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LAURA
THE UNDAUNTED

A Canadian Historical Romance

By

PRICE-BROWN

**THE RYERSON PRESS
TORONTO**

Books by Price-Brown

HISTORICAL ROMANCES

"Laura the Undaunted"

"How Hartman Won"

"Hickory of the Lakes"

"In the Van"

"The Macs of '37"

MEDICAL WORK

"Diseases of the Nose and Throat"

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CONTENTS

PART ONE—*Before the Crossing*

CHAPTER

- I. [GENERAL BURGOYNE](#)
- II. [MRS. INGERSOLL AND LAURA](#)
- III. [INGERSOLL'S SECOND MARRIAGE](#)
- IV. [THE WEDDING JOURNEY](#)
- V. [RENEWED DISTURBANCES](#)
- VI. [THE SECOND MRS. INGERSOLL](#)
- VII. [CHANGED CONDITIONS](#)
- VIII. [INGERSOLL'S THIRD MARRIAGE](#)
- IX. [AN OUTLOOK INTO A NEW LIFE](#)

PART TWO—*In the King's Country*

- X. [THE JOURNEY TO CANADA](#)
- XI. [ACROSS LAKE ONTARIO](#)
- XII. [FIRST DAYS IN NEWARK](#)
- XIII. [MADAME BADEAU'S PARTY](#)
- XIV. [TRAVELLING WEST FROM NEWARK](#)
- XV. [LIFE IN THE WOODS](#)
- XVI. [MEETING BRANT AGAIN](#)
- XVII. [BACK TO GOOD FRIENDS](#)
- XVIII. [LIFE AT THE CANADIAN CAPITAL](#)
- XIX. [LAURA'S BETROTHAL](#)
- XX. [THE WEDDING](#)

PART THREE—*The Conflict*

- XXI. [PRE-WAR DAYS](#)
- XXII. [THE WAR CLOUDS BREAK](#)
- XXIII. [TECUMSEH PLAYS A PART](#)
- XXIV. [LAURA'S HEROIC EXPLOIT](#)

LAURA THE UNDAUNTED

PART ONE

Before the Crossing

Laura the Undaunted

I

General Burgoyne

It was noon, the first of December, 1778. Troops had been coming and going all morning and the people of Great Barrington had been unusually excited, for the dispatches had brought what they had conceived to be good news. There was a three-hour watch at the fort and the patrol had been on the steady tramp since nine o'clock. But away from the buzz of voices he waited with eagerness the news that the relieving guard would bring.

"What news, Phil? Who's surrendered?"

"Best we've had for many a day in these parts, Gus. There was a big fight at Crampton beyond the creek early this morning between the Britishers and our men under Lieutenant-Colonel Steward. He won, but it was a bloody fight with heavy losses on both sides. He has sent in fifty prisoners."

"Where have they put 'em?"

"In the old barracks at the other side of the town."

"Can they pack fifty men in that hole?"

"If they stand like rushes and give each man six feet by one and half to sleep in."

"Devilish, isn't it?"

"Perhaps the major'll send them on to Boston."

"That would be just like him. It seems to me that he's almost too good to the enemy."

"Look at General Burgoyne, right in this Fort. He's as snug as a bug in a rug."

"But he's one of the biggest of the British generals."

"And he's been feeding on the fat of the land for three months."

"Yes, but back of it all there was good reason. For the first year and a half of the war he swept everything before him; but he was just as good to his prisoners as he was to his own men. I know that's true, for I was a prisoner for two months at Richmond while he held the city."

"Yonder comes Major Ingersoll himself. We had better stop our palaver."

"I see he has a bundle of papers in his hand."

"Someone told me this morning that he had dispatches from General Washington."

The two men parted, saluting Major Ingersoll as he entered the stockade. He went at once to his office.

This was a medium-sized, square room, scantily furnished. The desk was strewn with papers, a few of which were regularly arranged. A couple of arm-chairs and two or three with straight backs completed the furnishings, with the exception of a little square table. Upon this stood a file of large and small newspaper clippings, which covered the history of the war from its commencement. Pictures of a few old-world battle scenes were on the walls, also one of Washington in a general's uniform. A young clerk was awaiting orders.

Taking the first message and opening it, the major's face lighted up. He read it over a second time, put it in his

pocket, and wrote a note which he gave to the boy, telling him to take it with all speed to Mrs. Ingersoll and to return at once with an answer.

He then examined the rest of the dispatches, the expression of his countenance retaining the impress from the first note. There was no change manifested during the reading of the other papers.

