeared, and with her Seth Sloan. Her cheeks were aglow with health and exercise, and her eyes bright with interest and concern as she looked down upon the man lying on the sled.

"What has happened, Andy?" she asked. "Are you hurt?"

"I was j-jist t-takin' a bath, N-Nellie, an' g-got beyond me d-depth."

"In the river?"

"Ay, ay, in the r-river. It's v-very s-stimulatin'."

"Why, you're freezing, Andy!" the girl exclaimed. "You must get up to the house at once. Your clothes are frozen stiff."

"It's me a-armour, N-Nellie, t-t-to protect me h-heart from the g-g-girls."

Nell laughed, and so did all who heard him. They knew that nothing could dampen the spirit of this tough little wiry man they had known from infancy. He was a vital part of every household for miles around. They were well acquainted with his thrilling experiences on river and land as he journeyed from place to place. This was not the first time he had been rescued from a hole in the ice, and it was common knowledge that he sometimes slept in a snow-bank when overtaken by a storm. But he always turned up with a smile on his wrinkled beardless face, and a joke upon his lips.

Having removed their skates, Drum and several young men lifted the shoemaker from the sled and bore him swiftly up to the house. They carried him to the door of the cellar-kitchen, and here Drum left them, for over that threshold he must not pass. Not even on such an occasion as this would he enter a building from which he had been repulsed and sternly ordered never to set foot there again. His proud Bluenose blood had been stirred, and not for worlds would he give Squire Andrews an opportunity to repeat the insult.

Slowly he made his way back to the river, and met Nell and Seth walking toward the house. They hardly noticed him, so interested were they in conversation. And Drum was in no mood for talking just then. He replaced his skates, and took several turns around the fire which was now dying down. Only a few of the skaters were there, most of them having gone home. Hettie Daggert was one of the few, and she was standing near several blazing embers trying to warm her thinly-clad body. Her eyes, filled with admiration, were fixed upon Drum, and an expression, almost of triumph, illumined her face. She watched him until he left and started off down river. She stood for a few minutes gazing thoughtfully upon the fire. At length she turned, looked up at the Andrews' house, and then glided away into the blackness of the night.

CHAPTER 7

"WHIPPING THE CAT"

The generous fire-place sent out its genial heat, making the cellar-kitchen a comfortable and a cosy place. Two large pots suspended from hooks on the swinging crane emitted a savoury odour, telling that dinner was well on the way. From time to time Nell left her ironing at a table in the middle of the room, lifted the covers and examined the contents. Andy Dooner's eyes beamed with pleasure as he occasionally looked at her from his bench at the right of the fire where he sat "whipping the cat," as his craft was commonly termed. He noted the briskness of her step, the neatness of her dress, and the gracefulness of her every movement. He liked to have her there, for he could always work better when she was near. His heart was as young as ever in the presence of such a girl as Nell Andrews.

The entire household had been later than usual that morning in settling down to active work. This was due to the shoemaker. He was the regular vendor of news, and knew the gossip for miles around. Although garrulous, he seldom got into trouble, for people everywhere were fond of the wandering man. He could be trusted with a secret, too, and many a love-story he carried in his wise old head. The girls could confide in him, knowing that their confidence would not be betrayed. But when it came to the daily affairs up and down and across the river, he was always most voluble, and had a marvellous fund of information. He knew how many mats were hooked, quilts quilted, yarn spun, and suits of clothes made. He had the latest news about the new babies, their names, and how much each weighed. All this, with much more besides, proved of special interest to the women. And Andy had a way of leaving the impression that he knew a great deal more than he cared to impart. He regaled the men with news about cattle, horses, hay, and other matters in which farmers were most interested. But when politics and religion were mentioned he was most guarded about his words. These were vital questions, and understanding the people as he did, he knew just what to say so as not to give any offence.

So on the morning after his cold dip in the river, Andy had imparted to the Andrews' household considerable local news as they sat late at the breakfast table. But with the Squire and his son Tom at last off to the woods, where they were cutting fire-wood, with the dishes all washed, and Mrs. Andrews upstairs making the beds and tidying up the rooms, Nell was left alone with the shoemaker. This was to her liking, for now the conversation would be of far more interest to her than that about prosaic farm affairs. She was sure that Andy would touch on matters dear to every girl's heart, as he had always done in the past when they were alone.

But this morning Andy was slow in beginning his teasing habit. He seemed to be in a most thoughtful mood as he cut strips from a side of sole-leather and placed them in a pail of water nearby to soften. When this was done, he picked up a piece of well-tanned calf-skin and eyed it critically. Nell glanced at him curiously, and wondered what was passing through his mind. She made no comment, however, until he had sharpened his knife and begun to cut the skin according to a pattern upon a wide board laid across the leather apron upon his knees.

"Are you going to make my shoes first?" she asked, pausing in the act of carrying an iron to the fire. "Be sure and make them good."

"I allus make 'em good, Nellie," was the quiet reply. "I am never ashamed of my work. But I have jist been thinkin' that, perhaps, this'll be the last pair I'll ever make fer you, an' mebbe ye'll be ashamed of 'em before they are worn out."

"Why, what makes you say that, Andy?" the girl asked in surprise. "Why should I be ashamed of those shoes?"

"Ye shouldn't be, Nellie, an' that's what's worryin' me. But if ye go to the city to live, ye won't want to wear shoes sich as old Andy Dooner makes. Ye'll want new-fangled ones that look smart but won't wear."

"I am not going to the city to live," Nell laughingly declared. "Whatever put such a foolish notion as that into your head?"

"No? Well, I'm mighty glad to hear that from yer own purty lips. But what about that young lawyer feller ye met at The Three Elms? He's almost daft over ye, so I hear."

So startled was Nell at these words, that she nearly dropped the iron she was holding in her hand.

"What have you been hearing, Andy?" she asked.

"Oh, something that's set me thinkin'. Say, it was great the way yer father outdone them lawyers."

"So you heard about that?"

"Sure. It's all over Kingston by now. Jed Harris told the joke, an' every team that went to town the next day brought back the story. My! I'd like to have been thar to see the surprised look on them fellers' faces when yer father handed them that stumper about a bushman's cut or a lumberman's cut. Ha, ha, that was sartinly a good one, an' no mistake."

"But the lawyers took the joke in the right spirit," Nell defended. "They were gentlemen and didn't get a bit angry at what father said about Confederation."

"An' one of 'em was especially nice, eh? He had a talk with you, an' after ye'd left he asked Jed no end of questions about ye. He'll be here to see ye soon, I s'pose?"

The flush upon Nell's face was not caused by the fire alone. She forgot all about the ironing as she came close to Andy who was bending over his work. She was visibly annoyed.

"What right has Mr. Harris, or anyone else, to talk about me like that?" she demanded. "Mr. Mason spoke to me like a gentleman, and apologised for the way father had been treated. We were talking for only a minute or two."

"So I heard, Nellie. An' all the time Drum Rowan was watchin' ye from the kitchen. The women folks told Jed that Drum looked so mad they were afraid he'd pounce upon that lawyer chap an' tear him to pieces."

"They did! Well, it's none of their business to whom I talk. And why should Drum get mad? He can mind his own affairs, too. Anyway, Mr. Mason is nothing to me. I never met him before, and it is hardly likely that I shall ever see him again. I am only a country girl, while he is a city lawyer."

Nell returned to her ironing, and Andy's eyes twinkled as he watched her. He liked to see her in such a mood, for he understood her far better than she realised.

"Ye needn't git offended, Nellie, at what I've jist told ye," he remarked. "It's yer own fault, so don't blame others."

"My fault! In what way?" Nell asked, turning sharply upon the shoemaker.

"Fer bein' as ye are. Thar, now, don't git excited, but wait 'till I'm through. I don't wonder at that young lawyer goin' about daft over ye. He couldn't help it, fer that matter. It isn't every day he runs across a girl like Nell Andrews."

"Andy!"

"Thar, now, didn't I tell ye to keep quiet 'till I'm through?"

"But you are talking nonsense."

"Call it what ye like, Nellie, it makes no difference to me. But if I was in that young lawyer's place, I'd been up here to see ye the very next day. My! how I wish I was as young as I used to be. But as I'm out of the runnin', I was hopin' that Drum Rowan would have a chance. Now, thar's a young man to my likin'. Jist think what he did fer me last night. He risked his own life to pull me out of that hole in the ice. D'ye think Seth Sloan or that young lawyer chap would have done sich a thing?"

"Perhaps they would, Andy," Nell replied. "Seth is not a coward, and I know nothing about Mr. Mason."

"No, Seth isn't a coward in broad daylight. He's a great hero then. Oh, I know a good deal about Seth. But Drum's different. He ain't afraid of nuthin'. Now, I could tell ye something about him to show ye what kind of a feller he is, though I guess ye know, all right."

"But he is afraid to come here," Nell reminded. "He hasn't been inside of this house for months."

"That's not Drum's fault, Nellie. You know as well as I do the reason fer that. Yer father an' Cap'n Rowan are at swords' p'int on religion an' politics. They can't agree, an' never could. They're both fine men to meet so long as ye jump the way they do. But if ye don't, look out. Now, Drum isn't very strong on either religion or politics when it comes to slidin' in set grooves. He's got a mind of his own, so when he didn't altogether agree with yer father one night as they were settin' in

this very kitchen, he was ordered to clear out. Now, would any self-respectin' young man come back after bein' treated that way?"

Nell made no reply but went on with her ironing. She was well aware that her father disliked Drum simply because he was the son of his fierce opponent in religion and politics. She did not consider this just, for no matter how the two men might quarrel, it was not right that Drum should be the victim of her father's resentment. She admired the way in which the young man had taken the insult. Notwithstanding her apparent indifference, her heart always quickened when she thought of Drum Rowan. His free careless life in the open, his straight-forward manliness, and his outstanding courage, appealed strongly to her romantic nature. It was gratifying for her to know that he loved her, as she was certain he did. But there was much pleasure in playing with his affections. She enjoyed the envy of other girls in the neighbourhood, who also admired Drum. And when they learned that the young lawyer from the city was interested in her, they would be more envious than ever. It was, therefore, natural that Andy's news about their names being linked together should produce in her heart more than an ordinary thrill of exaltation. Even though nothing came of it, the thought of what her girl friends would say when they heard that a rising young city lawyer was seeking her attention brought a glow of pleasure to her cheeks. Perhaps he would write to her of an intended visit. She had thought of this more than once, and several times during the morning she had glanced furtively out of the little window facing the road.

This was mail day, and the courier might be along at any minute. Hitherto Nell's interest in his arrival was in the bits of news he had to give her, for Jerry Trueman, like the shoemaker, was a vendor of harmless gossip. His mail-bag was generally light, for only a few people received newspapers, and letters were scarce. When skating was good he travelled by ice, with his bag slung over his shoulder. He usually sounded his tin horn to advise people of his arrival, for he considered himself a person of note and greatly magnified his office in the Queen's service. The delivering of a letter was a matter of considerable importance, and he was always agog with curiosity. So on this morning as he glided into the shore at Maple Cove, unfastened his skates, and made his way up to the house, his face beamed with a pleasurable anticipation. Among his little packet of letters was one addressed in a firm masculine hand to Miss Nell Andrews. Jerry had already heard of the incident at The Three Elms, so he surmised that the letter was from the young lawyer.

He was about half way up to the house, when the door of the cellar-kitchen opened and Nell stepped out. She hurried toward him, and in another minute was at his side.

"Have you anything for me, Jerry?" she blushing asked.

"Why, bless yer sweet heart!" the courier exclaimed. "How ye did scare me! I didn't see ye until ye was right here. What was it ye asked me?"

"You are only fooling, Jerry, for you saw me when I came out of the house."

"Did I? Well, well! An' yer expectin' something, eh? There, now, ye needn't colour up like that, fer I was young once meself."

"Hurry up and tell me, Jerry, for I'm freezing."

"Let's go into the house, then, fer I'm cold, too."

"No, no, give me the letter now, if you have one for me."

"Yaas, I have a letter fer ye, me dear, but ye must pay me fer it. A kiss from yer own sweet lips is the price."

"You foolish man! Isn't it time you stopped such nonsense? You are too old to be wanting kisses from girls."

"But never too old to kiss you, Nellie. I kissed ye when ye was a little baby in yer mother's arms, an' a good many times since. Ye've never refused me before. But mebbe I've no right to ask ye now, as ye want to keep all yer kisses fer another. So I'll give ye the letter an' not exact the price."

Jerry sighed as he fumbled in his bag and brought forth the little packet. Nell was touched by the courier's appearance. For the first time she noticed how old and shrunken he looked, and how thin and worn his clothes. She knew what a hard struggle he had to make a living, and with what indomitable courage he had met misfortune, first in the death of his wife, and later in the loss of two of his children. As he handed her the letter, she stepped forward and imprinted a kiss upon his wrinkled cheek.

"There, will that do, Jerry?" she laughingly asked. "Come right in and have something to warm you up. Andy's in the kitchen."

Nell tucked the letter into the bosom of her dress, turned and hastened back to the house. Andy was at his work as she entered, and to all appearance he had not left his bench. But his eyes twinkled, and he chuckled to himself as the girl crossed the floor and sped to her own room upstairs.

CHAPTER 8

THE FENIANS!

The Andrews sat late at the table that evening when supper was over. Even Mrs. Andrews did not busy herself with clearing away the dishes, and this was something quite out of the ordinary. But there was a special reason which caused this active woman to depart for once from her regular routine. She shared with others the anxiety at the disturbing news which had reached them that day. It had come so mysteriously that no one could tell exactly who had heard it first, for all the neighbours seemed to be aware of it. What they had feared for weeks had really come to pass, and the Fenians were at last in their midst. It took but a few hours for fevered imagination to stir the people to a high pitch of excitement. Already the enemy was in the woods, lurking in secret places, waiting for night to carry out their work of destruction and death. Old shot-guns, muskets, pistols, and even rusty bayonets, weapons which had been handed down from the time of the arrival of the Loyalists, were brought forth, and carefully examined. Powder-horns of various shapes and sizes were filled, and bullet-moulds were kept piping hot from the molten lead which was poured into them. When these preparations had been attended to, all breathed easier, and some of the men felt free to discuss the critical situation with their neighbours.

Several of these had dropped into the Andrews' house on their way to the political meeting which was to be held that night. Jerry Trueman had carried the news that two prominent opponents to the Confederation scheme were to speak. This pleased the Squire, and he agreed to act as chairman.

"I hope the hall will be full," he remarked to his neighbours when they referred to the meeting. "I am anxious for all in this parish to hear the truth about this union farce. We killed it the last time, and we're going to do it again. Tilley must be a fool to imagine that he can succeed any better now. We'll show him a thing or two."

"But he has the Governor on his side now," Tom Logan, a big strapping farmer, reminded. "He's changed right around, so I hear. I wonder why."

"Because he has no mind of his own; that's why. When he went to England after the last election he was rapped on the knuckles in a pretty lively manner. The authorities there gave him fits and scared him almost out of his senses. So now he's back, and like a whipped cur, he is doing just what he was told. Why, he is the laughing-stock all over the country. People will pay no attention to what such a turn-coat as that says. He'll be more of a hindrance to Tilley than a help."

"I guess people are thinkin' more about the Fenians than they are about Confederation," Bill Slocum declared. "It's mighty disturbin' news we've heard to-day. It looks to me as we'd all wake up some fine mornin' an' find ourselves dead men, an' our wives an' little ones, too."

Nell, whose mind had been wandering during this conversation, heard Bill's closing words and laughed outright. She was seated by Andy's side, her elbows resting upon the table, with her hands supporting her chin. The shoemaker chuckled, a sure sign that he was enjoying himself. Bill, who was quick tempered, glared at the two.

"Ye may laugh at what I say," he retorted. "But it's no laughin' matter, let me tell ye that. With the woods full of Fenians, an' no knowin' when they may jump out at us, it's time fer weepin' instead of scoffin'."

"I wasn't laughing at the danger which threatens us," Nell explained, "but at what you said about people waking up some fine morning and finding themselves dead men. That would be a most wonderful thing."

A general laugh ensued, in which Bill joined when his somewhat slow mind had grasped the meaning of his blunder.

"Ho, ho," he roared, "that's a good one. But fer gracious sake, don't let Sary hear about this. She'll give me no peace if she does."

"It's all very well to laugh at a little thing like that," the Squire remarked, as he stretched out his right hand to give special emphasis to his words. "But we're in a critical situation just now, with the Fenians on the one hand ready to attack us, and Tilley and his gang on the other scheming to betray us and sell our province. No matter into whose hands we fall, we're bound to be ruined."

"But won't our men fight, father?" Nell asked.

"Sure they'll fight," Bill declared. "An' Old England'll stand by us. She'll send her soldiers over here jist as she did in the Trent Affair five years ago. Why, twenty-five thousand of the finest men that ever crossed the ocean landed here, an' I helped haul 'em from Saint John to Fredericton that very winter, an' made good money, too."

"Bah! we can't depend upon England now," the Squire retorted. "She's against us, that's what she is. It's well to remember what some English leaders said about Canada when the Militia Bill was turned down."

"What was that?" Tom Logan asked.

"Why, don't ye know? It was all in the paper at the time, and I've never forgotten the exact words that were said by prominent statesmen over there. I've got it right handy."

The Squire rose to his feet, and going to a shelf brought down a carefully-folded newspaper.

"Now, listen to this," he ordered, as he again took his seat, and held the opened paper toward the light. "This is what Mr. Roebuck, a politician of high standing said:

"What I want Canadians to understand, and what I want our Government to make them understand, is, that we don't care a farthing about the adherence of Canada to England. I want them to understand that England has no benefit from her connection with Canada. I want Canadians to understand clearly that England would not be sorry to see them depart from her to-morrow."

"Ah, that feller wasn't speakin' fer England," Bill Slocum declared. "I don't believe he knows anything about what a great country Canada is."

"But he wasn't the only one, Bill," the Squire snapped. "Why, the Secretary of State for War said that he would see Canada independent without regret, and even Lord Palmerston showed his anger by saying:

"I am glad that this discussion has taken place, as it has enabled the Secretary of State for War to make a statement which must satisfy Canadians that unless they choose to make exertions which are becoming in them to make for their own defence, which it is their duty to make, and which any people worthy of the name of men would make, unless they mean to fall into a state of apathy and betray a want of spirit, which would be disgraceful to the race to which they belong, that we have done as much for them as we intend to do, and it rests with them to do the remainder."

"Now, isn't that sufficient proof that England is against us?" the Squire remarked as he slowly folded up the paper.

"Think what happened to our Lieutenant Governor Gordon when he went Home. He was given a great dressing-down for opposing Confederation, and when he came back he was as meek as a lamb, and ready to use his utmost influence to ruin us. No, we can't depend upon England any more. She's dead against us, so we've got to fight our own battles now."

"If what ye say is true, Squire, than it's all the more necessary fer the provinces to be united," Andy replied. "A house divided ag'inst itself, as the Good Book says, can't stand. If we were one, then if danger threatened us, Nova Scotia, as well as Upper an' Lower Canada would send their soldiers to our aid, an' if they were in trouble we'd send help to them. I'm only an old shoemaker, but when I make a pair of boots all the parts must be firmly fastened together or the boots will be no good. An' the same with our country."

"Oh, that's some more of the Tilley stuff, Andy. It's all nonsense. How could we exchange soldiers with not a railroad in the country?"

"But Tilley says that Confederation will bring the railroad to pass, Squire, an' it'll be the great bindin'-link. S'pose we had it finished now, how easy it would be to move troops from one part of the country to another. Why, the Fenians wouldn't dare to attack us."

Squire Andrews rose to his feet and stalked across the room. He was much aroused, especially by Andy's words. He had never heard the old man speak so boldly before on behalf of union, and he wondered if he was expressing the views of people in general up and down the river. He was very fond of the shoemaker, and to hear him speak in such a manner was most disconcerting. He was quite aware that Andy kept his ear close to the ground, and knew very well what was being talked about in various households. Were the people changing their views? he asked himself. Was Tilley making headway, after all? Was the Fenian Raid scare affecting the province in favor of union? Squire Andrews, although stubborn and determined, was clear-headed enough to realise that forces were afoot of a most serious and determined

nature, and, perhaps, steadily increasing in strength.

When he returned to his seat at the table, the conversation was about the Fenians. The neighbours were expressing their views and discussing the probability of an early attack. Tom Logan was of the opinion that they would march in a large body right from the Border and wipe out every settlement along the way. But Henry Morden, the captain and owner of a river wood-boat, refused to agree with such an idea.

"They won't be such fools as all that," he emphatically declared. "If they come at all, they'll follow the roads and attack Saint John and Fredericton first. With the cities captured, the rest will be easy. It's the main places they want to get hold of. They won't bother with us along the river until later."

"Don't be too sure of that," Bill Slocum replied. "I believe they're in the province now, bands of 'em, hidin' in the woods, all ready to spring up when the word is given. They won't come in a body marchin' along the roads, no sir-ree. They're too cunnin' fer that. They've been dribblin' in by night, in this place an' that, until the country is full of 'em."

"Why wouldn't we hear or see something of them, then?" Henry demanded, glaring fiercely at his neighbour.

"Cause we have no chance; that's why. Isn't it nearly all woods back of us right through to the Border? Thousands of men could be hidin' there an' we wouldn't know nuthin' about 'em."

"Who said that the Fenians are in this province?" the Squire sternly asked. "No one has seen them, and no one has heard them. Where did that report come from, anyway? Who is responsible for it? We don't know for sure. For my own part, I don't believe a word of it. It's one of Tilley's tricks to scare the country into union. No doubt he sent out the cry that the Fenians are upon us, thinking it might help him in his game."

"What makes ye think Tilley is back of it, Squire?" Andy inquired.

"Brains and common sense. The idea of a Fenian raid is the height of folly. It is ridiculous to think that the United States would allow thousands of lawless men to cross the Border and attack us. We are at peace with our great neighbour, and she won't let a bunch of scalawags bother us. No, it's just another example of Tilley's baseness to try to force us into accepting Confederation. But it won't work. People will see for themselves, and the villain will be confounded."

The Squire spoke with much heat, and several times he brought his clenched fist down upon the table with a bang. He closed his speech with an extra heavy thump, causing Mrs. Andrews to stretch out her hands in dismay.

"Be careful, James," she warned. "You'll break all my good dishes if you don't stop your thumping. You had better keep your blows for the Fenians."

"For Tilley and his gang, you should say, Martha. But they'll get their thumps, all right, and mighty good ones, at that."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when a noise sounded right beneath their feet which caused the room to tremble and the dishes upon the table to rattle. It sounded like the bursting of a bomb, and the hurtling of the fragments against the walls of the cellar-kitchen. And mingled with the din was heard a wild yell of terror.

"The Fenians! the Fenians!" Tom Logan yelled, springing to his feet. "They're upon us! They'll kill us!"

"Hold your tongue," the Squire roared. "You'll scare the women to death."

"He won't scare me, anyway," Nell declared. "I can fight as well as anyone here. There's your gun, father," and she motioned to a corner of the room. "I loaded it myself this afternoon. The rest of us can arm ourselves with sticks from the wood-box."

The girl's coolness had the effect of restoring order. Andy, who had leaped for his beloved violin, laid it upon the table and picked up a stout birch stick.

"I'll brain the first Fenian that sticks his head upstairs," he cried. "Come on an' git yer cudgels, every one of yez, an' we'll clear 'em out in a jiffy."

Complete silence now reigned below, and in imagination they could see the enemy surrounding the house and peering in at them through the windows, about to attack. All were filled with a feeling of impending calamity, and their faces were

very pale. But their courage did not fail, and they were ready to fight to the last. It was the silence of uncertainty which sent cold chills through their bodies. But when the Squire started for the stairs leading down to the kitchen, they followed him without a word. Opening the door, he peered down, but all was in darkness.

"Bring me a candle," he ordered. "The light is out downstairs."

This was startling news, for a candle had been left burning there when they went up to supper. Holding on high the taper which was soon brought, the Squire cautiously advanced, followed by his silent body-guard. He reached the floor below, and looked keenly around. But as no enemy sprang to meet him, he breathed more freely. Then he emitted an exclamation of surprise and relief as he surveyed the kitchen. There was ruin everywhere; dishes on the table were smashed, and the glass in the windows broken. But he paid little attention to them, for lying on the floor near the fire-place was the mute evidence of all the disturbance. It was a pool of yeast, and nearby were several fragments of a big earthenware jug. Nell realised what had happened as soon as her father, and with a slight hysterical laugh, she dropped down upon a chair near the table. With the severe mental strain relaxed, she was now weak and trembling.

But with Mrs. Andrews it was different. Seeing what had happened, she rushed forward in great concern.

"Oh, my yeast!" she cried, spreading out her hands in dismay. "What in the world shall I do!"

"Don't worry, Martha," her husband advised. "Let us be thankful it's no worse."

"But we'll have no bread for to-morrow, James! Think of that!"

"I'm not so much troubled about the bread as I am about those windows, Martha. It was a very strange explosion and a bad one, too. Suppose it had happened before we went up to supper. Why, we'd all been killed or badly injured, at least. Look at those marks on the walls where the pieces struck. What did you do to that jug, anyway? You must have tied the cork down."

"No, I merely drove it in tight as I always did. It must have been too near the fire and fermented too much. I never heard of such a thing before."

"It's a warnin' to us," Bill Slocum fervently declared. "It's a sign that somethin' dreadful is goin' to happen."

"H'm, it's a warning to me not to put the yeast jug so near the fire again," Mrs. Andrews retorted, as she stooped to pick up several fragments from the floor. "And I guess it's a sign, too, that I'm getting absent-minded these days. To think that I've lost that jug which I've had ever since I was married!"

"Then it's time we had a new one, mother," Nell laughingly replied. "I like a change once in a while."

"But the yeast won't be as good in the new one, Nell. There's nothing like a well-seasoned jug."

"Don't worry, mother. You couldn't help making good bread no matter what you put the yeast in."

"Yer right, Nellie," Andy agreed. "Yer ma makes great bread, an' there's no doubt about it. But that jug was a wonderful one, an' mebbe yer ma'll never git another jist like it. An' what a yell it gave when it bust. That shows it was almost human."

"It wasn't the jug that yelled," Bill declared.

"What was it, then?"

"A speerit warnin' us that something dreadful is goin' to happen. I remember when Joe Slasher was killed by the fall of a tree. The night before, he broke his lookin'-glass while shavin', an' he told his wife that it was a sign of something dreadful. An' durin' the night they were wakened by a strange noise like a wild cry of some critter in distress."

"Tut! tut! man, don't be so foolish," the Squire chided. "The breaking of the glass had nothing to do with Joe's death. And the noise he heard in the night was the squeal of one of his pigs. I met him going to the woods the day he was killed, and he told me about it, and thought it was a big joke. But, there, we've talked long enough about nothing. You all go upstairs while I board up the windows. It's nearly time to start for the meeting."

"Ho! ho! a pig spirit!" Andy roared. "Say, Bill, what's comin' over ye, anyway? I thought ye had more sense."

"Ye may make all the fun ye like, Andy, but it's very queer," Bill mournfully replied. "It's the first time I ever heard about the pig squealin'. Mrs. Slasher didn't say nuthin' about it, an' she's the one who ought to know. But it wasn't a pig that squealed when that jar busted. It was the yell of an evil speerit, an' no one kin make me believe anything else."

CHAPTER 9

HALT!

The river road wound its crooked way through meadows, swamps, and thick groves of cedars, firs, and pines. In places the banks on the upper side were steep and rugged. Here trees came almost to the ditch, and on dark nights any traveller passing that way found himself in almost Stygian blackness. Even the boldest felt a chill of apprehension as the trees enshrouded him, and he always breathed more freely when he had gained the open spaces ahead.

Strange stories were told of things that had happened in those dark reaches, of mysterious sounds, and the sudden appearance of weird spectral beings. This fear was greatly increased when the stiffened body of an unknown man was found one morning on a knoll lying by the side of the road. There were no marks to show that he had met with a violent death. But that did not matter to those of a superstitious nature. He was evidently a bad man, a murderer, perhaps, and in that lonely spot he had met with his just punishment by an avenging spirit. Some even declared that they had seen the dead man's ghost hovering over the place. Although this had happened years ago, the story was never allowed to be forgotten. Children heard it from their parents, and their hearts always beat fast as they sped by the haunted knoll.

The dread of the Fenians made that river road a more fearsome place than ever. No one could tell when they might leap out of the woods and strike down all who passed that way. Imagination and lack of true knowledge concerning the Fenians did much to invest them with more than ordinary human qualities. They were gigantic men, so some believed, cruel and bloodthirsty. They were wild Irishmen, others contended, who, balked in their attempt to capture Ireland, wished to wreak their revenge upon England, their implacable enemy, by slaughtering her subjects in isolated places. Such ideas were but natural at a time when means of information were primitive, and whatever news did circulate was generally greatly distorted as it passed from man to man.

Seth Sloan's mind was filled with thoughts of the Fenians as he hurried along this river road. Only the hope of seeing Nell Andrews and walking with her to the meeting induced him to travel alone on the night following the recent Fenian scare. He would otherwise have waited for several of his neighbours and taken courage in their company. But he was afraid lest Nell might leave early with her father and brother, so he wished to be on time that he might have her all to himself. When he came to the darkest parts of the road he ran like a deer, glancing fearfully from side to side as if expecting a sudden attack. By the time he came near the Andrews' house he was panting heavily, and in a state of nervous excitement. Here his spirits revived, and he slowed down to a steady walk. He did not wish Nell to have the least suspicion that he was afraid of the Fenians, but desired her to consider him very brave, ready to meet the enemy any time and anywhere.

As he approached the house, he saw a light shining from the cellar-kitchen. Curious to know if Nell were there alone, he moved cautiously up to the window on the side next to the door. He had just stooped and was craning his neck to steal a furtive glance, when the explosion took place within. Startled beyond measure, he shrank back, and as he did so, a shower of flying missiles hurtled wildly through the window. As the glass crashed, several pieces struck Seth in the face, causing him to stagger back with a yell of pain and terror.

Certain was he now that the explosion was due to the Fenians, and that they were in possession of the house. The next instant they would be upon him, so his only hope of safety was in immediate flight. That he might be of some assistance to the Andrews never once entered his terror-stricken mind. He thought only of himself, so with a wild rush he dashed across the field, leaped the snake-fence, and landed heavily upon the road. His former running was slow compared to the speed he now developed. In imagination he heard the Fenians pursuing him, and with dilated eyes he often glanced fearfully back over his shoulder. It was fully a mile to the store, and Seth broke the record that night. His feet fairly spurned the ground as he dashed madly forward.

Within the store a dozen men were gathered, waiting for the time when the meeting would begin in the hall a short distance up the road. Several were seated on boxes around the stove, while others were perched upon the counter. They were earnestly discussing the startling news that had reached them that day. Each related the preparation he had made in case of a sudden attack.

"I spent the hull afternoon runnin' bullets," Abe Hawker declared. "Sez I to Becky, sez I, 'By jolly! we'll give them Fenyns a dose if they come snookin' around our place.' So I got down my old gun, give her a good cleanin' an' loaded

her for bear. Becky she hunted up a pistol, an' we fixed her up, too. Becky has the pistol with her in the house now, an' I brought the gun along, an' thar she stands ag'inst the wall ready fer action."

"D'ye expect ye'll have to use it to-night, Abe?" Zeb Danders asked.

"Ye kin never tell, Zeb, when a gun'll come in handy these days."

"Do you think you can shoot as well as you used to do, Abe?" the storekeeper inquired.

"Well, I can't altogether say fer sure, Tom. I haven't used the old gun much lately 'cept fer shootin' a few birds an' a skunk now an' then. But I guess me hand'll be purty steady when it comes to the pinch. Ye all remember when I shot that big bear out in me back pasture five years ago. I wasn't feelin' extry well that mornin', but when that critter riz right on his hind legs, opened his mouth an' came frothin' at me, I jist lifted that gun, took a steady aim an' let split. The way she kicked was wicked, an' fer two minutes I didn't know nuthin'. But when I came to and the smoke cleared away, thar was that bear layin' right on his back an' kickin' fer all it was worth. An' near by was me old gun kickin', too. It was the greatest sight I ever——"

Abe was abruptly interrupted by the door being flung violently open as Seth Sloan dashed into the store. His wild appearance and the blood upon his face startled the men around the stove.

"The Fenians! The Fenians!" he gaspingly yelled. "They're after me!"

"Whar are they?" Abe roared, leaping for his gun.

"U-u-up the r-r-road. T-they've blown up S-s-squire Andrews' h-house! T-t-they'll be here in a m-m-minute."

So overcome was Seth that he sank down upon the box Abe had just deserted. Not until he had drunk a brimming mug of Jamaica rum which the storekeeper handed to him, was he able to give a more detailed account of what he had experienced. No one doubted his word, for the blood upon his face was evidence enough. A hurried and excited consultation at once ensued. Most of the men were anxious to hurry home to protect their families. But Abe was of a different mind.

"We better keep together," he counselled. "We can't do much if we separate, but the bunch of us kin put up a stiff fight. An' by jolly! I want to have a whack at them Fenians. They have no bizness here, an' the sooner they find it out, the better it'll be fer all consarned. I'm goin' up the road, an' the ones that ain't too scared kin come along."

He left the building, and his companions followed, some armed with several new axes from the store, and others with pitchforks. Seth remained behind with the storekeeper, huddled upon the box, his eyes dilated with fear as he turned them at times toward the door.

Abe and his body-guard continued on their way, stopping at several houses for recruits, who took along their guns which they had in readiness. They thus presented quite a formidable band as they moved warily up the road, peering keenly through the darkness, and pausing every now and then to listen for sounds of the enemy. These men were no cowards, and although armed with primitive weapons, they proved of what stuff they were made in their march that night. To them it was all a very serious matter, for they really believed that the Fenians were but a short distance away, and that in a few minutes they would meet them in deadly conflict. They were peaceful men, hard workers, and wringing a precarious living from river and land. They were not accustomed to fighting, but true Loyalist blood flowed in their veins, and on behalf of their Sovereign and their Country they were willing to suffer great hardships, and, if necessary, to die for the principles they held so dear. And these were but a few of the thousands scattered all over the province, ready at a minute's notice to uphold and maintain the prestige of Old England in a stern and rugged portion of her far-flung Empire.

They had gone more than three-quarters of the way, and were not far from the Andrews' house when the sound of voices ahead brought them to a sudden halt. That the Fenians were coming they were sure, so springing to the upper side of the road, they took up their positions behind a number of large boulders which lined the bank. And here they waited, silent as the night, while the voices and the tramping of feet grew steadily more distinct. Each man grasped his axe or fork, while those with guns kept them pointed toward the highway, cocked and primed. The situation was now intense, for the critical moment was at hand. This was made more so when Abe stepped suddenly from the bank and stood in the middle of the road as silent as the trees around him. His companions were puzzled and amazed at his action, and some believed that the excitement had affected his brain. But they did not dare to speak for the enemy was now almost upon them. They

could only await the outcome, whatever that might be.

"Halt! or we'll blow ye to pieces."

It was Abe's stentorian voice which gave the order. This was immediately followed by several exclamations of consternation, mingled with a woman's cry of fear. At once Abe's levelled gun was lowered, and he gave expression to a deep growl of disgust. He turned to his companions.

"Them ain't no Fenians," he announced. "Them's folks comin' to the meetin'."

"Is that you, Abe Hawker?" a voice called through the darkness.

"Yes, it's me, Squire," was the reply. "But what in time d'ye mean by scarin' the hull neighbourhood like this?"

"And what do you mean by holding up respectable people on the road?" the Squire demanded as he stepped into view. He gave a great start as he beheld the dim forms of the men emerging from behind the rocks. "What's the meaning of all this? Have you men gone crazy?"

"But whar are the Fenians?" Abe inquired. "Have ye seen 'em?"

"Fenians! We haven't seen any Fenians."

"But Seth said they blew up yer house, an' ye were all dead."

"He did! Seth said that! Oh, now I understand. He must have heard the explosion when the yeast jug burst."

"But Seth saw the Fenians with his own eyes. He saw 'em in yer cellar-kitchen, an' his face is all cut with the broken glass when the winders bust out."

Nell and the men with her had now drawn near and heard Abe's explanation. They were greatly relieved, for the peremptory order to halt had been most startling. In another minute the humour of the situation dawned upon them and they all laughed heartily.

"Where is Seth?" the Squire asked. "He's the cause of all this trouble. And I want to know what business he had hanging around my house and peeking in at the window. Where is he?"

"Oh, Seth's huggin' the stove in the store, Squire," Abe replied. "He's scared 'most out of his boots. But, by jolly! he'll wish the Fenians had him body an' britches when I get me hands on him. I'll larn him a lesson or two. He'll think twice before he stirs up sich a racket as this ag'n."

"Don't be too hard on Seth," Andy Dooner pleaded. "It was only natural fer sich a feller to git scared. Why, we were all froze stiff when that jug exploded, thinkin' that fer sure the Fenians were upon us."

"But what business had Seth prowling around my house and peeking in at the window?" the Squire again sternly demanded.

"He had no bizness," Abe replied, shaking a big right fist in the air. "We kin all laff at this now, Squire, but if it hadn't been fer the thump of yer big boots upon the road some of us would be layin' here dead men. Squattin' on the bank behind that rock, I heard yer clod-hoppers, an' sez I to meself, sez I, 'That's the Squire on his way to the meetin', fer nobody else on God's earth brings his feet down like you do. So when I jumped down on the road an' ordered yez all to halt, the men here thought I was crazy. But, by jolly! I was right. I knew I couldn't make any mistake in the thump of them boots. But, thar, I guess we'd better git along, fer it's time for the meetin' to begin."

CHAPTER 10

NAILING THE LIE

As the people of the neighbourhood gathered in the hall they heard the startling news which Seth had set in circulation. There was much excitement, and the able-bodied men formed themselves into a band to march up the road to take part in the fight against the enemy. They were about ready to start as Abe and his companions arrived. When the cause of the trouble had been explained, all at the hall were greatly relieved, and looked upon the matter as a joke. Seth, alone, was most uncomfortable. For a while he considered himself quite a hero as people clustered around him to hear his story of the explosion. He told them about the broken windows, and showed the marks upon his face from the flying pieces of glass as evidence of what had taken place. But when he heard about the yeast jug, his feeling of heroism quickly subsided. The laughter of the men and the women, and the jibes they levelled at him, made him realize what a fool he had made of himself. This was most galling to his pride. He did want Nell to consider him very brave, but when he saw her talking with several of her girl friends, and noticed how amused they were, he became angry. He longed to give expression to his feelings, to hit someone, for instance, smaller and weaker than himself, to prove that he was no coward. He was ready, in fact, for almost anything of a desperate nature. But when Abe Hawker's big right fist was shoved up suddenly under his nose, his dare-devil spirit sank to zero.

"I've a good mind to flatten out yer face," Abe roared. "Look at all the trouble an' worry ye've given us to-night."

"B-but I c-c-couldn't help it," Seth stammered as he shrank back from the irate farmer.

"Ye could have helped it. What bizness had ye prowlin' around an' peekin' in at decent folks' winders? By jolly! this night's racket came very near bein' a tragedy. If it hadn't been fer the thump of the Squire's boots on the road some of us 'ud be dead men now."

"Come, come, Abe, leave Seth alone," Andy interposed. "Don't ye see that the poor feller is feelin' like an old boot, an' lookin' it, too? Guess we'd better go inside, fer the Squire's callin' the meetin' to order."