The major again looked at his watch. The boy had been gone ten minutes. He rang the bell and Corporal Mills entered.

"You have several men at liberty in the Fort?"

"Yes, sir. There are Jones, Marshall, Jenkins, Smith and Sergeant Forbes in his room."

"Give this note to the sergeant and with the other men place yourselves on guard. There is no danger, but I am going to talk with General Burgoyne and a guard is necessary for discipline."

In a very few minutes the general and the sergeant came in. As they entered the major motioned the officer to retire, and rising, he advanced half way across the room to meet the general with extended hand.

"An unexpected honour for a prisoner of war," said the general with a smile and a slight curl of his proud lip.

"An honour that I have been looking forward to for some time," was the answer, given in a cordial but equally lofty tone. "Take a chair, general. I have good news for you."

"That's fine. Are you all surrendering at discretion?"

"Something much better than that. Generals Washington and Howe have mutually agreed to surrender you your liberty on parole."

"Humph. Is that all?"

"A good deal, one would think, after a man has been cooped in a guard room for three months. Your tint is fading, general. The sea breeze will give colour to your cheeks again."

Burgoyne was a handsome, well-preserved man of fifty or more, well set up in form, with large, lustrous, piercing eyes, aquiline nose and small mouth. His broad brow indicated deep thoughtfulness and strength, while the delicateness of his mouth and narrow chin seemed to evidence a remarkable combination of strong, masculine, individualistic character, combined with a refined sensibility of feminine indecision which might make, as well as make, his whole career. Of inflexibility there might be much, of decision more, while behind all there might be judgment well balanced, yet not sufficiently positive to insist on its ruling at the moment essential to its highest success.

The stolid face of the major was cast in a different mould. The correctness of his judgment might be questioned, but the positiveness of his decision could never be doubted.

"What are the terms?" he questioned grimly.

"It is simply a parole of honour, two against one. The freedom of General Burgoyne to be exchanged for the freedom of Colonels Murdoch and Spencer," the major answered.

"Not one of them to fight again?"

"In this war, no."

"And in this one do you think you will win?"

"I haven't a shadow of doubt of it. We are winning on every hand. Boston, Philadelphia and even Richmond, the stronghold of your old British aristocracy, will soon be ours."

"But not New York."

"No, we haven't got the city and port, but we have nearly the whole of the surrounding country. We already call it the State."

"But how is the transfer to be made?"

"A troop of horse will leave by daybreak to-morrow across country for New York to deliver you to the British, and a ship to England will take you on board the next morning. It will bring the two colonels on the return trip."

"What if I should make my escape on the way? There are lots of Loyalists all over this northern part of the colony."

"We'll take care of that. It was lucky for us that we caught you when we did. Some say that you were the best commander of the British officers. And if we hadn't made you prisoner you would have cooked our goose."

"It is no fault of our own men that we are losing," was the general's response. "Imbecility and indecision lie at the bottom of all that we have lost. This war should never have occurred."

"If that was your belief why did you consent to come over and try to whip us into submission?"

"Because I believe in the integrity and continuity of the nation. That emptying of a shipload of tea into Boston harbour was bad business. In my heart I could never blame the colonists. We had no just right under heaven to compel the emigrants over here, fighting all the elements, to obtain a hold on the land to pay our debts, but the Government was too pig-headed to see it. A lot of you men over here refused to do it, and I don't know but that you were right. But there was a principle at stake. The British nation, with one language, one religion, one set of laws in all its parts, should by all that is holy have held together as one people. If they had done so they could have defied the world. That's why Howe and I and others were willing to come over. We hated like sin to slaughter our own people, but we were between the devil and the deep sea and had to come."

"As an abstract theory, perhaps, it was all right, but you did not manage to carry it out."

"Simply because we were cooped up without a fair supply of troops and ammunition. If Lord Germain had not been too anxious to have his holiday we might have had both."

"And then what would have happened?"

"It's as plain as a pikestaff. You wouldn't have had me for a prisoner, and with our disciplined men and good generalship you would never have won. And the victory being on our side, we would, as peace-makers, have surrendered the taxes and held up our heads to all the world."

There was a tap at the door, the messenger re-entered and coming to the desk handed a note to the major. Glancing over the message he said to the general:

"I have been looking for the order for your parole for some time back and have arranged with my wife to invite you to dine with us the day it should come. I have just received word from her that one o'clock would suit. Will you honour us, general?"

"Delighted. I have not had the honour of dining with a lady for a year."

"Nor I, with a general, for two."

"The delight then should be mutual," said the general, gently pulling his whisker.

Ingersoll rang the bell and the corporal appeared.

"Tell the sergeant that I want to speak to him for a minute." Rising he excused himself and went out into the hall to speak to that officer.

"How many prisoners have we now in Great Barrington?"

"At least two hundred and fifty all told, sir. This new lot packs 'em like sardines and some of them are getting a bit restive."

"That's why I wanted to speak to you. As the general will leave us to-morrow I want him to dine with me at two to-day. Since he surrendered one does not know what they might try to do. We must run no risk."

"You may be sure we won't."

"Not a word, then. Set your men well. Have three or four near my house. He'll be back in the fort in a couple of hours. General Burgoyne at heart is such a deuced fine fellow that I want to do him a little kindness before he leaves."

"All right, sir. It shall be as you wish."

Returning to the office Major Ingersoll resumed the conversation.

"You were expressing your views when we were interrupted," he said. "In some respects my opinions are like yours. With us it was a matter of necessity, not choice. If you had left us alone to make the best of our destiny we would have remained true as steel. But when we resisted direct oppression you tried to ram your muskets down our throats, and it was more than our British nature could stand. When it got that far I was one with them every time. When once started we had to win. There was nothing else for it. Even if your Lord Germain had done his duty he couldn't have beaten us. Having once started we were fighting for our lives, our homes, our country and, no matter how much men like you would have stood up for the right, there would have been many a hole as black as that of Calcutta before the end could be reached."

"Quite possibly. You are an enterprising people. And right here you are getting piles of coal already."

"Yes," said the major, smiling at the break, "Pennsylvania has been giving us coal for half a century. But it is ten minutes to one and my wife will be expecting us."

"It's so long since mine saw me that I'm sure she won't know me from Adam."

"Perhaps that's your name?"

"I didn't say it wasn't."

"What about you recognizing her?"

"Oh! that will be quite easy. There's a little dimple in her chin which whispers softly 'divil' within."

"That's pretty tough on your lovely absentee lady."

"No, not at all, not at all:

"'She's beautiful, divinely fair,
With dark brown eyes and golden hair.'"

"The fact is, throwing all nonsense aside, when I married her she was recognized as the most beautiful woman in England, and as a matter of course the only way that I could get her at all was to elope with her. And we were married at Gretna Green."

"And she consented?" queried the major.

"Just to save my reputation. She claimed that if we were married I would leave her alone and attend to my profession. If not I would be sure to forfeit my rank." Again he pulled his goatee.

"Ah! here we are," Ingersoll noted as they approached the house.

"Rather alarming!" said General Burgoyne, elevating his chin and looking dryly from right to left. "Four corners and at every corner a sentinel. Am I going to be shot?"

"Not until after dinner." And with a laugh in which each joined they entered the house.

II

Mrs. Ingersoll and Laura

"Elizabeth, this is General Burgoyne." Ingersoll spoke not without a touch of pride in his manner, for although of only middle height his wife was more than ordinarily well-favoured. Those big eyes of his took her in so intently that she flushed a little, as she took his hand.

"This is a pleasure that I have been looking forward to for days," were her words.

"And I for weeks," was his gallant rejoinder, stretching the point a little.

"And this is our little daughter," she said, to divert his attention from herself to the daintily-dressed child, who stood by her side holding her other hand.

"Yes," he said, laying his hand on the little one's head. "The very picture of her mother save that her hair is darker. Do you know, madame, that you remind me so much of my own wife? She has golden hair, and dark brown eyes just like yours; only that was many years ago. She is getting a little tinted now."

"How long is it since you saw her, general?"

"Three years. That's the worst of a soldier's life. When you kiss your wife good-bye, and drop on her face a couple of tears, and start off on a campaign, you know very well that you may never see her again."

"This time, though, you are sure."

"Not if your husband's a man of veracity. He told me that I was to be shot as soon as dinner was over."

"So that was what you were laughing about when you came in."

"It was too big a joke to be taken seriously." But the little one with the big brown eyes had taken it all in and she whispered:

"Mumma, is that man to be shot?" And with a convincing shake of the head the cloud vanished.

"Do you know, Mrs. Ingersoll," said the general in the conversation across the table, "while you have a strong resemblance to my wife, your little daughter is almost the image of my daughter, Laura, at her age."

"Good gracious, how singular! And the same name."

"And this is my birthday, too," cried the child, who at the moment was sitting among some dolls beside a little table.

"How old is she?" the general asked.

"This is December the first, seventeen hundred and seventy-eight. She is three years old to-day," said her father.