Seth was glad to slink away, especially from Abe, whose tongue and fist he feared in no small degree. He slouched into the hall, and stood near the door with his back to the wall, for every seat was filled. He was in no enviable frame of mind, and he longed to have revenge upon someone. If he had only another drink or two he would feel more confident of himself.

Drum was late in arriving at the hall. He had been visiting his traps that day, and loitering around the Valley of The Jaws. He called in at the store and heard the story of Seth's scare and the excitement that had ensued. He laughed heartily as the storekeeper related the tale, and wondered what Nell would think of Seth now.

He was considering this as he entered the hall and stood among several just inside. The Squire was closing his opening speech, which had been an appeal to all to oppose Tilley and his gang. But Drum hardly heard a word that he said, for his eyes were at once riveted upon a man seated by his side. It was the young lawyer he had seen talking with Nell at The Three Elms! Then the Squire introduced him as the speaker of the evening.

"We were expecting to have with us to-night the leader of the opposition to the traitorous Confederation scheme," he announced. "But as he has been unable to come, owing to many urgent duties elsewhere, he has sent in his stead Mr. Richard Mason. In a letter, which I hold in my hand, he says that Mr. Mason is well acquainted with all the facts of the case, and a man in whom he has every confidence. I have, therefore, very much pleasure in introducing to you Mr. Richard Mason as the speaker of the evening."

Drum was very much alert now, and studied the lawyer with special care. He noted his well-dressed appearance, his easiness of manner, and the fluency of his speech. As he listened to his words, he realized that his leader had made no mistake in the man he had chosen in his stead. His arguments against Confederation seemed unanswerable as he marshalled and presented his facts in a clear vibrant voice. He told of the harm that would befall New Brunswick if Confederation should come to pass.

"We are a prosperous people here now," he said. "We have our fine dock-yards and our lumbering operations. But if this union scheme carries all our revenues will be swept away and handed over to the custody and administration of

strangers. We will be unable to regulate our trade any longer. We will be forced to submit to the dictation of those who live above the tide, who know little and care less for our interests and our experiences. Our ship-yards are full of life, and our flag floats on every sea. All this will be changed. The right of self-taxation will end, and we shall be stripped by any and every mode or system of taxation. Every horse, cow, pig, and even your hens and chickens, cannot escape. Our post offices will be regulated by a distant authority. Others will fix the salaries of our principal public officers. We will have to pay, but will have no voice in the fixing of the amount. And what guarantee will we have that our money will not be squandered to reward the traitors who betray us? Our savings banks will also be handed over, and with Confederation will come a higher rate of interest, thus grinding the faces of the poor. Others will appoint our judges and our senators, and we will only have the privilege of paying their salaries. No, we must not allow this abominable and treacherous scheme to be carried into effect. Tilley and the party he leads are trying to betray us. We must defeat them, and show the world that we are an independent and self-governing people. Now, or never, is the time when we must prove the worth of our true Bluenose blood."

As the lawyer continued in this strain, a feeling of envy crept into Drum's heart. He longed to be able to talk like that. How rough and ignorant he seemed compared with the man from the city. He glanced occasionally at Nell, and read only too truly the meaning of her animated face turned so attentively toward the speaker. He knew that she was admiring him and eagerly drinking in every word he uttered. It was not a happy time for Drum. He longed to leap upon the platform and reply to the lawyer's statement. But this he was well aware he could not do, for he had neither the confidence nor the gift of speech. He knew the facts, but was unable to present them. If only Mr. Tilley were present how effectively he would answer the voluble lawyer. He recalled that noble man's words and the earnest expression upon his face the morning he had visited him in the city. It annoyed him to think that such a person who had the welfare of his country at heart should be denounced as a traitor. And yet this was being done and there was no one present to lift up a word in his defense.

Drum thought of all this as he listened to the speech and watched Nell. The girl had eyes and ears only for the man who was speaking. He called himself a fool for thinking that she cared for him. What was there about a rough rover such as he was to attract a girl like Nell Andrews? Dick Mason was of her kind, and he would have much to offer her. This idea stung him, causing him to lift his head with a jerk, and to straighten suddenly up. He drew a deep breath, and a peculiar light dawned in his dark-brown eyes. He hardly heard the speaker's closing remarks, and paid little attention to the Squire's expression of thanks. He was away on the wings of fancy, soaring in realm of strange and stirring deeds.

From this region of enchantment he was abruptly recalled by the commotion around him. The people in the hall had risen to their feet and were talking with one another in the most animated manner, while some were already leaving the building. Drum looked for Nell, and saw her talking with the lawyer. He noticed the happy expression upon her face as she listened to what he was saying. Presently Mr. Mason left her to speak to the Squire who was standing near the platform. Moved by a sudden impulse, Drum started forward. He would have a word with Nell, and request the pleasure of accompanying her home. In this manner he would put her to the test. Most likely she would refuse him, but he would have it from her own lips, and get the uncertainty over with as soon as possible.

Before he could reach her side, owing to the crowd around him, Seth approached Nell, and asked if he might walk home with her. The answer she gave was so decisive that Drum stopped abruptly, and then stepped quickly back.

"Not to-night, Seth," he heard her say. "Mr. Mason is going home with me. He is not afraid of Fenians, you know."

Drum saw the laughter in Nell's eyes, and the proud tilt of her head as she thus dismissed her dejected admirer. She then turned to speak to a girl by her side, and paid no more attention to Seth. The latter glared at her for a few seconds, and then pushing his way roughly through the crowd, left the building. Drum also went out, and stood silently under a big spruce tree a short distance away and watched the people as they emerged from the hall. At last Nell and the lawyer appeared. They were chatting pleasantly as they came down the steps, although Drum could not hear what they were saying. Then side by side they walked slowly up the road and in another minute were out of sight.

For a while Drum stood there as still as the great spreading tree overshadowing him. Ere long all the people had left the building, the lights were extinguished, and the door closed. Drum waited until the crowd had dispersed. The men were talking about the speech, but from occasional remarks which he overheard he knew that the women, especially the younger ones, were more interested in Nell and the lawyer. In every house for miles up and down the river the two would be the subject of considerable discussion that night and for days to come. Women would gossip freely whenever they met, and debate about the prospect of an early wedding. And Drum was well aware that his own name would be

mentioned, too, for all knew of his attention to Nell Andrews. It annoyed him, and made him long to spend the rest of the winter in the woods where he would not see, and forget, if possible, the one girl in all the world who meant so much to him.

At length he started down the road, walking slowly, as there was no need for haste. He had very little interest in life, anyway, since Nell had given herself to another. Coming to the store, he entered and found there a number of men who were discussing the lawyer's speech. They were in no hurry to go, for the room was comfortable and the talk interesting. Drum sat down upon a box and listened. He knew that he was the only one there in favor of Confederation, so he wisely kept silent. He was the youngest one present, and any word of opposition from him would have met with disapproval and, perhaps, scorn. Wisdom and knowledge rested in older heads, so it was believed in the parish, especially in questions of religion and politics.

Drum had been in the store for about a half hour, when, feeling somewhat sleepy owing to the heat, and as the talk was becoming uninteresting to him, he decided to go home. But just then Seth Sloan entered, laid some money upon the counter, and demanded a drink.

"Give me something quick, Tom," he ordered. "I'm all in."

"Why, what's the matter now, Seth?" the storekeeper asked. "Not another Fenian scare, I hope."

"Fenian scare be damned!" Seth growled as he gulped down the rum. "Say, Tom, ye should have heard the speech to-night."

"Was it good?"

"Good! It was slush, an' so was the speaker. He's a sly cuss, a'right. He came here to-night on purpose to see his sweetheart, Nell Andrews. I follered 'em up the road after the meetin', an', by God! it was fun the way they hugged each other. They did the same the first time they met at The Three Elms, so I hear."

"That's a lie!"

Drum had leaped to his feet, and with blazing eyes and clenched fists confronted Seth. The latter shrank back, and his face turned ghastly pale.

"I d-didn't know you were h-here, Drum," he gasped. "Where did ye drop from anyway?"

"That doesn't matter, Seth. You have no right to spread such a lie about Nell and the lawyer."

"How d'ye know it's a lie?"

"Because I was at The Three Elms that day, and saw Nell and the lawyer for the few minutes they were together. And, Seth, what you said about them as they walked up the road is a lie, too. You've got to deny it before you leave this store."

"What d'ye mean, Drum? D'ye take me fer a liar? Didn't I see 'em huggin' each other? You shouldn't git hot over that. Why, ye should be glad to hear sich news after the way Nell's treated you an' me."

"Well, I'm not, and what's more, Nell's not that kind of a girl. You should surely know that yourself, if you have any sense left."

"An' so ye'll stand up fer her after she's left ye fer that cuss of a lawyer!" Seth exclaimed in surprise. Such manliness was beyond his comprehension.

"That has nothing to do with it, Seth. It's the question of Nell's honour I'm thinking about now. You've lied about her, and you must deny what you just said."

"Hell, if I will," Seth retorted. "I'll say what I like."

With a quick movement Drum reached out and caught Seth by the throat, and forced him back over the counter. The latter struggled and clawed furiously at the gripping fingers.

"Deny what you said," Drum demanded, "or I'll break every bone in your body."

Knowing full well that his fierce antagonist meant every word he said, the gasping man tried to speak. Only then did Drum relax his grasp and step back a pace, but ready for further action.

"Say it quick," he ordered.

Seth's eyes shifted, however, and he turned in a mute appeal to the silent men in the store. Seeing no sign of response from them, he glanced toward the door. In a flash Drum was upon him again. With a yell of rage and terror Seth tore himself free and leaped aside.

"Don't touch me!" he pleaded. "Fer God's sake! keep yer hands off me."

"Deny it, then," Drum sternly insisted. "Say that you lied about Nell."

At this critical moment when it seemed as if Drum intended to carry out his former threat, Bill Slocum rose to his feet and intervened.

"Here, let's settle this rumpus," he began. "We don't want any bones broken in this store to-night. Neither do we want any nasty yarns told about decent girls in this parish. I've a daughter of me own, an' I wouldn't like sich things said about her. So, Seth, if ye've been lyin', own up. If ye don't, I'll make it my business to see Squire Andrews the first thing in the mornin', an' may the Lord have mercy on ye if he gits after ye. Yes, ye'd better own up here, an' git over with it."

This met with the approval of the rest of the men. They expressed their views in strong terms, causing Seth to realize the serious situation in which he had placed himself. He was mad, and yet afraid. He knew that he had gone too far, but saw no way out of the fix.

"Hurry up," Drum ordered. "I won't give you another chance."

"Won't you fellers believe me?" Seth asked. "D'ye think I'm lyin'?"

"You are," Drum replied, "and as you won't tell the truth, you can put up with the consequences."

Again he stepped forward, caught Seth by the collar, and yanked him out into the middle of the room.

"Tell the truth," he ordered, giving the unhappy wretch a severe shake. "Speak up, and none of your lies."

Seth endeavoured to defend himself. He struggled, fought, and bit like a wild-cat. But Drum held him fast, threw him to the floor, and held him there until he had exhausted himself with his vain struggles.

"Let me up," he roared.

"Not until you deny what you said about Nell."

"I won't deny it."

"Very well, then," Drum calmly replied, releasing his hold and rising to his feet. "Get up and defend yourself. I don't want to hit a man lying down. Get up, I say."

Seth struggled slowly to his feet and tried to face his opponent. But when he saw Drum's right arm drawn suddenly back and then shoot forward like a sledge-hammer, he emitted a howl of terror, dodged the blow and dashed to the opposite side of the room. Slowly Drum followed, and when Seth saw that retreat was useless, he threw up his hands in despair.

"I'll confess! I'll confess!" he yelled. "Don't hit me! Fer God's sake, don't!"

"And you lied about Nell?"

"Yes, yes, I lied."

As Drum's hand dropped and he stepped back, Bill Slocum sprang forward and confronted Seth.

"Ye mean skunk," he roared. "Ye ought to be strung up by yer thumbs fer sayin' sich things about Nell Andrews. But now that we've nailed yer lie, git out of here, an' don't show yer measly carcass around here ag'in. Git."

Seth did not stop to argue, but leaped for the door, and disappeared into the night. Drum was in no mood for any talk with the men in the store. He wanted to get away by himself. Picking up his skates and cap, he, too, passed out of the building, leaving Bill and his companions with a new and interesting topic of conversation.

CHAPTER 11

HETTIE!

As Drum stepped out of the store he looked up and down the road. He was in a fighting mood, and if Seth had made his appearance just then it would not have been well for him. The thought of the cowardly lie angered Drum. He could hardly understand himself. Why had he stood up for Nell when she had thrown him aside for the lawyer? That she could ever care for him seemed hopeless now. And yet mingled with this feeling was his deep and passionate love for the girl. That he had defended her gave him some comfort. But perhaps she would never hear about it, so taken up would she be with Dick Mason.

Drum thought of this as he walked slowly to the shore where he fastened on his skates. So absorbed was he with his own troubles that he never once cast his eyes backwards. Had he done so he might have seen a shivering form standing near the store, and a pair of keen eyes watching his every movement. The moon was now rising and flooding the river with its silver gleam. It exposed the young man's erect figure as he straightened up from his kneeling position and drew on his woollen mitts. As he glided from the shore and moved up river, the form near the store stretched out trembling hands of entreaty to the speeding skater, although no words came from her firmly-compressed lips.

Before going home Drum wished to have another look at the Andrews' house. If he could not see Nell it would be some comfort to gaze upon the building which sheltered her. He knew that her room faced the river, and he hoped to see a light shining from her window as he had often seen it in the past. But on this night he was doomed to disappointment, for the only gleam came from the parlour below. No doubt the family were gathered there, entertaining the lawyer, and drinking in his words of wisdom. How pleased the Squire would be to have such a man to talk to. And perhaps Nell was seated near, listening to every word, and watching the visitor with those wonderful eyes of hers. A sudden desire came upon Drum to go ashore and peer in through the window. This temptation was of but a brief duration, however. He thrust it from him and started off at a rapid pace to give vent to his feelings. He cut a wide circle, and again stopped to look over at the house on the side of the hill which fascinated him so strongly.

And as he stood there a great longing swept suddenly upon him to prove to Nell Andrews that he was worthy of her love, even though she might bestow her heart and hand upon another. He would do something to make her proud of him, but he had no idea what that might be. He would show her, and everyone else in the parish, that Drum Rowan had good Bluenose blood in his veins, and was not such a useless being as many supposed.

With this idea beating through his brain, he swung sharply around and sped down river with long swinging strides. The moon, higher in the heavens now, illuminated the great expanse of ice for a considerable distance around. It showed him his home beyond, nestling in a cosy valley on the hillside. A light gleamed from one of the front windows, and the sternness of Drum's face softened as he thought of Margaret who was no doubt awaiting his return. No matter what others might think, she was proud of him, anyway, and did everything she could to inspire and encourage him in all of his undertakings.

Reaching at last the shore, he unfastened his skates, and was walking up the narrow path leading to the main highway, when Hettie Daggert stood suddenly before him. Drum started at the sight of the girl, for her unexpected appearance at such an hour of the night was unusual. She assumed a weird aspect, almost uncanny, standing there beneath the wan light of the moon. Her head and shoulders were partly covered with an old shawl, the ends of which she clutched around her thinly-clad body.

"Why, Hettie, what are you doing here?" Drum asked.

"Jist waitin' fer ye, Drum," the girl replied, turning her face up to his. "Ye was a long time comin'."

"Why were you waiting for me?"

"I've somethin' to tell ye, Drum; that's why I waited. I wanted to tell ye to keep away from The Jaws. It ain't safe thar, as I told ye afore."

"What nonsense is this, Hettie? I was at The Jaws to-day, and nothing happened to me. It was very quiet there, with no one anywhere in sight. What do you mean by such talk?"

"But the cranes nested thar last summer, Drum, an' that's allus bad luck. Keep away, oh, keep away! Don't go thar ag'in!"

So earnest was the girl, that Drum felt there must be some good reason for her concern. Did she know about the cabin, and the cave with the store of ammunition? he asked himself. Had she seen the Fenians prowling around the place? It did seem likely, but why didn't she say so? He turned sharply toward her.

"Do you know about that cabin and cave?" he asked.

"I know about the cranes, Drum," was the evasive answer.

"So you told me, Hettie. But I asked you about the cabin and the cave."

"Did ye, Drum? Is thar a cabin an' a cave in The Jaws? Stay away, then, fer it ain't safe thar."

Drum was becoming impatient. He was sure now that the girl knew more than she was inclined to reveal. What did she know, anyway? He must find out, for much might depend upon her information.

"Look here, Hettie," he began, "I believe that the Fenians have stored ammunition in that cave, so if you have seen any of them around there I want you to tell me. It is a very serious matter, and I need your help."

"I am helpin' ye, Drum, by warnin' ye to keep away from The Jaws. No one else'll do that. Nell won't, fer she don't care nuthin' fer ye now."

"How do you know that?"

"'Cause she's gone with that lawyer feller. I seen her walkin' up the road with him, an' she was very happy."

"What! were you watching?"

"Yep, in the bushes by the side of the road when they went by. No, she don't care nuthin' fer ye no more, Drum."

"Well, what of it, Hettie? Do you think I mind very much?"

"Ye seemed to, Drum. Didn't ye take Nell's part in the store t'night?"

"Were you there? I didn't see you."

"I was peekin' in at the door, an' heard an' saw everythin'."

"What business had you hanging around the store at night, Hettie? You should be ashamed of yourself."

"I wanted to warn ye ag'in about The Jaws."

"Well, why didn't you do it when I left the store? Where were you then?"

"I was hidin', Drum, 'cause I was afraid. Ye looked awful mad. But I saw ye go up river, an' I knew what ye went fer."

"You did! Who told you?"

"Nobody. I didn't have to be told."

"Did you follow me? Did you see me on the ice in front of Nell's house?"

"No, I didn't have to. I knew without goin'."

Drum looked keenly into the girl's eyes, as if he would read there her very soul. How white and thin appeared her face as the moonlight fell upon it. How was Hettie able to understand him so truly? What spirit possessed her to divine the secret of his heart? The thought annoyed him, yet at the same time he felt a thrill of awe. How did this girl of the lone backwoods know so much? Who had taught her about such things? She was always a peculiar being to him, a mysterious waif of the wild, but he never felt it so much as now.

"It's time we were home, Hettie," he abruptly told her. "I am cold, and I know you are by the way you are shivering."

"I don't mind the cold, Drum," the girl replied. "Why, I sleep out all night sometimes when Dad an' Unc' are fightin'. I'm used to it."

"But I'm not, Hettie, so I'm going home. It's getting late."

"Don't go jist fer a minute, Drum," she pleaded. "I want to tell ye somethin'."

"Well, what is it? I thought you had told me everything."

"I want ye to be happy, Drum; but ye ain't."

"How do you know that?"

"By the way ye acted t'night. Ye think if ye had Nell, ye'd be happy. But ye wouldn't. She ain't yer kind."

"That's my own business, Hettie," Drum somewhat hotly retorted.

"I s'pose 'tis, Drum," and the girl sighed. "I was jist tellin' ye; that's all, 'cause I want ye to be happy. Nell couldn't live like you do. An' you ain't got nuthin' to give her. She wants purty dresses, ribbons, an' a big house to live in. The lawyer'll give her all them things she's hankerin' after."

"I guess you're right, Hettie," Drum acknowledged. There was a tremor in his voice which did not escape the girl's notice. Again she reached out her right hand, but this time she clutched his arm.

"Don't take on hard, Drum. Ye shouldn't worry about Nell. She wouldn't work fer ye, anyway. You want a girl that'll work her fingers to the bone fer ye, that'll foller ye 'round in the woods, an' live in any kind of a ol' shack. You won't be able to buy her fine clothes, an' she won't want 'em. S'long's she's got you, she'll be happy, 'cause she'll love ye so much she won't think about nuthin' else."

"Why do you talk such nonsense, Hettie?" Drum asked. "Do you for a minute imagine that I'll live all my life in the woods? And if I ever have a wife, would I want her to work her fingers to the bone for me and follow me around like a dog?"

"But yer headed that way now, Drum. Ye don't do much 'cept trap some in winter an' boat a little in summer. You couldn't 'spect to do much fer a wife. She'd have to fer you, seems t'me."

Drum shifted uneasily at this charge which he knew was only too true. He had often heard Hettie express her opinion about various matters, and it had always amused him. But now it was different. Her words, although gently spoken, sank deep into his soul. Out on the ice that very night, in front of the Andrews' house, he had thought of the same thing. It was strange that this girl should now put his thoughts into words. Once more a feeling of awe swept over him. Hettie was beyond his comprehension.

"Thanks for what you have told me," he at last remarked. "I am going home now to think over your words. I guess you are right. Good-night."

"Good-night, Drum, an' don't think about Nell, 'cause she don't love ye no more. Think only of the girl that does."

"Who is that?"

"Ye'll have to find out fer yerself. Good-night. I'm off."

Hettie turned and sped swiftly along the road, leaving the young man staring curiously after her.

"What a queer girl Hettie is," he mused, as he made his way slowly up the hill. "I wonder what in the world she meant by those last words. No girl loves me. Hettie must be crazy."

He stopped abruptly as an idea flashed into his mind. Then from his lips came a low whistle of understanding.

"Hettie!"

CHAPTER 12

LAND-BOUND

"I wonder what can be keeping that boy so late? He should have been home an hour ago."

Captain Rowan lowered the paper he had been reading and looked over at his daughter who was doing some needle-work on the opposite side of the table. He shuffled uneasily in his big chair, and with difficulty moved his left foot from the small stool to the floor. He was a large man, bearded, and with a wealth of iron-grey hair on his strong well-poised head. His appearance was stern, and his eyes bright and keen. His look and manner betokened one accustomed to command, and to whom obedience was expected as a matter of course.

His daughter ceased her work and turned her soft blue eyes upon her father's worried face. She then rose to her feet and went to his side.

"Does your foot hurt you much to-night?" she gently asked. "Let me bathe it again. That new liniment seemed to lessen the pain."

"It's not my foot that's troubling me so much now, Margaret," the captain explained. "It's Drummond's lateness. I want to hear about the meeting before I go to bed, and what the speakers had to say. I suppose the Squire presided as usual, and was very happy. But for this confounded foot of mine I'd have been there to-night and had my say."

"No you wouldn't, father," his daughter replied, seating herself upon a low stool by his side. "You would be on board your ship, somewhere at sea."

"You're right, Margaret, you certainly are. I wouldn't be hanging around on land but for this foot. The sea's the only place worth living, and here I've been housed for ten months. A year ago I was with my ship, and now—!"

He threw out his clenched fist, and his eyes glowed at the thought of other days. He was once more on board the "Racing Queen," the long lean clipper, loaded with deals, bound for overseas. In imagination he saw her spreading canvas, and heard the wind shrieking through her shrouds. Forgotten was the meeting as his mind strayed seaward. Margaret's eyes twinkled. She knew how to divert her father's attention from political matters and local affairs.

"That was a great run," the captain continued. "I outstripped all the ships that sailed with me, and had my deals unloaded before they reached port. Ah, you can't beat a Bluenose clipper and Bluenose men when it comes to fast sailing and hard work."

"It was too bad, father, that you met with that accident. But, then, let us hope your foot will soon be well again."

"It may take some time, Margaret, before I'm out of this. I'm homesick for the sea. That's the life, out there, where a man can breathe the wind strong and free, and racing other ships. Talk about sights! but to me the finest of all is to watch a number of vessels racing in mid-ocean on a clear morning. You can see their long, low black hulls cutting through the foam, their towering masts, and yards covered with snowy canvas bulging to the crisp morning breeze. And the 'Racing Queen' could hold her own with any of them when I was in command. Why, every line of her told of speed and power, with her tall raking spars and skysail yards almost touching the clouds. And what a figurehead she carried! It was designed and made by that young wood-carver, John Rogerson, who works in the city with his uncle, Edward Charters. There was nothing mean or cheap about his work, as the figure of that maiden on the bow of the 'Racing Queen' plainly shows. He put life into it; that's what he did. He wanted the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the mouth to speak, and the limbs to express character and strength. He wanted the robes to appear to stream like a wind-tossed flag, or to lie at rest in graceful folds. Why, that figurehead was admired wherever the ship sailed, and I was always proud to say that both the vessel and her figurehead were made right in Saint John, her home port."

The captain's eyes were glowing as they gazed off into space. Margaret understood this mood, and her heart beat in sympathy. She, too, loved the sea, although she had never sailed upon it. But she was of a sea-faring race, and the spirit was in her blood. How often she had heard her mother tell of voyages she had made in her young wedded days before family cares chained her to the land. She recalled some of those stories now.

"Yes, dear, I well remember the first voyage your mother took with me," the captain continued, as if reading her thoughts.

"It was in the old 'Dreadnaught,' and a hard time we had of it. Terrible gales hit us in mid-ocean when I felt sure the ship would go to pieces. But your mother was the coolest of us all, and cheered and encouraged us by her words and actions. Ah! she was a wonderful woman, and you are much like her, Margaret."

"I long to be like her, father," Margaret quietly replied. "But it is very hard at times to be brave and good."

"I know it, I know it," the captain emphatically declared. "Since your mother's death Drummond has got beyond all bounds, and he worries you a great deal. I hope he will go to sea some day and have a ship of his own. In the meantime, I am testing him out with that wood-boat on the river. He did fairly well last summer, and seems to like the work, that is, when he attends to it. He worries us both by his fitful ways."

Margaret made no reply, but gazed thoughtfully into the open fire before her where several dry hardwood sticks were burning brightly. She could not tell her father that he himself was really the one who worried her by his fierce moods of impatience. In Drum she could confide her troubles, and discuss household affairs of which her father knew but little. Since her mother died, five years before, she had taken charge of the house, and she and Drum had lived peaceably together. They always looked forward to their father's home-coming, and did all in their power to make his brief visits as pleasant as possible. And on these rare occasions the captain had been most agreeable. But when he was forced to give up the sea and remain on land, owing to an injured foot, his nature changed in an alarming manner. He became fretful and irritable, complained a great deal, and antagonized most of his neighbours by his extreme political and religious views. His championing the cause of Confederation was chiefly due to the strong and bitter opposition to union which prevailed in the parish. He was also considered an unbeliever by the orthodox church members, while some affirmed that he was a downright infidel. But the captain was by no means an irreligious man. Having seen so much of the world, he was annoyed at the petty opinions held by his neighbours. "They want to fence in Jehovah to their own narrow views," he often declared. "A shock now and then won't do them any harm."

Shortly after his accident the captain purchased a wood-boat to ply on the river, and commanded by an old riverman. He placed Drum on board, trusting that the young man would thus acquire a liking for the water which would lead him ere long to the open seas beyond, and eventually to become master of a fast-sailing clipper. But so far the undertaking had not proved very successful. The captain lost money, and at the close of the boating-season he was unable to pay off the balance of the mortgage on the craft. This gave him considerable worry, so after much thought he decided to enter upon a venture which he believed would return him good profits.

Although at sea the captain was very practical and keen-minded, and with a thorough knowledge of sailors, on land he seemed to be bewildered in business affairs. This was quite clearly shown in the deal he made with the Daggert brothers, men in whom no reliance could be really placed. He sought the advice of no one, and, in fact, he would have scorned any had it been offered. The two brothers agreed to cut a boatload of hardwood at so much per cord, and haul it to the boat where it was lying near the shore. The fine beech, birch, and maple trees were on the captain's own land about two and a half miles back from the river, and he had often longed to make some use of them. The time had now arrived when they would serve his purpose and help him out of his financial difficulties. He believed that he could sell the cordwood in the city and clear enough to lift the mortgage.

For a while the Daggert brothers worked well. They chopped several cords, hauled them to the shore with their oxen, and loaded them on the boat. The captain supplied them with provisions from the store to keep them going until the day of settlement. In a couple of weeks, however, the work lagged, and then the loads became fewer until they ceased altogether. But there was no cessation of the supplies from the store which Hettie carried day by day in her basket. It was not long before the brothers were in debt to the captain. He sent them word, demanding that they carry out their agreement, or they would get no more food. They always offered excuses and promised to do better in the future. This they did for a day or two when several more loads would be delivered, and then ceased again. The captain fumed and fretted. He knew that he was at the mercy of the rascals, but he refused to stop their store-supplies for fear that they would abandon the work entirely. This state of affairs was worrying him a great deal the night he was awaiting Drum's home-coming.

"I don't know what we're going to do with the Daggerts," he abruptly declared. "They haven't hauled a load to the shore this week."

"Suppose you send word to them again, father," Margaret suggested.

"Little use would that be. They paid no attention to my last message. I warned them that if they didn't get to work I would have to hire others to finish the job. But I don't want to do that as those villains owe me too much at the store."

"Why not send Drum to stir them up, father? Hettie may not have delivered your message."

"That wouldn't do any good, Margaret. They would pay no heed to Drummond. I've a mind to send him out with an axe, and let him do the chopping. He is well able to do it, and I could hire a team from the shore to do the hauling. It would be better for the boy to be working at something useful instead of wasting his time roaming the woods. Trapping is all he seems to think about. Give me my account-book, dear, and mix me my drink. I can't stay up much longer. In the morning I shall have a plain talk with Drummond. He must get home earlier at night, or he will find the door locked against him. Ugh! how my foot hurts. I believe it's getting worse."

Margaret sat alone after her father had gone to bed. The fire-light fell upon her fair thoughtful face as she gazed down at the burning embers. She was tired, and glad of this respite from her father's querulous talk. It was the same day after day, week in and week out. But to-night she was thankful that he had not started upon his usual long tirade about the opponents of Confederation, especially Squire Andrews, his most determined enemy. She was fond of the company of young people, but owing to her father's stern and hostile manner few came to the house. Her brother was her chief comfort, and but for him she felt that she could not endure the dull weariness and loneliness of her life. Notwithstanding all this, she had bright dreams, and some of them were connected with Drum. She was ambitious for his welfare, and pictured him as captain of a fine ocean clipper. She would sail with him sometimes and visit other lands. And mingled with her dreams was the hero she would one day meet, who would bestow upon her the love her young heart craved.

Thus she sat, weaving her web of golden fancy, until she was at length aroused when Drum opened the door and entered the room.

CHAPTER 13

A SHOT IN THE NIGHT

The trees stood in irregular ranks on the hillside sloping to the valley below. They were second-growth trees, unharmed as yet by fire or biting axe. Maples, beeches and birches mingled with one another and proudly lifted their branching tops high in the air. In summer their leafy crests swayed and rolled like ocean billows when swept by the wind. They shaded the ground beneath, and only streaks of sunlight gleamed through their long silent reaches. But now they were bare of foliage, save some bleached beech leaves which clung tenaciously to the branches. And thus for years they had stood, kissed by the warm sun and gentle breezes of summer and whipped by the wild winds of winter.

But a greater menace than storms was now threatening them. Against the most furious tempests that had driven lashingly across the land they had maintained their solid ranks. Only occasionally a comrade, weakened by age or inward decay, would crash to the ground. This was now to become a common occurrence, for the fatal axe was about to fall, and against the might of that sharp gleaming steel they could oppose no resistance.

It was early morning as Drum Rowan stood and looked up to the top of a tall stately maple. It leaned slightly uphill, and in that direction he decided it should fall. His face was aglow, due to his brisk walk in the frosty air. He had beaten the sun which was just then touching the tips of the highest branches. A deep silence pervaded the forest. Not a living creature could be seen, although rabbit and partridge tracks were plentiful in the light flurry of snow that had sifted down two nights before. His eyes shone with pleasure as he glanced around upon the trees. No twinge of remorse smote his heart at the thought of their destruction. To him they were so many cords of hardwood necessary for his purpose. He enjoyed chopping when the spirit was upon him, and he was in the proper mood this morning. Soon his axe was cutting deep into the maple, and the ringing sounds were reverberating through the forest.

Drum's presence in the woods was due in a large measure to the idea which had come into his mind the previous evening when standing on the ice before the Andrews' house. It had been fanned by Hettie's words down by the shore, and it had later burst into flame in his conversation with his sister Margaret. She had told him how the Daggert brothers had failed in their agreement, and how much depended upon the boat being loaded, in time to reach the city as soon as the ice ran out of the river. All this Drum knew, although he viewed it now in a new light. He determined there and then to undertake the heavy task himself and hire a neighbor to haul the wood to the shore. He believed that when his muscles became sufficiently hardened he could cut a cord a day. Other men had done it, and sometimes more, so why could not he? His enthusiasm delighted his sister, and for some time they discussed the whole affair.

"This may stir up those lazy Daggert rascals," Drum remarked. "When they see me chopping, they may start in again. But I intend to keep on no matter what they do, and cut all I can."

"I am glad to hear you say that," Margaret replied. "I shall put you up a good dinner every day, and have a hot supper ready when you come home at night. How pleased father will be when he hears of this. I shall tell him the first thing in the morning."

"I must get off before he awakes," Drum declared. "He will want to hear about the meeting to-night, and there is very little I can tell that will interest him. It was all one-sided."

Besides helping on with the work, Drum had something else in mind. By chopping on the hillside he would be near the Valley of The Jaws, and he could thus keep a watch over the place. He said nothing to his sister about this, for he did not wish to alarm her. It would be time enough when something happened and after he had communicated with Mr. Tilley. He regretted now that he had mentioned anything to Hettie about the shanty and the cave.

The spot that Drum chose for his work was separated from that of the Daggert brothers by a young growth of soft wood, consisting mostly of fir and spruce trees. He was glad of this, as he wished to be by himself, away from his neighbours in case they should resume their chopping. He believed that they would resent his intrusion into the woods, but this did not worry him in the least. It was his father's property, so he felt at liberty to do as he wished without consulting others.

All through the morning Drum swung the axe. He felled several trees, trimmed their tops, and cut them into cordwood lengths. Some were hard to split, so he was forced to use wooden wedges. When the last fallen tree had been finished he was hungry and ready for dinner. From a little brook down in the valley he brought some water in a tin pail which he

boiled over a small fire he lighted. When the tea was steeped, he sat down upon a stick nearby and opened up the dinner Margaret had prepared. He was tired after his morning's exertions, so the rest was refreshing and the food tasted exceptionally good. He was in a happier frame of mind than he had been for days. He was doing something worth while, and his thoughts naturally drifted off to Nell. He could think of her more calmly now than before. He was master of himself, and he would prove to her and to the world that he was worth something and not a mere drifter through life. This was a new sensation and it gave him considerable satisfaction. Several chickadees chirped as they hopped along a pile of fallen branches. A whiskey-jack fluttered down and peered curiously at the man. To it Drum tossed some crumbs of bread and watched as the hungry bird warily and steadily approached the tempting morsel. He laughed aloud when the little creature at last seized a piece in its beak and flew off to the refuge of a branch not far away.

"Come again, little chap," he invited. "You are safe with me."

The sound of his own voice seemed strange, and he glanced quickly around. Just why he did so he could not tell, but he had the feeling that someone was near. And as he looked, he saw the form of a man moving among the trees high up on the hillside. In another second he had disappeared, and although Drum strained his eyes for a second glimpse he did not see him again. Who could it be? he asked himself. Was someone watching him? He thought of Tom and Bill Daggert. Perhaps one of them was spying upon him. He smiled a little at this idea as he rose to his feet and continued his work. He did want to arouse the lazy scamps' curiosity, and at the same time stir them to action. His mind turned to the dividing-line upon the floor of their house. Would they agree to be friends, wipe it out and begin work again? He hoped so, at any rate, although he had his serious doubts.

Drum was cutting deep into a big white birch, and the chips were flying to right and left, when he suddenly dropped the axe-head upon the ground. He looked over in the direction where he had caught sight of the man gliding among the trees, and a new light shone in his eyes.

"Perhaps it's one of the Fenians!" he exclaimed. "I forgot all about them."

His heart beat fast at the thought, and he stood very still for a few minutes wondering what to do. Even now the enemy might be down in The Jaws, and perhaps the man he had seen was one of them. He longed to leave his work to make an investigation. But this he soon decided would be foolish in broad daylight. Only under cover of night would it be wise to visit the place. The Fenians must have no suspicion that he was watching them.

All through the afternoon he continued his chopping, and only ceased when twilight began to steal gently over the land. He had worked with almost feverish intensity, in keeping with the thoughts that were beating through his brain. He felt that the critical time was now at hand when immediate action would be necessary. Much depended upon him, so he must be most cautious and alert. Mr. Tilley had entrusted him with a great responsibility, and he must not fail his leader.

When the twilight of the short winter day had deepened into night, Drum started for The Jaws, gliding noiselessly through the forest down to the valley below. Often he stopped to listen for some warning sound, but hearing nothing but the murmur of the wind in the tree-tops, he continued on his way, and at last came near the old road leading to the log-cabin. He did not step out upon this, but kept among the shelter of the trees as he moved in the direction of the cabin. He was doubly cautious now, fearful lest the least sound should betray his presence. It was darker in the valley and he almost collided with the shack ere he was aware of its nearness. He stood perfectly still, but no sound could he hear. Satisfied that no one was within the building, he crept around to the door. This he pushed open and peered in. But all was in darkness and the room cold. From here he went to the cave in the hillside, but nothing rewarded his efforts there. Certain was he now that he had been mistaken. There were no Fenians in the place, and all his trouble had been for nothing. He would go home, for he was feeling unusually tired after his day's toil.

As he stood for a few minutes before the cave a peculiar feeling of uneasiness swept suddenly upon him. He could not account for this, and he glanced apprehensively around. The same sensation had come to him the night his hand had been caught in the trap. He listened attentively and at length his straining ears caught the faint sound of some movement on his left. Then a twig snapped and Drum knew that he had not been mistaken. His hands gripped hard upon his axe-handle, and his entire body grew suddenly tense like a tightened cord. He was accustomed to various forest sounds, but this was different from that of bird or beast. All at once there flashed into his mind Hettie's words of warning for him to keep away from The Jaws. He had treated them lightly then, but they meant a great deal to him now. Did the girl know something she was afraid to tell him? he asked himself. Was she aware of the presence of the Fenians in the valley? It did seem likely, and that approaching thing, evidently a human being, but a short distance away, was what she feared.

Although startled at first, the idea of retreat never once entered Drum's mind. It was not his nature to run away when danger thickened around him. He had not done so yet and he was not going to do so now. Instead of fear, anger possessed his soul, and he was ready and willing to fight a whole band of Fenians single-handed. What right had they to come into that valley, spy upon the land, and make preparations for the capturing of the country? He believed that some of them were near, a few yards away, creeping stealthily toward him. How they could see him he did not know, neither did he much care. If it was fight they wanted he would give them their hearts' desires, and at once.

Moving swiftly along the road in the direction from which the sounds had come, he was about to plunge into the forest when a flash of light streaked the darkness, followed instantly by the thundering report of a gun. Instinctively Drum jerked aside at the flash and then a bullet whistled past his head. This cowardly attack aroused in Drum the rage of a wild beast. Not pausing to consider that there might be other guns awaiting him, he leaped furiously forward, his body tearing a passage through the underbrush. Expecting to find the unseen enemy ready for battle, he was surprised to meet no one upon whom he could lay hands. Instead, however, he heard the sound of somebody running away, crashing through the bushes in his precipitate flight. Drum stopped to listen as the sound grew fainter and at last ceased altogether. Realising that pursuit would be useless, he walked slowly back to the road, and stood there for a few minutes ere making his way out of the valley to the high hill above.

CHAPTER 14

THE WARNING

Drum said nothing to his sister about his experience at The Jaws. But Margaret knew that something was troubling him by his unusually quiet manner all through the evening. She also noted that he cleaned his gun that night with special care, and took it with him when he went to work the next morning.

"I hope to get a moose or a deer, so shall take along my gun," he informed her as he rose from the breakfast table. "Their tracks are quite plentiful, and we are in need of fresh meat. I must visit my traps, too, as I have left them too long."

"How did you make out with your chopping yesterday?" Margaret asked.

"Very well for a beginning. But I expect to do better when I get more hardened. I feel somewhat sore this morning."

"Did you see anything of the Daggert brothers?"

"No, they never came near. But I imagine they know what I am doing, for they have eyes and ears like hawks."

"And they are hawks," Margaret emphatically declared. "I never had any use for those men, and I am sorry that father got mixed up with them. They will ruin him if he is not careful. Poor Hettie must have a hard time living with such creatures."

"Have you seen her lately?" Drum inquired, as he picked up his gun and dinner-pail.

"She went by here yesterday on her way to the store. She had her basket as usual, and it seemed to be well filled when she came back."

"Tell father to stop the supply, Margaret. What's the use of letting those lazy rascals get any more provisions? It will only mean a heavier loss."

"I'm afraid it would do no good, Drum, as father is so determined. He yet thinks that Tom and Bill will cut and haul the wood."

"He'll be doomed to a bitter disappointment, then, for those men will never fulfil their agreement, especially as they are in father's debt. But there is nothing we can do about it now. We can only hope that his eyes will be opened. Good-bye, Margaret, and be sure to have the frying-pan ready when I get home."

Drum worked hard all the morning, and piled up the wood he chopped. No one came near him, and although he glanced occasionally around, he saw nothing of the Daggert brothers. He ate his dinner, and then picking up his gun he sauntered off in the direction of The Jaws. He walked cautiously when he came to the place and in sight of the cabin. He saw no sign of life, however, and although he examined the spot from whence the shot had come the night before, he could only see some moccasin tracks upon the light snow. These he followed down the valley for about a mile to a well-beaten lumber-road used by some neighbours in hauling logs to the river. Further pursuit was now out of the question, so in no enviable frame of mind he returned to his work. He had lost valuable time and had accomplished nothing. The enemy had eluded him again.

As he thought of the Fenians and their store of supplies in The Jaws, his hands gripped harder upon the handle of his axe as he drove the blade into the birch he was cutting. Then as the tree toppled and fell to the ground with a resounding crash, a feeling of exultation swept over him. What had happened to that tree would overtake the men who were planning to capture Canada. And he was going to do his part to help. He thought of what his father had often told him about the treatment of the Loyalists, and also of the War of 1812. From a child his mother had related to him stories of the hardships the Loyalists had endured when they landed in 1783, and his heart had always thrilled with pride and patriotic fervor. He, too, would be loyal and defend his country to the last. He had often thought of this while lying in bed, and he longed for an opportunity to prove his devotion and courage. And now the time had arrived, and the people who had driven out his forefathers, and later had tried to capture Canada were once more in arms against his native land.

And thus he thought as he worked that afternoon. He was not cutting cordwood alone, but with every swing of the axe he

was hurling back an unseen enemy. He pictured himself leading a band of men against the foe and following them as they fled in wild flight through the forest and over the fields. It was all very real, and his bronzed face flushed and his heart beat fast with the thrill of conquest. He made a record that afternoon, and he was surprised when he had piled up the wood to find how much he had cut. He was tired when he left for home, and eager for the supper he knew would be awaiting his arrival.

It was dusk when he reached the place where the Daggert brothers had done their chopping, and he had just crossed the clearing when he met Tom who suddenly emerged from the woods. He was carrying an axe over his shoulder, and his manner seemed somewhat threatening.

"Hello, Tom," Drum accosted. "You're late starting to work. Had a change of heart, eh?"

"Naw, us don't work no more here," was the growling reply. "Us'll have to git out."

"Why, what's the matter now?"

Tom lifted the axe from his shoulder and brought it down upon the ground with a thud. His long hair, unkempt beard, and quaint rough clothes would have sent a chill of fear through the heart of a stranger. But Drum thought nothing of such an appearance, so accustomed was he to the sight of this more than half wild creature. Neither did he pay any heed to the angry gleam in the small shifting eyes. He did notice, however, that the man was unusually agitated, and that his jaws were working in a strange manner.

"What's wrong, anyway, Tom?" he asked. "You look worried. Are you sick?"

"Us ain't sick," was the savage reply. "Us mad. Us got t'git out."

"So you told me, Tom. But why?"

"Us got no more work. You take work from us. You d—— skunk! cuttin' our wood."

At these words Drum straightened himself suddenly up, and the half-humorous expression in his eyes vanished. That this man was not to be fooled with, he was well aware. Neither must he humour him in his wrath. He could fight with his brother as much as he liked, but Drum was determined that he, at any rate, would put up with none of his nonsense. He took a quick step forward.

"Stop your snarling at me, Tom," he ordered. "I'm cutting the cordwood because you and Bill won't do it. How else could we get our boat loaded?"

"Us'll cut it bimeby when us stop fightin'."

"And when will that be? You and Bill will only quit fighting when you are dead, it seems to me. We want the cordwood cut now while the hauling is good."

"Oh, plenty time yit. Spring's long way off. Us cut an' haul fast."

"You haven't done that so far, Tom, and I don't believe you will do any better in the future. I intend to cut what I can myself, and then if you and Bill will get busy so much the better."

"Us'll not cut another stick if you chop any more. Us'll do all or nuthin'."

"Then you'll get no more supplies at the store, Tom. You've been getting too much already. I should think you would want to pay what you owe us. You can starve if you won't work. I'm going home now, for it's no use talking to you any more."

Scarcely had Drum ceased speaking, when Tom, livid with rage, lifted his axe and aimed a savage blow at his head. With a lightning movement he dodged the stroke and the blade of the axe crashed to the ground. As it did so, Drum sprang upon his assailant, tore the axe from his grasp, and seized him by the throat. Tom struggled wildly to free himself from that vise-like grip. But the clutching fingers pressed harder into the coarse hairy neck. When the gasping man's eyes were fairly bulging from their sockets, Drum loosened his hold and pushed him from him.

"You coward!" he cried. "It's your age that saves you from my fists. What have I done to you that you should wish to kill me? Get out of this, and don't let me catch you around here again. There's your axe; take it and use it to a better purpose

after this."

Dazed and trembling, Tom picked up his axe and shuffled slowly away across the clearing. At the edge of the forest he turned and fiercely shook his fist at the young man. The next minute he had disappeared among the trees, leaving Drum with the certainty that he had made a bitter enemy of the man that evening, whom it would be necessary to watch most carefully.

"I knew the spite was there," he mused as he wended his way homeward. "Those Daggert devils have had it in for us ever since father bought that land next to their place which they were anxious to get, but didn't have the money. They have pretended to be our friends, but murder was in their hearts. It came out to-night, all right, when Tom showed his venom. Perhaps it is just as well, for it will teach me to be on my guard. They would like to kill me, but I guess they won't find it as easy as they imagine."

The next morning he continued his chopping, but the spirit that had animated him the day before had departed. He worked more like a machine, and at times he stopped and looked far off toward the east in the direction of the Andrews' house. He thought of the chopping and quilting party which was to be held that afternoon for the benefit of Widow Saunders, and he was well aware what that would mean. The young people would gather during the afternoon, and while the women quilted the men would chop the big pile of wood in the dooryard. Then after supper there would be dancing. Nell would be there, Drum felt sure, for she always had attended this annual event. Last year he himself had been present and had walked home with her through the clear frosty night. He knew what a pleasant time it would be, for Widow Saunders was a bright body who enjoyed the presence of young people. Margaret had told Drum all about the arrangements, and she had been surprised when he had informed her that he would not attend the party.

"I must look after my traps to-morrow," he had explained. "There is a storm coming, and most likely it will be a big one, as the weather has been fine for so long. I shall not be home at night for the party."

About the middle of the morning as he was leaning on his axe gazing off into space, he heard a step behind him. Looking quickly around, he saw Hettie but a short distance away. He smiled, and told her how she had startled him. The girl, however, made no immediate reply, but approaching, perched herself upon the stump of a tree. She looked very grave, and her eyes were big and bright. Drum noticed that her face seemed thinner and more drawn than usual.

"What's the matter, Hettie?" he asked, "Anybody dead at your house?"

"No, Drum. Why d'ye ask that?"

"Because you look so mournful. I thought perhaps your father and uncle had been fighting and one of them had been killed."

"No sich luck, Drum." The girl sighed as she drew the skirts of her dress close around her feet. "They fit last night, an' Dad scratched Unc; that's all. It's nuthin' new."

"What a great time you must have at your house, Hettie. So much fighting must make things lively. Is the chalk mark there yet?"

"Yep, it's thar, a'right. I'm goin' to wipe it out when I git time. But, Drum—"

"What is it?" the young man asked, as the girl hesitated.

"Are ye goin' to the party t'night?"

"No, I haven't time, as I must visit my traps. There's a storm coming, so I must not wait any longer."

Hettie sprang quickly to her feet, and came close to where he was standing.

"Don't go to yer traps t'day, Drum. Go to the party."

"Why should I go there?"

"Cause ye want to."

"How do you know that?"

"Cause Nell'll be thar."

"Well, what of it? She's nothing to me."

"Why was ye gazin' 'way off thar, then, Drum?"

"Oh, I was just thinking; that was all."

"Thinkin' 'bout her, eh? Ye can't fool me, Drum. Ye'd ruther go to that party an' meet Nell than anything else in the world. Now, wouldn't ye?"

"But I'm not going, Hettie, so that's the end of it. I must attend to business first."

"It's goin' to be a bad storm, I guess," and the girl looked up at the sky as she spoke. "See them clouds? I know what they mean. They're mad when they look like that, an' then I'm allus afraid. Listen to the wind in the tree-tops. It's gittin' worser all the time. Don't ye hear it howl? Ye mus'n't go to yer traps, Drum, with sich a storm comin'."

"But I shall be safe in my cabin before night," Drum replied. "Anyway, I don't mind a storm; I like it."

"Ye won't like this one, though, Drum. It'll be worser than any ye ever saw in yer hull life."

"How do you know that?"

"I jist know; that's all, so ye better go t' the party."

"Look here, Hettie, what's the meaning of your strange words?" Drum demanded. "You seem to think that something bad will happen to me. If you know anything, tell me. Don't beat around the bush so much."

"But the storm's goin' to be bad, an', then, them cranes—"

"Oh, that's all silly nonsense," Drum interrupted. "You speak about the cranes every time we meet. I don't want to hear any more about them. I'm not superstitious."

Hettie reached suddenly out and caught the young man by the arm.

"I've warned ye, Drum, not to go to yer traps t'day," she cried. "I can't tell ye what I mean. I ain't sup'stishus. But don't go, don't!"

Her voice sank to a low wail, and a peculiar feeling of awe smote Drum's heart. Then he laughed, and that laugh aroused in Hettie a spasm of fury. Her eyes blazed, and she stamped furiously upon the ground.

"Go, then," she shrieked. "Have yer own way, but remember I warned ye. Go to yer traps, an' be damned!"

She then turned and sped swiftly away, leaving Drum gazing curiously after her retreating form.

CHAPTER 15

DISENCHANTMENT

It was only natural that Nell Andrews' heart should thrill with pride as she walked with the lawyer up the road after the meeting in the hall. She knew how envious the other girls in the parish would be at the attention paid her by this brilliant young man from the city. This was a novel experience to her and an outstanding event in her young life. She had never lacked admirers since early school days, but they had all been neighbours, boys she had known from childhood. They were just ordinary, commonplace lads, who had never inspired her with the glamour of romance such as she had read about in story-books. But this stranger came from the world of which she had so often dreamed. With him she associated all those charms of city life of which she was ignorant. What a wonderful experience to be the wife of a leading lawyer, to move in the best social circles, and to meet well-dressed and highly-refined people. What an honour to have such a man as her husband, and how she would be the envy of all the girls of her acquaintance. Such was the realm of fancy in which she had been soaring ever since the day she had met Richard Mason at The Three Elms.

But as Nell walked up the road by the lawyer's side, this sense of elation gradually subsided. She did not feel altogether at ease with this young man. He was not of her world, and he was almost entirely ignorant of country ways. His whole life had been spent in the city, and so engrossed was he with his legal studies that he had little or no interest in sports or social amusements. He had never skated, knew nothing about coasting, and had not even been to an apple-peeling party. When Nell mentioned these, he plainly told her that he had more important things to occupy his mind, and that people were spending too much time upon such frivolous affairs. He then launched forth upon the great purpose of life, and quoted passages from eminent writers in support of his claim. Nell was almost in despair and she felt so wofully ignorant in the presence of such a man. This soon changed to the spirit of annoyance at his bland and self-satisfied manner.

"You do not seem to be much interested in the ordinary affairs of daily life," she at length remarked.

"Only as they affect my profession," was the reply. "Everything must centre around and contribute to that. Ship-building, for instance, does not interest me at all, even though it is one of our chief industries. But I study all I can about it so as to be ready if I have to conduct a ship-building case in court. It is necessary to know all the details of the craft."

"And you do the same with everything else, Mr. Mason?"

"Certainly. My professional career is at stake, and if I should make a fatal blunder about some common thing it would be most disastrous to me and my clients. I was brought up in the city, but I endeavor to make a special study of the way of the backwoods, or as I should say, the country, for I number farmers and lumbermen among my clients."

"But you take no interest in the ways of the country, Mr. Mason."

"None at all except as they assist me in my profession. They are like so many sticks and stones to a bridge-builder, important only as they serve his purpose."

"And is that why you are here to-night?" Nell bluntly asked. "Do you consider us and our ways as so many sticks and stones to serve your purpose?"

"To a certain extent I do. You see, we must down Tilley and his gang, and defeat this union scheme. But we cannot do it without the aid of the country people. We must have their support, so that is why I am here to-night."

Nell winced at these words, and her cheeks burned with indignation. The first prop was thus rudely torn from her dream-castle.

"Was that the reason why you spoke to me at The Three Elms?" she inquired.

"I wished to apologise for our rudeness to your father, Miss Andrews. I was anxious to become acquainted with the daughter of such a man. It was very clever the way he defeated us that day, and I had never heard the expressions 'bushman's cut' and 'lumberman's cut' until then. They may prove of great value to me some day."

"So you thought you could learn something more of country ways from me, did you?" Nell sarcastically queried.

"I was hoping so."

"Have your hopes been fulfilled?"

"Partly so."

"And the letter you wrote, telling me how you hoped to meet me again was all in your wonderful bridge-building scheme?"

"Ah, did I write you a letter? I had forgotten all about it. But I must have done so if you received one from me. Yes, that is complete evidence for the plaintiff. How stupid of me to forget. But it does not matter now. I find that you are a clever young woman, a type, in fact, all by yourself. I know very little about country women, as my dealings are mostly with men."

A sudden desire swept upon Nell to knock this conceited specimen of humanity down over the steep bank on their right. She knew that it would be an easy thing to do, for she was strong, well-developed, and accustomed to hard work. What fun it would be to hear him shouting for help among the thick tangled bushes below. It would be just what he deserved, too. Imagine being the wife of such a man as that! The mere idea caused her to shudder. Then Drum Rowan came suddenly into her mind. What a contrast between him and this conceited fellow by her side. Drum was a living breathing personality, full of abounding health and strength, and interested in the things which appealed to her. Never before had she thought of him in such a light. But now he seemed almost a hero in her eyes.

She was about two-thirds of the way home when this change of heart and mind came upon her. It would not do to dump her companion over the bank. But she did want to do something to stir him up, and to find out whether he was really made of flesh and blood. Although they were not walking fast, she noticed that the young man was breathing quite hard and was labouring over the road which did not bother her in the least. He was much encumbered with an overcoat, and his shoes were light and the soles smooth.

Presently an idea flashed into Nell's mind, and gradually she increased her pace. This proved most effective, for the lawyer had a hard time to keep up with her. He tried to continue the conversation, but he could only gasp out a word now and then as he struggled onward. He was panting heavily, and sometimes he slipped on a piece of ice. But Nell seemed to be unconscious of his frantic efforts, and only slowed down when she reached her own home. She stopped before opening the door and looked at her companion.

"Have you enjoyed your walk, Mr. Mason?" she asked.

But the young man made no reply, as he was gasping and breathing heavily. He could not see the amused expression in the girl's eyes as she stood watching him.

"You have learned a lot about country ways to-night," she bantered. "You should find this experience very useful in your work. But suppose we go into the house. Mother is quite a doctor, and has some peppermint which she will give you. She always keeps it on hand, and it is fine for babies."

The young man followed her slowly into the house. He was half-dazed, and very glad was he to lie upon the sofa in the parlour while Mrs. Andrews brought him a glass of her best home-made wine. She was much worried over his weak condition, and attributed it to the exertion of speaking in the hall.

"You are tired out, poor man," she sympathised. "And you have been walking too fast. Why, you are all out of breath. Nell, you should have known better," she rebuked, turning to her daughter.

"Oh, I wanted Mr. Mason to learn something about country ways, mother," the girl replied. "That's why he is here, so he has had his first lesson to-night—and from me. He'll be all right in a minute."

It took more than a minute, however, to restore the exhausted man. He remained for a while upon the sofa, and with closed eyes thought over Nell's curious words and actions. Shrewd and clever in his chosen profession, it never once entered his mind that this country girl was making fun of him. This was partly due to his ignorance of the ways of women, and also to his own vanity. He really imagined that she was taking him at his word and was anxious to teach him about things he did not already know. In a half hour's time he was much refreshed, able to sit up and talk with the Squire. The latter was delighted to have the lawyer visit his house, and together they discussed the momentous question of

Confederation. Andy Dooner listened intently to all that was being said, but took no part in the conversation. In fact, the visitor never seemed to notice his presence.

Nell was far from happy. She sat by Andy's side, but her mind was not upon the subject under discussion. Although outwardly calm, she was doing considerable thinking. Mentally she was comparing the slight, well-dressed lawyer with the strong, rugged and upstanding Drum Rowan. What a difference there was between the two. The contrast in personal appearance was great; one big and manly, the other slight and almost effeminate. Drum, she knew, loved her for her own sake alone, while this man thought of her as he would think of a stick or a stone, something to serve his purpose. Nell's vanity was wounded, for this was the first time she had ever been treated in such a slighting manner. The careless, wandering and impulsive Drum had never done that. But this man from the city was devoid of all sentiment, and nothing but a human icicle.

These thoughts beat through her brain as she sat there, listening apparently to the conversation. But she heard only what interested her, for she cared very little about political matters. She was quite satisfied to leave such deep, dry affairs of state to her elders. But when the lawyer spoke about himself she was all alert. And this he did more than once, for then Richard Mason was very much in his element. What he thought, said and did always formed the chief burden of his remarks.

"Sentiment should have nothing to do with this Confederation fight," she heard him say. "Tilley is making too much use of it in connection with his bogey-scare of the Fenian raid. Why, it's all nonsense, and yet Tilley and his gang are working it for all they are worth. Sentiment plays too much a part in life, anyway. Facts and hard cold logic are the only things that count, and it is by means of these that we are going to win. For myself, I have no use for childish sentiment. It is the head and not the heart that matters."

Nell was certain now that she had not been wrong in her judgment of this man. She wanted to get away from the sound of his voice, and she wondered why she had been so greatly fascinated by it at the meeting. But she did not know him so well then, and that made the difference. Very glad was she when at last sleigh-bells sounded outside, and the visitor rose to his feet.

"My driver has come for me as I ordered," he explained.

"Why not stay here all night," the Squire suggested. "You can get an early start in the morning."

"No, I have important duties awaiting me in the city, and they must not be neglected. The horses have had a long rest, so will be in good form for the drive. But I trust to you, Squire, to carry on the fight in this parish. I have fired the opening gun, so to speak, and you must line up our supporters and continue the work to a successful finish."

He reached out his hand to Nell.

"I hope we shall meet again," he said. "I have spent a very pleasant and profitable evening, and shall always remember it with pleasure."

Instead of taking his hand, Nell made him a profound and graceful bow.

"You forget yourself, sir," she reminded. "Hand-shaking is mere sentiment, and the pleasant memory of this evening will be all nonsense."

"Nell! Nell! I am surprised at you," her father sternly chided.

"I am only taking Mr. Mason at his word, father. He has no use for sentiment in life, so he told us. Why, then, does he pretend that he does? It is nothing but hypocrisy, and that's a thing I despise."

She turned and fled from the room, her eyes blazing and her cheeks scarlet. Andy slowly shuffled after her, his face beaming with amusement, and his heart beating with satisfaction.

CHAPTER 16

A STARTLING APPEAL

Andy smiled quite often the next morning as he worked at his bench. Sometimes the smile ended in a chuckle as he drove the pegs into the sole of a boot he was finishing. Nell, washing the breakfast dishes, glanced occasionally at the old man, and an expression of amusement shone in her eyes. She had been unusually silent this morning, thinking over all that had taken place the evening before. She knew that the shoemaker had something to say, and that the chuckles were but the prelude to his words. She was forced to wait, however, for some time, and her patience at length became exhausted. When she had wiped the last cup, and had put the dishes away upon the pantry shelf, she went over and sat down by Andy's side.

"What's the matter with you this morning?" she abruptly asked.

"Why, what d'ye mean, Nellie? Ain't I all right? Do I look sick?"

"What are you smiling and chuckling so much about? You seem to be very happy."

"An' why shouldn't I be happy when I have jist finished sich a piece of work as that?" He lifted the boot from his lap and held it up for her inspection. "Look at that, now. Won't ye be proud when ye slip yer little foot into it. It's none of yer fact'ry stuff, all cardboard an' glue. It's the finest calf-skin, well-sewed, an' the soles stout enough to stand the roughest wear. Ye'll need 'em more'n ever, I guess, if I'm any jedge of human natur'."

"In what way, Andy? Why shall I need such boots more than ever?"

"To keep that lawyer feller on the jump. Ha, ha! how I'd liked to have seen him last night tryin' to keep up with ye, Nellie. My! he must be sore this mornin'. I bet ye a dollar his dainty feet are all blisters. Did ye see what he was wearin'?"

"No, I never noticed. I was too busy thinking about other things."

"So I thought. But trust an old cat-whipper to look first of all at a man's feet. Now, a tailor'll size up a man by his clothes, an' a woman, mebbe, by the colour of his eyes an' the curl of his hair, but a shoemaker'll jedge him by his feet an' what he's got on 'em."

"Is that the way you judged Mr. Mason?" Nell laughingly asked. "Were you not impressed with his speech at the hall last night? I thought it was wonderful."

"It was a wonderful lot of gab, Nellie, an' no mistake. But that speech was prepared fer him, an' he sang it off jist like a good little school boy at an entertainment. He was only sayin' what he was told. He hasn't enough understandin' to do anything else."

"I am surprised at you, Andy, for saying such things," Nell remonstrated. "What reason have you for your harsh judgment?"

"By what the feller said to yer father last night settin' up there in the parlour. Didn't ye hear 'im?"

"I only heard a little, especially what he said about sentiment. I'm not interested in politics, so didn't pay much attention."

"It was jist as well, Nellie, fer ye missed nuthin'. Why, that chap couldn't talk any sense when he got off the song he larnt by heart. His understandin's poor; that's the trouble. I knew it as soon as I caught sight of his feet, an' the things he had on 'em."

"What were they, Andy?"

"I can't tell ye, Nellie, fer I never saw their like before. They may have a name in the shoe-stores, but I never heard it. They were nice dainty little things, with soles about as thin as cookies ye git in a city hotel. An' them things he was wearin' were so low ye could see his ankles hangin' out over the tops of 'em. That's a fact, Nellie, an' I'm not lyin'. I ginerally find that when a man has weak understandin' at the lower end of 'im, he has it, too, at the upper. When I look at

a man's feet I kin tell nigh to a grasshopper what his head is like."

"I hope you don't judge me that way, Andy," Nell smilingly replied, glancing down at her own feet.

"I'm only speakin' about men, Nellie. But yer feet are all right, an' I want ye to try on these new shoes jist now. Shoes, like clothes, look good or bad accordin' to the ones who wear 'em. My shoes have never looked out of place on you yit, an' I've been makin' 'em fer ye ever since ye was a little gal in frocks."

In a few minutes Nell was standing up with the new shoes on her feet, while Andy's eyes glowed with admiration and satisfaction.

"They fit like a glove!" he exclaimed. "My! won't ye give that lawyer feller a race when he comes to see ye ag'in."

"I don't want to see him again," the girl firmly declared. Her cheeks were flushed, and her head was held proudly erect.

"Well said, Nellie!" Andy cried, rising to his feet. "Them's the best words I've heard ye say in a long time. Jist let me git me fiddle, an' we'll have a little spree here before ye ma comes back. We allus have done it in the past when I finished yer shoes, an' now it'll be a double celebration. I'm mighty glad ye've come to yer senses at last. Git ready now, an' step yer purtiest."

Nothing loth, Nell pushed back a couple of chairs, and holding out her skirts with both hands stepped heel and toe to Andy's lively air. She was a good dancer, and her every movement was full of subtle charm. The old man's eyes kindled with admiration as he watched her, and when she at last ended with a graceful bow toward him, he was delighted.

"Good fer you, Nellie!" he complimented. "Ye never done that better. It's them shoes, I guess, that makes ye step like that. An' what a purty colour ye've got in yer cheeks. I wish Drum could see ye now."

Before Nell could reply, the door was suddenly opened and Mrs. Andrews entered. Her face and manner told of some unusual excitement, but she stopped short at the scene before her.

"Well, well!" she exclaimed. "What in the world are you two doing? Is this the way you carry on when I leave the house? I expected to find you both at work."

"When the cat's away the mice'll play, Mrs. Andrews," Andy reminded. "We're jist celebratin' some finished work. Look at them shoes, now," and he pointed to Nell's feet. "Ain't they worth a little spree? You did the same yerself when ye were young, an' I well remember that no one could beat Kitty Witrow when she once got livened up to a good old jig. Ain't that so, now?"

"You've certainly licked the Blarney Stone well," Mrs. Andrews retorted, although it was evident that she was pleased at Andy's compliment. "I may have been a good dancer when my feet were as light as my head. But times have changed, and instead of hopping about to the jig of a fiddle, I have to dance attendance upon every baby in the place."

"Used yer peppermint to-day, I s'pose? Ye should have used it last night upon that city baby. It would have brought him to quicker than yer wine. It allus does the trick."

"But he didn't have the colic, Andy. He needed something more stimulating after his hard exertions. But, dear me! here I've been talking and have forgotten all about that paper. Where did I put it, anyway? Ah! here it is. Just read that, and learn for yourselves what's going on right in our very midst. It's awful!"

Nell took the piece of paper from her mother's hand, and glanced at it for a few seconds. Then noticing Andy's interest, she read aloud:

"To the People of New Brunswick.

"We are among you as the foes of the British rule. We have taken up sword and gun to strike down the oppressor's rod, and to give you freedom. Too long have you been under the yoke of a cruel tyrant. England does not care for you, but uses you merely as a pawn in her unjust ambitions. The mighty Atlantic ocean separates you from her.

People who live three thousand miles apart can have little or nothing in common. We are your next-door neighbours, with only an invisible boundary line dividing us. We are a great Republic, composed of free-thinking people, with Liberty as our motto. We threw off the tyrant's yoke and the bonds that were holding us in servitude. We are free, and we seek your freedom. People of New Brunswick, your ways are our ways, your speech is our speech, and we are all of one blood. Your interests are our interests, and we appeal to you to unite with us in driving the British rule from your land. Already we are concentrating our forces, and making ready on land and sea. From the Great Lakes to the Bay of Fundy twenty thousand men are ready to strike the blow of liberty and free Canada and the Provinces by the sea. Now is the time to be up and doing. The hour strikes; our plans are all laid, and sooner than the enemy expect the blow will fall. Join with us, people of New Brunswick, in the great and final downfall of England's rule in your midst. If you do all will be well with you, but if not vengeance will overtake you swift and complete. In the name of the great Fenian Brotherhood, the promoter of true Liberty, we appeal to you. The spirit of our organization is running like an electric current in the east, north and west, and thousands upon thousands warn England that her tyranny on this side of the Atlantic must cease."

Nell's hands were trembling as she finished reading, and her face was pale.

"Where did you get this, mother?" she asked.

"Down the road. Why, copies of that thing have been left at several houses. Tommy Watkins picked this one up right at their gate. Just think of that!"

"There must be Fenian spies among us," Nell declared. "And they ask us to join them against England. They want to capture our country. But they will never do it, will they, Andy? Our men will rise in arms and drive them back. Hasn't the United States enough land without trying to take ours?"

"It isn't the United States that's doin' this," Andy replied. "That thing," and he pointed to the paper, "was drawn up by a number of scalywags who hate England. I've been readin' in the paper about 'em. They're a lot of Irish agitators who've been tryin' fer a long time to free Ireland. They sent over a ship loaded with guns an' ammunition. But Old Johnny Bull was up to their tricks, an' nabbed the ship before she had time to land her supplies. Then when they couldn't git Ireland, they turned their attention to Canada. They think that we'll side with 'em, but they'll soon find out their mistake."

"But why are they allowed to do such a thing?" Nell asked. "We are at peace with the United States, are we not?"

"Sure we are, an' Uncle Sammy's keepin' an eye over them scamps, you may depend. He may not be on kissin' terms with Johnny Bull, owin' to the Revolutionary War, but he's got enough sense not to git mixed up in a nasty scrape because of them rattle-brained agitators. But fer all that, when twenty thousand men kick up trouble, Sammy may have his hands more'n full before he gits 'em under control. In the meantime, a lot of 'em may git into this province an' do considerable mischief. It'll be jist as well to be ready if they do come."

"But they are here now," Mrs. Andrews declared. "Doesn't that paper say so?"

"Quite true," Andy agreed. "They must have their spies among us, an' it's our bizness to find out who they are. But, there, I must git to work. Nellie, I guess ye'll have to postpone yer dancin' 'till the apple peelin' party t'morrer night. If them shoes don't make ye step livelier than ye ever did before, it won't be Andy Dooner's fault, not by a jugful."

CHAPTER 17

THE PARTY

The apple peeling party at Caleb Britain's was an event of considerable importance in the settlement. All looked forward to it with much interest, especially the young people. The time of holding it depended upon Andy Dooner's arrival, for without the music provided by the shoemaker the affair could not be successfully carried out. Andy knew this, and it always pleased him to know that his presence was necessary on such a festive occasion. He enjoyed parties, and was particularly fond of mingling with young men and women, chaffing them, and listening to their merry talk.

The work was well under way when he and Nell arrived, and both received a hearty welcome. It was an animated scene which met their eyes as they entered and laid aside their wraps. The large kitchen was occupied by the elders, while the dining-room and parlour were filled with young people. The latter claimed Nell, and those in the kitchen detained Andy for their own special benefit. The big fire-place sent out its genial heat, mingling its brightness with that of the candles on the table. The women peeled and cored the large rosy apples, while the men strung them on shoemakers' twine. They were then hung to dry over the blackened girders above. At times the women jokingly chided the men for their slowness and clumsiness. Mrs. Zeb Martin was the most talkative and entertaining one of them all. She was always listened to with respect, not only on account of her age, but because she was reputed to be worth considerable money left her by a distant relative. She was of good stock, too, and although most of the people in the parish boasted of their Loyalist descent, Mrs. Martin was considered somewhat superior owing to the fact that one of her ancestors had been an English lord.

"Abe Hawker!" she exclaimed, laying down her apple and knife in her lap, "you've got that twine all in a tangle. You're awful clumsy."

"Guess I am," Abe ruefully agreed. "By jolly! I never saw the like of this stuff."

"You are better with the axe or plough, Abe. Here's Andy; let him have it. He's used to handling twine."

"So I am, Mrs. Martin," Andy smilingly replied. "But I'm not much good at unravellin' other peoples' tangles. It's as much as I kin do to keep me own twine straight."

"Well, then, take a fresh piece and show Abe how to do it. He's as awkward as a bear."

"I only use waxed twine, Mrs. Martin, with a good pig's bristle on the end of it. Ye can't do much without wax, to my way of thinkin'. I need it on me twine an' me fiddle strings to git the best results. Even bees need it, an' ye know what wise little workers they are. My! my! what a busy lot yez all are, an' so happy. Jist listen to them young folks, too. What a time they're havin'. Ye'd never imagine the Fenyuns were threatenin' us, would ye, now?"

"Have you heard anything lately, Andy?" Mrs. Martin anxiously inquired. "We really shouldn't be here if there's any danger."

"But what about them pieces of paper scattered up an' down the road, advisin' all to jine the Fenyuns an' overturn the British rule?"

"We were jist talkin' about that afore ye came in," Abe explained. "Sez I to Becky, sez I, 'We shouldn't go to the party t'night, fer one kin never tell when them Fenyuns may come.' But Becky wouldn't hear of sich a thing. 'We've never missed, Abe,' sez she, 'so we're goin', Fenyuns or no Fenyuns.' So here we are, an' we're goin' to stay. We got one scare the night that goose, Seth Sloan, jumped into the store, an' by jolly! I'm not goin' to be fooled ag'in in sich a hurry."

Having thus relieved his feelings, Abe bent to the task of straightening out his tangled thread. The talk became general, and all had something to say about the papers scattered from house to house. Many were the surmises, but no satisfactory solution was found to the problem, as no suspicious character had been seen along the road.

Andy listened to what was being said, and at times joined in the conversation. But he was not as talkative as usual. He did not bubble over with humorous jests and remarks as in the past. He turned his eyes occasionally toward the merrymakers in the adjoining rooms. His mind seemed to be more with them than with their elders. He longed to join them, and very glad, indeed, was he when he heard his name called to provide music for the dance.

"Dear me! are those giddy young things through with their work already!" Mrs. Martin exclaimed. "They think more of dancing than anything else."

"Remember yer own young days, me dear," Andy reminded. "You could shake a foot with the best of 'em, an' mebbe ye could do so now. I'd like to see you an' Zeb out upon the floor once ag'in."

"Go along, you blatherskite. Zeb's all broken up with rheumatism, and my joints are too stiff for any such nonsense. That's what hard work in season and out does."

"But there's nuthin' like dancin' to keep ye limber, Mrs. Martin. Old folks have a habit of droppin' it jist when they need it most. We'd all live longer an' have fewer aches an' pains if we'd let up fer a while an' jine in a little shindy with the youngsters. But, there, they're callin' me, so I must git along."

Nell was not enjoying the evening so much as on former occasions. Although she was as bright and pleasant as ever, and smiled when her companions bantered her about the lawyer, she was not happy. Every time the door opened and some one entered, she looked quickly up, hoping that it might be Drum. But as the evening wore on and he did not appear, she was puzzled. Never before had he been known to stay away from such an affair as this. She could not help thinking about him, and her heart was strangely stirred this night. She was mentally comparing Drum with the lawyer, and she saw the great difference between the two. She had heard of the incident at the store, how Drum had defended her honour and forced Seth to take back his lies. The thought of his nobleness thrilled her soul, and she longed to thank him. But she had not seen him since that night at the hall, and she had no idea what had become of him.

Nell was becoming weary of the talk and confusion around her when Andy entered the parlour. She saw him looking keenly around the room as if searching for some one. Seeing Nell, he crossed over to where she was sitting. He was holding his violin in his hands, and as he sat down by her side he gently thrummed the strings with the fingers of his right hand.

"Are ye goin' to open the dance, Nellie?" he asked in a low voice.

"I don't feel like dancing," the girl replied. "I may after a while, though."

"Ah, I understand, an' don't blame ye. Mebbe he'll be here later. I can't make out what's keepin' him. He never missed before."

Nell shot a swift glance at Andy and the colour rose to her cheeks. She knew that the old man had read her mind, and it pleased her to know that she had his honest sympathy. She could talk to him better than to anyone else.

"What do you suppose is keeping Drum away to-night?" she at length questioned.

"I'm not sartin', Nellie, but I have me strong suspicion. When a man gits as old as me, he knows a thing or two which he didn't fathom when young. This fiddle of mine is a delicate instrument an' needs proper handlin'. It ain't every one who kin understand it. An' so with the human heart. It has ways which are sometimes past findin' out. Now, Drum has a great heart, as tender, sensitive and responsive as this fiddle when touched jist right."

"Hush! hush! Andy," Nell whispered, her face now crimson. "Every one in the room will hear you."

"No one kin hear me here, Nellie. Don't ye see we're by ourselves? The rest are gittin' ready fer the dance, an' they're callin' to me fer the music. But what I said is right, remember. Drum won't bother ye so long as he thinks that lawyer chap is the favoured one. He's too much of a man fer that. No one kin fool with a heart sich as he's got. I know the breed from which he sprung—good old Bluenose blood from generation to generation, as the Great Book says."

Andy played his best this night, for he was keyed up more than was his wont. His eyes shone with animation as he watched the various couples whirling before him. But when Nell came upon the floor he kept his eyes fixed upon her face. He could easily tell that she was not enjoying herself, and when she was through she came and sat down by his side.

"I am tired, Andy," she whispered, "and am going to sit here by you for the rest of the evening. You want company, don't you?"

"I'm allus glad to have you with me, Nellie," the old man replied as he rosined his violin strings. "Ye want to go home,

an' I do, too. But I'll have to play a while longer. Hello! what's the racket now?"

Nell looked quickly up and saw that Seth had entered the room. He was standing just inside the parlour door, gazing upon the company. He had not removed his hat, which was slouched to the left side of his head. The expression in his eyes seemed to challenge all in the room as he looked from one to another until they rested upon Nell.

"Who said I am a coward?" he demanded.

No one spoke, for all had been talking and joking about him ever since the night of the meeting in the hall. They had called him all sorts of names, but no one felt inclined now to mention them to his face. An intense silence pervaded the room as Seth looked triumphantly around.

"Ye've been callin' me a coward," he declared. "But ye don't dare to say it when I'm here. Ye believe what Drum Rowan says about me. He's a d—— liar, that's what he is."

At these words Nell rose quickly to her feet and confronted Seth. Her eyes were ablaze with anger, and her hands were clenched.

"I called you a coward, Seth Sloan," she said. "And you are a coward, and the meanest one, at that. You lied about me and Mr. Mason, and Drum Rowan made you deny what you said. And now you call him a liar when he is not here to defend himself. You should be ashamed to be seen among respectable people."

Seth was taken completely back by this unexpected turn of affairs. Never for a moment had he imagined that a woman would say such things to him, and Nell of all women. But to see her standing so proudly and defiantly before him aroused the beast within him. He had taken just enough liquor to make him reckless and to buoy him up with artificial courage.

"So yer takin' Drum's part, are ye?" he sneered. "I thought ye'd thrown him overboard fer that thing of a lawyer from the city. But I'm not goin' to fight with a woman. Where are the men?"

"Here's one of 'em," Abe Hawker roared, laying his heavy right hand upon Seth's shoulder. "I've had it in fer you, young man, ever since that night ye gave us sich a scare about the Fenyuns. Now, what's the meanin' of all this racket?"

"People have been callin' me a coward," Seth explained, trying to free himself from that tightening grip.

"Well, an' what of it? You are a coward, as Nell said, an' if ye had any sense left, ye wouldn't come here to do so much blattin'."

"It's none of your bizness, Abe Hawker," Seth angrily retorted. "Let go my arm or I'll punch yer face."