"And my Laura was twenty years old yesterday. You might say exactly seventeen years older. She has the same sort of strong, far-seeing dark eyes and sweet, flexible mouth. I would not be surprised if, when this little Laura grows up, she will resemble my own fair English beauty. Great Heavens! How long it is since I saw her."

"No doubt your wife and daughter will be just as anxious to see you as you will be to see them," said Mrs. Ingersoll, who saw very plainly that there was much that was lovable in the general's face.

"That's natural I suppose. But more than that; Laura is to be married as soon as it can be comfortably arranged after my return."

"Has she been long engaged?"

"She's young enough, but she and her fiancé are getting tired waiting."

"It's a shame," exclaimed Mrs. Ingersoll impulsively, "to have you here in that lonely fort for three months, when they might just as well have let you return at the first as now."

"My dear, what do you know about military diplomacy?" inquired the major, in a bantering tone. "At that time the general was too valuable a prisoner to let slip out of our hands and it was too much of a surrender of British supremacy for them to suggest it to us."

"Now you think that you have the matter in your own hands," said the general.

"We've got the upper hand and we're going to keep it," returned the major.

"You may get the south of this continent," the general returned. "But you won't get the north. French Canada and the British territory to the west you will never get. The people throughout that region are too loyal to be affected by Revolutionary ideas."

"That may be," said Ingersoll. "We shall have our hands full enough without attempting anything more. Besides," he continued, "there is more than half the continent to the west in the hands of the Indians still untouched."

"I have always insisted," the general noted, very emphatically, "that the British people should have stuck together as one, wherever they might be situated, giving equal justice and freedom to all. Yet as that seems to be impossible there is no reason under heaven why they should not be friends for the future, brethren of a common stock, and together lead the way."

"There is no good reason," said Major Ingersoll, "why the British nation and our own independent American nation should not gradually extend their possessions until they, together, cover the whole of this North American Continent; you taking the northern half and ourselves the southern; and in the end be perpetual friends."

"Yes, that's what it will come to. We may have a brush now and then, but I venture to predict that, notwithstanding the present war, this continent will be divided between the two; and along the whole imaginary line from the Atlantic to the Pacific there will not be a fort erected or a gun planted."

"May I hope that you will be true prophets," said Mrs. Ingersoll, as they rose from the table.

The old-fashioned parlour had an attractive appearance as they passed through the archway. The general had not noticed it before. A big, open fire with a huge maple back-log gave warmth and cheer to the room. Against the wall opposite the fire stood a spinet in excellent preservation. It was seemingly of ancient manufacture, for it reminded the general of a highly-prized one which had long occupied a well-favoured spot in his own drawing-room.

"That beautiful and quaint old music box would take us all back to our common motherland if it could," said the general, glancing playfully from one to the other. "I think I see a London maker's name on it."

"Yes, my father's father brought it out with him in a Plymouth ship, seventy years ago," his hostess noted, replacing a

piece of music that had slipped from the keyboard.

"And also," said the major, "my grandfather brought over that old-fashioned carved mahogany round table seventy-five years ago."

"And I see that Laura's birthday gifts are piled upon it now," added the general. "May I add a little thing for the child as a memento of my visit to this hospitable house, for little Laura to keep in memory of her third birthday?"

"It will be a delight to Laura and to all of us," said Mrs. Ingersoll.

"I am not so sure that the major will be quite so appreciative, but of all that I brought with me to this blessed country of yours it is the only thing I have left."

He took out of an inside pocket a tiny miniature of the king tastefully embossed in ivory and gold. Removing it from its cloth cover he stood it in the centre of the table.

"You don't wish to sow dissension among the patriots of a new country?" said Major Ingersoll, a rather disturbed expression stealing over his face.

"Not at all," returned General Burgoyne, with a satirical smile. "But is it not an honour to the president of a new Republic to present to one of its youngest subjects the picture of my king?"

"General, you are the greatest mixture of opposites that I ever saw in my life."

"They say that is a sign of prospective longevity. I'll give you an example that everybody knows. And that is his picture—King George himself. He sputters his German, murders his English, has a fat body and a lean mind, is always making mistakes yet never errs, jumbles his figures and yet strikes the nail on the head every time, has a wonderful memory and great forgetfulness. With all these attributes, together with the most short-sighted sagacity, he looks as young as he did when he came to the throne sixteen years ago and may live to reign three times as many more."

"Please, stop," said the major.

"Thank you. I am just through."

"And must I keep this picture?" inquired little Laura who had taken it in her hand.