"Naw ye won't, ye young rooster. You jist flop down an' stay where I put ye."

Suiting the action to the word, Abe gave Seth a vigorous shove which sent him sprawling over a nearby chair.

"Now, look here," Abe continued when Seth had wriggled himself into an upright position, "I'm in earnest, an' what I say I mean. If ye don't behave yerself fer the rest of the evenin' I'll tie ye into sich a tangle that yer own mother wouldn't know ye. By jolly! I kin hardly keep me hands off ye now."

As Abe glared down upon his victim, Andy struck up a lively tune, and in a few minutes the dancing was again well under way. No one seemed to pay any attention to Seth, who glowered upon them all, with Abe standing by like a watchful bulldog. When that dance was ended, rolls, biscuits and cakes were brought in by Mrs. Britain and several other women. But Nell did not feel like eating. Her head was aching and she wanted to go home. The excitement through which she had passed had unnerved her, and she could not bear the sight of Seth as he sat staring at her from the other side of the room. She whispered a word to Andy, and rose to her feet. The shoemaker looked at her keenly for a few seconds, and then silently followed her as she left the room. Together they left the house, after they had bidden Mr. and Mrs. Britain good-night. The air was cold, and Nell drew her thick scarf about her throat. Andy walked by her side, his violin under his arm.

"You should not have come with me," Nell at length remarked. "How will they get along at the party without you?"

"I'm not worryin' about that, Nellie," Andy replied. "I've got something more important on me mind. But, hello! who's that?"

"It's only Hettie Daggert," Nell explained, somewhat absentmindedly. "That girl seems to be everywhere. I am surprised, though, that she is so far away from home at this time of night."

"But wasn't she hustlin', Nellie! She went by us like a fox with a dog at its tail. I wonder—"

"What are you wondering about, Andy?" Nell queried.

"What's that yer askin' me, Nellie? What am I wonderin' at? Well, fer one thing, I was wonderin' how long the soles of that gal's boots'll last at the rate she's clippin' over these rough roads."

"Are you on the lookout for business, Andy?"

"I allus am, Nellie. But I don't have to hunt fer it. I've more'n I kin do these days. Tom an' Bill Daggert are expectin' me at their place, so I guess I'll 'tend to them next. They need lookin' after, them fellers do. It's a caution the way they wear out boots an' moccasins."



CHAPTER 18

HORSE-SENSE

The next morning Andy worked with almost feverish haste. Nell was surprised at this, and also at his unusual silence. Sometimes when she spoke to him he did not hear. She believed that he must be thinking about the party, and was offended at her, perhaps, for her boldness in confronting Seth. He had never mentioned that incident, and she wondered why.

"What is the matter with you this morning, Andy?" she at last asked, turning toward him from the table where she was rolling dough.

"Nuthin', Nellie," Andy replied, pausing in his work to look at her. "What makes ye think there is?"

"Because you are so quiet and absent-minded. I have spoken to you several times this morning, but you never heard a word I said."

"Is that so! Well, that's queer. Me mind must have been wool-gatherin'."

"Thinking about last night, Andy?"

"Mebbe so, Nellie."

"And you are not angry at what I did and said?"

"Angry! I should say not. I was proud of ye, an' I was jist goin' to jump to yer side when Abe Hawker loomed up. I wish Drum could have seen ye then. I liked the way ye stood up fer him. It did me old heart good."

"I wonder where Drum was last night, Andy?"

"An' so do I. It's not nat'ral fer him to miss a party. I never knew him to do so before. But I believe there must be some good reason, an' I have an inklin' as to what it is."

"You have?"

"Wouldn't be surprised. I was young once meself, an' understand a few things. If I'd had the feelin' that my company wasn't agreeable to the one gal I thought most of in all the world, ye couldn't have got me within a mile of her. So I guess that's the way with Drum. I like that good old Bluenose spirit which lifts a man above the common herd. Ye don't find him snifflin' an' whinin' around after a gal when he knows she doesn't care fer him. Not a bit of it. He's too proud fer that, Drum is."

Andy continued his work and did not notice the blush that appeared upon Nell's cheeks. Rapidly and skilfully he drove the pegs into the sole of the boot upon his lap, the hammer keeping time with his thoughts. When it was finished, he held it up for inspection.

"There, Nellie, that'll stand yer dad some hard thumpin'. I hope he'll use the toe of it upon Seth Sloan if he comes snookin' around here. I'd like to give him a good bootin' meself, an' if I wasn't so old an' stiff I'd a done it last night."

"I don't want to think about him, Andy," Nell declared. "It makes me shiver when I remember how he glared at me. He's changed so much of late. Perhaps his scare that night when he thought the Fenians were after him has affected his brain. He never acted so rudely before."

"H'm, he's not afraid of the Fenyuns now, Nellie. Why, he never mentions 'em."

"I had not noticed that. But why is he not afraid of them?"

"I can't tell fer sure, but I have me suspicions."

"Do you mind telling me what they are?"

"Ye'll promise not to breathe a word?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, bend down an' I'll whisper in yer ears. There, that's better. Now, listen. I believe that Seth is bein' used by the Fenyuns."

"Andy!" Nell's face turned suddenly pale. "I am astonished to hear you say such a thing."

"Mebbe ye are, me dear, but I guess ye'd be more surprised if I told ye all I know."

"How did you find out?"

"Don't ask me, Nellie, fer I can't very well explain. We say that we have five senses, hearin', seein', smellin', tastin', an' feelin'. But I have another which I call 'horse-sense,' an' a mighty useful thing it is at times. It can't be explained; ye can't reason about it; but when ye have it in yer make-up it helps ye to grasp things which the other senses don't."

"So it was your horse-sense which made you suspicious of Seth, was it?"

"Indeed it was, Nellie, an' that's the funny thing about it."

"But suppose your horse-sense is all wrong? It seems to me that Seth is the last one you should suspect of helping the Fenians when he is so frightened of them."

"Ah, that's jist where one's horse-sense comes in handy. Ye see, it's this way; them Fenyun spies heard about Seth's scare, an' knowin' what a miserable thing he is, they said to 'emselves, 'That's the feller we want to help us out. We'll git him to do our dirty work, an' no one'll suspect him 'cause he's so scart of us.' Then one of 'em met him, talked to him kind an' nice, held out the bait, an' he bit good an' quick. That's what me horse-sense told me."

"But what proof have you, Andy?" Nell was still doubtful of his horse-judgment.

"What proof? I have enough, Nellie. Fer instance, did ye notice what Seth was wearin' on his feet last night?"

"No, I did not. I never looked at his feet. His face was bad enough."

"Ah, that's jist like a woman. But I looked at his feet, the place where I kin generally jedge a man, as I told ye t'other day. An' what d'ye think he was wearin'? Why, a pair of new fact'ry boots! Jist think of that!"

"Well, and why shouldn't he, Andy? That's his own business."

"Ah, Nellie, ye've got to go deeper than that. Now, where did Seth git the money to buy them boots? An' what took him to town in sich a hurry? Did ye notice, too, the new suit of clothes he was wearin' in the place of his old homespun duds? I did if you didn't. Now, where did he git the money to buy sich an expensive outfit?"

"Earned it, I suppose."

"Earned it, yes. But how? Seth hasn't been doin' any work since he laid up his old boat last fall. He didn't have much money then, so I hear, an' he couldn't git a cent's worth of credit at any store. But he kin go to town an' buy a fine suit of clothes an' fact'ry boots. Where did he git the money fer them?"

"On credit, perhaps."

"Not on yer life, Nellie. A feller sich as Seth has got to pay spot-cash when he goes to the city. They know him too well down there."

"Well, where do you think he got the money, then?"

"From the Fenyuns; that's where he got it. They've paid him well, mark my word, fer somethin' he's been doin' fer 'em. That's where his money came from."

Into Nell's eyes came a startled look, and her cheeks turned pale. She paused in her work of cutting the dough with the cutter, and turned around.

"Andy!" she exclaimed, "that's a terrible thing for you to say!"

"Mebbe so, Nellie, but it'll be more terrible fer Seth when he's caught. I wouldn't like to be in his boots then. I hope to goodness he'll be wearin' them fact'ry things when the soldiers git their hands on him. I'd be ashamed to see him marched off with the boots I made fer him on his feet."

"Do you feel sure enough about what you say to tell on him, Andy? You should be very careful."

"Oh, I'm not worryin' about that. By the time I'm ready to tell, I'll know all that'll be necessary."

Nell felt in no mood for further talk just then. She went on with her work, cutting out the cakes and placing them in the big pan. But she was doing much thinking, and a weight was pressing upon her heart. She had known Seth from childhood, and they had gone to school together, and although she had lost all respect for him of late, she felt grieved at his villainy. If what Andy said were true, Seth would be either shot as a traitor or put in prison. Perhaps he did not fully realise what he was doing. Should he not be warned before it was too late?

With this idea in her mind she turned toward Andy, and found him watching her intently. In his eyes she noted an expression such as she had never seen there before. He was looking at her, and yet he seemed not to see her, but beholding something afar off. In his right hand he was holding the boot he had just finished, and he was sitting tense and upright.

"What is the matter, Andy?" she asked.

"Nuthin', Nellie, nuthin'," was the startled reply. "I was jist seein' somethin'; that's all. An' I was wonderin'."

"You are doing a great deal of wondering this morning, it seems to me, Andy."

"I am, I surely am. An' it's necessary, I guess. Now, I was jist wonderin' whether ye'd better do it or not."

"Do what?"

"Warn Seth, fer that's what ye was thinkin' about."

"Andy! How in the world did you know that?"

"Me sixth sense told me. I know it's but nat'ral ye should take an interest in Seth, as ye two were brought up together. Yer heart's so big that ye'd hate to see him git into a nasty scrape, bad as he is. But ye'd better not, Nellie, as it might spile everything."

Nell now stared at Andy in amazement. She had always admired this wandering man, but never before had she suspected him of reading other minds so truly.

"But shouldn't Seth be warned?" she at length found voice to ask. "There might still be time to save him from disgrace and, perhaps, death. A word in time might mean much."

"I'm afraid it would spile everything, Nellie. There may be other traitors in our midst, so we want to catch the hull outfit. If ye warn Seth, he'll pass on the word to his companions in this diviltry, an' then we kin do nuthin'. It might be hard on Seth, but it'll be a darn sight harder on the entire country if this plot isn't stopped, an' the guilty ones punished. Jist let it rest at that, Nellie, fer a while, an' don't worry yer purty head too much."

Nell, however, could not help worrying, and all through the rest of the morning she tried to think of some way whereby Seth might be warned and saved from trouble. She went on quietly with her work and little was said in the kitchen. Andy gave the finishing touches to the last pair of boots he was making, and then rolled up his leather apron. He also collected his tools and placed them in his waterproof bag. When this had been done, he picked up his violin and drew the bow across the strings with a sudden swish. The music was wild and at times almost uncanny. Nell had never heard him play in such a manner before. He seemed to be giving expression to a deep passion of soul, and his eyes glowed with a bright light. So overcome was he with his emotion, that he rose to his feet and stood in the middle of the room apparently unconscious of what was going on around him.

And as he stood there, Mrs. Andrews came downstairs, and a few minutes later the Squire entered the kitchen. They, too,

were impressed by Andy's playing, and his transformed appearance, and stood watching him with awed curiosity.

At length the music ceased, and the player looked around in surprise. Then a smile overspread his face as he noticed his interested audience.

"By crickets!" he exclaimed, "I'm glad I'm here."

"Why, Andy, where did you imagine you were?" the Squire asked.

"Chasin' the Fenyuns. Why, I was right after 'em, an' they was hustlin' fer all they were worth. My! I'm sorry it wasn't true."

"I'd see the doctor, Andy, if I were you," Mrs. Andrews suggested. "You can't be altogether well if that's the way you feel."

"Ah, it's the power of music, madam. When I'm really worked up, an' git sawin' on that fiddle, everything that's in me heart comes out with a rush. It's the only way I kin git relief. It's queer, but I was allus like that, an' guess I allus will be."

"H'm, it's a good thing it doesn't attack you often, Andy," the Squire replied. "I wouldn't want you around here if it did. Now, while you've been sawing on that thing I've been sawing at the wood-pile. That's the way farmers have to express their feelings, and it makes one mighty hungry, too. Is dinner ready, ma?"

"Land sakes, no!" his wife exclaimed. "Hurry up, Nell, and set the table."

CHAPTER 19

ON THE TRACK OF THINGS

Andy did not get away until after supper, although he planned to go earlier. Squire Andrews induced him to stay the afternoon to mend some harness, and this took longer than he had expected.

"I'll have to do some lively hustlin' to git to the Daggerts to-night," he declared as he bade the Andrews good-bye. "In a way, I'd like to stay here 'till mornin', but, then, I'd lose the best part of the day travellin'. I'm quite a night owl, anyway, an' me eyes are used to the darkness."

He sped on his way down the road, drawing his sled loaded with his kit and his few other belongings. This was his life, always moving from place to place, repairing things, and carrying a cheery greeting wherever he went. He stopped at the store and had a friendly drink with the storekeeper, and heard some of the gossip of the parish. He knew that the Daggerts would be anxious for the latest bits of news, so it was necessary for him to be well prepared. He purchased a little candy, too, for Hettie.

"That poor gal doesn't git many sweets, let me tell ye that," he explained as he stowed the package away into a pocket of his jacket.

"Who's that you're talking about?" the storekeeper asked.

"Oh, Hettie Daggert. I thought I told ye. I'm on me way there now to do some cobblin'. They're a queer pair, Tom an' Bill, but I git good fun out of 'em."

"Well, you're about the only one, then, who does, Andy. It's more than I do with the big bill they're owing me."

"Why, I thought Captain Rowan was payin' fer their grub."

"He is now. But they got supplies from me before that, and they have never settled. Hettie carries the grub, and she left here just before you came in. She looked pale and peeked to-night, so I thought."

"Guess a little candy will brighten her up," Andy replied, as he bade the storekeeper good-night and continued his journey.

About half a mile farther on, the road wound its way through a grove of thick fir and spruce trees. It was very dark at this spot, and travellers were always glad when through the weird place, for tales were told of strange noises which had been heard here at night. Andy had almost reached the farther end of the grove, when the sound of human voices directly ahead arrested his attention. He stopped short, and presently saw a figure step quickly across the road. Cautiously now Andy advanced, and for a while nothing more could be seen. He was nearly out of the grove, when through the gloom he saw Seth Sloan and Hettie Daggert but a few rods away. They did not see him, so quietly had he approached, and so intent were they in conversing with each other. What they were saying he could not hear, although he had his suspicion. He did not know what to do. His first impulse was to step to the side of the road until they were through. But upon second thought he decided to go on and surprise them. He was just upon the point of doing so when Seth and Hettie parted, the former climbing the hillside to a field above, while the latter hurried down the road. Andy was really glad of this, for he did not wish them to have any idea of his presence. His mind, however, was now more active than ever as he moved forward. He longed to keep Hettie in view, but so swift-footed was she that in a few minutes she was out of sight.

Coming at length to the road leading to Tom Sanson's house, the toe of Andy's right foot touched a piece of paper. He stooped, felt around with his hand and soon had the paper in his fingers. With a chuckle of satisfaction, he thrust it into a pocket, hurried along, and did not stop again until he reached Captain Rowan's house. The door was at once opened in response to his knock, and Margaret stood before him. Her face brightened with pleasure when she saw the old shoemaker, and she at once invited him inside.

"Father will be so pleased to see you," she told him. "He is very restless to-night. Bring in your sled, and leave it in the kitchen."

The captain gave Andy a hearty welcome, and held his hand in a firm grip as he looked up appealingly into his face.

"It's good of you to come to see me, Andy," he said. "Few and rare are the people who visit me these days. When I was well and returned from the sea, all my friends came, and we always had a great time. But now they have deserted me. I wonder what is the reason."

"Don't let that worry ye, captain," Andy replied, as he sat down by his side. "All the folks are purty busy these days with their work, an' gittin' ready fer the Fenyuns when they come. My! how nice an' cosy yez are here. I wish t'goodness I had sich a place where I could spend me old days instead of allus movin' from pillar to post."

"But think what others would miss," Margaret reminded. "How should we get along if we did not have you to visit us from time to time? And, besides, would you be content to remain in one place? You would be like father here. He longs to be at sea again."

"Mebbe yer right, me dear," Andy agreed, looking admiringly at the bright face before him. "I would miss the sight of you, a'right, an' several other gals I could mention. I've had a fine time at Squire Andrews' house. Nell's a great gal, an' no mistake."

"She is a dear, Andy, and I am longing to see her again. I wish she lived nearer."

"I don't," the captain emphatically declared. "Squire Andrews is too near as it is. Little did I ever imagine that I'd be stranded on shore to have to put up with such a man."

"Oh, you'll soon be away from here when yer foot gits better," Andy soothed.

"Do you think so?" The captain leaned eagerly forward, and peered intently into the shoemaker's face. "Do you think I'll ever be able to go to sea again?"

"Sure ye will. Why, what's to hinder ye? You're a young man yit, an' that foot'll soon be well. There was Jed Brown, ye remember him, a much older man than you, who was so badly smashed up that no one thought he'd ever be good fer anything ag'in. But he came around a'right, an' went to sea fer years. An' there are others I could mention. You'll be as smart as ever, captain, if ye keep up heart. What's an injured foot to a man like you?"

"It's good to hear you say that, Andy." The captain sighed as he leaned back in his chair. "It's the first word of encouragement I've had since I've been laid up. Perhaps I do look too much on the dark side."

"Then ye musn't do it, captain. You're too good a man to be mopin' an' complainin'. If I'd had the experience that you've had, why I'd jist lay back an' think of all the great times I've had. Yer mind must be so crammed full of wonderful things that ye shouldn't have no time at all to mourn or whine. Now, whenever I git in the dumps, I jist recall some of the good times I've had an' the funny things I've heard. They're the best things I know of to drive away the blue-divils."

"But you've never been penned up like I have, Andy," the captain replied. "It's well enough to talk about being bright when there's nothing the matter with you. But when you're laid up such as I am, it's quite a different thing. You've never had that experience."

"No, mebbe I haven't, captain. Neither have I sailed on a great ocean clipper sich as the 'Racin' Queen.' I've lived only a quiet humdrum life, an' have tried to make the most of it. I ain't got much to look back upon. But if I had what you've got, why, man, I'd be happy fer the rest of me life, even though I had to live in a pig-pen."

The captain's eyes brightened and a smile overspread his face. Memories stirred within him, and in Andy he had a good listener.

"Bring us some toddy, Margaret," he ordered. "Yes, I've led a great life, and no mistake. How I long to be out again on the ocean, and to feel the wind blowing fresh and free. There is no life like that."

Thus he talked, and hardly noticed when his daughter placed two well-filled glasses upon the table. Andy kept his eyes fixed upon the captain's face most of the time, and to all outward appearance he was paying rapt attention to what was being said. But occasionally he looked at Margaret who was seated on a low stool near the fire. He saw the flames illuminating her fair cheeks and brow and playing upon her dark wavy hair. His old heart always stirred at the sight of a beautiful woman, and it did so now. He thought of the lonely life she led with such a cranky father, and yet she was always patient and loving. If he were only young again! He gave a deep sigh as he mused upon this, and the captain's

words fell upon his unheeding ears. Margaret looked quickly up.

"You are getting tired, Andy," she remarked. "And you must be, too, father, after your talk. You can continue this in the morning."

"But I'm not goin' to stay here all night," Andy announced. "I must git on me way to the Daggerts. They'll be in bed, no doubt, but Hettie'll let me in."

"Stay here to-night," Margaret pleaded. "You can get away early in the morning. It is so nice to have you, and we need you more than the Daggerts do. It is getting late, anyway."

Andy was really nothing loth to remain. He was very comfortable, and looked forward to a pleasant chat with his fair hostess later on. With considerable grumbling and complaining the captain at last bade them good-night and shuffled off to his room. It was then that Andy's heart was made happy as Margaret sat down again upon the stool in front of the fire. They talked quietly of many things, and in the wandering shoemaker the girl found a true sympathiser. She told about her father's worries over the Daggert brothers, and how Drum was trying to make up for their failure. They did not discuss the problems of the day, and the question of Confederation was not once mentioned. Andy let Margaret do most of the talking, for he knew what a relief it must be for her to express her heart and mind to a sympathetic listener. When at last the fire was low, and the clock warned them of the lateness of the hour, Andy rose to his feet.

"This has been a great evenin' to me," he remarked. "I'm glad I stayed fer it's much nicer here than at the Daggerts. It was good of you to tell me about yer troubles. Ye must keep up courage, lassie, an' everything'll come out a'right. Ye was never intended to be hidden away all yer life. Some day he'll come, me dear, the man after yer own heart, an' then ye'll be happy. There, now, don't git confused, fer ye needn't mind what an old man sich as me says."

No sooner had Andy entered the little bedroom assigned to him, than he drew from his pocket the paper he had found by the side of the road and held it close to the light of the candle. He read it carefully, and as he folded it up, there was a far-away look in his eyes.

"Jist as I suspected," he mused. "The Fenyuns are purty busy, an' I'm sorry fer the ones they're usin' as their tools in their dirty work. But I must git deeper'n this, an' keep me eyes an' ears wide open. So they think they'll capture Canada, do they? Well, we'll see about that. Guess there'll be something doin' before long, from all appearances. I'm on the track of things, anyway, but how it'll all end, the Lord only knows."

CHAPTER 20

SUSPICION CONFIRMED

The Daggert brothers were glad to see Andy, and they welcomed him in their gruff manner. They knew that the old shoemaker would have the latest news of the parish, and his presence was a pleasant diversion in their rough life. Except for an occasional visit from Drum Rowan, they were left severely to themselves, as their neighbours had no use for such people. They were most always spoken of in terms of contempt, and generally referred to as "Slinking Tom" and "Shifty Bill." But Andy made himself at home wherever he went, and it was not long before he was joking with the brothers about the line upon the floor.

"So that's the way yer livin', eh?" he queried. "Can't agree on nuthin', so ye must put that chalk mark there to divide the house. Why don't ye fight it out an' be done with it?"

"Us have fit," Tom explained, "so that's why us put the line thar."

"Ho, ho, nice brothers you fellers are," Andy roared. "I'd like to give yez both a good hidin'. An' I'd do it, too, this very minute but fer the fear of hurtin' sich babies."

Tom and Bill grinned at this banter, while Hettie chuckled.

"Give it to 'em, Andy," she cried. "They'll take anything from you, so lay it on hard. I'm sick an' tired yangin' to 'em."

"I should think ye would be, me dear," and Andy turned his eyes upon the girl. "Why, I'd leave 'em if I was you, an' go off with some nice lookin' feller. Now, if I was only as young as I used to be, I'd carry ye right away with me from these two bears. It's a wonder to me that some young chap hasn't toted ye off before this. Yer lookin' younger an' purtier every day, Hettie. An' ye've got a nice colour in yer cheeks, too. There, now, don't git all red at what I say, fer she shouldn't mind an old friend's gass."

While thus talking, Andy was busy unpacking his outfit, and arranging the tools in order upon the low bench Hettie had brought for his use. The brothers watched his every movement, and when he had at last settled down to work their eyes shone with expectancy. It was news they wanted, and their visitor was longer than usual in satisfying them.

"My, my! what a wreck!" Andy exclaimed, as he examined a coarse heavy boot. "An' I made that jist a year ago! D'ye expect me to mend that thing, Tom?"

"Guess ye kin do it, a'right," was the reply. "Ye kin mend 'most anything, 'cept yer tongue. That's sharp as ever. What's new, Andy?"

"Ho, ho, I knew ye was waitin' fer news. I was sartin ye wanted me to blab out everything the minute I got inside the door. But I haven't much to tell ye this time. There's nuthin' new about politics, an' ye ain't interested in church matters. If ye was I could tell ye what the parson's sermon was about the last time I was at church, an' how many babies were christened. Like to hear?"

"Naw, us don't care 'bout sermons an' babies," Bill growled from the other side of the room. "Us want news."

"But I want to hear about the babies," Hettie declared. "Whose was 'em? An' what was their names? Did 'em cry when the parson took 'em in his arms? How was 'em dressed? I never saw a chris'n in me life."

Andy stooped, thrust several pieces of sole-leather into a tub of water, and then turned his attention to the boot upon his lap.

"Was ye ever at church, Hettie?" he asked.

"Not since mum died," the girl replied. "She took me sometimes."

"An' yer dad never took ye?"

"Him take me!" The tone of her voice expressed scorn, surprise and amusement. "Dad at church! Lord!"

"Shet up, Hettie," her father sternly ordered.

"Will if I want to, dad. You can't make me. Try it, now."

"Come, come," Andy interposed. "It's no use fightin' over sich a little thing as that. Ye want to hear about them babies, don't ye, Hettie?"

"Deed I do, Andy. But don't git me riled ag'in, or I might do something despert. Tell me 'bout the babies."

"Well, let me see. S'pose I tell ye their names first. I can't remember all, but one was called David Obadiah Moses, an' another, Sarah Mehetibel Jane. Good old names, most of 'em straight from the Scriptures. But I do pity them youngsters with havin' to carry sich loads 'round with 'em fer the rest of their lives."

"How was 'em dressed, Andy?"

"Dressed! Why, like all babies, of course."

"But not all alike."

"No, no, surely not. Now, how was 'em dressed? Let me see. Well, they was all rigged up in white, with pink ribbons here an' there, an——"

"Ugh! us don't want to hear 'bout babies," Tom interrupted. "Talk sense."

"Bless my heart!" Andy exclaimed. "Isn't talkin' about babies sense enough? What d'ye want me to talk about, then?"

"Us want news. Babies ain't news."

"They ain't! Why, ye old alligator, the arrival of a little baby in the parish is the best news I know of. All the women git so excited, an' run right off to see it. I wish t'goodness, Tom, that you had a baby or two in this house. If ye had, you an' Bill would have something to keep ye busy, an' make ye quit yer silly actions."

Andy went on with his work, but out of the corner of his eye he saw more than the brothers imagined. He knew very well what they wished him to talk about, and he was anxious to find out how long he could put them off. He wanted one of them to suggest the subject which he felt was uppermost in their minds. He had ripped the soles off the boots, and had the lap-stone and hammer all ready to beat out the softened sole-leather, when Tom rose from his chair and came close to his side.

"Tell us 'bout the Fenyuns," he ordered. "Us don't want to hear no more 'bout babies."

"So that's what ye want to know about, eh?" Andy exclaimed in apparent surprise. "Gittin' scared, Tom? Afraid they'll pounce upon ye?"

"Yaas, mebbe," Tom droned as he sidled back to his seat. "Yaas, mebbe."

"An' yer right, Tom. The Fenyuns are gittin' very close, right on top of us, a'most. Why, it's terrible the things that have happened up river. Ye've heard, I s'pose?"

"Naw, us heard nuthin'. What is't?"

"An' ye haven't heard nuthin'? My! that's queer, an' it's all over the country about them spies an' the fearful things they're doin'."

"What?" The question came as one from both men. Hettie leaned over the table, her staring eyes fixed intently upon the cobbler's face.

"There, now, don't git excited," Andy continued. "People who mind their own bizness, sich as we do, have no reason to fear. It's only the ones who git mixed up with them Fenyuns that have cause to shiver an' shake. I wouldn't be in sich folks' shoes fer all the money in the world. Why, me life wouldn't be worth as much as a muskeeter in mid-winter."

"H-how? how? W-what d'ye mean?" Tom gasped, thoroughly aroused for once. "Us don't understand yer words."

"Strange that yez ain't heard nuthin'," Andy mused. "Yez must have been asleep. But I guess some people ain't been sleepin' much since they heard about it."

"Us heard nuthin'," Bill declared. "Fer God's sake! tell us quick."

The eager Daggerts did not detect the slight gleam of triumph in the shoemaker's eyes as he looked down at his work, neither did they hear the silent prayer for forgiveness for his deception and the lie he was about to utter.

"I'll tell yez," he slowly promised, "pervidin' yez don't git too nervous an' excited. Livin' as yez do here, away from everybody else, it might upset yez to learn that sich bloodthirsty critters are hoverin' around. Mebbe it's jist as well fer yez not to know."

"Tell us, Andy," Hettie pleaded. "I kin stand it, even if Dad an' Unc can't. It don't matter much 'bout 'em, anyway. They've got no feelin's."

"An' yer sure it won't make ye lay awake at night, Hettie, starin' at the winder expectin' to see some awful face lookin' in at ye, an' listenin' to every sound, thinkin' it might be the Fenyuns creepin' upon ye? Are ye sure it won't, now?"

"No-no, n-no; t-tell us." The girl's face was white, and she glanced somewhat fearfully around. "W-what happened up r-river?"

"I don't know all, so can't tell ye everything. But it seems there'd been spies hangin' around fer a while. They paid one poor half-daft critter up there to scatter papers along the road an' at the gates. It was all done so quietly that no one suspected that the enemy was workin' in sich a sneakin' way. Then one day that poor deluded feller was found dead, an' all believed he'd been killed, though fer a time they couldn't understand why."

"Who killed 'im?" Hettie asked in a voice that was tense with anxiety.

"I'm comin' to that if ye'll jist give me time. Now, let me see, where did I leave off? Oh, I remember now. It was where the Fenyuns killed that poor chap so's he couldn't tell on 'em when the so'gers came."

"How did the so'gers find out?" Tom asked.

"Can't say. But they found out, a'right, an' fer fear that feller'd give 'em away, the Fenyuns killed 'im, that's what they did. Then, when the so'gers had caught one of the spies, he confessed to the hull affair, an' told how they'd been working' fer months to git ready fer the raid."

"Did 'im!" Bill had leaped to his feet, and was standing wild-eyed before Andy. Tom, too, had left his seat, and was glancing fearfully around.

"Keep calm, boys," Andy soothed in a soft voice. "There's nuthin' to fear. The Fenyuns won't touch people who mind their own bizness, an' don't git mixed up in this nasty affair. Yes, that spy 'fessed up, a'right, an' gave the so'gers the names of a number of traitors they had workin' fer 'em."

"Did 'im!" Tom's eyes were now glaring wildly, and he was greatly agitated. Andy pretended not to notice his excitement.

"He sartinly did, Tom, an' he told a hull lot about the plans they had made."

"What was 'em?"

"Oh, I don't know all, but one was to hire folks at different places along the river to scatter their papers an' do other dirty work fer 'em. Then, if they found out they were discovered, the spies were to kill the very ones who had worked fer 'em, like they did that poor feller up river, so's they couldn't be brought up as witnesses."

"Does ye know any names?" Bill hoarsely asked.

"I can't remember any, but the so'gers have 'em all down on paper, so they'll git the traitors, pervidin' the Fenyuns don't git 'em first."

"Will 'em, d'ye think?" Tom whispered.

"Who?"

"The Fenyuns. Will 'em kill first."

"I wouldn't be surprised. That spy said the Fenyuns were everywhere, watchin' the ones workin' fer 'em. They're prowlin' around the houses, an' hidin' along the roads to be sure that their orders are bein' carried out. At a minute's notice, he said, sudden death might come to a hull lot of people up an' down the river, an' the neighbours 'ud never know who done the deed. My! I wouldn't like to be in them poor deluded fellers' boots jist now. They kin never tell when a knife or a bullet'll find its way into their hearts. Terrible thing it is to git mixed up with sich critters as them Fenyuns."

Andy went on with his work, while Tom staggered back and sank down heavily into his chair. Bill did likewise, while Hettie stared straight before her with eyes wide with fear. The thud of the hammer upon the leather on the lap-stone was the only sound heard. Andy pounded longer than was necessary, and, in fact, he hardly knew what he was doing. He was more disturbed than he had been for years. He knew now that his suspicions were correct, and he turned over in his mind what course he should next pursue. That the Daggerts were in league with the Fenians he was certain. He did feel sorry for the lie he had told, but he soothed his conscience somewhat by thinking of the necessity which compelled him to do so and the results it had accomplished. It was for the welfare of the whole country, so he reasoned, and, perhaps, it would not be charged against him on the Great Day of Reckoning.

"What did 'em do with the spy?"

Andy started and looked over at Tom who had asked the question.

"Do with him? Nuthin' much yit. They're holdin' him so's he kin give evidence ag'inst the traitors. Then they'll shoot him jist as they would a dog, along with the poor fellers he got into trouble."

"Will 'em?"

"Sure they will. Them so'gers are not goin' to allow this land to be overrun by a hull pack of traitors, not a bit of it. They'll make sich an example of the first ones they git their hands on that no one'll ever dare to cut up sich diviltry ag'in. I can't imagine people callin' 'emselves British subjects, an' loyal to the Queen, God bless her! an' yit willin' to betray their country fer a few dollars. Hangin' is too good fer sich critters."

No one ventured to reply to these words, and for a while silence reigned. Tom and Bill were in no mood for further conversation. They glared at each other across the room, and Andy, furtively watching, wondered what was passing through their minds. He was quite willing to let his words burn into their hearts, and await the issue, whatever that might be. In order to relieve her feelings, Hettie began to prepare dinner. She was an active little body, and several times Andy complimented her. This always brought a flush to her cheeks and the light of pleasure into her eyes. Words of praise were almost unknown in that house of almost incessant wrangling and fighting. Happier would have been her lot among the beasts of the fields than with her father and uncle, two brutes in the likeness of human beings.

CHAPTER 21

TROUBLESOME "THINKS"

It was quite evident that Tom and Bill Daggert were greatly disturbed at Andy's tale. They ate very little dinner, and when they were through they slouched back into their chairs, lighted their pipes and smoked for some time in complete silence. Andy and Hettie talked about various matters of interest which had happened in the parish, but the brothers seemed to pay no attention to the conversation. For over an hour they sat there, when a sound resembling the hoot of an owl fell upon their ears. Shortly afterwards Tom rose slowly to his feet, picked up his cap and left the building. He had been gone but a short time when Bill also departed. No sooner had the door closed than Hettie hurried to the window on the right side of the house and stood watching for a few minutes. She then opened the door and looked out. At length she came back to where Andy was working and sat down by his side. There was a troubled expression in her eyes which did not escape the shoemaker's notice.

"Ye seem to be bothered about something, me dear," he remarked. "Yer eyes look scared like, as if ye'd seen a ghost."

"I've seen more'n a ghost," the girl replied, glancing somewhat apprehensively around. "I ain't afraid of some kind of ghosts. I kin go by the graveyard near the church without shiverin' once, an' no creeps go up an' down me back."

"Have ye any creeps now, Hettie?"

"Lots of 'em. But it ain't the graveyard kind that makes me have 'em now."

"What is it, then?"

"Did ye hear the owl hoot, Andy?" she whispered.

"Ay, ay. But what of that? Surely ye not afraid of an owl. It's not sich a fearsome bird, is it?"

"Mebbe not. But that one is. Did ye notice that it only hooted once?"

"I do remember now, since ye mention it. But why was that?"

Hettie rose to her feet and looked again out of the window.

"Thar's a big storm comin', Andy," she said, as she once more took her seat by his side. "It's goin' to be a whopper this time."

"How can ye tell?"

"Oh, I know, a'right, by the way the wind blows an' the clouds scud. Thar's been a big ring 'round the moon fer two nights, an' that's a sure sign."

"But you don't mind a storm, girl. It's nice to be in the house when it's wild outside. I like to hear the wind blow, an' see the snow flyin' through the air, an' the trees bendin' an' shakin' their heads. Don't you?"

"I used to, Andy, when I was a leetle girl, an' mum was livin'. A storm never scared me then like it does now."

"Why is that?"

Andy looked up from his work and noted the worried expression in Hettie's eyes.

"'Cause somethin' bad allus happens now when it storms hard. It gives me a sinkin' feelin' here," and she placed her right hand over her heart as she spoke. "It's worse now than ever afore since I heard ye tell that story 'bout the spies killin' that man who worked fer 'em."

"Why should that worry ye? You have nuthin' to fear."

"I'm not so sure of that, Andy. I could tell ye a lot if I had a mind to."

"Won't ye tell me? Nobody else'll hear."

"I can't. Everything's got ears these days, an' I don't like t'think sometimes fer fear my thinks'll be known. It's awful to have black turrible thinks, isn't it?"

"It sartinly is, me dear. But put 'em away from ye mind, an' don't bother about 'em. I wouldn't if I was you."

"How kin I, livin' all the time with sich men as Dad an' Unc? They make me have bad thinks when I know what they say an' do. They yang at me all the time when they ain't fightin' atween theirselves. I cook fer 'em, keep house, wash their duds, an' run all their errants, an' yit I can't do nuthin' right. They're allus jawin' an' squabblin' 'bout somethin'."

"Yer a good cook, Hettie, an' no mistake," Andy complimented. "That moose steak we had fer dinner was as tender as a chicken, an' browned jist right. Where did ye run across sich a piece of meat as that?"

"A man gave it to us a few days ago."

"Nice of him, wasn't it? One of the neighbours out huntin', eh? Had more'n he wanted, I s'pose?"

Andy looked up at the girl and noticed the flush of embarrassment that had overspread her face. He wondered what it meant. What was the cause of her sudden confusion? He made no comment, however, but bent again to his work. He did not wish to say anything that might arouse her suspicion.

"I'd like to tell ye who it was, Andy, but I don't dare to," Hettie explained after a short silence.

"Oh, ye needn't mind, fer I'm a purty good guesser. I know what a hunter Drum Rowan is, an' it's jist like him to leave a nice piece of moose meat here. He's a fine lad, a'right."

"It wasn't Drum, Andy," the girl hastened to correct. "Him hasn't been huntin' this week. No, it wasn't him. Him's been choppin'."

"Is that so! Well, that's interestin'. So it wasn't him, then, who gave ye that meat?"

"No, it was another, a man ye don't know, who was passin' an' left it here."

Again Hettie went to the window and looked carefully out. As Andy watched her, his mind was very active. He was certain that the girl knew far more than she dared to impart, no matter how willing she might be. It must be fear alone that was restraining her.

"It's goin' t'storm afore night," she declared. "The wind's comin' up, an' it's shakin' t' the trees hard. It makes me shiver."

"But yer a'right here, Hettie. Ye don't have to go out, so ye needn't worry, no matter how it storms."

"I must go out, Andy, an' I'm goin' purty soon."

"After yer dad an' uncle?"

"Mebbe so."

"What are they doin', anyway?"

"O, jist choppin' over yon, mebbe."

"Helpin' Drum?"

"Mos' likely."

Hettie drew on an old jacket, pulled a thick cap over her tousled hair, and reached for her mittens.

"Ye don't mind stayin' here alone, do ye?" she asked. "I might be gone quite a while."

"I do mind, but I'll have to put up with it," Andy replied. "I like company, but when I have to do without it I kin. I'll have me own thoughts, anyway, as I keep workin' here."

"I'll be back in time to git supper. Dad an' Unc 'll be sure to turn up then. Keep an eye over everythin' in the house, an' if Dad an' Unc come back afore I do an' begin to fight, don't git scared."

"Oh, I won't stand any fightin' when I'm around, Hettie. I'll pitch 'em both out in the snow if they kick up any rumpus. I'll keep things straight, so don't ye worry."

"I hope ye will, Andy," and the girl's eyes twinkled a little. "But Dad an' Unc are very strong an' used to fightin'. They could settle you in no time if they had a mind to."

"Guess there won't be any trouble, gal, so git on yer way, an' come back as soon as ye kin. If ye do, I'll play some fer ye on me fiddle. I'm jist dyin' to see ye do the light-step, fer ye was mighty nimble on yer feet the last time I was here."

"I can't dance no more now, Andy. When me heart is heavy, me feet are, too. Ye want a light heart to dance well."

"Tut, tut, child, that's all nonsense. Me old fiddle'll make yer heart an' feet as light as ever. Git away, now, an' leave me alone."

During the remainder of the short winter afternoon Andy worked steadily at his task. But his mind was really on other things. He was thinking seriously over what he had heard that day, and he was much puzzled. He was far from satisfied, and longed to know more. That the Daggerts were in league with the enemy he had no doubt. But he did not know anything about their plans. It was quite evident that Tom and Bill were not chopping cordwood. Something else had taken them away. He thought of the hoot which sounded like that of an owl. Perhaps it was not a bird at all, but a signal understood by the plotters. Even now they might be planning some mischief with the Fenians. And what about that moose meat, and Hettie's confusion when he had questioned her? Had it been supplied by a Fenian spy, who was a regular visitor at the house?

These thoughts surged through his brain as he sewed and pegged away at the boot upon which he was working. He longed to throw everything aside and leave the place. But where could he go? What steps could he take to solve the mystery? The only thing he could do was to remain where he was and await developments. When the brothers returned he might find out something of importance.

Several times during the afternoon Andy rose from his seat, placed several sticks upon the fire and looked out of the window. Then when darkness stole over the land, and it was difficult for him to see at his work, he picked up his violin and began to play. This had always soothed and comforted him in the past, and it did so now. The wind shook the building, and the flames roared up the big chimney. But Andy paid little heed to what was going on around him. The stirring music animated his soul, and as he stood by the window, tapping the floor with his right foot, he was a youth again, and his heart was aglow with bright hopes and fancies.

He was in the midst of a more stirring measure than ever, when the door opened and Hettie entered. She stood for a few minutes watching the player, and listening entranced to the music. Then she crept softly to his side and touched his arm. Startled, Andy lowered the violin and gazed around in a dazed manner. He then smiled when he saw the girl.

"My! how ye startled me," he exclaimed. "I was wanderin' in sich a beautiful place, an' havin' a glorious time. Wonnerful, isn't it, what me old fiddle'll do?"

"Yer playin' gives me the creeps t'night, Andy," Hettie replied. "Yer music sends cold chills an' shivers up an' down me spine. It makes me turrible scared."

"It shouldn't do that, me dear. Mebbe yer not well. Chills an' shivers are signs that a bad cold's comin'. Got any medicine in the house? Ye should take a dose, if ye have."

"It ain' that, Andy, wot's upsettin' me. An' it ain't really the music. It's somethin' else."

"An' what is it?"

"Drum's gone off to his traps!"

"Well, what of that? Surely he's old enough to know his own bizness."

"But it's not safe fer him to go."

"It isn't? Why not?"

"Cause it's goin' t'storm turrible."

"H'm, I guess Drum kin look after himself, a'right. The biggest an' wust storm that ever came this way wouldn't bother him much."

"But this one will, Andy," the girl insisted. "It'll be the worstest one that ever came. Oh, I know it will, an' Drum might be caught out thar an' die."

The old man looked keenly at Hettie, and noticed the anxious expression in her eyes, and the paleness of her cheeks.

"Ye seem to be very much interested in Drum, me dear. Afraid somethin'll happen to him, eh?"

"I don't want him to die, Andy."

"Well, why don't ye warn him, then? It's no use talkin' to me. I can't stop him from goin'."

"But I have told him, an' he laffed at me."

"So ye saw him to-day, did ye?"

"Yep; left him jist a while ago."

"Oh, he'll be a'right, Hettie. Don't ye worry about him. He's used to the woods and the storms. An', besides, he's got a good cabin back in the hills where he'll be as snug as a bug in a rug."

"I know him has a cabin thar, but mebbe him'll never git to it."

"Think he'll git lost in the storm?"

"Mebbe so, or worsen."

"What d'ye mean, Hettie?"

"I can't tell ye, Andy, but I'm 'fraid all t'time. Somethin' right here," and she placed her hand to her heart, "says that Drum'll die out thar in the hills. I've had no end of signs of late an' they've allus come true."

"Nonsense, child, there's nuthin' in sich signs. S'pose ye hustle an' git supper, fer I'm mighty hungry. Ye've got the blues, an' there's nuthin' like a good meal to drive away them divils when they attack ye. Light the candles while I fix up the fire. Yer dad an' uncle'll be comin' home soon, starved as two bears, jist out of their dens."

Hettie reluctantly obeyed. But her movements were listless, and as Andy watched her he knew that it was more than the storm that was worrying her. Why was she so concerned about Drum? It was only natural that she should have a fondness for him, but why should love suggest the foolish notion that he would die out in the hills?

He was in the act of lifting a stick to place upon the fire, when he let it fall to the floor with a bang. An idea had stabbed his mind which brought a sudden paleness to his face. Was Drum in danger from Tom and Bill Daggert? Was that the cause of Hettie's anxiety? Was she pretending that it was the storm she feared? He knew how the Daggert brothers must resent Drum's chopping, and in the spirit of revenge they might go to almost any limit. And knowing of this, Hettie had warned Drum. The whole thing now seemed clear as daylight, and he was surprised that he had not thought of it before. He turned toward Hettie who was placing several dishes upon the table.

"Are ye afraid that Drum'll be killed by someone?" he abruptly asked. "Is that what's givin' ye the chills an' shivers?"

"W-what makes ye ax that, Andy? The girl almost dropped a cup in her confusion."

"None of yer foolin', gal. It's not the storm that makes ye afraid, but human bein's. Isn't that so, now?"

"Don't ax me, don't," she pleaded. "I can't tell ye nuthin'."

She sank upon the bench near the table, and burying her face in her hands, wept bitterly. Andy was at a loss what to say or do. He stood watching her for a few minutes in silence. Then he stepped close to her side and laid a gentle hand upon her shoulder.

"Never mind, me dear," he said. "Ye needn't tell me if ye don't want to. But there's somethin' mighty curious goin' on around this place, an' you know what it is. I feel sorry fer ye, an' I believe ye'd tell me if ye dared. But, come, git up an' dry yer eyes, fer I hear somebody at the door."

CHAPTER 22

OXEN, EH?

The door slowly opened, and Bill Daggert entered. He looked cautiously around the room, and then shuffled toward the fire. Here he silently stood for a few minutes warming his hands. Andy who was standing with his back to the genial blaze, watched him out of the corner of his eye. He noticed that he was exceptionally excited, and he saw him glance several times around at the door as if expecting someone to enter.

"What are ye gawkin' at, Bill?" Andy asked. "Ye look 'most scared out of yer senses. Have ye seen a ghost?"

"Naw, us haven't seen nuthin'," was the surly reply. "Us lookin' t'see if the door shet. Cold here."

"Git warm, then. This fire'll start the blood in yer veins. Or d'ye want somethin' else to put new life into yer carcass?"

"Us would. Het," he called, "bring us rum. Quick. Us freezin'."

"Ye can't have rum till sup's ready," the girl emphatically declared. "Ye'll drink it all up, an' thar'll be none left fer Dad. Where's him, anyway?"

"Us don't know. Us not seen 'im." He shivered, and again looked around.

"Is it goin' to storm?" Andy asked.

"Stormin' now. Wind bad."

Bill pulled off his cap and threw it into a corner of the room. He then shuffled over to his chair and slumped down. He seemed to be well nigh exhausted. Andy watched him curiously. What was the cause of this man's excitement? he asked himself. Something of a most unusual nature must have taken place outside, and he was anxious to know what it was. Had it anything to do with the Fenians?

As he stood there and thought, Tom entered. He, too, looked fatigued as he shambled slowly up to the fire. He kept his eyes fixed intently upon Bill, and paid no heed to the shoemaker.

"Yer late," Andy accosted. "Been choppin'?"

"Naw, us not choppin'," was the growling reply.

"Bad night, eh?"

"Bad! Hell!"

"Somewhat colder'n that place, judgin' by the way ye hug the fire. Mebbe ye won't find it as cold as this when ye git there. Guess ye'll long fer a few whiffs of a nor'easter then."

"Oh, Dad an' Unc are gittin' ready now," Hettie declared. "They're practisin' all the time, so they won't feel lonesome an' homesick thar."

"Shet up, Het," her father ordered. "Ye talk too much. Hur' up an' git sup. Us starvin'."

"I am hurryin', Dad, an' sup's 'most ready, sich as 'tis. Thar's nuthin' much in the house to git sup with, anyway."

"Git to store, then, an' tote grub. Yer gittin' lazy."

"An' who'll pay fer the grub, I'd like t'know? Cap Rowan's shet down on us."

"Him has! When him shet down?"

"This week. We git no more without money, so Gid Brown said."

"Gid say that?"

"Didn't I jist tell ye he did?"

Tom stared at his daughter for a few seconds as if he considered her the cause of the calamity that had suddenly fallen upon them. He then sank down upon the bench near the table.

"Bring on what y've got, Het," he ordered. "Come, Andy, have a snack."

The shoemaker took his seat at one end of the table, while Bill hitched his chair up opposite to his brother. Hettie served them with scraps of meat left over from dinner, and coarse wheat bread. The tea she poured into big thick cups, and each man helped himself to the milk and brown sugar. Tom and Bill glared at each other across the table like two savage dogs. They gulped down their food, and when they were through, Tom ordered Hettie to fetch the rum. She obeyed, and having placed a black jug upon the table, she filled a mug for Andy.

"I don't want Dad an' Unc to swig all," she explained. "They lose their heads when they take too much."

Although Andy was fond of an occasional drink, he let the liquor remain untouched before him. He did not wish to befuddle his brain, but to keep it as clear as possible. Tom and Bill, on the other hand, drained their mugs and filled them again. They were ready for a third helping, when Hettie removed the jug and carried it away, notwithstanding their protests.

"Ye can't have no more t'night," she informed them. "Ye've made fools of yerselves a'ready, but when ye've swigged too much rum yer both ravin' injuts. No, ye can't have no more."

The liquor had the effect of loosening the brothers' tongues, and they commenced a wordy battle across the table. Andy hoped that they might drop something which would give him a clue as to what they had been doing that afternoon. But they were cunning enough to steer clear of anything that might betray them in the least degree. They dwelt almost entirely upon Captain Rowan, and what an ungrateful and miserable man he was. Each blamed the other for his laziness in connection with the cordwood, and so furious did they at last become that they rose to their feet and rushed at each other. Then ensued a rough-and-tumble fight in which savage blows were exchanged, clothes torn, and faces scratched. Andy was anxious to separate them, but Hettie caught him by the arm.

"Leave 'em alone," she cried. "They'll git tired after a while. They're used to it, an' they'll feel better when they're through."

For some time the brothers pulled, mauled, and belaboured each other, growling all the time like angry dogs. Andy had never beheld such a scene of depraved brutality, and his heart sickened. He had heard of the quarrels of these creatures, but had always smiled at the stories. Now, however, a deep loathing possessed his soul, and he longed to leave the house at once and never to enter it again. As he was thinking about this, the fight suddenly ceased, and the combatants drew apart, still glaring at each other. This was Andy's opportunity.

"Come, come," he began, "ye've had enough of that, so git back to yer seats. Ye should be ashamed of yerselves fer fightin' that way. An' you brothers, too!"

"Us havin' good time," Tom muttered. "Us sooner fight'n eat."

"So would dogs. But you call yerselves men, though ye act more like fools."

"That's right, Andy," Hettie encouraged. "Give it to 'em good an' hard. They won't listen to me."

"They need a big stick, Hettie, an' I've a good mind to git one an' lay it on their hides. How would ye like that, ye rascals? Come on, now, an' I'll beat yez both."

Andy was smiling, and the brothers grinned as they looked at him, so small did he appear in their eyes.

"Us don't want to fight you," Tom replied. "Us only fight men."

"An' don't ye call me a man, ye old frog? What d'ye think I am?"

"Jis' Andy, the cat-whipper."

"H'm, is that so. Well, mebbe ye'd find I kin whip more'n a cat."

Although Andy spoke in a bantering tone, and pretended that he was much amused, he was really quite angry. But he knew that it was just as well that the brothers did not take him at his word. It would be better, he realised, for them to consider him merely a harmless old shoemaker of whom they need not be suspicious. This was the only thing that gave him any comfort. They did not suspect him, and thus he might be able to accomplish much more to further his designs. If they had the least idea concerning what was in his mind, his plans would be entirely frustrated.

The brothers slouched back into their chairs, and Andy sat down in front of the fire. Hettie busied herself with clearing away and washing the dishes. The flames roared merrily up the chimney, for the draught was strong this night. The wind increased in force, shook the house and rattled the loose windows. It was becoming very rough outside, and Andy could hear the snow beating against the small panes of glass. He was glad to be under cover, and if only he had genial companions he would have been perfectly happy. But the dread of some unseen trouble disturbed him, which made the room more like a prison than a dwelling-place. Several times he tried to shake off the feeling, but in vain. He thought of his violin, but he was in no mood for playing just then. He gazed into the leaping flames, and busied his mind with thoughts of the two creatures close at hand. What were they planning? he wondered, and what was the meaning of their strange actions that afternoon? There was no more chance to talk with Hettie about the matter, and just then he was not much interested in anything else.

After a while Andy moved his kit up nearer the fire, and thus by the light of the candle upon the table and the glow from the flames he was able to continue his work. He felt better when busy, and he needed to do something to relieve his feelings. He picked up the partly-finished boot and began to fasten on the thick heavy sole. He worked rapidly, keeping both hands busy with the wooden pegs and the hammer. But he did not forget to keep his eyes alert to his companions' movements. Tom and Bill remained in sulky silence, pulling at their old clay pipes. But Hettie was restless. When she had finished with the dishes, she moved first from one window to another peering out into the darkness. Twice she went to the door, and each time a cold draught swept in which brought a growling rebuke from her father.

"Keep that door shet," he ordered. "Watcher want to be peerin' out so much fer?"

The girl made no reply, but came back to the fire and stood watching Andy. When the latter had finished the boot, and had given it a touch of blacking, he laid it upon the floor to dry.

"There, guess that'll do fer to-night," he remarked. "I'm goin' to make a pair fer you next, Hettie. The ones I made last year are about gone. Ye must have done a heap of trampin' in 'em."

"Deed I have, Andy. Dad an' Unc keep me totin' all t'time. But they'll have to do it theirselves after this, an' pay fer what they git, too. They've fooled Cap Rowan too long, a'ready."

"Quit yer yangin', Het," her father growled. "Us sick an' tired hearin' yer tongue waggin'."

He rose slowly to his feet, picked up his hat, and moved toward the door. When he had left the house, Bill showed signs of restlessness. He shifted uneasily in his chair, and several times looked at the window opposite.

"Are you goin', too?" Andy asked. "This is a bad night to be prowlin' around outside."

"Guess us'll have to see t'the stock," Bill replied. "Must feed oxen."

"Won't Tom attend to 'em?"

"Tom too lazy."

He left his chair and shuffled over to the door. Ere lifting the latch, he turned around and stared for a few seconds at Hettie and the shoemaker. He uttered no word, but Andy felt a sudden chill and a nameless dread at the sight of that silent man standing there in the gloom. Why did he look back at them like that? he asked himself. And why had the brothers left the house on such a wild night? He questioned Hettie when Bill had gone, but she merely shook her head and vouchsafed no explanation.

"Surely it doesn't need both of 'em to look after the oxen," he declared. "An' I don't see how they'd agree, anyway."

"Oh, them agree when they want to, jis' like cats an' dogs. But they won't feed the oxen. They'll fergit all 'bout 'em. I've had to look after 'em all winter. I'm goin' to see to 'em now."

Andy looked at the girl in astonishment. So she was going, too! What did it all mean? There was no use asking any more questions, so he might as well hold his tongue. He watched the girl as she put on her hat, coat and mittens.

"Ye'll keep house till I come back, won't ye?" she queried.

"I'm not so sure about that, Hettie. I don't like to be alone, so ye needn't be s'prised if ye don't find me here when ye come back."

"Do stay, Andy," she pleaded. "Don't go 'way."

"Why d'ye want me to stay?"

"'Cause ye'll have to look after the fire while I see to the oxen."

"Oxen, eh? Surely it'll not take so long to poke some hay to the critters. I could do it in five minutes, Hettie."

"Mebbe ye could," was the low reply. "But stay here, anyway, Andy, till I come back. Oh, don't go 'way. Good-bye."



CHAPTER 23

WHAT A NIGHT!

Andy Dooner was no coward, and he had often boasted that he was not gifted with the sense of fear. But as the door closed behind Hettie and he was left alone, a subtle uncanny feeling stole over him. The gloomy room seemed like a place of dread, and he glanced apprehensively around at the dark corners. The wind roaring outside rattled the loose windows, and as his eyes sought their small panes he almost imagined he saw malignant faces peering in upon him. He knew that it was only the whirling snow he beheld, and he called himself a fool for being afraid. He tried to shake off the feeling by throwing several sticks upon the fire and then pacing up and down the room. But this gave him no relief. He longed to leave the house, but when he opened the door and looked out, he gave up the idea. The wind smote him like a giant, and the swirling snow dashed against his face, causing him to draw hurriedly back.

"Lord, what a night!" he exclaimed. "An' to think of them folks bein' out! What in time kin they be doin', anyway?"

He returned to the fire and stood with his back to the leaping flames. The perspiration was standing out in beads upon his forehead, and at every extra heavy gust of wind he started.

"This is awful!" he groaned. "Why did I ever come to this place? If I live to see mornin' I'll git away from here even if the snow is up to me neck. Guess a few tunes on me old fiddle will put new life into me. It's never failed me yit, so I hope it won't now."

He picked up the violin and drew the bow across the strings. But his hand trembled so much that he could hardly play at all.

"Confound it!" he growled. "I believe I'm gittin' the palsy. I wonder what makes me hand shake so much? This'll never do. Andy Dooner, don't be a coward in yer old age. Show yer spunk, or ye'll never be able to hold up yer head among decent folks ag'in. Come on, now, an' no more foolin'."

He played a few lively airs, and after a while felt his courage returning. The room did not seem so lonely and uncanny, and the howling of the wind was not so depressing. He even smiled a little at his former fear, and thought of the story he would have to tell as he travelled about the parish. He would embellish it, too, and draw it out to a fascinating length.

He was thinking of this, when a deafening report sounded on his right, followed instantly by a crashing of glass. The violin was hurled from his grasp as a bullet touched it in its onward sweep before burying itself into the opposite wall. Andy stared for a few seconds at the broken window. He was so dazed that he did not heed the wind rushing in through the opening. Nothing could he see, and no further sound did he hear. Slowly his senses returned. He glanced down at the violin a few feet away, and then over at the wall where the bullet had struck. What was the meaning of that shot? Did some one wish to shoot him? It seemed so, and the thought caused his knees to shake and a great fear to leap into his soul. His life was in danger, and it was not safe for him to remain in that room. Anywhere, even out in the pitiless storm, was better than there. Other attempts might be made upon his life by some unseen enemy. No doubt he was even watching him now out of the blackness of the night. Perhaps he was a Fenian! That idea aroused all the energy within him. Forgetting his beloved violin, he seized his cap and mittens, leaped for the door and rushed out into the storm. The wind whipped about his body, and the snow pelted his face. But he felt safer here, for he was sure that no one would attempt to follow him, and no bullet could find him.

After he had gone several rods he began to realise that he could not keep up such a headlong pace. Already he was quite weary, for the snow impeded his progress, and the wind nearly blew him over. He could see nothing, and to continue meant certain death. He had to find shelter somewhere, but he was determined not to return to the house. At first he thought of the barn. He would be safer there with the oxen, and he could find shelter in the hay. But that was too far away, and he did want to keep a watch, if possible, upon the house. Then he thought of the rough lean-to over the well. That was just the place, and but a short distance from the window through which the bullet has sped. There he could stay for awhile, obtain a little rest, and think over his future course of action.

With considerable difficulty he groped his way back over the course he had come, and after much stumbling and battling reached the shelter of the well-house. It was a poor affair, but huddled behind the north side he obtained some protection from the wild nor'easter. He was panting heavily, and he was glad to sink down upon the snow to rest. Never had he

known such a dark night, but from where he crouched he could see the light from the house struggling feebly through the grimy windows. It fascinated him, and its fitful gleam had something almost sinister in its appearance. It was only a single candle, mingled with the fire-light, that shone out into the darkness, but it had drawn some one to the house intent upon murder. Was that person lurking around even now? What right had any one to shoot at a harmless old man? The thought angered him, causing him to scramble to his feet. The blood quickened in his veins, giving warmth to his chilled body. All his former fear vanished, and he was in a fighting-mood. And yet he was cautious. He must find out who that villain was, and the purpose of his cowardly attack. He would wait and watch for the fellow to return. He would surely come back again, and when he did, Andy was determined to face him and demand an explanation.

For some time he waited, and as the minutes crept slowly by he became very impatient. He was becoming cold again, and the wind whistling through the cracks of the lean-to made his position most uncomfortable. He wondered how much longer he could remain there. That he could not stay all night was certain. To reach the house of a neighbor on such a night was out of the question. The barn was his only hope, so if nothing happened soon he would go there and take shelter with the oxen. The hay in the loft would give him some warmth, at any rate.

Andy did not know how long he had been waiting and watching, but it seemed to him like hours. His feet were cold, and he stamped them and slapped his arms about his body to gain some warmth. But this was only temporary. He would go to the barn and obtain some rest. No doubt the fellow who had fired the shot had gone away and did not intend to return.

He was about to leave his shelter and plunge out again into the storm, when glancing toward the house, he saw a dim figure suddenly emerge from the blackness and step cautiously up to the broken window. Andy was now all alert, and forgot entirely about his coldness. He shrank as far back as the lean-to would permit, lest he should be seen. But there was no need for this, as the man at the window never looked in his direction. He was peering into the room, as if to make sure that no one was inside. He then moved away, walked rapidly around to the door and entered the building.

Swiftly Andy slipped from his hiding-place and hurried toward the house. No sense of fear stirred his heart as he approached the window and looked into the room. Although the fire was low, the candle was still burning, and by its light he could see the man within kneeling on the floor where Tom Daggert always sat. At once Andy saw that it was Bill, who was forcing up a plank in the floor. He then lifted out a well-filled bag, tied around the neck with a stout cord. Laying this upon the table, Bill crossed to the other side of the room, moved back his own chair, and took a similar bag from beneath a plank in the floor.

All this took but a few minutes, and Andy was held spellbound by Bill's speedy movements. That the bags contained money he had no doubt. But where had it come from? How did the brothers happen to have so much in the house? and what was Bill going to do with it? The next minute, however, his mind cleared, and so startling was the revelation that he staggered back from the window and stood knee-deep in the snow while the wind whipped and curled around his defenceless body. He understood now the meaning of so much that had been puzzling him but a short time before. Slowly he made his way back to the lean-to, and huddled there in a corner, he thought over what had so suddenly come into his mind. At times he imagined it was but a dream from which he would soon awaken. But the wind, the bitter cold, and the light from the house told him that it was all too terribly real. He had seen Bill Daggert stealing his brother's bag of money, and most likely he was going to clear out with it. And that money was the price of base treachery, he felt certain. The Fenians had paid the brothers for some work, whatever that might be. And it was the money which caused Tom and Bill to place the chalk-mark of separation upon the floor. It was all clear now. The villains were suspicious of each other, and each guarded his ill-gotten gains, and kept his chair over the very spot where the money was hidden. So far it was all quite plain. But why had Bill fired that shot? Did he mean to commit murder? Perhaps he only wished to drive Andy out of the house by giving him a severe fright. That did seem reasonable, and the idea brought some comfort to his mind. Yes, that was evidently the explanation, he decided. It was not his life Bill was after, but his brother's money.

All this passed through his mind with lightning rapidity as he huddled back in his poor place of refuge, as far away from the wind as possible. He did not know what to do. He longed to stop Bill from getting away with his booty. But he knew that he was no match for the man with the strength of an ox, and the insane rage of a tiger when interfered with while grasping its prey. Andy's one desire now was to get back to the shore, to the captain's house, if possible. In the meantime, the barn must suffice, so he would go there and wait until morning. By then Hettie might be back.

As he was thinking of this, a wild yell startled him, causing his face to turn deadly pale and his body to tremble. It came directly from the house, and was followed instantly by another, and then another. He had never heard such blood-curdling sounds before, and in a few seconds there issued forth a wild medley of screeches, yells and snarls, mingled

with fierce oaths. Andy could endure the strain no longer, so rushing from his shelter, he again reached the window and peered into the room. And what he saw there made his heart sink within him, for he beheld the Daggert brothers in a terrible conflict. Bill had been caught by Tom in the act of making off with his money, and they had leaped at each other like two enraged beasts of the jungle. Backwards and forwards they surged, clutching at each other's throats, dealing terrific blows, tearing clothes, and all the time snarling in the most furious manner. The table and chairs were overturned and broken in the wild contest. Fortunately the candle was resting upon the shelf above the fire-place where Hettie had deposited it before leaving the house. But alas! for Andy's beloved fiddle. He had left it lying upon the floor in his fright, and now it was being crushed to bits beneath the feet of the contestants. He groaned aloud as he heard the cracking of the wood, and saw the ruin of his faithful companion of many years. It made him so angry that he longed to be strong enough to leap into the fight and beat the brutes into insensibility. It was what they really deserved. His hands clenched hard and he ground his teeth in his rage. But he soon realised the futility of his anger, for what could he do against those tough and hardened fighters? He would be as nothing to them, and most likely they would turn upon him and rend him in twain. Their rage might carry them to almost any degree of excess.

And as he watched, he noticed that knives were drawn, and that Tom and Bill were slashing at each other in the wildest fury. It was a terrible onslaught, but of short duration, for suddenly with a sickening scream, followed by a groan, Bill dropped his knife, reeled and fell sprawling to the floor. Tom also staggered a bit, but recovering himself, he began to slash the prostrate body at his feet. This was more than Andy could stand. With a whoop, he smashed in what remained of the window, leaped into the room, and rushed at the infuriated man. He caught his arm which was uplifted for another blow.

"Tom! Tom! fer God's sake, stop!" he cried. "Are ye mad?"

Slowly the arm was lowered, and the knife fell from the now limp hand and clattered upon the floor. Wild-eyed, Tom looked first at Andy, and then down at his brother. His slow mind now seemed to comprehend the enormity of his crime, and the thought filled his heart with a nameless terror. He bent and touched his brother's body, but when Bill showed no sign of life, he straightened up and looked wildly at the shoemaker.

"Is 'im dead?" he asked in a hoarse whisper. "Has us killed 'im?"

"It looks like it," Andy replied. "This is a mighty bad fix ye've got into, Tom. I see yer finish, a'right. Ye better give me a hand to carry him over near the fire so I kin examine him."

To this request Tom paid no heed. With a weird groan he rushed across the room, tore open the door, and dashed out into the night.

CHAPTER 24

TREACHERY

It is wonderful what a woman will do for the man she loves. And Hettie Daggert was no exception. She was well aware that Drum Rowan did not love her, for he thought only of Nell Andrews. To some natures this would have aroused a bitter hatred and a burning jealousy. With Hettie, however, it was different. Even though she knew that Drum could never love her, yet her love for him was the one sustaining thing of her life. She had nothing else upon which to bestow her affection. Since her mother's death she had led a lonely existence. No one cared for her, and until her love for Drum became a consuming fire she had little to live for. Several times she had tried to banish the thought of him from her heart and mind. But always there was such a sense of desolation and hopeless despair, that she had been glad to return to the warmth and glow which the memory of him produced. She adored the ground upon which he walked, and in fancy she wove bright dreams which she well knew could never be fulfilled.

The afternoon when he had laughed at her warning, she once more determined never to think of him again. But as the storm swept around the house that night, and she pictured Drum alone in the midst of dangers, her heart relented. She had told him to go to his "traps an' be damned." Those words gave her great uneasiness. Perhaps they would really come true, and how could she ever forgive herself? All her love flamed into a white passion as she brooded over this. She had warned him of danger, and he had refused to take her seriously. To most minds that would have been sufficient. But love knows no beaten path, and listens to no reasoning. The man she loved was in danger. That was the one idea which was ever before her. It was not the storm she feared, for Drum was accustomed to that, and could look well after himself. But what could he do against other dangers, subtle and unseen, which surrounded him, of which he knew nothing? But she knew, and it was her duty to protect him.

While her father and uncle remained in the house that evening, she was content to wait. But when they at length left, she knew that she must delay no longer. When those men would venture forth in such a storm she was certain that something more than ordinary was on foot. Her only thought was of Drum, and she never once considered what it would mean to reach his side to warn him once more. She had faced storms such as this before, and familiarity had rendered her reckless of their strength and fury.

With considerable difficulty she made her way across the wind-swept open space, and reached the forest beyond. Here she was protected from the fierceness of the tempest, and paused for a few minutes to rest. She knew well the trail leading to the valley below, so needed no light to guide her. She could tell by the trampled snow that her father and uncle had gone that way, and as she moved swiftly forward, she was keenly alert. Several times she placed her right hand to her bosom, and the feel of something there stimulated her courage and brought a glow to her cheeks. With that sharp-pointed knife hidden within the folds of her dress, she considered herself prepared for any emergency with desperate men.

It did not take her long to reach the valley, and then her pace slackened and she moved more cautiously. Not a thing could she see, but her eyes searched the blackness beyond. The wind howled and raged overhead, and the trees swayed and groaned like souls in some great agony. The snow sifted down through the branches, and she could feel its cold gentle touch upon her face. The roaring of the tempest stimulated her now like martial music. It was in keeping with the tumult in her heart and mind. She did not try to analyse her feelings, neither did she give a thought to the thrill that possessed her being. She had no definite plan of action. She only knew that somewhere in that great wilderness was the man she loved, surrounded by dangers, and that she must find him and save him from harm. It was not reason which guided her, but another sense akin to instinct. It had assisted her in the past, so she trusted to it now without the slightest doubt or hesitation.

Her steps led her to the rude shanty in the side of the rocky cliff which Drum had viewed with such surprise the night he first beheld it. Hettie was well aware of its presence, for she had often visited the shack, as well as the place where the ammunition was stored. She had always approached these spots with the greatest of caution, following the instructions she had received from her father and uncle. She was doubly cautious now, but for an altogether different reason. It was not the Fenian cause of which she was thinking, but the welfare of one man who meant everything to her. It was for his sake alone that she stepped softly and warily through the deep snow until she stopped dead in her tracks as the weak glimmer of a light met her straining eyes.

And as Hettie stood there, she heard the faint sound of voices. It came from the shack, so advancing, she drew near the door where she again stopped. The voices were louder now, and several men were talking at the same time, interrupting one another with coarse oaths. She longed to see inside, but she did not dare to go too close to the door where the light was coming through a wide crack. And, besides, if any one should come unexpectedly out and find her there, she knew quite well what the result would be. It was necessary, therefore, to be most careful when near such men.

At the back of the shanty was a small opening, once used as a window, but now boarded up. Hettie remembered this, and several times when alone in the building she had seen the daylight filtering in through the cracks. It took her but a minute to scramble over several boulders and reach the rear of the shanty. Here she found that the window was above her head, but by standing on a fallen tree which was lying near, she was enabled to bring her face close to a crack between two boards and peer into the room. It was not a good view she thus obtained, but she managed to see the men gathered there, and the first one she noticed was her father. Her uncle was nowhere to be seen, and she wondered what had become of him. The other men were doing most of the talking, and their words were coarse and rough. Several black bottles were standing upon the deal table, around which the men were clustered, and drinking more than was good for them. The place was lighted by several candles, and there was a good fire in the small stove. She knew all the men but one, and he was doing much talking. He seemed to be quite excited, and she could hear distinctly every word he uttered. At first she could not understand what he was talking about. His rapid words were mingled with oaths and fiery denunciations. He was saying something about the "government," "soldiers," "sneak" and "shooting." This puzzled Hettie until he turned suddenly to her father and roared,

"And ye think it was that cur who told on us? Are ye sure?"

"Us sure," Tom replied. "Us seen 'im hangin' 'round here. Him tol', a'right."

"Where is he now?"

"Him been choppin' over yon. Gone t' traps now."

"He has! Which way?"

"Up valley. Him got camp thar."

"Will he stay there to-night?"

"Guess so."

"Good! We'll keep him from bringing the soldiers here. Look, I want you to lead us to his camp to-night. You know the way, don't ye?"

Tom, however, shook his head, and rose slowly to his feet.

"Naw, us don't know whar camp is," he muttered. "Too bad storm, anyway. Us go home now."

"But we've got to get that sneak, or it's all up with us."

"Git 'im in mornin', then. Him'll come down valley to trap over by leettle brook." He jerked his thumb to the left as he spoke.

"Will he? Are ye sure?"

"Us sure. Yep, him come, mebbe. Us go now."

Hettie was quivering with excitement, and her hands pressed hard against the rough logs. She understood now what the men intended to do. That it was of Drum they were speaking she had not the slightest doubt. And her father had told them! The blood surged madly through her veins, and her anger increased to a white passion. They would never get Drum. She would go to him, and warn him of the danger. But how was she to get to his camp on such a night, and through the deep snow? That thought rushed into her mind as she looked helplessly around. His camp was over two miles off, and part of the way was across a bleak wind-swept region, and with no track to guide her, she would surely get lost. What could she do to help the man she loved?

Again she pressed her face close to the crack and looked into the room. Her father was gone, but Seth was there still, talking with the leader of the gang. They were speaking in lower tones, and she could not make out what they were saying. Presently the leader sprang to his feet and flourished a pistol in his right hand.

"Let the soldiers come!" he cried. "Let them do their damnest. We've got enough stuff hidden away in that cave to blow every mother-son of them to h——. We can shoot, too, and never miss. Look."

He raised the weapon and fired point-blank at the boards against which Hettie was pressing her face. Before she had time to start aside, the bullet tore through the wood and grazed her right cheek in its flight. With a cry of terror and pain she staggered back and dropped upon the snow beneath. Instantly she realized what she had done, for a commotion at once was heard within the cabin. There was a sound of hurrying feet and a clamor of voices. Wild with fear, Hettie scrambled to her feet, climbed up over a pile of rocks, leaped down the opposite side and plunged headlong among the trees beyond. Several times she tripped and fell, but she paid no heed to the scratches upon her face and the bruises upon her body. Her only thought was to get away from the men who were now searching around at the rear of the building. She knew that they could not very well follow her in the dark, and that for the present she was safe. Huddled under the shelter of a small thick fir tree, she waited and regained her breath. Although she could not see the men, she could hear them, and from the words which drifted to her ears she knew that they believed it was Drum who had been hit by the bullet while watching them through the crack between the boards. Presently the voices sounded nearer. Recognising Seth's, she crouched fearfully against the tree.

"I hope the bullet broke his skull," she heard him say. "Maybe we'll find his carcass in the mornin'."

"Lucky shot, that," another replied. "How the cur yelped. Ha, ha, he got the surprise of his life that time, all right. Let's get under shelter, Seth, for it's hell out here."

Hettie remained crouched by the tree for some time after the men had gone. Her cheek pained where the bullet had grazed it, and she felt the blood trickling down. She was becoming cold, too, and her body was trembling. She felt unusually weak, and knew that she could not go far through the storm and the deep snow. Her heart was very heavy as she thought of Drum's danger, and how she could do nothing to warn him. But she could not stay there; that was certain. She had to find shelter somewhere. How cold it was! Her entire body felt numb. Slowly she crawled out from under the branches and staggered to her feet. Where was she to go? What was she to do? There was warmth in that building but a short distance away where she could find comfort. But she preferred to die rather than to go to those men for help. She might do something yet to assist Drum, and for his sake, at least, she must run no risk. She surmised what would happen to her should she venture among those men in the cabin. Although a creature of the wild, Hettie Daggert was willing to die rather than go where a woman's honour was considered as a thing of naught.

Suddenly she thought of the cave where the ammunition was stored. It would afford her some shelter, and there underground she might obtain some warmth for her numb body. Slowly and with difficulty she forced her way through the snow, reached the rude structure, tore away several of the logs across the doorway, and entered.

CHAPTER 25

SNEAK-THIEVES

Drum Rowan thought of Hettie's angry words as he made his way down to the valley that afternoon at the beginning of the great storm. He smiled at her fears on his behalf, and also recalled her warning that night by the riverside when she had waited for him. He considered her, as also did most of the neighbours, a weak-minded creature, and an object of pity. But he knew that she kept herself above reproach, and all that could be said about her was that she was exceptionally odd and old for her years. She had been that way from a child, so no one expected anything else from Hettie Daggert.

Ere long Drum forgot all about her, for his mind had turned to Nell Andrews. It was more natural and pleasant to think of her, and as he thought of her his heart quickened and his bronzed cheeks glowed with animation. A vision of her rose before him as he sped on his way. Her beauty of face and form, her beaming eyes, the curve of her lips when parted in a smile, the dimples on her cheeks, and the stray wisp of hair that had the habit of drifting so temptingly over her forehead, all returned to him again. And Nell meant more to him now than ever before. Distance, and the uncertainty that she cared for him increased the fervor of his passion. She had preferred the company of the lawyer that night of the meeting in the hall, and would she have any more use for such a careless roving mortal as himself? Was the prize upon which he had set his heart to slip from his grasp? Would Nell marry the lawyer and go to the city to live? What could he do to make her care for him? Some young men so deeply in love would have heaped extra attention upon the object of their heart's affection. They would have visited her home and forced themselves upon her, and with pleadings would have besieged the fair citadel of their desire. But with Drum it was different. His nature was to keep as far away as possible, and unless she wished his presence not to come anywhere near her. He thought, too, of the wood-chopping affair which was being held that afternoon, and of the happy time that would be spent in the house that evening. He knew that Nell would be there, and a picture of her came vividly to his mind. He did not dare to go home when the party was almost next door, so the safest place for him was in the wilderness, away from the temptation. He could think of Nell, anyway, while in his cabin, and that would be some comfort.

After he had travelled some distance up the valley, he stopped near a low-set spruce tree where hung a pair of snow-shoes and a small hand-sled from a lower branch. These he would need, especially the snow-shoes, judging by the fine snow which was sifting down upon him. The trees were already swaying and creaking beneath the wind, and the short winter day was drawing to a close. He did not expect to visit all of his traps that afternoon. He would merely examine the ones on the way to his camp and finish the work on the morrow. If it stormed too hard he would remain under shelter, and enjoy the rest in his comfortable abode. He had some work to do there, anyway, looking after the pelts, and most likely there would be more animals to skin. He had always enjoyed such solitude, and never felt lonely in the woods. There was no one to trouble him, and alone with his thoughts he was quite happy.

Drum's line of traps ran in the form of a circle, the smaller segment being nearer the river from the head of the Valley of The Jaws to his cabin. Along brooks, on the shores of lakes, in rocky crevices and in other favourable places he had his snares, dead-falls and steel traps set for the furry creatures of the wild. He was a skilful trapper and knew how to match the cunning of the furtive-footed animals that roamed the region. He expected considerable success on this trip as he had not made his round for several days, and he hoped to have his sled well loaded by the time he reached his cabin. In this, however, he was disappointed, as well as greatly surprised, for he found trap after trap empty and sprung. That the animals had not escaped through their own strength he was certain, and he soon came to the conclusion that someone had been there ahead of him and had robbed him of his game. The light film of snow prevented him from examining any tell-tale tracks, and in fact, he needed none. He had sufficient evidence at nearly every trap he visited.

Drum forgot everything else now in the face of this new problem which confronted him. His one object was to find the culprit and measure out to him the punishment he deserved. By the time he had reached the last dead-fall, and found it sprung, darkness had enshrouded the land, and the snow was falling fast. The storm was raging in its fury overhead, and the trees were writhing beneath the onslaught. But he paid little attention to the ravings of the elements. Another storm was raging in his heart and mind. He was intensely angry, for the code of honour of the woods had been violated by some sneak-thief. Perhaps there were several of them, and he was determined to find out who they were.

It was but natural that the Daggert brothers should enter his mind. Who else knew where his line of traps was situated? Was this an act of revenge on their part? It seemed so to him now, and it appeared as if they were intent upon annoying

him in every way that was possible. He straightened himself up and looked thoughtfully in the direction from whence he had come. Tom and Bill hated him, and he realised only too well what the ill-will of such men might mean. They would not face him openly, but would use some underhand scheme to carry out their designs. His eyes glowed with the light of anger, and his hands clenched hard together. Did Hettie know of this? he wondered. Then he remembered her warning which had seemed so foolish to him before. He recalled her agitation and her advice to keep away from The Jaws. She had also pleaded with him not to visit his traps that day. Did she know of some mischief her father and uncle were planning of which she was afraid to tell? The more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that Hettie had good reason for her warning. And was this robbing of the traps but a step to something else of a more serious nature? Even now the villains might be lurking somewhere near, and under cover of the night and the storm were waiting to do him some bodily harm, shoot him, perhaps. An uncanny feeling stole over him, causing him to examine his gun and his supply of ammunition.

"Let them come," he challenged, looking defiantly around, "and the sooner the better. I would rather they set upon me at once than endure this uncertainty. I must get on into camp and think it over."

He strode rapidly forward, his gun in readiness and his senses keenly alert. He moved almost noiselessly, and the sharpest ears could not have detected his presence. Although most wary, he would have relished a good fight just then, for he was in the right mood, especially with the Daggert brothers. But he did not fancy the idea of being stricken down without an opportunity of defending himself. If they were prowling around waiting for him, his desire was to come upon them first, if possible. If he could do so, he did not doubt the outcome for he was the quickest and surest shot in the whole neighbourhood.

Nothing, however, interfered with his onward surge. In fact, he was safer there in the darkness and the storm than anywhere else. One enshrouded him with its sable mantle, while the other drowned any inadvertent sound he made by its continuous roar. Ere long he reached the cabin, pushed open the always-unlocked door, and entered. Lighting a candle which he drew from a pocket of his jacket, Drum set it upon a small table at one side of the room. The place was cold, so he at once stooped to touch a match to the fuel he had left prepared in the stove the last time he was there. It had always been his practice to have everything in readiness for the fire when he visited his cabin. It was pleasant to come from the trail and in a minute to feel the stove giving out its genial heat. It saved him from groping around for bark and wood when his hands were numb. But as he now stooped, he gave a start as he noticed that his carefully-prepared fuel was all burned, and that not a stick of his supply of dry wood was left near the stove. Such a thing had never happened before. He glanced around the room, and then seizing the candle in his hand, he took a few steps forward and examined the walls. A cry of anger escaped him when he found them stripped of the furry pelts he had left there to dry. Of the valuable skins of fox, lynx, otter, mink, martin and raccoon, not one remained. All had been taken. Drum's hand trembled as he held the candle close to the walls and stared upon the bare space. He stood there for several minutes with a burning rage in his heart. He thought of his traps which had been robbed, and he was sure that the same ones who had raped them had also carried off the pelts from his cabin. And the Daggert brothers were the guilty sneak-thieves. Of this he had no doubt, and there and then he determined to go and charge them with their villainy. He was not afraid of them for when it came to the test of strength and agility he was more than a match for those two awkward brutes.

Slowly he returned to the table, left the candle there and searched the room for some fuel. Only a wooden box had been left, and this he broke to pieces and crammed it into the stove. When the fire was burning well, he took his axe and went outside. A dry pole he had left near the door he dug out from under its snowy mantle and carried it into the building. From this he cut a number of sticks, several of which he added to the fire.

When he had finished this his mind was somewhat composed, and he was able to think more calmly and clearly. He felt hungry, for he had tasted nothing since noon. Going to the box where he kept his small supply of provisions, he was again surprised to find that only a little remained of the meat, flour, butter and molasses he had stored there. This discovery increased his anger making him all the more anxious to meet the Daggerts.

"I'm glad they left something anyway," he growled. "It's a wonder they didn't take every scrap of grub and burn down the cabin as well. Just wait till I get my hands on them."

He set to work and prepared a simple supper with the small piece of meat and flour that remained. It did not take him long, for he was well accustomed to cooking. After he had eaten, he felt in a better frame of mind, and sat at the table for some time lost in thought. The storm raged overhead, and he could hear the trees creaking and moaning in their distress. The room was now comfortable, and a drowsy feeling slowly stole over him. He looked over at the bunk close to the

wall on his right.

"I might as well go to bed," he remarked aloud. "There is nothing for me to do now, and I feel sleepy. I expected to be busy with the pelts to-night, but Tom and Bill have saved me the trouble."

He rose to his feet, picked up the axe and cut the rest of the pole lying on the floor into stove lengths. He had just finished, when a sound outside arrested his attention. He seized his axe with a firmer grip and listened intently. Again it came, a peculiar scraping noise upon the door, followed by a groan of despair and then a dull thud. Springing for his gun, he threw open the door and looked cautiously out. But nothing could he see in the blackness beyond. Returning to the table, he picked up the candle, and protecting it as much as possible from the draught, he again peered forth. At once he saw something huddled upon the snow a few feet from the door, which he recognised as the form of a man. Laying aside the gun, and replacing the candle upon the table, he stepped outside, lifted the man in his arms, carried him into the building and laid him upon the floor near the stove. He closed the door, and then stooped to examine the man's face.

CHAPTER 26

A PRISONER

The face upon which Drum looked was covered with a thick rough beard. The man's eyes were closed, and he showed no sign of life. He was well clothed, and to Drum's surprise a leather belt, containing quaint little pockets, surrounded his waist. At first he did not suspect what it was, being more interested in the stranger's appearance. Going to the table, he poured out some of the tea, which was still warm, and forced a little between the man's set teeth. It was the only thing he had, so he hoped it would prove effective. And in this he was not disappointed. The beverage and the warmth of the room caused the man to stir. Presently he opened his eyes and looked around in a dazed manner. He then sat up and attempted to struggle to his feet.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "And what am I doing here?"

"It doesn't matter who I am," Drum cautiously replied. "And what you are doing here is more than I can tell. You should be able to answer that question yourself. But just lie still for a while and rest. Let me put something under your head."

Going to his bunk, Drum returned with a pillow which he dropped upon the floor near the man's head.

"There, that will be more comfortable," he said. "Are you hungry?"

"Guess I am; almost starved. But before you get me any grub, take a look for my gun. I must have dropped it at the door."

Drum at once obeyed, and going outside, groped around, and after a few minutes found the weapon. He brought it into the room, wiped off the snow and stood it near the stove to dry.

"Let me have it," the stranger ordered, reaching out his right hand.

"Oh, never mind about it now," Drum replied. "You won't need it here."

"But the soldiers may come at any minute, and I must be ready."

Drum wheeled quickly around from the stove and faced the man. "What soldiers? Where are they?"

"Over yonder on the other side of the valley. They're camped now, I guess, but they won't stay there long."

"But what soldiers are they?" Drum insisted. "And why are you afraid of them?"

"The Queen's soldiers, of course. I'm not afraid of them, but I don't want to meet them, that's all. But there they are now! Don't you hear them, just outside?"

He had lifted his head and shoulders from the floor, and was staring hard at the door.

Drum was sure now that the man's mind was wandering. He went to the door and looked out, but nothing could he see.

"There are no soldiers anywhere near," he declared. "It's only the wind you hear."

"Ah, maybe you're right," and the man sighed as he dropped back again upon the pillow.

It did not take Drum long to prepare some food, and while the stranger ate, he watched him closely. His mind was very active, and he was thinking about what he had just heard. Was the man mentally deranged? he asked himself. Had his experience in the storm affected his brain? It did seem so, and what he needed was a good sleep. In the morning he could question him.

When the visitor had finished his meal, Drum suggested that he could rest better in the bunk against the wall.

"A night's rest will put you on your feet again," he told him. "Get up and I will give you a hand. Take off your coat and that belt so you will be more comfortable."

Listlessly the man obeyed, and made only a slight protest as Drum unfastened the belt from his waist.

"Better leave that on; I might need it," he muttered.

"No you won't. It will be here in the morning, so don't worry."

"A'right," was the sleepy reply. "Call me early, for I must get on my way before—before the soldiers come."

In a few minutes he was asleep, and Drum could hear his heavy breathing from where he sat near the stove. He picked up the gun and examined it most carefully. It was the strangest he had ever seen, and it confirmed his suspicion concerning its owner. It was a breech-loading repeating carbine, and he had heard about the wonderful things it could do, and that it had been used by the federal cavalry during the American Civil War. The owner of such a weapon must have crossed the Border from the United States, and what would bring him into The Valley of The Jaws in the dead of winter unless he were a Fenian spy? He was sure now that the man had seen some soldiers that afternoon, and, accordingly, was greatly alarmed. Drum was surprised at this, for he had no idea that soldiers were anywhere in the vicinity. Were they searching for the cave with the ammunition? he wondered. Did they suspect the presence of Fenians in the country, and were out scouring the woods in the hope of capturing them? It seemed likely that such was the case. But why had not Mr. Tilley awaited news from him? Perhaps he had acquainted the military authorities with the secret of the cave and they had at last taken action. He thought of the letter he had carried to Fredericton. That, no doubt, had contained special information, and the presence of the soldiers here was the outcome of it.

A feeling of resentment welled up in Drum's heart as he thought of the soldiers. What right had they there? Had not Mr. Tilley given him the commission to watch the movements of the Fenians, and to report to him when anything of importance took place? Why, then, had others been sent into the region which he considered his rightful sphere of action? He had discovered the ammunition, and it was only fair that he should be allowed to watch and report any information he might obtain. But now that the soldiers had arrived, they would take all the credit to themselves, for most likely they had heard about the cave in the side of the hill.

As Drum thought of all this, he glanced over at the sleeping man, and then at the weapon he was still holding in his hands. He was certain that he had a Fenian spy in his possession, as well as his new and wonderful gun. What a valuable prisoner the man might prove to be, and from him, perhaps, might be learned many secrets of the enemy. He would take him to the city in the morning and hand him over to Mr. Tilley who would be sure to know what to do with him. What a fine thing that would be. He was certain that Nell would be proud of him, and would consider him some good after all.

Thus all through the long winter night Drum remained on guard. He could not afford to go to sleep lest the man in the bunk should awake and obtain possession of his gun. He kept the fire going, and several times he was compelled to go outside, search around in the dark and dig out some dead sticks from beneath the snow and drag them into the cabin. The storm continued until the break of day, when it began to abate, and ere long ceased altogether. The wind sank to rest, and an intense silence reigned throughout the forest. Drum stood for a few minutes at the door and looked out upon the beautiful scene before him. Every fir and spruce tree stood robed in a soft mantle of white. Not a sign of life was to be seen. All nature was hushed after its wild tumult of the night.

Drum was about to close the door, when the faint report of a gun away to the right startled him. It was followed immediately by another, and he surmised that the soldiers were astir and preparing for their onward march. This thought aroused him to swift action. He must get his prisoner out of the valley before they arrived to claim the prize as their own.

Quickly preparing breakfast from the few scraps of food that remained, he ate a little himself and left the rest for the stranger. He then went to a corner of the room where stood a pair of snow-shoes.

"It's lucky I left these here," he commented in an undertone. "I was tempted to take them with me on my last trip. It's a good job Tom and Bill overlooked these when they took nearly everything else."

He paused and glanced toward the bunk. A new idea had come suddenly into his mind. Had he been accusing the wrong ones? Perhaps the Daggerts had nothing at all to do with the theft. What if that man over there had done the deed? There might be several spies in the valley, anxious to get possession of such valuable furs. He would find out, anyway, and as soon as possible.

Going over to the bunk, he touched the sleeper's shoulder.

"Get up," he ordered. "It's late, and we must be on our way."

The man opened his eyes, and looked around in a dazed manner. He then sat quickly up and stared at Drum.

"Where am I?" he asked. "What has happened to me?"

"You're right here in my cabin, which you reached last night, more dead than alive. You've had a good rest, so get up, and as soon as you have eaten a bite, we shall move on."

"Where to?"

"Oh, you'll find out later. I want you now to do just as I tell you. Hurry, and don't make any trouble."

Drum's voice was stern, and this the man noted. He crawled out of the bunk and crossed over to the stove. Here he made a swift movement for his gun. But Drum was quicker still. He seized the weapon in his hands, and held it in readiness.

"None of that," he ordered. "I know who you are, and why you are here in the valley, so don't try any nonsense. I'm in no mood to be fooled with this morning. I didn't sleep a wink last night."

The stranger sank down upon a nearby bench and stared hard at the young man standing so defiantly before him. His eyes glowed with a dangerous light, and only with a great effort could he control himself.

"You utter strange words," he at last found voice to say. "I cannot understand your pugnacious attitude. What is the meaning of it all, anyway?"

"I think you understand, all right," Drum quietly replied. "Your presence here, your dread of the soldiers, and this gun of yours are all the evidence I need to tell me that you are a Fenian spy."

"What! How dare you make such a charge?" the man shouted. "Why, I am a loyal British subject, and for years I was a soldier in the good Queen's army."

"Where did you get this gun, then?" Drum inquired.

"Get that? Why, my dear fellow, it's no trouble to run across such a weapon. I picked it up in a city store."

"In Saint John?"

"Yes, I got it there only last week."

"Well, I guess you didn't, for I know the stores where they keep guns better than I know anything else. I almost live in them when in the city."

"That may be so, but I got this one from a second-hand shop."

"Now, look here, it won't do any good to keep on with your lies. You're a Fenian spy, and this gun, as well as your fear of the soldiers proves it. And I believe that you are the one who stole my pelts. You have been here before, and so knew where to come when caught in the storm. You ate up most of my grub, too, and burned all the wood. You can't deny it. I want my furs, and you've got to tell me where they are."

Drum was standing erect as he uttered these words, and the stranger realised that this sturdy young man had to be handled with much discretion. To oppose him would only make matters worse, he was well aware. Soon a cunning expression appeared in his eyes. He was an adept in the art of deception, and a man in a desperate situation does not worry over any conscientious scruples. His manner suddenly changed.

"Say, young man, you're more clever than I thought," he began. "You've cornered me, all right, this time, so I might as well make a clean breast of it. I did steal your pelts, though I'm not a Fenian spy. You see, I was hunting in this region for moose, and getting nothing, I felt mighty sore. So coming across your traps, I followed them up, lifted the game and also the skins in this cabin. That's the long and the short of it."

"And where are the pelts now?" Drum eagerly asked. "Did you sell them?"

"Oh, they're in a shack I ran across at the foot of the valley. I spent a night there, and intended to get away yesterday morning. I wish to goodness I had."

"Why didn't you?"

"I wanted to have another try for a moose, but when I ran across the soldiers I was nearly scared out of my wits."

"Why? Surely you're not afraid of soldiers."

"Not as a rule. But I had stolen your pelts, and a guilty conscience makes a man a coward."

"And a liar," Drum emphatically added.

The mention of the soldiers aroused him. It was necessary to get away at once before they arrived. At the same time, he wished to test this man concerning the pelts. He would make him go to the cabin on the way to the city. There was one thing more he wished to know, upon which much depended.

"Are you alone?" he asked. "Have you left any companions in the cabin you just mentioned?"

"Not a soul. I came all by myself, intending to have a good time with none to bother me."

"But you got more than you expected, eh?"

"Should say I did. Why, I never got into such a h—— of a fix before. When I get out of this hole, I'll never come back here again, let me tell you that."

Drum asked no further questions, but ordered the man to get ready at once, and put on the snow-shoes. This did not take long, and in a few minutes they left the cabin, the stranger going before with Drum following, holding the gun in readiness. His own he had left behind, preferring to carry the one he had taken from the prisoner. The snow was deep and light, so the snow-shoes were almost buried at each step. Drum was quite surprised at the pace his companion set, especially as he was forced to break the trail. But he swung along so rapidly and eagerly and without the slightest hesitation, that Drum knew he was well acquainted with the locality. This only tended to increase his suspicion that the man was a Fenian spy and knew every foot of the valley. A casual hunter would have difficulty in finding his way, especially with no marks to guide him.

The distance to be travelled was about two miles, and it took them nearly an hour to reach the little brook where Drum had his most southerly trap, and the one in which his hand had been caught while setting it. Here the hurrying man slackened his pace, and then swerving to the left, made toward the cabin. Drum was all alert now, and as they came in sight of the building, he ordered his prisoner to stop.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked. "You told me that there is no one with you, and yet I see smoke coming from the cabin. Were you lying?"

With an ugly growl the man looked quickly around.

"Well, and what of it?" he demanded. "What can you do now?"

"I can put a bullet right through your head, and the head of every one that shows out of that door," was the determined reply.

"What! would you murder us? Would you dare to do such a thing?"

"It would not be murder. It's never called that in time of war."

"But this is not war."

"I don't know what you call it, then. But it makes no difference. You go on at your own risk. I mean what I say."

But the man did not move. He stood there like a statue, staring wildly at the young man standing so calmly but a few feet away with the gun ready for immediate action. He was in a bad fix, and knew it. His lips moved as if he would speak, although no word came forth.

And as the two faced each other in silence, a great roar startled them, causing the earth to shake beneath their feet. At once shrieks of terror and agony fell upon their straining ears, and then all was still.

CHAPTER 27

FOR LOVE'S SAKE

Hettie found the cave very dark and her heart beat faster than ever as she groped her way forward. She was no coward, but a feeling of fear came upon her in that silent place. Every movement she made sounded so loud that several times she started and shrank back. She guided herself by touching the kegs on the right. She had often looked upon them in daytime, and they had always filled her mind with curiosity, mingled with awe. She knew something of the power of that ammunition, as she had once seen her father and uncle blow a rock to pieces by means of gunpowder. She was young then, and the noise of the explosion had terrified her, and caused her to run screaming to the house where her mother had comforted and soothed her fears. But the impression remained, and when she knew that so much powder was stored in the cave on the hillside, she had mused upon its deadly effect if exploded. And she thought of it this night as she groped her way onward. She wanted to get as far away from it as possible, to the farthest end where she felt she would be safer. She was afraid lest the spies should search the place, and if they discovered her, what explanation could she give for her presence there? Her mind was wrought up to a high pitch of excitement this night, and her vivid imagination carried her beyond all bounds of reason. She even pressed her right hand to her heart lest its beating should betray her so loud did it sound. The Fenians would be sure to hear it if they came.

It was not so much about herself that Hettie cared, but Drum. She must save him, and as she crouched there upon the ground she racked her brain for some plan whereby she might warn him of his great danger. He would be sure to come down the valley in the morning to visit his trap by the little stream, and there the waiting spies would shoot him before he could do anything to defend himself. What could she do? It was out of the question to go to his cabin in such a storm. And if she did go, would he heed her warning? She thought of his scornful laugh that afternoon when she had pleaded with him not to visit his traps. Would he not treat her in the same way if she spoke to him again? She felt sure that he would. But she could not allow him to die at the hands of the Fenians. He meant much to her, even though she was nothing to him.

Her mind turned to the men in the shack nearby, and her heart swelled with anger. What business had they to come into the country and make so much trouble? She hated them with a bitter hatred, for were they not planning to kill the man she loved? And they had also induced her father and uncle to help them. Oh, she knew what they had done, and the money they had given. Her anger flamed to a white heat. Surely she could do something to stop them and save Drum. They were miserable wretches, while he was strong and noble. They did not deserve to live. And Seth Sloan was in league with them! She pictured him again as she had seen him that night through the crack between the boards. She wanted to punish him, too. But how could a weak lone girl do anything?

Suddenly an inspiration flashed upon her which caused her whole body to tremble. She sprang to her feet, dazed for an instant by the astounding idea. Could she do it? That was the only thought which troubled her. No sense of right and wrong affected her. Whatever would save Drum from those men was her only care.

Stealthily now she made her way out to where the ammunition was lying. She felt around until her hands rested upon a keg which she believed was powder. Almost lovingly she fondled it, for it was to be the means of carrying out her design and saving the man she loved. The keg was not large, so by turning it on its side, she slowly rolled it back to the part of the cave she had just left. Here she placed it on end, and groping around with her hands she found a stone which would serve her purpose. Ripping off a piece of her skirt, for Hettie was most cautious in her temporary madness, she wrapped this about the stone, and began to pound upon the head of the keg. At times she paused to listen, fearful lest the muffled sound should be heard outside. Once she ceased and went to the mouth of the cave and peered out. Seeing no one, she felt more satisfied, so returned and continued her work. At length the repeated blows had their effect, the head of the keg gave way, and when Hettie had lifted out the pieces of broken boards, she ran her fingers through the soft yielding powder. Then she laughed, and the sound of her own voice startled her, so weird did it seem. She shrank back close against the wall and looked anxiously toward the opening of the cave. But as nothing happened, she went again to the keg and moved it along the ground until she had it near its former position. This accomplished, she once more retreated to the rear of the cave to await the dawn of a new day.

Hettie had no intention of going to sleep, but as she crouched upon the ground her eyes became heavy. The excitement of the day had left her very weary, and although she fought against the drowsy feeling, she ere long succumbed to its effect.

When she awoke and opened her eyes a great fear leaped into her heart lest she was too late to save Drum. The light of day drifted into the cave, exposing a number of the kegs against the wall. Hurrying forward, she looked cautiously out, but no one was to be seen, and the snow lay white and soft on all sides, untrodden by man or beast. The plan she had thought out during the night was as strong in her mind as ever, although she was calmer now and more self-possessed. The sleep had refreshed her, thus giving her a renewed confidence in herself and her undertaking.

Stepping forth, Hettie moved slowly toward the cabin beyond the jutting rock. As she approached she saw smoke issuing from the pipe stuck up through the roof. She surmised that the men were at breakfast, for by the position of the sun she knew that it was yet early. When but a short distance away, she turned and made another track right back to the cave. When she again came close to the cabin she looked around, and the marks in the snow brought a glow of satisfaction to her eyes. In such action Hettie exhibited something of the instinctive shrewdness of the wild creatures of the woods. When close to the door she paused and glanced along the trail leading to the little brook. She saw that the snow had been broken there, and this brought an anxious feeling into her heart. Perhaps Drum had already arrived and the terrible deed had been committed. She gained some comfort, however, from the thought that she had heard no report of a gun that morning. But some one might be waiting by the brook even now for Drum's arrival. Hesitating no longer, she gave a slight tap, pushed open the door and entered. Four men were seated at the table, who stared with wonder upon their early visitor. They had just finished breakfast, and were indulging in a smoke. As Hettie crossed the room, the men noticed her agitated manner. Seth was nowhere to be seen, and the girl wondered what had become of him.

"Have yez caught him?" she asked in a hoarse whisper.

The men made no reply, but continued to stare at the girl, thinking that she must be crazy.

"Didn't yez hear what I said?" she cried. "Are yez deaf?"

This brought the men to their senses, and they laughed aloud.

"We're not deaf," one of them explained. "But we're not accustomed to such an early visitor, especially a lady. Who are you, anyway?"

"I'm Hettie, Tom Daggert's gal, an' I want to know if yez have caught Drum Rowan yit?"

"Oh, that makes a great difference," the man remarked. "So you're Tom's girl, eh? We know him well. He's a special friend of ours, and we are all delighted to meet his daughter. But why do you ask if we've caught Drum Rowan?"

"'Cause if yez haven't, yez kin git him whenever yer ready, fer he's hidin' right near."

At these words the men sprang to their feet.

"He is! Where?"

"In the cave over yon," and Hettie jerked her thumb to the right as she spoke.

"How do you know that?"

"If yez don't b'lieve me, go an' see fer yerselves," Hettie retorted, angry at being thus questioned.

"We believe ye, girl, but it seems queer that he should be hiding in the cave."

"Was it queer that him was peerin' in at yez last night through the cracks in that winder? Didn't him yell when the bullet went through the board?"

"That's so. But who told ye about that?"

"Wasn't Dad here? Didn't him know what took place?"

"And he told ye about it?"

"I couldn't find out any other way, could I?"

"No, certainly not. But how do you know it was the man we want?"

"Who else knows 'bout this place an' what ye've got in the cave 'cept yerselves, an' us, an' Drum Rowan? Would any other livin' critter be prowlin' 'round in sich a storm? Guess not."

"What makes ye think he is hiding in the cave?"

"I saw him peekin' out as I came to tell yez that him was hidin' somewheres near, an' watchin' yez. He's been here afore yez was up, fer his tracks is in the snow. Yez kin see plain where him come an' went back."

Hettie never hesitated an instant, and looked straight into the eyes of the man standing before her. Lying was easy to her just now when Drum's life was at stake.

"And you say you saw him at the mouth of the cave?" another of the men asked.

"That's what I said. He was thar when I came in, but he dodged back, thinkin', mebbe, that I didn't see him. But if yez don't hustle, yez may lose him, fer Drum Rowan's no fool, an' if him takes to t'woods, the divil himself couldn't ketch him."

"You're right, girl. We'll go, anyway, and prove the truth of your words. But, say, is he armed? Has he a gun?"

"Guess not. Him left his gun up on the hill where him was choppin' when him went off to visit his traps."

"Why did he do that?"

"Oh, him's in love with Nell Andrews, an' when a man's in love, him fergits easy."

At this the men laughed heartily, and looked quizzically at Hettie.

"So he's in love with another girl, eh?" one of them queried. "That makes you jealous, I suppose, and out of revenge, you're telling on him now? Is that it?"

"Drum don't love me. Him loves another gal, an' I can't stand it. That's why I'm here."

"Come on, then," the man shouted. "It's all clear now, and we understand. Let's help the girl to have revenge upon her fickle lover, and at the same time get the man we want. We're in luck this morning, and there's good fun ahead."

"Yez better fetch a candle 'long," Hettie reminded. "The cave's dark in spots."

"That's right, too," one of the men remarked. "Here, you take it," he ordered, thrusting a candle and several matches into the girl's hand. "You know the way, and if the fellow has a gun, he won't shoot if you're in front."

The word "coward" was about to leap from Hettie's lips, but she restrained herself, and turning, left the building. She walked fast, in keeping with the excited state of her mind. At the door of the cave she paused, struck a match, lighted the candle and entered. The men, stooping low, followed. Slowly Hettie advanced, holding the light before her. When part way in she stopped.

"Thar he is," she whispered. "Over in that corner. Yez kin git him easy."

In their eagerness the men pressed ahead of her, and this was Hettie's opportunity. She turned, and with a swift movement hurled the lighted candle right into the open keg of powder near the men, and with a wild cry sprang back toward the mouth of the cave. The inevitable at once ensued, and the explosion rent the earth and rocks asunder with a mighty thunder-like roar. Hettie's work was done, but of this she knew nothing, for the force of the explosion had hurled her like a rocket from the mouth of the cave out into the snow. And there she lay, a huddled and inert form, right upon the old lumber road, half buried beneath a shower of earth and stones.

CHAPTER 28

THE UPLIFTED HAND

For a few seconds Drum and his prisoner stood as motionless as the trees around them. Then with a startled cry the latter leaped forward and hurried toward the cabin. Drum followed, with his gun ready for action. He could not understand the meaning of that noise, although the stranger evidently did. The door of the shack was open, but no one was to be seen. Only pausing to glance into the deserted building, the Fenian dashed by the door and made his way to the cave beyond. As they rounded the jutting rock, Drum at once knew what had happened. The snow everywhere was covered with dirt, while broken rocks were lying on all sides. What once had been the cave was nothing but a torn raw scar. Both stopped in sheer amazement, and then a terrible oath came from the prisoner's lips.

And as Drum looked, his eyes presently rested upon something lying in the blackened snow not far away. He advanced, and his heart almost ceased its beating as he beheld the huddled form of Hettie Daggert. Tearing away the stones which partly covered her body, and brushing off some of the dust from her face, he looked keenly down hoping that she might still be alive. But as she gave no sign of life, he was about to lift her from her tangled position when something caused him to straighten up a little and glance around. And what he saw caused him to throw himself swiftly aside as the Fenian hurled himself forward like a bolt from a catapult. The man's rage was terrible, and he was holding in his hand a gleaming sheath knife. Scrambling to his feet, just in the nick of time, Drum met his infuriated antagonist, receiving as he did so a blow from the knife in the fleshy part of his left arm. The pain, as well as the cowardly attack, stirred him to intense anger. With a mighty sweep of his right hand he hurled the weapon from his assailant's grasp, and then grappled with him with all the strength at his command. Drum was no weakling, otherwise he would have gone down in an instant before the raging demon he was now encountering. Never before had he engaged in such a struggle, and he at once realised that only by the utmost care and sheer brute force could he expect to win. To and fro they reeled through the snow, and at times Drum felt that his body would be crushed by his opponent's fearful grip. He saw, too, that he was striving to seize him by the throat, and this he was determined to avert if possible. He hoped to wear the man out, for even now he was breathing heavily.

And thus silently and terribly they writhed, wrenching furiously at each other, their size and weight being about equally matched. At length Drum felt that he could not hold out much longer against the Fenian's almost superhuman and enduring strength. When every minute he expected him to lessen his powerful grip, he found him still continuing with apparently as much energy as ever. He could tell that his opponent was skilled in the art of wrestling, whereas he had only his strength and hardened muscles upon which to depend. It was well that he had been chopping for the past few days, for thus he was better enabled to bear the strain that was being exerted upon his body. But notwithstanding all this, he knew that he was weakening. His brain began to reel, and his firm grasp relaxed a little. This the Fenian realised, and like lightning his hand shot to Drum's throat. It closed with a vise-like grip, and as the young man staggered back, feeling that all was over, a sickening sensation swept upon him. But at this critical instant his eyes rested upon something which aroused in him a new energy. It was Hettie's hand suddenly uplifted as if in mute appeal to him. That sight, and the thought of her lying there and the wretches who had come to this place, stirred the brute beast within him. He ripped away the hand from his throat, tore his right arm free, and surging back drove his clenched fist with all the strength he could muster right into his opponent's face. At once the grip about his body relaxed, and the Fenian with a groan sank down upon the snow, motionless, save for a slight quivering of his body. Drum, however, took nothing for granted. He leaped upon him, determined that the villain should not have another chance to do any more harm. He pulled off the belt from around his waist, turned the man over on his face and tied his hands securely behind his back. He then straightened up and stood watching the prostrate and dazed Fenian. He was weak, and his arm was bleeding freely. So faint did he become that he was forced to rub some snow on his face, which brought immediate relief.

Drum now tried to collect his senses. Why had the prisoner made his violent attack? he asked himself. But as he looked over at the ruins of the cave, the meaning became somewhat clear.

"He must have been raging mad when he saw that wreck," he muttered. "I wonder how in time the explosion happened, anyway. Did Hettie have something to do with it?"

He brushed the perspiration from his eyes, and glanced over to where the girl was lying. He staggered to the place and bent low.

"I was sure I saw her lift her hand," he mused. "But I must have been mistaken, for I believe she's dead. It won't do to let her remain here, though. I must get her to the cabin and try to do something for her there, providing she is living."

He tried to lift the girl, but was forced to desist. So weak was he after his terrible struggle, that he had hardly strength to stand, let alone carry a heavy burden. He looked anxiously around, but no sign of help could he see.

"This will never do," he growled. "I must do it. If only that thing lying over there would come to, I'd make him carry her."

He glanced over to where he had left the Fenian and saw him wrenching at his bonds. Drum forgot all about his weakness as he stepped over to his side.

"Here, none of that," he roared. "Try any more of your nonsense and I'll knock your brains out. You tried to fix me, but found out your mistake."

So formidable and determined did Drum look, that the baffled man shrank back. His eyes glared like a wild beast's, and his lips moved, although he uttered no sound.

"Get up," Drum commanded. "You have more strength than I have, so I want you to carry that girl over to the cabin."

As the man made no reply, Drum looked around, and seeing the gun lying where he had dropped it, he picked it up and wiped off the snow.

"I feel better now," he said turning to the prisoner, "so can do the job myself. It wouldn't be safe to untie your hands, so I shall leave you just as you are. What did you attack me for, anyway?"

"Look at that," the man replied, turning his eyes toward the place where the cave had been.

"But I didn't do that."

"I know you didn't. But I was crazy, I guess, when I saw the wreck of all my plans and the destruction of all that ammunition."

"So you are a Fenian, then?"

"Hell, yes! I was the leader of the gang. But what has happened is more than I can understand. My companions are all dead, by the look of things."

"They certainly are from all appearance," Drum agreed. "But as you have now confessed who you are, you're going to remain my prisoner until the soldiers come."

Drum was really in a quandary. He could not leave this man, and he did not dare to unfasten his hands lest in some manner he should escape. The soldiers might be some time reaching the place, and Hettie needed immediate attention, if she still lived. He could not carry the girl himself, even though he felt able, and guard the Fenian as well. What was he to do? His arm pained where the knife had struck, and the sleeve of his jacket was wet with blood. He was beginning to feel chilly after being so greatly overheated in the fierce struggle. Something had to be done, anyway, and that at once. He looked over in the direction of the cabin, and wondered if he could carry Hettie there and then return for the prisoner. Would it be safe? The man might tear his hands free and make good his escape.

And as he looked, Seth Sloan suddenly appeared around the jutting rock. He stopped abruptly at the strange sight before him, and his face turned pale with fear and consternation. He seemed to grasp the meaning of the disaster, and was on the point of beating a hasty retreat, when Drum brought the gun quickly to his shoulder.

"Come here," he ordered. "Don't you dare to run away."

"W-what's the matter?" Seth asked in a frightened voice.

"Everything. But, hurry up and give me a hand. There is no time for explanation just now."

Seth moved slowly forward, his eyes fixed upon the man lying in the snow. He then looked over at the ruined cave, and his body trembled.

"Explosion, eh?" he queried.

"Seems so, doesn't it? But, get busy, Seth. Hettie Daggert is right there, and you must carry her into the cabin."

"Hettie!"

"That's what I said."

"Good Lord! What is she doing here?"

"Never mind now, but do as I say. Get over there and pick her up while I keep watch over this cur."

At first Seth was loth to obey, but when Drum threatened to clout him over the head with the butt of the gun, he did as he was told. He was, in fact, too much frightened to think of getting angry. Drum watched him as he lifted the unconscious girl in his arms and carried her away from the fatal place. He then ordered the prisoner to rise and follow. Soon they were at the cabin, and there Drum examined Hettie as well as he possibly could.

"She is alive and breathing a little," he announced, as he rose from his kneeling position by her side. "But we can do nothing for her here. She must be taken home at once, and you will have to carry her, Seth."

"What! all the way? I kin never do it through this snow."

"You can do it, all right, especially when I'm walking behind with that," and Drum motioned to the gun leaning against the table.

"Ye wouldn't shoot me, would ye?" Seth gaspingly asked.

"You better not tempt me too much. This is a critical situation. With this Fenian as prisoner, and Hettie in such a serious condition, it's hard to tell what I might do. So it's safer to obey my orders. Wrap one of those blankets around the girl and let us get on our way."

Drum picked up the gun and straightened himself to his full height. His grim aspect sent a chill through Seth's body, and even the moody prisoner was awed. His torn clothes, his scratched and bleeding face, his hair, tangled and matted over his forehead, combined with his blood-shot eyes, gave him a startling and savage appearance. Seth knew from experience that Drum was not to be fooled with, and that the safest plan was to obey without any argument. Picking up a blanket, he wrapped it about Hettie, and lifting her in his arms he bore her out of the building. Drum motioned to the Fenian to follow, and in another minute they were making their way, single file, along the road leading to the upland. The deep snow made walking difficult, and often Seth was forced to stop to rest. The Fenian was sullen and slouched along in a spiritless manner like a whipped cur. Several times Drum had to speak sharply and order him to move faster. Once the man growled out some unintelligible words as he quickened his pace. He knew full well that he was in an awkward predicament, and twice Drum stopped him in the act of wrenching violently at the leather belt binding his hands.

"That won't do any good," he warned. "You'll not escape, even though you do get your hands free. You are too valuable a prize to lose. You have brought this trouble upon yourself, so you'll have to put up with the consequences."

"And what'll they be?" the man asked.

"That remains to be seen. The soldiers will know what to do with you, if that will be any satisfaction to you."

"And you intend to hand me over?"

"I certainly do. I was hoping to take you to the city myself, but that is out of the question now."

The man suddenly stopped and looked around.

"Say," he whispered, "if you let me go, I'll make you a rich man."

Noticing Drum's stare of amazement, he eagerly continued:

"I am in command of money without stint, so if you'll help me to escape I'll give you more than you ever dreamed of having."

"What! Bribe me?" Drum exclaimed.

"Oh, no, it wouldn't be that. It would just be helping a poor devil in a hard fix. Not much on your part, you see."

"H'm, you might not think it much, but I do," Drum retorted. "I'm not that kind, so get along and don't suggest such a thing again."

"But think how much there'll be in it," the man persisted. "A fortune. You'll never have such a chance again."

"All the gold in the world wouldn't bribe me. I'm too loyal to my country to do such a thing as that. You can't work that game around here."

"But we have. Tom and Bill Daggert have been working for us, and so has Seth Sloan."

Drum started at this confession, and stepped quickly forward.

"Are you telling me the truth?" he demanded.

"Before God I am," the prisoner replied, shrinking back from the aroused form confronting him. "We paid them good money to help us."

For a few seconds Drum stood like a statue, his hands gripping hard upon the gun. He then ordered the man to go on and overtake Seth, who was waiting for them some distance ahead.

Drum said nothing more about the startling news he had just heard. He wanted to think it all over that he might decide what was the best thing to do. He was brooding over this when they reached the Daggert house and entered. No sooner had he crossed the threshold than he forgot everything else in the sight that met his eyes. A fire was burning in the fire-place, and at one side stood Andy Dooner, bending over a form upon the floor. He saw the broken table, smashed chairs, and other signs of confusion, and realised at once that something out of the ordinary had taken place. As they entered, Andy straightened himself up and looked around. Seeing Drum, his face brightened. Then noticing the burden in Seth's arms, and catching a glimpse of Hettie's blackened face, he uttered a cry of dismay. His nerves were almost shattered by the terrible experience through which he had passed, so this new calamity brought him to the verge of the breaking-point.

"Is it Hettie?" he asked in a weak gasping voice.

"It is," Drum replied. "But what have you there?"

"Bill Daggert. He was killed by his brother. Oh, Lord! what's goin' to happen next?"

Seth laid the girl upon the floor, stepped forward, and seeing Bill's haggard face, and the wide staring eyes, he shrank back as if from a blow. Then with a wild cry of terror, he rushed toward the door, and dashed out of the building before Drum could lift a hand to prevent his escape.

CHAPTER 29

THE PARTY AND AFTER

The party at Widow Brown's was a pleasant affair. During the afternoon the young men chopped, split, and piled the wood, while the young women quilted and hooked mats in the house. Mrs. Brown was a jolly lively person, fond of company, especially that of young people. Her face beamed with pleasure and animation as she moved about among the workers, telling or listening to bits of gossip, and bantering the girls about their admirers outside.

"If we only had Andy Dooner here, the Lord Himself couldn't make me any happier than I am now," she exclaimed after an outburst of merriment had subsided at a quaint remark she had just uttered.

"Has Andy deserted you?" one of the girls asked.

"I'm afraid he has, Ellen. The old rascal! Just wait till I get my tongue on him."

"Where is he, anyway, Mrs. Brown?"

"Out with 'The Twins,' so Margaret told me. He stayed at her house last night, and seemed to be worried about something, so she said. I wish to goodness that dear girl was here with us now, but she doesn't dare to leave her pa. He's more cranky than ever, so I believe. With Drum away, Margaret has a lonely time of it. She needs brightenin' up a bit."

"Where is Drum?" Sarah Belmont inquired. "He never missed a party at your house before, did he?"

"Not to my knowledge. But he's cuttin' cordwood on the back lot. The Twins failed in the undertakin', so Drum's taken it in hand and is doin' it all himself. I'm glad he's settled down to real work at last. I was always fond of that boy, for there's a lot of good in him, even though he is somewhat harum-scarum at times, livin' so much in the woods with his traps and gun."

Nell Andrews' head bent somewhat lower over the quilt at which she was working as she listened to Mrs. Brown. She knew that her cheeks were flushed, and that the eyes of several of the girls were turned in her direction. She was greatly disappointed that Drum was not at the party, for she had looked forward to seeing him. After her experience with the lawyer she wanted to meet Drum more than ever. She chided herself over and over again for her foolishness in dreaming so much about the city and the life she would lead there. All her fond illusions had been suddenly shattered, and she was not sorry now. Drum meant a great deal to her. He was the very embodiment of life and buoyant manhood, and his careless and roving nature appealed to the spirit of romance within her soul. That he had so nobly defended her honour against the insinuations of Seth Sloan had affected her deeply, and she longed to thank him. But he had kept away from her ever since that night of the meeting in the hall, and she surmised the reason. It was just like him, she knew, not to come to her unless certain that she needed him. He would not force himself upon her, nor plead for her favour. There was too much pride in him for that.

When the storm swept over the land, the men were compelled to cease their chopping. With supper ended, the young people spent the evening with games and dancing. They missed Andy and his inspiring music, so had to content themselves with a young man who rasped out several tunes on an old violin. The party broke up earlier than usual owing to the storm, and some even then had difficulty in reaching their homes.

Nell had not enjoyed the evening, and before the rest dispersed she slipped away to the house on the hill where Margaret was awaiting her coming. She had planned to spend the night here, and had looked forward to the quiet time they would have together. The captain had long since been in bed, and the room looked exceptionally cheery and homelike as Nell entered. The blazing hardwood sticks in the fire-place were pleasant to behold, and above all, Margaret's sincere and hearty welcome.

The two talked late that night, and many were the secrets they imparted to each other of their hopes and fears. Each knew the value of the other, and their souls were in harmony to the deep and noble things of life. The storm raged outside, and the wind sweeping around the house rattled the windows. Only when an extra heavy gust caused the building to tremble and creak did an anxious expression appear in Margaret's eyes.

"I do hope Drum is in his cabin to-night," she remarked. "This is the worst storm we have had for some time. I am sorry

he went to his traps to-day. But when he makes up his mind there is no stopping him. He has been working hard of late, and I am so thankful."

"Mrs. Brown said that he has been chopping on the back lot," Nell replied. "It's too bad the Daggerts didn't do it as they agreed."

"In a way it is, Nell. But it has given Drum an interest in something besides trapping and hunting, and that is important. I am hoping that he will settle down to steady work after this. It will be a great relief to us if he does."

Nell made no reply, but looked thoughtfully into the fire. She had not told Margaret the great secret of her heart, for it was too sacred a thing to reveal to another, even to her most intimate friend. It was partly this, and also the sense of shame at the way in which she had rejected Drum for the lawyer which sealed her lips. She felt mean for the manner in which she had behaved, and she wished to do something to make up for her past mistake. Margaret, however, was not blind to her brother's love for Nell, even though he had said nothing to her about it. She did hope that the love would prove mutual, for with Nell as Drum's wife it would mean much to him as well as to herself. She did suspect that something had happened which caused Drum to remain away from the party that night. He had never done so before, but had always looked eagerly forward to the affair. She believed that Nell knew, and she was somewhat disappointed when she remained silent on the subject.

When they awoke the next morning the storm had ceased, and they looked out upon a world of dazzling whiteness, for the sun was hanging just above the far-off eastern hills. The captain was pleased to see Nell of whom he was very fond, although he had no use for her father. He was brighter than usual, and complained less about his foot. His talk was chiefly of Drum, and what good work he was doing in the woods.

"We shall get the boat loaded, after all," he declared, as he limped to the table for breakfast and sat down. "Tom and Bill Daggert needn't look to me for any more help. I've shut down on them at the store, and it's a pity that I didn't do it sooner."

"And Hettie won't have to make so many trips to the store," Nell added. "Poor girl! what a life she must lead with such men as her father and uncle."

"She's the only one I'm sorry for, Nellie. She takes after her mother, who was a remarkable woman in many ways. But what chance did she have with such a brute as Tom Daggert for a husband. I can't understand why she ever married him. He and Bill drove her to her grave. They killed her, that's what they did, with their devilish ways. My! how I'd like to have those two men on board ship with me out on the ocean. That's the only place to keep such curs. They'd have to do as they were told there, and if they tried any of their nonsense it wouldn't be well for them. But what can one do on land! It's no place to live, anyway, when you can't make people mind."

"Come, come, daddy," Margaret smilingly chided. "You might be in a far worse place, remember. What would you do out on the ocean now, lame as you are?"

"I could do more than you imagine, dear. I'm just as strong and capable as ever but for this foot. And if I were once more on my old ship I'd like to see the man who'd try to oppose my authority. That's the place to have Tom and Bill Daggert for a few months, and I'd show them a thing or two."

The captain's eyes glowed with the fire of determination as a vision of other days swept upon him. He even forgot to eat as he sat there gazing through the partly-frosted window on his right.

"You are forgetting your breakfast, daddy," his daughter reminded. "Your coffee and porridge are getting cold."

"It doesn't matter, dear, as I'm not very hungry. How can a man have an appetite shut up in a house all the time? Now, it was different when I was on board ship. I could always eat a good square meal, for I had plenty of exercise, and the fresh open air in which to breathe. But here! Why, I don't eat as much as a mouse."

Notwithstanding his words, the captain managed to eat a fairly good breakfast. When he was through and back again in his big chair, with his pipe drawing to his satisfaction, he was in a more pleasant frame of mind, and quite contented with his lot on shore. Margaret's eyes twinkled with amusement as she glanced occasionally in his direction as she and Nell cleared the table. She was always glad to see her father in such a mood, and this he generally was in the morning. If he would only remain so during the day what a comfort he would be, and how her burden of caring for him would be

lightened.

When the dishes had been washed, beds made, and the house tidied up, Margaret and Nell sat down near the fire and began the piecing together of little squares of cloth of various colours for a quilt-cover. The captain watched their fair faces, and his thoughts went back to the days when they were but children and played so much together. And always on his visits home he had been so fond of going with them on tramps through the woods, picking berries, and fishing sometimes in the brook. He and Squire Andrews were not enemies then, but friends, and what pleasant times they had together. But the men of the neighbourhood did not come to see him now, and a longing stole into his heart to have several of the older ones around him again. He wondered if the squire was very bitter toward him. He felt inclined to ask Nell a few guarded questions about her father, and was just clearing his throat for speech when a knock sounded upon the door. At once it was opened, and without any more formality Widow Brown entered. She stamped the snow from her feet, and brushed off a liberal supply that clung to the bottom of her skirts. Her face was beaming as usual, and in her hand she carried a plate covered with a white cloth.

"I've brought ye some of the left-overs," she explained, as she set the plate down upon the table. "It's a nice frosted cake which I thought the cap'n would enjoy, an' you, too, me dear," she added, turning to Margaret. "It's too bad you weren't with us last night, for we had a great time. My! my! I'm all het up, and nearly fagged out from climbin' that hill. It seems to be gettin' steeper every year."

She sat down in a big chair Margaret had drawn up for her, and then looked at the captain.

"And how are you this mornin', Cap'n Rowan?" she inquired.

"Very well, thank you, Mrs. Brown. Only my foot is no better."

"That is hard on a man like you, always used to be movin' around and givin' orders. I well remember when you was as spry as any of us. Dear me! no one knows what's ahead of us. Who ever thought that there'd be such a storm last night to spoil that party. But, then, I s'pose it was the Lord's doin's, so we shouldn't complain. And what are you girls makin'?" she suddenly asked. "A quilt, eh? For you, Nellie? Ah, there's nuthin' like gettin' ready in time for house-keepin'."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Brown," Nell laughingly replied. "I'm not going to start house-keeping for a long time."

"Is that so? Well, I thought mebbe there might be something in what I heard about that lawyer feller comin' to see ye. Glad to hear from your own lips, though, that it isn't the case."

"Why, wouldn't you like for me to marry a lawyer and live in the city?"

"You live in the city! Nellie Andrews, your place is right here in the country where you were born and riz. What would you do in the city? You'd be like a fish out of water, jammed up between all of them houses. I go there only once a year, and not that often if I can help it. And I'm always glad to get back home again where I can breathe the fresh air as the Lord made it, and which is not mixed with the smell of things He didn't make. Yes, the country's the place for them who were brought up in it."

When Mrs. Brown was present no one had much chance to say anything. All knew the goodness of her heart, so they made due allowance for all she said. She was always ready night or day to help her neighbours, especially in sickness. Women preferred her to the doctor, and she was, accordingly, kept busy going from house to house wherever she was needed.

"I never studied medicine or nursin'," she had often said, "but as I was the seventh daughter, the Lord gave me special gifts. I guess the good old-fashioned medicines do their work just as well as all these new-fangled notions with names that old King Solomon himself couldn't understand, with all his wisdom. I try to use common sense whether it is feedin' a baby or nursin' somebody sick with ammonia."

But after all, her cheery presence and buoyant nature had a wonderful influence in a sick-room, for her every word and movement radiated health and hopefulness.

"You'll be all right in a jiffy," she would say to the most despondent patient. "You're just a little run down, so a rest will do ye a world of good. Don't think too much about yourself, but count your blessin's and see how good the Lord has been to you."

She stayed for over a half hour at the Rowans, and then glancing at the clock on the shelf, she rose quickly to her feet.

"Just look what time it is!" she exclaimed. "Here I've been talkin' as if I had nuthin' at all to do at home, clearin' up after last night's racket. Not that I mind it, but it's got to be done, for it's wonderful how young people can upset a house with their shindies."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the door was suddenly thrust open, and Seth Sloan staggered into the room. The wild expression in his eyes, his excited manner, and his vain efforts to speak produced a startling effect, causing Nell and Margaret to rise quickly to their feet in fear and astonishment.

CHAPTER 30

BEARERS OF RELIEF

Seth groped his way to the chair, slumped down, and made no attempt to speak. He was greatly exhausted and breathing heavily.

"What is the matter?" Margaret asked, placing her right hand upon his shoulder. "Are the Fenians upon us?"

"Y-yes, I g-guess so," was the feeble reply. "T-that is, they were. Oh, it's a-awful! G-get me somethin' to d-drink. Q-quick."

Going to the kitchen, Margaret prepared a cup of tea, and returning with this, she handed it to the exhausted man.

"Drink this, Seth," she said. "It will make you feel better."

"Got anything stronger?" he asked, as he lifted his head. "Give me some r-um. That's the only t-thing 'll put l-life into me."

"Rum! ye've had too much rum already, it seems to me," Mrs. Brown declared. "I believe that's what's wrong with ye."

Margaret again left the room and came back in a few minutes with a glass full of Old Jamaica. Seth clutched it eagerly and drained it to the last drop.

"My! that's great," he sighed, as with a trembling hand he placed the glass upon the table. "It goes to the right spot. Nuthin' like it."

"Now, what's the meaning of all this?" the captain demanded. "Have you seen a ghost, or have the Fenians been chasing you? Out with it."

"Bill Daggert's dead, an' Hettie's dyin'," Seth gasped.

"What! are ye crazy?" Mrs. Brown cried, stepping to his side.

"I'm not crazy. I know what I seen. Didn't I see Bill layin' in his house with Andy standin' over him? An' didn't I carry Hettie all the way from the Valley, with Drum follerin' me with his gun? Don't I know what I'm talkin' 'bout? I ain't crazy, though I've gone through enough to make me ravin' mad."

"Bill dead, an' Hettie dyin'!" Mrs. Brown shrieked, clutching Seth fiercely by the arm. "Are ye tellin' the truth?"

"True as God's in heaven," Seth avowed, wriggling his arm from the gripping fingers. "Didn't I see 'em? Don't ye think I ought to know?"

"Come, come," the captain remonstrated. "Stop this wrangling, and let the young man tell his story. Explain now, sir, what you mean."

"There's nuthin' more to explain, cap'n. I only know that I was crusin' along the Valley of The Jaws this mornin', an' comin' to an old lumber road, I was walkin' by that steep cliff of rocks, when I was struck dumb by an awful sight. There stood Drum Rowan, with a gun in his hands, standin' over a man layin' in the snow with his hands tied behind his back. They'd had a terrible fight, by the look of things, an' Drum's arm was wet with blood. An' jist a short distance away was Hettie, layin' in the snow, her face all black with dust an' powder, with stones an' rocks piled around her. It must have been an awful explosion."

"Explosion!" The captain lifted himself from his chair and staggered to his feet, while the women stared at Seth in wide-eyed astonishment.

"Yep, the hull hill was blown to smithereens. Guess the Fenians had powder stored there, an' it must have exploded."

At this astounding statement the captain sank back in his chair, too much amazed for further utterance. The women could hardly believe their senses, and for a minute a death-like stillness reigned in the room. Nell's mind was working rapidly.

She thought not only of Hettie but of Drum, as well. She was the first to break the silence.

"Is that all you know, Seth?" she asked.

"Yep, that's all."

"And you say you carried Hettie home?"

"I did, an' an awful load she was."

"Who is the man with his hands tied?"

"A Fenian, I guess. The rest must have been killed by the explosion."

"And what happened to Bill Daggert? How was he killed?"

"I don't know nuthin' 'bout that racket."

"And Hettie was alive when you left?"

"I think she was. But I didn't wait to see after I reached the house. Lord, it was awful!"

"I must go to her," Nell impulsively declared. "Will you go with me, Mrs. Brown? You understand about nursing, and Hettie may need us both."

"Sure I'll go, Nellie. You're quite right. Women'll be needed there, fer men ain't much good in sich cases. Let me run home to git some bandages an' me snow-shoes. You kin borrow Margaret's an' her moccasins. Be ready when I come back. My lands! one never knows what's goin' to happen next."

She bustled out of the house, and when she was gone Margaret turned to Nell.

"How I wish I could go with you," she said. "I am so anxious about Hettie and Drum."

"We can do all that will be necessary, I feel quite sure," Nell replied. "You can't leave home very well, and you will be able to have everything ready for Hettie when we bring her back with us. But you will come, Seth, won't you?" she asked, turning to the young man.

"Yep, I'll go, Nell. But I don't feel very well. Guess I'm all in."

By the time Mrs. Brown returned Nell was ready for the journey. She had Margaret's moccasins and snow-shoes on her feet, and a small basket in her hand, filled with food.

"This is Margaret's doings," she explained to the widow's look of surprise. "She thinks we might be hungry before we get back."

"An' right she is, too, me dear. There's no tellin' how long we might be kept out there. An', besides, there'll be other mouths to feed, fer not likely there's much left to eat in the Daggert house. I do pity poor Andy, fer he must have come through tryin' times. I wonder what in the world happened to Bill. But, come on, an' we'll soon find out."

"Oh, if I could only walk!" the captain remarked. "I wouldn't let two women go alone on such a mission. You should have a man along to help you."

"Don't ye worry one bit, cap'n," Mrs. Brown replied. "Nobody'll harm us, an' we'll have Seth along to pull us out of the snow banks."

Seth, however, did not relish the idea of going back to the hills. He was trembling as he left the house and his face was very pale. When the door had closed behind him, he stopped, glanced quickly around, and then made a sudden dash for the main highway. The women stared in amazement, and almost held their breath at his speed. But he never once looked back, and when he had disappeared from view, Mrs. Brown gave expression to her feelings.

"The coward!" she cried. "To think of him runnin' away like that an' leavin' us alone! Why, I believe he's scared 'most out of his senses at what he saw out there. Jist wait till I git me tongue on him. Won't I give him a piece of me mind fer

sich actions."

"We can get along without him," Nell replied. "He would be only in our way, and we shall show him what we can do without his help."

It was a hard journey, for the snow was light and their snow-shoes sank deep at every step. But bravely, though slowly, they plodded on. Up a steep hill they moved, down the other side, over a long valley, up another hill, and through stretches of forest, until they came to the clearing in which the Daggert house was situated. They saw it in the distance, and none too soon, for they were almost tired out.

"Let's stop here a minute, Nellie," Mrs. Brown panted. "I'm almost fagged, an' I guess you are, too. I ain't as young as I used to be. Once I could come this hull way on the run without any trouble. But, hello! who's them? Why, I believe they're soldiers."

Nell was already looking, and she had no need to be told who the men were. She saw them emerge from the woods on the left near the Daggert house, and she counted twelve in all. They were moving cautiously, yet swiftly, and when they had reached the house they surrounded it, while one went to the door and in another minute had entered the building. He was gone but a short time when he came out and beckoned to his companions. When they had all gone inside, Nell breathed a sigh of relief, why, she did not know.

"What d'ye s'pose the soldiers are doin' here?" Mrs. Brown asked. "Mebbe they've got wind of the Fenians."

"Most likely," Nell agreed. She hardly knew what she said, for there had suddenly come into her mind what Andy had told her about Seth. Was he really in league with the Fenians, and was that the cause of his terror? Why had he been in the Valley that morning, especially after such a storm, unless he had been assisting the enemy? Did he know of the nearness of the soldiers, and was that the reason why he had run away? It did seem so, and the thought made her angry. She turned to her companion.

"Let us go on," she said. "I want to find out about this affair. I believe Seth knows more than he told us."

"Why, what d'ye mean?"

"I believe that Seth has been helping the Fenians, and now that the soldiers are here, he is frightened almost to death."

"Nell Andrews! what are ye sayin'?" the widow demanded. "Seth Sloan helpin' the Fenians! I can't believe it."

"Maybe not. But Andy has had his suspicions for some time, and I feel certain now that he was right. Anyway, we shall find out before long."

They made their way as fast as possible through the snow, and when they came near the house Nell's heart was beating fast. She did not want to meet the soldiers, and yet the thought of Hettie lying there, dying, perhaps, and Drum wounded, how badly she did not know, nerved her to dare almost anything. Added to this was the sting of Seth's treachery, which was enough to arouse the most timid.

Reaching the door first, she entered, and the sight which met her eyes caused her to shrink back. The room seemed filled with men, and most of them soldiers. When her eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, she beheld Drum near the fire-place with Andy by his side. He was answering questions hurled at him by one of the soldiers who had the appearance of an officer. As the women entered, the men, though surprised, made way for them, and as Nell went forward she caught sight of a bundle lying upon the floor at the left of the fire.

"There is the prisoner I captured," she heard Drum say. "He tried to kill me, and very nearly did it, too. You had better look well after him. He should be able to explain about all this better than I can."

He then saw Nell, and an expression of astonishment came into his eyes.

"How did you get here?" he asked, unheeding now the officer.

"Walked, of course," Nell replied. "Is that Hettie over there?"

"It is, and she needs attention at once. Andy has done what he could, but I had to watch that," and he motioned to the

prisoner standing defiantly near. "We must get her right away from here."

Nell stepped quickly forward, and when she had drawn back the blanket which partly covered Hettie's face, she uttered a cry of dismay. In an instant Mrs. Brown was by her side.

"Oh, the poor dear!" the widow exclaimed. "I wouldn't know it was Hettie Daggert. What kin we do fer her?"

"We must get her out to the shore. It won't do to let her remain here."

"I shall carry her, Nell, and we shall go at once," Drum replied. "The soldiers can attend to Bill and the prisoner."

"Is Bill dead?" Nell questioned, while a tremor of fear shook her body.

"I believe so. Andy can tell how it happened. But there is no time for that now."

"Just a minute," the officer commanded, turning to Drum. "I don't wish to detain the ladies any longer than I can help. Neither do I wish to keep this injured girl here. But this is a serious affair, and I must take you and this old man with me to the city as witnesses, I shall send two of my men to carry the girl to the shore."

"But Drum is wounded," Nell remonstrated, rising to her feet. "Look at the blood upon his hands. Seth said he was stabbed by the Fenian."

"Seth who?" the officer inquired.

"Seth Sloan. He brought us the news, and then ran away."

"He did! How did he know about this affair?"

"He said he was down in the Valley and carried Hettie here."

"Is this the truth?" he asked Drum.

"It is. I forced Seth to carry the girl while I guarded him and the prisoner."

"Does Seth know anything about what happened?"

"Ask him," and Drum motioned to the Fenian.

"Out with it," the officer demanded, swinging swiftly around upon the prisoner. "Did Seth Sloan have anything to do with this trouble?"

"He was one of us," came the surly confession.

"That will do for the present. We shall look after that man later. Now we must attend to this injured girl."

He then ordered two of his men to prepare a stretcher, which when they had completed, they laid Hettie tenderly upon it, and were about to bear her out of the building when Nell requested them to wait a minute.

"Will you please send a doctor up from the city to do what he can for Hettie?" she asked the officer.

"I hardly know how I can do that, Miss. It's a long way, and the travelling is heavy."

"But you will need her as an important witness. If she recovers she should be able to give you some valuable information."

"You are quite right. I shall see what can be done."

"And you will get a doctor to attend to Drum's arm?"

"Yes, he will be well looked after, so don't worry."

The officer noted the flush that overspread Nell's cheeks as she made this request, and he surmised its meaning.

"And take good care of Andy," she further reminded.

"God bless ye, Nellie!" the shoemaker replied, speaking for the first time since her arrival. "I knew ye wouldn't fergit yer old friend. Oh, this has been a sad time fer me. I've been in hell since I saw ye last. I shall never git the sight of them two brothers fightin' out of me mind till me dyin' day. It was awful! awful! But good-bye, me dear, an' I'll see ye ag'in when this trouble's all over."

Nell noticed how frail and white the old man looked as he stood before her. He seemed to have aged greatly in a few days, and had lost all of his old-time cheerfulness of spirit. She looked, too, at Drum and held out her hand.

"Take care of yourself, Drum," she simply said. "Come home as soon as you can. Good-bye."

She followed Mrs. Brown and the stretcher-bearers out of the house, and did not once look back. Drum kept his eyes fixed upon her until she had disappeared from view. Although tired, almost to the point of exhaustion, and suffering from the wound in his arm, a new feeling of joy thrilled his heart. Nell's words, and the look she had given him acted like a tonic to his drooping spirits, and inspired him with a new confidence and hope.

CHAPTER 31

LOVING CARE

News of the tragedy back in the hills soon spread up and down the river and the excitement became intense. The story passed from mouth to mouth, gaining in magnitude according to the fervid imagination of the narrator. Drum's heroism in capturing the Fenian leader was mentioned with almost bated breath. But the cause of the explosion remained a profound mystery. No one could solve the problem of Hettie's connection with the affair, nor how she had escaped while the men had been blown to pieces.

And added to this was the murder of Bill Daggert by his brother. It was terrible and startling, and the thought of Andy Dooner alone in the house with the dead man made the boldest shudder with fear. All longed for more news, and waited impatiently for some word from the city which was so slow in coming.

Many visited the Valley of The Jaws and looked fearfully upon the havoc that had been wrought by the explosion. The soldiers had been there before them and had interred the bodies, or portions of the bodies, of the men who had been killed. The visitors peered into the shack which the Fenians had inhabited, and there they found the pelts which had been stolen from Drum's cabin. They took care of these, not knowing to whom they belonged until later. They also found papers of an inflammatory nature, such as had been circulated throughout the parish.

The Daggert house was deserted, and all who entered it saw the mute evidence of the terrible struggle that had taken place. Many were the surmises as to the cause of the trouble, although no one could give any satisfactory explanation. Of the bags of gold they knew nothing, as the soldiers had carried them off to the city.

Everywhere the feeling of anger and insecurity ran high. No longer did any one doubt the Fenian menace. It had been right near and they had treated it all too lightly. Perhaps there were many of the enemy still in the country, with more concealed supplies of ammunition, awaiting a favorable opportunity to begin their work of destruction and death. This idea spread like wildfire, and all began to realise more than ever the great necessity of the entire country being united for defence against the threatened invasion. Those in favor of Confederation made the most of it, and in emphatic words declared that all the provinces should come together as one to prevent their utter ruin at the hands of the enemy. The opponents to union had really nothing to say, and even Squire Andrews remained silent. His old arguments seemed almost ridiculous now in the face of the stern reality. It was hard for such a man to change his views and to acknowledge that he had been in the wrong. But he was noble enough to admit it, and also to speak a word of praise for Drum Rowan.

"I guess there must be something in that boy, after all," he said to his wife one evening. "He is of good Bluenose stock, and you can't beat that when it comes to a pinch."

While all this excitement was stirring up the entire parish, Nell was watching by Hettie's side. Mrs. Brown had insisted that the injured girl should be taken to her house, as there was plenty of room, and she considered herself the very one most capable of looking after her.

"I ain't got chick nor child," she declared, "so why shouldn't I look after the poor dear? The Lord will provide some way fer me to live while I am 'tendin' to her."

Nell decided to help the widow all she could, and spent most of her time there. Much to her surprise, her father and mother made no objection when she suggested the idea to them.

"Do as you like, Nell," her mother had told her. "Mrs. Brown will need some one with her, and I really don't know who can go but you. I can manage to get along for awhile."

The neighbors did everything in their power to assist, and sent such an abundance of supplies that Mrs. Brown gasped in amazement as the goods came pouring in.

"I never saw anything like it!" she exclaimed. "I always knew the neighbors were kind, but I didn't fer a minute imagine they'd do all this. Why, there's enough stuff piled up in the store-house to last me fer years. It surely must be the Lord's doin's."

The widow was not much given to outward emotion, but she was forced to wipe her eyes with the corner of her apron,

and turn away her face.

"It is because you are doing such a good work in looking after Hettie," Nell explained. "The people's hearts are deeply stirred over the sad affair, and they feel that they cannot do enough for the poor unfortunate girl."

Hettie was a pitiable object when the soldiers carried her into the house. At once the women had set to work to do all they could for her. How badly she was injured they could not tell, but she was alive, and that was something. They washed off the dirt from her face, and as much as possible of the grime of the burnt powder, and then laid her tenderly in Mrs. Brown's spare-bed. And there the girl lay motionless while the widow endeavoured to force some brandy between her firm-set teeth.

"If only the dear would take a little it might revive her," she said. "Look how her hair and eyebrows are scorched. My! it's a wonder to me how she managed to escape when the men were killed. Oh, I hope the doctor will come soon."

The doctor, however, did not arrive until toward evening of the next day. He looked grave as he examined the girl, while the women watched him with anxious eyes.

"Is she hurt bad?" the widow at length inquired, impatient at his silence.

"I cannot tell, Mrs. Brown," was the quiet reply. "No bones are broken so far as I can tell. But there are serious bruises upon her body which must have been caused by the falling stones. She may recover for a time, at least, but she is such a frail creature that there is not much vitality in her body upon which to work. I shall, however, leave some medicine and come again as soon as I can. You women can do all that is necessary just now."

"Did you learn what caused the explosion, doctor?" Nell asked.

"I know nothing about it, Miss Andrews. The first I heard about the trouble was when Mr. Tilley sent for me and asked me to come up here. But the news of the double tragedy soon spread, and when I left there was much excitement everywhere. The discovery of the Fenian plot will greatly strengthen Mr. Tilley's cause on behalf of union. That young Rowan did a great piece of work in capturing that Fenian leader. He is Captain Rowan's son, so I believe."

"Indeed he is, and was riz right next door, too," Mrs. Brown proudly replied. "People got the habit of sayin' that he was no good. But I knew better an' stuck up fer Drum. He was always good to me, an' I'm glad he's showed folks what's in him."

This little piece of news was pleasant to Nell, and although she did not mention Drum to the widow, she thought of him a great deal, and longed for the time to come when she should see him again. As she sat alone by Hettie's side while Mrs. Brown was busy with the house work, she let her mind wander and pictured in imagination the capture of the enemy leader. What a great fight the two must have had, and in the struggle Drum had received the knife thrust in his arm. But he had won, and it was that which caused her heart to thrill with pride and thankfulness. And he had said nothing about it in the Daggert house, so the soldiers did not know of his wound until she mentioned it. That was just like him.

On the third day Hettie began to move a little, and to turn her head from side to side on the pillow. At times she moaned, as if in pain, and at last began to murmur something which could not be understood. She swallowed a little of the nourishing broth Mrs. Brown made for her, and to all appearance she was gaining in strength.

"If she would only open her eyes," the widow once remarked, as she stood watching her. "I am hopin' now that she will pull through, after all. If she does, what a story she'll have to tell."

Nell was on watch that night, and although there was little that she could do for the patient except administer some medicine and broth at stated intervals, she did not feel inclined to leave her. She busied herself with needle-work, and although her eyes became heavy at times and her head drooped, she always aroused herself to watchfulness.

It was toward morning, and the faint light of a new day was making itself dimly felt against the frosted window pane when Hettie opened her eyes and looked absently around the room. They rested at length upon Nell's face, but showed no sign of recognition.

"Hettie," Nell softly spoke as she bent over the bed, "don't you know me?"

But the patient continued to stare first at her and then at a picture on the wall opposite the bed. Presently into her eyes

came an expression of fear, and she lifted her head from the pillow.

"The cranes! the cranes!" she cried. "Don't ye see 'em, Drum? Keep 'way from The Jaws; it ain't safe thar."

She then remained silent for a while, and with closed eyes, breathed as if asleep. Nell watched her intently, hoping that a change for the better had come. When again Hettie opened her eyes, it was another vision she beheld.

"The powder! the powder!" she shrieked. "It's thar, ready to go off. I'll blow 'em all up. I'll, I'll—oh—!"

Mrs. Brown rushed into the room, and stood looking at the excited girl. She saw the look of fear upon her face, and stooped to comfort her.

"There, there, dear," she soothed. "Yer a'right here with us."

She placed her right hand upon the patient's forehead, and that touch brought immediate calmness. A faint smile appeared upon Hettie's face.

"That you, mum?" she asked. "I knowed ye come. I've been waitin' fer ye a long time. But the cranes! the cranes! Don't ye see 'em?"

She was like that all through the morning, repeating almost the same words. Nell tried to read a meaning in what she said, but try as she might, she could make no sense out of the rambling sentences. She wondered what the fear of the cranes had to do with Drum. She asked Mrs. Brown, but the widow could throw no light upon the problem.

"It's jist her wanderin' mind, I guess, Nellie. But I kin understand somewhat her words about Drum. She was fond of him, so, mebbe, what's she's kept to herself is comin' out now. That's often the way with people who are delirious. I've noticed it before in others."

This was a new idea to Nell, so she remained silent. It had never entered her mind that Hettie was fond of Drum. But as she thought it over she wondered if the girl's love had anything to do with the terrible tragedy in the Valley. Had Drum been in danger, and had Hettie risked her own life to save his? A new feeling akin to romance, stirred her heart, and upon this she allowed her imagination to play. And what had the cranes to do with it?

She was thinking of this the next night as she sat by the side of the bed. She had slept that afternoon, so was greatly refreshed. Hettie was quiet, lying motionless with her eyes closed. The needle-work had dropped upon Nell's lap, and she was gazing straight before her. She was aroused by a slight touch upon her arm, and glancing quickly around she saw Hettie looking up into her face. There was a new expression in the girl's eyes now, and she seemed quite rational.

"You frightened me, Hettie," Nell told her. "I didn't know you were awake."

"Didn't ye, Nell? I was watchin' ye, an' teched yer arm. Was ye dreamin'?"

"I believe I was."

"'Bout him?"

"Who?"

"Drum. But, tell me, Nell, is he safe?"

"Yes. He's in the city now."

"Oh, I'm glad the Fenyuns didn't kill 'im. I must have stopped 'em, a'right, when I threw the candle into the powder."

"Did you do that, Hettie?" Nell asked, shrinking back a little in horror.

"I did. Thar was nuthin' else to do. The Fenyuns was goin' to kill Drum when he came down the Valley to his trap, so I got 'em into the cave an' blew 'em up. Was 'em all killed? I hope 'em was."

"Yes, they all were, Hettie. And you were nearly killed, too."

"Was I? An' is that why I'm here? Where am I, anyway?"

"At Widow Brown's house. The soldiers carried you here."

"The so'gers! Did 'em come?"

A look of fear leaped into Hettie's eyes, and she made an effort to rise from the bed. But Nell pressed her gently back.

"Don't get excited, dear. The soldiers will not harm you."

"But did 'em git Dad an' Unc? They was turrible 'fraid of the so'gers."

"Don't worry about that now, Hettie. You must not talk any more, as you are very weak. I am going to get you something to eat."

Nell evaded answering Hettie's question about the soldiers. She did not wish to tell her of the tragedy that had been enacted at her home. It would only excite her, and might seriously affect her. She returned shortly, and when the invalid had taken some of the warm chicken soup, she wished to continue the conversation. But Nell would not let her.

"You must go to sleep and get a good rest," she told her. "I shall go away unless you mind what I say."

"But I can't sleep, Nell. I have a bad pain here," and Hettie placed her hand to her chest. "It's jist like a big weight crushin' me an' stoppin' me breath. I wonder what it kin be."

This was alarming news to Nell, and at first she was inclined to awaken Mrs. Brown. Upon second thought, however, she decided to apply hot cloths. When she had done this, the patient obtained considerable relief, and after a while dropped off to sleep.

Nell had something new to think about now. So Hettie had risked her own life to save Drum's! She looked fondly upon the girl lying on the bed. Then a sadness stole into her heart. Hettie had done that for the one she loved, and she was only the poor and ignorant daughter of Tom Daggert. She had been true to the last, while she, Nell Andrews, well brought up and knowing better, had cast Drum aside for the brief foolish attention of another man. How she hated herself for her ignoble action. She bowed her flushed face in her hands, and was not ashamed of the tears that rolled down her cheeks. Could she ever atone for what she had done? And how could she tell Drum of her heart-felt regret?

CHAPTER 32

AT REST

Many were the inquiries made about the injured girl, and often neighbors came to the door, while passing, for the latest information. All were much relieved when they heard that Hettie had regained consciousness and was able to talk a little. The interest in the tragedy had in no way abated, and all anxiously awaited for some word from the city. The "Morning News," which had a weekly edition for the people in the country, never seemed so long in coming. The mail carrier was slower than usual in making his way up the river. But when at last his horn sounded all work was dropped, and eager eyes scanned the pages of the newspaper he brought, while others stood impatiently by waiting for the slightest scrap of news.

Nell happened to be nearest the door when Jerry Trueman arrived at Mrs. Brown's house.

"Nuthin' but a paper t'day, me dear," he announced. "How's the sick gal?"

"A little better, I believe," Nell replied, as she unfolded the paper, and ran her eyes over the contents. "Oh!"

Her exclamation caused Jerry to smile, although she did not notice it. She was reading rapidly the account of the double tragedy, and the great credit given to Drum Rowan for his good work in capturing the Fenian leader. There was no explanation concerning the explosion of the powder, as that was shrouded in mystery, so the paper stated. Mention was made of the injured girl, but what part she had taken in the disaster was not known. The murder of Bill Daggert by his brother was enlarged upon, and Andy Dooner's story was recorded in full. Nell shuddered as she read the account, and her face was pale when she at length laid the paper aside.

"Wasn't it awful!" she exclaimed. "Just think of poor Andy being there when those two men were fighting!"

"It was turrible, Nellie, an' no mistake," Jerry agreed, as he stood by the stove warming himself. "But they haven't caught Tom Daggert yit. No one knows what's become of him."

"He will be caught, though, won't he, Jerry?"

"Mebbe he will, an' mebbe he won't. Tom's as cunnin' as a fox, an' it's no tellin' where he is by this time. He may be hidin' with the Fenyuns, fer all we know."

"Oh, do you think so? Surely there are no more of them in this province."

"That's what we don't know, me dear. An' that's what's stirrin' up the authorities in the city. The discovery of that plot out in the Valley has made 'em all mighty uneasy. But, there, I must be gittin' on me way. The Royal Mail can't be delayed, an' others are anxious to hear the news. The travellin's heavy, an' I ain't gittin' any younger. Oh, well, I s'pose it's only what we must expect."

He rose slowly from the chair upon which he had been sitting, and was stooping to lift the mail-bag from the floor, as Mrs. Brown bustled into the room.

"Yer not goin' yit, Jerry," she cried. "Ye must have a cup of tea an' something to eat before ye leave this house. Ye look about fagged out, poor man! Jist set down ag'in, an' I'll fix ye up a bite in a jiffy. The water's bilin', so it won't take long."

Jerry was only too willing to remain a while longer, notwithstanding his anxiety about the Royal Mail. As the widow busied herself at the stove, he related to her bits of news he had picked up on his way along the river. Nell, also, gave her a digest of the article she had just read in the paper.

"I'm glad that Drum's got some praise at last," Mrs. Brown declared. "How pleased the cap'n an' Margaret'll be when they see that. I'm jist dyin' to run over an' congratulate 'em both."

Nell was thinking of the same thing, and she had her mind made up to go over that very afternoon. But shortly after dinner her mother arrived, and although Nell was surprised, she was glad to see her.

"I wanted to see how you folks are making out," she explained, as she laid aside her wraps. "I can't stay long, as your pa

will be back shortly. We have all been so much interested in poor Hettie. How is she getting along?"

"Very well, indeed," Mrs. Brown replied. "She sleeps a great deal now, an' when she's awake she doesn't talk much, but jist lays there gazin' over at the winder or the wall. There's something on her mind that's troublin' her, I feel sartin."

"How is the pain in her chest?" Mrs. Andrews inquired. "I heard that she is troubled there, and it made me anxious."

"That doesn't seem to bother her now one bit. Anyway, she never complains about it. I really believe she'll pull through, an' I know the doctor'll be surprised when he sees her. But I'm afraid she'll git all upset when she hears about the murder. Wasn't it awful, Mrs. Andrews?"

"Indeed it was, and just think of Andy being there when Tom Daggert killed his brother! You've heard about it, I suppose?"

"Yes, it's all there in the paper which Jerry left this mornin'."

An hour later Squire Andrews called for his wife, and Nell noticed how unusually cheerful he appeared. She wondered what had caused the change, but she did not find out until she went over later to see Margaret. Both father and daughter were sitting, as was their custom, before the open fire as Nell entered. They gave her a hearty greeting, but there was an expression in Margaret's eyes and a peculiar eagerness in her voice which made Nell wonder. Not until she had told them about Hettie's condition, and the visit her mother had paid her that afternoon, did she learn what had taken place in the house on the hill.

"And while your mother was with you, your father was here with us," Margaret announced. Then seeing the look of surprise upon her visitor's face, she smiled.

"Yes," she continued, "he walked right in and congratulated us both for what Drum did out in the Valley. We had not seen the account in the paper, so were greatly surprised."

"We were, dear, indeed we were," the captain agreed. "The Squire shook hands with me just like he used to do years ago. He told me how proud he was of my boy, and asked my forgiveness for the way he had misjudged Drummond."

"Father did that!" Nell exclaimed. She could hardly believe that she had heard aright, knowing him as well as she did.

"Yes, Nellie, it's true. I never expected such a thing from Squire Andrews."

The captain's eyes were misty, and Nell was forced to turn away her face to hide her own emotion. But in her heart there was a great happiness.

"And your father and I had a fine chat," the captain continued. "We see eye to eye now about this Confederation scheme. He realises as I do that the provinces must be united in order to be strong. We both believe that this Fenian scare will be the great fighting-slogan for Tilley. We talked it all over, and although he was here nearly an hour it seemed like only a few minutes. And I never thought of my foot at all, and didn't have the least twinge of my old pain."

Margaret laughed at her father's enthusiasm, and told him that he was renewing his youth, and would be out again in a few days.

"I certainly shall, dear, if such pleasant surprises continue," he replied. "I feel better to-day than I have for a long time."

Nell remained for a while with the Rowans, and when she left she walked along the road in a most thoughtful mood. Her heart was light, and she felt like singing a hymn of praise. So much had happened in a short time that she was quite bewildered. What she had considered almost impossible had come to pass, and her father and the captain were friends once more. It seemed too good to be true, and she longed to see Drum to tell him the wonderful news. She thought much of him, and wondered when he would be home again. The longer he was away from her the more she missed him, and the greater a hero did he appear to her. She wished, too, in some way to make up for her past neglect and foolishness.

She was thus thinking as she reached the house. No sooner had she entered than she heard Mrs. Brown calling to her. Surprised at the excited note in the widow's voice, she hurried upstairs, and paused at the door of the little room where Hettie was lying. At once she noticed a change in the girl's condition, for she was breathing with difficulty, and her right hand was pressed upon her breast.

"It came upon her all of a sudden," the widow whispered. "I heard her moanin', an' when I came into the room she looked jist like she does now. Oh, I wish the doctor would come!"

"Can't we do something to relieve her?" Nell asked.

"There's nuthin' that I know of. I've put hot cloths on her chest, but they don't seem to do any good. She's sufferin, I know, by the look on her face, poor dear."

Nell forgot everything else now in her attention to the invalid. When she was not applying hot applications, she held her hands, and sometimes spoke words of comfort and cheer. Hettie made no complaint, but often she turned her eyes full upon Nell's face. She said nothing, however, until that evening when Mrs. Brown was downstairs and the two were alone. Nell felt the girl's hand press hers more firmly, and noticed that her lips were moving.

"What is it dear?" she asked.

"Yer good to me, Nell," Hettie whispered. "Yer jist like me own mother."

"And why shouldn't I be good to you, Hettie? I want you to get better."

"I never will, Nell. But thar's somethin' I want to tell ye afore I go. Ye must be good to Drum. He loves ye better'n anyone else in the world."

"Hush, hush, dear, don't talk that way," Nell pleaded, while tears came into her eyes. "I can't bear it. You must get better."

"But I must talk, Nell," the girl insisted in a firmer voice. "I must tell ye what's on me mind. Take care of Drum. He never loved me, but he loves you. Didn't I see him the night ye walked home with that lawyer feller? He skated up the river, an' stood watchin' yer house fer a long time."

"He did!"

"Yep, he done that, a'right. An' when he was choppin' out in the woods, I offen saw him standin' lookin' off to yer place. Oh, I knew he was thinkin' 'bout you an' not me."

Here Hettie paused and remained silent for a few minutes. But for her laboured breathing no sound was heard in the room. At length she aroused a little, and a sad smile overspread her face.

"I was thinkin' of mum, Nell," she explained. "I know she's waitin' fer me. She was a good woman, an' I'm sure she's in Heaven. D'ye think I'll go thar, too, Nell?"

"I am sure you will, Hettie, for you are a good girl."

"But I'm not, Nell. I'm bad through an' through, an' I've done sich awful things. Jist think of the lies I've told, an' how I helped them Fenyuns to scatter their dirty papers 'long the road."

"But the Lord will forgive you, Hettie."

"D'ye think he will, Nell? Will Him fergive a bad girl like me?"

"I am sure He will, for He has promised to forgive all who ask Him."

"An' does that mean me, Hettie Daggert, the wild, bad girl?"

"Yes, yes, you, too."

Nell was sobbing now, and she could hardly control herself, so deeply was she affected.

"Don't take on so, Nell. I don't want to make ye feel bad. But will ye ax the Good Lord to fergive Hettie Daggert fer the bad she's done? I don't know what to say meself, fer I only know some words of a lettlet prayer me mum learned me."

"And what is that?"

"Now I lay me down to sleep.' I used to say it."

"I know it, Hettie, so suppose we say it together."

"A'right, Nell. You go ahead, an' 'll try to foller."

In a choking voice, Nell began:

"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

Hettie lay very still after this. Only her lips moved, and she murmured softly, "I pray the Lord me soul to take."

Then her eyes opened wide, and a radiant smile overspread her pinched face. Suddenly she lifted her hands, looked upwards, and with the glad cry of "Mum, I'm comin'," her arms dropped, and Hettie Daggert was at rest.

CHAPTER 33

ANDY COMES BACK

The neighbours were much affected by Hettie's death. They did everything in their power and made all arrangements for the funeral. They called at the house, and more assistance was offered than Mrs. Brown could accept.

"I never saw anything like it," she confided to Nell the next day during a lull in the coming of visitors. "Everyone feels so sorry and worked up over the poor girl's death. An' no wonder, considerin' the way she died."

"What can have happened to her father," Nell replied. "We have had no word of him at all. Do you suppose he will grieve about Hettie when he hears of her death?"

"H'm, not that thing," the widow sniffed. "He's too much of a brute to have any feelin's. Most likely he's so anxious jist now about savin' his own measely carcass that he can't think of nuthin' else."

"Isn't it a pity that the Daggerts had anything to do with the Fenians, and thus bring so much trouble upon an innocent girl?"

"It sartinly is, Nellie. But that's always the way with the wicked, so I've noticed. If they themselves were the only ones to suffer, it would not be so bad. But they generlly bring the house down on top of them that had nuthin' really to do with their rascality. Now, that poor little lamb layin' there was as pure an' harmless as a baby."

"She was much like a child, Mrs. Brown, and it's a surprise to me how she remained so good through all her trials and the bad example that was set her."

Another caller at the door interrupted the conversation, but as the two sat at supper that night, they again referred to the subject.

"Mebbe it's jist as well that Hettie's gone," the widow began. "If she had pulled through this trouble, she'd been always weak. Now she's at rest. Life, after all, isn't sich a great luxury that we should want to cling to it so much."

"But we do cling to it, for all that," Nell reminded. "I have had a good time so far, any way. Only lately have I come to see its more serious side."

"I know it, Nellie, I know it. You were always happy an' free from care. An' yer bound to be happy still. It's yer nature to be bright an' cheery. Drum'll come back ag'in, so don't fret."

"How do you know I am fretting?" Nell asked in surprise. "What makes you think that Drum means anything to me?"

"Haven't I got eyes in me head, me dear? What did the Lord put 'em there fer if not to see? I know that Drum Rowan loves you, an' that you love him, so there. Ye can't deny it. An' if ye do, yer blushes give ye dead away."

Nell did not feel annoyed at these words, spoken in such a homely and friendly manner. In fact, she was glad that some one understood the deep longing of her heart, and that she could talk with Mrs. Brown about Drum and not feel embarrassed. Andy Dooner was the only other person in whom she could safely confide, but he was now far away, and she did want to speak to some one.

"Drum'll make good, Nellie," the widow continued. "I'm glad ye didn't take up with that lawyer feller from the city. You wouldn't be happy with him."

"And so you knew about my foolishness, Mrs. Brown?"

"Sure I knew. An' so did every one else in the parish. But I told 'em not to set too much stock of the silly ways of a girl who lost her head fer a time. I knew ye too well, me dear, to believe that yer nonsense would last long. That young snipper-snapper from the city would make no suitable husband fer a girl like you."

"You were quite right," Nell agreed, as she rose from the table, and began to clear away the dishes. "I have little respect for a man who has no real life in him. I wish you could have seen him the night we walked home together. He was about

done out when we reached the house. I suppose it was wrong for me to do what I did, but I could not resist the temptation. It was really funny to see him puffing and struggling to keep up with me."

"I heard about it, though, Nellie, an' I wish I'd been there. But here's another caller. Go to the door, will ye?"

Before Nell could comply with this request, the door was pushed open and Andy Dooner entered. Without a word, he walked slowly into the room, and sank down upon the nearest chair.

"Why, what's the matter, Andy?" Nell asked, bending over him. "Are you sick?"

"No, not sick, but jist played out," was the feeble response. "I ain't as young as I used to be."

Quickly Mrs. Brown poured out a cup of tea and handed it to the fatigued visitor.

"Drink this, ye poor man," she ordered. "An' eat one of these biscuits. Ye'll feel better in a short time. Have ye jist come from the city?"

"I have, Mrs. Brown. I got a lift part of the way, an' walked the rest. I thought I'd never git here. So the poor gal's gone, has she?"

"She went yesterday, Andy. The funeral'll be to-morrow."

"So I heered, an' that's why I wanted to be here on time. My! my! many turrible things have happened since the last time I was here. I never expected to be mixed up with sich doin's at my time of life. But, then, one never knows what's ahead on him."

He drank two cups of tea, and when he had finished the third biscuit, he looked and felt much refreshed.

"Guess I'll stretch out on yer sofy fer a while, Mrs. Brown," he said. "It'll rest me up a bit."

"Yes, do, Andy, an' make yerself comfortable. Nell, you take off the poor man's boots, while I go an' git a soft pillow. That old one's too hard."

"My! it's great to have women wait on me," Andy murmured, when he was at last resting to his satisfaction. "I've been through sich deep waters of late that this is 'most like Heaven."

"Tell us about it all," Nell requested, sitting down by his side. "We are anxious to hear everything."

"Specially 'bout Drum, eh? Well, he's a'right, an' lookin' fitter than ever. I'm sartinly proud of what he done, an' so is Mr. Tilley. Why, he invited Drum an' me up to his house, an' axed us no end of questions."

"He did!" Mrs. Brown exclaimed. "Bless his heart! He's a real man, fer sure, an' understands jist what to do. He was from the country himself an' is jist like one of us. He doesn't put on no high-falutin' airs."

"Yer right, Mrs. Brown, yer sartinly are. He was as nice to us as if we'd been dooks or princes. He was nat'rel an' easy-like, an' how his eyes did shine when Drum told how he captured that Fenyun leader, an' the awful fight they had in the snow. 'I'd like to have seen it,' sez he. 'But I feel sorry fer the poor gal that got hurt,' an' when he said that I saw that his eyes were misty. He'll feel bad when he hears she's dead."

"Is there any word about her father?" Nell asked.

"Not a whimper, Nellie. Oh, that was a turrible night, an' I thought I'd never live to see mornin'. With the storm ragin' outside, an' them two brutes fightin' like mad, it was enough to make any man go clean daft. An' I guess I was fer a time until Drum arrived with Hettie, an' that brought me to me senses a little. I couldn't do nuthin' but stand by the side of Bill an' watch him, listenin' all the time fer Tom to come back. But he didn't come, an' I'm sartin now that he won't."

"But the soldiers will get him, will they not, Andy?"

"Mebbe they will an' mebbe they won't. Tom is a cunnin' critter, fer all he's sich a divil. But if they do git him, they'll make short work of him, that's sure."

"Did ye tell Mr. Tilley all about yer experience?" Mrs. Brown asked.

"I sartinly did, an' he was turrible int'rested. An' when I told him about the gold that them skunks had got from the Fenyuns, he jumped right to his feet in astonishment. I never saw him so much worked up afore. He made me tell the story all over ag'in."

"Did they have the gold hidden in their house?" Nell asked in surprise.

"Yes, right near the fire-place, in the floor, a hole on each side. It was the gold that made all the trouble."

"Well, I never heard of sich a thing in all me born life!" Mrs. Brown exclaimed. "An' to think that you, poor man, should have been in that awful racket."

"It was bad, Mrs. Brown, an' no mistake. Mr. Tilley shook me by the hand, an' there was only one thing lackin' to make that little meetin' of ours perfect."

"What was that?" Nell inquired.

"Jist a drop of somethin', me dear, a glass of good Old Jamacy, fer instance. That would have put new life into me. That's all I have ag'inst Mr. Tilley. He's dead set ag'inst liquor."

"Indeed he is," Mrs. Brown declared. "An' I wish there were more like him. He's the leader of the Temp'rance Movement that's goin' t' wipe out all the vile stuff that turns men's heads an' that's ruinin' the country. I do admire Mr. Tilley fer the stand he's taken. He doesn't tech liquor himself, an' what's more, he won't allow it in his own house, so I hear."

"So I found out, Mrs. Brown. But I kin fergive him fer all that, 'cause of the way he treated Drum an' me. An' he told us that what we'd done was goin' to carry Confederation fer sure. 'The hull province'll be so worked up over this,' sez he, 'that the people can't do nuthin' else but vote fer union. This Fenyun scare'll be our fightin'-slogan, an' we'll snow our opponents under,' sez he, an' he brought his fist down upon the table with a bang. My! there was fire in his eyes when he said an' done that. I wish ye could have seen him jist then."

"Do you really think that the discovery of that Fenian plot will make any difference in the coming election?" Nell asked.

"Mr. Tilley is sartin that it will, Nellie, an' he ought to know if any one does. He told us that word was even then comin' in from all parts of the country favorin' union. The city has been mighty worked up ever since we took down the news of the tragedy. The so'gers are drillin' like mad, an' the streets are full of 'em marchin' to an' fro. More young men are jinin' up every day, an' they are keen fer a fight."

"Dear me! I hope it won't lead to war with the United States," Mrs. Brown exclaimed. "That would be turrible."

"No, this won't lead to no war, Mrs. Brown. The United States won't let them Fenyuns git beyond the Border, mark my word."

"If that is so, what is the sense of the soldiers getting ready to fight?" Nell questioned.

"Jist as a matter of precaution, me dear. Ye kin never tell how fer them Fenyuns may git afore the United States Government steps in. Some of 'em may slip across the Border an' try to do harm. But don't ye worry. Uncle Sam'll keep his hand an' eye upon them restless critters an' stop 'em good an' quick. I'd like to be there to see the fun when them scalywags are gittin' rounded up an' marched home like a bunch of runaway youngsters. But Drum'll tell us all about it when he comes home."

"What! has Drum joined up, too?" Nell asked in surprise.

"Sure. Didn't I tell ye about it? No? Well, that's queer. Nuthin' could keep him back when he saw the so'gers marchin' along the streets, an' heard 'em singin' 'Fer away from poor Janette.' It was more'n he could stand, so he jined up that very day. An' a fine lookin' so'ger he makes, too, fer I seen him in his uniform jist afore I left the city."

Further conversation on this subject was prevented by the arrival of several neighbours to spend the evening, and to "keep the women company," so they said. Andy had no more chance to talk to Nell about Drum, but he managed to slip a letter into her hand while Mrs. Brown was in the parlour showing the visitors the dead girl.

"It's from Drum," he explained. "He axed me to give it to ye on the sly, but it's been a mighty hard job to do it here with some one allus around. Hide it away quick, fer they're comin' back."

Nell did as she was bidden, and with a flushed face thrust the letter into a fold of her dress just over her heart.

"Jist the place fer it," Andy mused to himself as he watched her. "My! I like to see her when she looks like that. It's no wonder Drum's daft over her. I would be, too, if I was young ag'in. It would take more'n the smartest lawyer from the city to git ahead of me, by jingo, if it wouldn't!"

CHAPTER 34

THE ROUND-UP

Winter at last gave way slowly to spring. The cold days and the rough storms were forgotten in the renewal of life which appeared on all sides. But the months of uncertainty and fear could not be dismissed from the people's minds, and now with the warmer weather the menace of the threatened invasion increased. The enemy was concentrating along the Border, and the attack might take place at any time. All throughout the province were greatly stirred, especially those living nearest to the danger-line. In the city there was much activity of preparation, and a thousand men marched to the frontier. News of the movement of the soldiers soon spread along the river, and Jerry, the mail-courier, was the object of considerable interest as he made his rounds. He stopped for dinner one day at the Andrews', and regaled the family with bits of information he had picked up in the city.

"I saw the so'gers go," he told them, "an' a fine lookin' lot of men they were, too. There were three battalions of the New Brunswick Regiment of Artillery, an' seven companies of the Saint John Volunteer Battalion. Others have gone, too, from Carleton an' Charlotte Counties, so I heard. I saw 'em marchin' along the street, an' the band was playin',

'Thou art goin' fer away
Fer away from poor Janette.'"

"As I watched 'em swingin' along, I thought that mebbe a good many of 'em would never come back ag'in to their poor Janettes. Them Fenyuns are reg'ler divils, so I understand, an' used to fightin'. They were in the Civil War, an' have had lots of experience. They're jist spilin' fer a fight, an' have a new kind of gun that kin shoot quicker'n ye kin wink. Did ye hear about the one that Drum Rowan took from that Fenyun leader?"

"We did," the squire replied. "And I have been much interested in it."

"Well, it's that kind the Fenyuns have, so I hear. I wonder what our men kin do with their old muzzle-loaders ag'inst sich weapons. I'm afraid they won't have much of a chance fer their lives."

"But are there not British war vessels near, Jerry? I heard there were, and that they were even at the mouth of the St. Croix. The sailors will help in the fight, will they not?"

"Oh, yes, the war vessels are there, a'right, an' the sailors'll take a hand, never fear. But them boats can't go fer inland, an' the Fenyuns are cunnin' enough to keep out of their way. They'll cross the Border furdur up."

Nell listened to every word and longed to ask Jerry if he had seen Drum. But she hesitated, afraid that she might betray the deep feelings of her heart. She knew, however, that Drum had gone to the Border, and when the fight began he would be sure to be in the thick of it. She had the letter from him which Andy had delivered, and she had read it over several times. It did not contain many words, and, in fact, it was mostly about Hettie. But Nell read between the lines, and built a fairy realm all her own. She had not seen Margaret for some time, but she knew that the captain was improving. This was due not only to his pride over Drum's work in capturing the Fenian leader, but to the kindness of the neighbours. They had united, cut the cordwood, hauled it to the shore, and then loaded it on the boat. This touched the captain's heart more than anything else, and when he learned that Squire Andrews was the chief mover in the undertaking, his eyes filled with tears.

"I never imagined they would do such a thing," he remarked to his daughter one evening as they sat alone together. "Here, I have been denouncing them for months, and now look how they have repaid me good for evil. And to think that it was the squire, of all men, who put them up to it."

Nell knew what was going on, and her heart rejoiced at the change that had come over her father. He was on good terms with the captain, but would he be friendly to Drum should he return? She thought of all this as she made her way that afternoon down to the graveyard near the church. Since spring it had been her custom to go each week to Hettie's grave, and when the flowers were in bloom she planned to keep the little mound well covered with as many early blossoms as she could find. Something seemed to draw her to that secluded spot among the trees, and she would stand for some time looking thoughtfully down upon the grave. It was the last resting-place of the brave girl who had given her life to save the man she loved. But for her deed, Drum might have been killed by the Fenians. And suppose Drum had died! Her heart

beat fast at the thought, and her steps quickened. How could she then ever forgive herself for her indifference to his love? She knew his reason for staying away from the parties. He did not wish to be near her if she did not care for him. And, perhaps, that was the reason why he had gone to his traps that night of the storm instead of being at Mrs. Brown's. And it was her own fault that he had remained away.

Nell was in sight of the graveyard when she saw a number of men coming across the field up from the shore. She recognised them as neighbours, among whom was Abe Hawker. They were talking excitedly to one another, and when Abe saw Nell, he called to her to wait.

"What is the matter?" she asked, as the men drew near.

"We've found him," Abe pantingly replied. "He's layin' down thar among the bushes."

"Who is it?" Nell inquired, much startled.

"Tom Daggert, of course. We found his body as we were sackin' off some logs. He must have been layin' thar fer some time. Drowned, I guess, the night of the storm an' the murder."

Nell's face was very white, and she was trembling with excitement.

"Yep, Tom must have tried to cross the river that night an' wandered into an air-hole," Abe continued. "Anyway, thar he is, jist where the river threw him out."

"Oh, isn't it terrible!" Nell exclaimed.

"Served the brute right fer helpin' the Fenyuns an' then killin' his brother," Abe growled. "By jolly! I wish the skunk had lived a while longer so's we could have got our hands upon him."

Nell was in no mood for further conversation. The thought of Tom Daggert's body lying down on the shore sickened her. She turned and walked slowly back home. She had now no inclination to visit the graveyard. A new and uncanny feeling possessed her soul. How strange it was that Tom's body should be lying so close to Hettie's grave. Perhaps something more than the vagary of the tide had caused it to be cast up there. Anyway, it brought to her mind the idea of the certain retribution which must surely fall upon the wicked. She had often heard the parson speak about this in his sermons, but never until lately had she thought much about it. It was different now, however. And where was Seth Sloan? She had heard about his contemptible assistance of the Fenians, and she wondered what had become of him. No one knew, and he had disappeared as mysteriously as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

The discovery of Tom Daggert's body caused intense excitement in the parish, and a large crowd attended the funeral. Nell did not go, but she heard all about it from her father. The parson refused to allow him to be buried in consecrated ground, and would not read the regular Burial Service, but had substituted several prayers, full of warning to unrepentent sinners.

"The parson did right," the squire declared. "How could he say 'In sure and certain hope' about such a man as Tom Daggert who murdered his brother and betrayed his country to the Fenians? I wish you could have heard the sermon the parson gave. It sent cold chills through me."

This excitement soon subsided, however, at the crisis which was now reached in connection with the Fenian raid. All sorts of rumors spread throughout the parish, most of them more and more magnified the farther they travelled. But that the enemy was on the march to the Border was certain, for the Morning News told of the advance, as well as the positions the various battalions had taken to meet the invasion. Days passed in terrible tension for the waiting ones. The latest word told of a strong force of Fenians that had gathered at Eastport and Calais ready for the blow. It was the spear-point, so it was believed, that would enter the province and force its way to the very heart of the country. Would the local soldiers be able to drive them back, or would they be mowed down like grass before the new guns in the hands of the enemy?

Nell thought a great deal about Drum during this time of anxiety. How she longed to know how he was faring. Although she was concerned about her country's welfare, she felt that little would really matter to her should the man she loved be killed. This disturbing thought was with her day and night. Often she looked down the road, and every person appearing caused her to start with apprehension lest he should be the bearer of ill tidings. In every house all the available weapons

were ready in case of sudden need. Men talked and planned what they would do should the enemy break through and march inland. Little work was carried on, and the store was daily filled with men, alert and in readiness for any emergency.

At last the news arrived. How it came no one could really tell. It passed from house to house, until all knew and breathed deep and fervent sighs of relief. The enemy had gathered at the Border towns under the direction of General Dorian Killian. Here they drilled and awaited the arrival of a vessel they had chartered at New York loaded with arms and ammunition. And while the filibusters gathered there, strong forces of volunteers were posted along the New Brunswick frontier on the opposite side of the river, prepared for action. It was a time of great tension, and while all waited not knowing what to expect, three British war vessels steamed quietly into the St. Croix River, ready for action. These vessels greatly relieved the severe strain, but the presence of a couple of American gunboats not far away looked ominous to the soldiers lining the shore. They could not understand the meaning of what was taking place, and they wondered why the British vessels allowed the gun boats to approach so close. The reason, however, became apparent when the vessel bearing the arms and ammunition from New York hove in sight. At once the two gun boats swung into action, promptly took charge of the visitor and seized her cargo.

The Fenians were stricken with consternation at this unexpected act on the part of the United States' Government. Having no munitions of warfare, they were helpless. And to add to their humility, General Meade, with a battalion of soldiers, arrived at Eastport with orders to see that a breach of the Neutrality Act was not committed. This promptness brought a sudden termination to the Fenian menace along the New Brunswick boundary line, and the great suspense was relieved.

Such was the news that drifted up the river and brought rejoicing into every home. That very night the men celebrated the event by building a huge bon-fire close to the river in front of the store, around which they fired off guns, clanged cow-bells, and beat tin pans and kettles to their hearts' content. Several indulged too freely in the rum that was passed around, and several fights took place among the most pugnacious. But little attention was paid to the scrappers. The rejoicing was too intense, and the relief from the dread of invasion too great to be marred by a few men who made fools of themselves.

CHAPTER 35

VICTORY

It was a bright day and all nature was putting on her dress of living green. The trees were awaking to newness of life, and the verdant grass was showing on hillside and valley. Nell stood at the kitchen window and looked out upon the pleasant scene. Her eyes were turned down the road as if expecting some one from that direction. Weeks had passed since the settling of the Fenian trouble, and she wondered if the troops had yet returned to the city. She had received no further word from Drum, although several days before Margaret had told her that he was still at the Border. Would he come right home? she asked herself, and would he be anxious to see her? Perhaps the new excitement as a soldier had given him a change of heart, and he had put her from his mind altogether. She found life very tiresome and humdrum these beautiful days, with the social pleasures of the winter over, and with the great out-of-doors appealing to her so strongly. There was so much work to be done in the house that she had little time for anything else. Life on a farm was hard, anyway, but in the spring of the year the routine was more wearing than ever. She was naturally of a buoyant disposition and took her tasks in good part as all in the day's work. But this morning an unusual depression weighed upon her. There seemed nothing in store for her but the continuous round of cooking, ironing, washing and scrubbing to which she had been accustomed for years. What had she to look forward to, anyway? She knew that she had only herself to blame for treating so lightly the love of the one man in the whole world who could bring a new spirit and a sweet joy into the deadly monotony of her existence. She felt that she could not endure it much longer.

And as she stood there, she caught sight of a man coming slowly along the road. Her heart beat fast at first, as she thought it might be Drum. But in another minute she recognised the traveller as Andy Dooner. As he drew nearer, she saw that he was carrying something under his arm. She had the door wide open by the time he reached the house, and gave him a hearty welcome.

"Come right in," she invited. "You look tired out."

"An' I feel jist as I look," Andy replied, as he followed her into the room and sat down upon a chair. "Jist lay that on the table will ye, me dear? It's me fiddle, an' a beauty it is, too."

"A new one?" Nell asked, as she took the box in her hands and laid it carefully upon the table. "How you must miss your old one."

"I sartinly do, Nellie. But this'll last me the rest of me life, an' it'll allus remind me of the good man who gave it to me. Ye can't guess who it was?"

Andy chuckled as he watched the interested light in the girl's eyes, as she vainly turned over in her mind who the donor might be.

"Ah, I knew ye'd never guess, fer ye'd never think of Mr. Tilley. Yes, that's who it was, an' sez he to me, sez he, 'Mr. Dooner, I know all about ye, an' how yer fiddle was broke the night ye was with them Daggert rascals. I've sent fer ye, an' I want ye to accept this fiddle from me as a slight token of my 'preciation.' Them's the exact livin' words, Nellie. 'A slight token of 'preciation.' Jist imagine sich a great man sayin' that to an old cat-whipper like me!"

"I think it was very nice and generous of him," Nell replied. "But did he really send for you?"

"He sartinly did, an' I went all the way to the city on purpose havin' no idea what he wanted me fer. I've jist got back, so here I be all fagged out an' hungry as a bear. I came up on the mornin' boat an' walked from the wharf."

"Why, indeed, you must be hungry, you poor man. I shall give you something to eat at once. It was stupid of me not to think of it before. I should have known that men are always hungry. I know from experience."

"Yer right, Nellie. The Lord made us that way, I guess. An' there'll be some one else comin' along some fine day with an appetite as big as mine, if I'm not much mistaken. Ye want to git ready fer him."

Andy's eyes twinkled as he saw the sudden flush that mantled Nell's cheeks at these words. He noticed, too, her trim figure and the graceful poise of her head, with her wealth of dark hair so neatly combed. Her step was quick and light as she prepared his meal.

"I wish t'goodness I wasn't so old an' wrinkled," he mused aloud. "But I'd like to be in that young man's shoes who's comin' one of these fine days. My! wouldn't life be worth livin' to have sich a lass waitin' on me all the time. I wouldn't git tired then, and as fer bein' hungry, I'd never think about it, fer the sight of yer sweet face would be feast enough, an'—"

"There, there, you old blarney, I'll not give you a bite to eat if you talk any more such nonsense," Nell declared, her face now scarlet. "Do you think I have time to listen to such foolishness? I want to hear some news. Tell me about the election. Is Mr. Tilley going to win?"

"Sure he's goin' to win. The hull province is with him now an' he'll carry everything before him. I axed him about it, an' ye should have seen his face light up. 'Mr. Dooner,' sez he, 'we're sartin' of victory. It's a righteous cause, an' the Lord is with us. Nuthin' kin keep this great land from bein' united. An' I've found a name fer it,' sez he, reachin' out his hand an' pickin' up a book from off the table. 'Listen to this,' sez he, 'it's right here in the words of Holy Writ, where it sez that the Lord's dominion shall be from sea to sea. That means us, Mr. Dooner,' sez he, 'and that's the name fer our country, the Dominion of Canada.' An' then he told me a hull lot more, how the provinces would be united, all under one flag, an' all loyal to the good Queen, God bless her!"

"Did he say anything about the Fenian raid?" Nell asked. "Was he pleased at the way it was ended?"

"I was jist comin' to that, Nellie, when ye axed the question. He sartinly did speak about it. An' I wish, me dear, ye could have seen the wonderful light in his eyes when he referred to the roundin' up of them rascals at Eastport. 'Jist think of them English battle ships layin' there at the mouth of the St. Croix, waitin' an' watchin',' sez he. 'An' not fer off were the United States gunboats. They were the signs of two great powers,' sez he, 'an' they were not there to fight each other, not on yer life. They were there to keep peace. Then when that rebel vessel hove in sight, loaded with arms an' ammunition, them gun boats took it in charge. Uncle Sam wasn't goin' to allow a bunch of scalywags to start a war with Old England,' sez he. 'He nipped the plot in the bud, an' sent the scamps home, that's what he done. I'm mighty proud of the United States,' sez Mr. Tilley, 'fer the prompt way she acted, an' I pray the Lord that sich a spirit of good will an' common sense will allus keep England an' the United States at peace with each other. We're of one blood an' one speech,' sez he, 'an' I trust that these two great countries will allus lay side by side in peace like two infants in one cradle.' That's the gist of what he said, an' I felt prouder of him than ever fer his noble words. An' 'Amen,' sez I when he was through. 'Mr. Tilley, yer a good man, an' the Lord has riz ye up fer this time of need to be our leader.' 'Thank ye, Mr. Dooner,' sez he, an' there were tears in his eyes as he reached out an' gripped me by the hand. I tell ye, Nellie, that was the greatest moment of me hull life, an' I'll remember it to me dyin' day."

Andy paused and looked up at Nell, who was watching him with much interest, and listening intently to every word he uttered.

"Nellie, me dear, I wish ye could have heard the nice things Mr. Tilley said about Drum Rowan. 'He's a fine young man,' sez he, an' I agreed with him. 'I want to see him ag'in,' sez he. 'I'll bring him to ye, Mr. Tilley,' sez I, 'jist as soon as he comes back from the Border.' An' I did, Nellie. I waited fer him, an' when I seen him marchin' along with the rest of the so'gers, I follered right down to the Barracks. When they were disbanded, I rushed up to Drum. My! but he was glad to see me, an' nearly shook me hand off. But what d'ye think he axed me fust of all?"

"About his father and sister, I suppose," Nell replied.

"Ho, ho! yer wrong there. He axed about you, me dear."

"He did!"

"Yes, that's the Gospel truth. The fust question he put to me as we walked along the street was about you. 'How is Nell?' sez he, an' when I told him that Nellie Andrews was pinin' fer the sight of him, he stopped me right there in the street an' stared me straight in the eyes. 'Are ye makin' fun of me, Andy?' sez he. Then when I told him that I wasn't he seemed sorter dazed like, an' a wonderful look came into his eyes."

"Surely you didn't tell him that about me, Andy!" Nell exclaimed, abashed.

"I did, me dear, an' it was the truth, too. I knew ye was pinin' fer the sight of that boy, an' told him that he'd better hustle home to the finest gal on earth that was waitin' fer him. There, now, don't git all flustered an' worked up, Nellie. We've

talked about Drum before, so I know purty much what's in yer heart. It's only nat'rel, an' I was like that once meself. Yes, Drum was mighty sot up when I told him ye'd pitched that lawyer feller fer good, an' the coast was all clear an' the sailin' fine. An' I don't blame him fer his joy. I wish—But here comes yer ma."

The days that followed Andy's visit were hopeful ones to Nell. It was a joy beyond words for her to know that Drum's first question to the old shoemaker was about her. And yet mingled with this feeling was a sense of uneasiness. How could she meet Drum without embarrassment after the way she had treated him? What should she say? Would it be necessary to explain? But, perhaps, he would not question her about the lawyer. She was much more interested in such thoughts and the dreams which came to her than she was about the elections which were then taking place throughout the province. Hardly anything else was talked about in her own home during this momentous time. Neighbours dropped in during the evenings, bringing the latest scraps of news, and discussed for hours the prospect of union winning the day. Favourable reports had already been heard from several counties, and all had gone strong for Tilley and his Confederation scheme. The opposition was being swamped on every side, and when at last it became known beyond all doubt that Confederation had carried, it was decided to celebrate the victory in a right proper manner. This was to be in the nature of a huge bon-fire in front of the store, close to the river where there was an abundance of drift-wood. It was to exceed in greatness the affair held over the Fenian defeat. It was to be the most wonderful ever known in the Parish, in keeping with the importance of the occasion.

Nell listened somewhat indifferently to all that was said concerning the celebration. She knew that it would be a noisy affair, and that much liquor would be drunk, followed, no doubt, as in the past, by considerable fighting. But she was naturally curious to see the bon-fire from a safe distance, to hear the firing of guns, the sound of horns, the cheers, and the singing of the National Anthem.

When supper was over, on the evening of the great event, Nell walked slowly down the road toward the graveyard. She had not been there for several days, and a longing was upon her now to visit again the spot where Hettie was lying. From here she would see the bon-fire, providing it was not too late in being lighted. She did not wish to go any closer to the store, as mostly men would be gathered there.

It was a beautiful evening, calm and mild. The river was like a mirror, and the trees along the shore were reflected in the clear depths. Nell's heart was stirred at the peace surrounding her, and as she stood by Hettie's grave she mused upon the quietness of the place with only the birds chirping in the trees around her. She laid upon the mound a few flowers she had gathered along the way, and then stood very still, with her hands clasped before her, thinking of the girl lying there, and the events that had led to her death. What a contrast between the peace of this evening and the wild night when Hettie had risked all to save the man she loved. A slight tremor shook her body as she thought of the girl's desperate action in blowing up the powder. Nell wondered if she herself would have had so much courage. Would her own love have endured such a terrible test as that?

A step startled her from her reverie, and glancing quickly around, what was her surprise to see Drum Rowan coming swiftly toward her. Her face turned suddenly pale, followed instantly by a rush of rich blood to her cheeks, so great was her emotion. But Drum did not hesitate. He came right up to the opposite side of the grave and looked straight into her eyes.

"Is it true what Andy told me?" he abruptly asked.

"What do you mean, Drum?" Nell faltered.

"That you were waiting for me, and longing to see me again?"

"Yes, it was true."

Nell's voice was very low, but it was all that Drum needed. Impetuously he stretched out his arms, and there across that lowly grave their hands were clasped. For a few seconds neither spoke, but as Nell slowly lifted her face, Drum noticed that her eyes were gemmed with tears. Stepping swiftly around to her side, he freed his right hand and placed his arm tenderly about her.

"You must not cry, Nell," he told her. "I cannot bear to see tears in your eyes."

"I cannot help it, Drum. Your coming was such a surprise, and—and I am so happy."

Drum's only reply was to draw her close to him, and as he lifted her face to his, their lips sealed the pledge of their hearts' deep love.

"I didn't expect to meet you here," Nell at length whispered.

"Neither did I expect to meet you," Drum replied. "I only reached home this afternoon, and was on my way to you to learn my fate, when I turned aside to look upon Hettie's grave. She gave her life for me, and I wanted to see the place where she is lying."

"And how strange that our great happiness should begin right here, Drum, and that we clasped hands across this little mound. I didn't realise at first what we were doing."

"Neither did I, Nell. But how appropriate it was, for it was only by her death, or in other words, across her grave, that we are standing here this evening, and so happy in each other's love."

"Poor Hettie!" Nell sighed. "We can never forget her. What a shock it was when Seth burst into the house that morning and told us about it."

"It's too bad that Seth didn't go up with the Fenians when the powder exploded. The villain! I wish I could get my hands on him."

"Where is he, anyway? We haven't heard a word about him."

"Oh, he crossed the Border as soon as he could get there, and is somewhere in the States now, I suppose. It's not likely he'll ever return to this province."

"Let us forget all about him, then," Nell suggested. "We want to think only of pleasant things this evening. Suppose we gather some more flowers to lay on Hettie's grave."

Side by side they moved about picking the fresh bright blossoms, and when they had enough they returned and laid them reverently upon the little mound until it was completely covered.

"We must look well after her grave," Nell remarked, as she gave the finishing touch to the task of love. "It is all we can do for her now who did so much for us."

The shades of evening stole quietly over the land as they then sat by the side of the lane leading from the church to the main road. No one came that way, and only the birds witnessed the young lovers as they talked to their hearts' content. They had so many things to tell each other, and such plans for the future that the minutes slipped unheeded by. They did not notice how dark it was until the report of a gun startled them. They sprang to their feet and looked over toward the store where a great bon-fire was lifting itself high in the air. Shot after shot went up, horns sounded, and the cheering of men could be distinctly heard. Silently the two watched and listened. Then Drum pressed Nell's hand more firmly in his.

"Isn't it wonderful that this celebration should take place on the very evening of our great happiness," he said. "They are doing it in honour of the union victory. But it seems to me to be meant for us, in honour of the happiness of our united hearts."

"That is a beautiful idea," Nell replied. "There seems to be rejoicing everywhere to-night, so let us imagine it is all in honour of us, and that the people are celebrating on account of our happiness. Suppose we go and tell Margaret the great news. She should be the first one to hear of it."

"And won't Andy be delighted, Nell. We must have the good old fellow's blessing, for he has meant much to us both. And what music he will bring from that wonderful new violin of his in our honour."

They laughed like two happy children as they walked slowly up the narrow lane. But it was to more than the ordinary country highway they were moving. It was toward the great and unknown highway of life they had set their faces. But a joy known only to lovers was theirs, so with hearts united they were glad and willing to go forward to that mystic future shining so brightly before their love-lit eyes.

THE END

Transcriber's Note

Punctuation errors have been corrected.

The following suspected printer's errors have been addressed.

no where changed to nowhere.

Page 43. woman changed to women.
(interested in women)

Page 95. t-night changed to t'night.
(the store t'night)

Page 109. them changed to him.
(spying upon him)

Page 117. thing changed to think.
(I should think)

Page 180. touch changed to touched.
(a bullet touched it)

Page 196. difficulty changed to difficulty.
(and with difficulty)

Page 232. shore changed to store.
(trips to the store)

Page 235. prefered changed to preferred.
(preferred her to the doctor)

Page 260. here changed to her.
(turned her eyes)

[The end of *The Fighting-Slogan* by H. A. Cody]