"Certainly, my dear. Put it away carefully among your treasures, and when you are twenty years old, exactly the age that my own Laura is to-day, I will send you, God wot, something even better than this, in memory of your third birthday, and as a wedding present."

"I think that you ought to give the gentleman a kiss after such a promise as that," her mother suggested with a radiant smile. And throwing her arms around his neck with a right good will, the child's kiss was given.

As the general straightened himself again, something like a tear glistened for a moment in his eye.

A few minutes later, when adieux were said and the general, accompanied by the major, was descending the steps, Laura ran to her mother and asked:

"Mamma, what did he mean when he said 'God wot'?"

"Why, child, he meant that if he was alive, and if you were alive, and if he knew where you were and if he did not forget, he would send you a wedding present on your twentieth birthday."

"Was that it?" and clapping her hands she ran to the window to see the two men turn up the street.

As they passed the corner the general returned the sentinel's salute. A little further on he cast a momentary glance behind him. The four men were still at the corner.

"A bit of a snow storm with more wind," said the major. "I hope that it won't be rough for your ride to-morrow."

"A storm is nothing in a soldier's life. If you had my experience you would know it."

"You've been far afield, no doubt?" queried the major.

"Yes, in India and Egypt and Flanders as well as here."

By this time they had reached the entrance to the fort, and through the falling snow they could still see the front and end of the major's house. "I think your sentinels must have mutinied," exclaimed the general, dryly.

"They have disbanded without relief," returned Ingersoll with a grim smile, as they re-entered the fort.

III

Ingersoll's Second Marriage

Major Ingersoll's house looked very gay that morning. June roses were on the mantel in handsome China mugs placed between tall Elizabethan brass candlesticks, which the first wife, Elizabeth Dewey, had brought as a wedding gift to the house. Lilies of the valley filled a great green platter standing in the centre of the old mahogany table which seven years before had been graced by little Laura's birthday treasures. Carnations were everywhere, for Mercy Smith, the new bride, was known to be fond of them. To the black servants the event was one to rejoice over. To be without a mistress for a whole year was long enough, and they were rubbing up and refurbishing everything for "the new missus." To them, with their light hearts and merry laughter, even in their days of slavery, it was always "The King is dead. Long live the King."

The younger children, dressed in their good clothes, were joyously playing with the new toys which the prospective mamma had judiciously sent them.

But Laura, a grown girl now, refused to be comforted, although dressed in her new frock and brightest ribbons. Against her will her mourning had been laid aside.

"No use, chile, gwine on like dat," said the old cook, cheerily patting her back.

"I wasn't crying, Chloe."

"No, but you was breakin' yer heart when there wan't use. Massa Tom knows best."

"It's too soon. Mamma was so good. He should have waited and given me a chance to forget before putting someone else in her place," Laura asserted.

"Look here, honey," Chloe cried, striking a dramatic attitude. "I know more about dem tings dan you does. Yer lubby mamma was de bes woman I ebber saw in my life. I belong to her. She brought me here herself when I first cum. But people can't live forebber. When de good Lawd took it in His head that it was the right time to take her He jes' came and did it. That was all. Massa couldn't help hisself one bit. And more than that, Miss Lau', I don't see, when massa los' de very best ting in all dis worl', why he shouldn't take de second best when he got de chance."

"Well, I'll try to be good."

A smile passed over Laura's face despite the tears.

"You're always dat, but don't be cross wid yer dad."

"Pity you didn't go to de church. Yer dad 'ud be jes' dyin' to hab ye dere. So purty too. De big folks wid all de good clothes 'ud jes' shine."

"Dad wanted me to, Chloe. But I would have cried. I'm sure I would. Oh! here they come!"

And rubbing her eyes she ran upstairs to her room.

"But, honey, you'll come down again."

"Yes, after a bit."

The wedding party came trooping in, smiling and chatting as if the whole of life were one sweet song; and strife and turmoil and death and disaster had never existed, and never could. While upstairs, shut in her room, was a tender maid, only ten years old, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Little fool," she said to herself at last. "How silly! I don't think mamma would like it if she saw me act like this. And I won't. So there."

So she bathed and dried her face and fussed about her room until the traces of tears had passed away.

In the meantime the big room downstairs quickly filled. There were greetings between the new mother and the younger children and general congratulations all round.

"Where is Laura?" Major Ingersoll asked the housemaid, in a constrained voice.

"She's up in her room, massa," replied Persiana, with the slightest toss of her head. "She'll be down soon."

The Rev. Gideon Bostwick was there in all his massive proportions, both mind and body. He was a mighty preacher, the original and only Anglican minister in Great Barrington. There was also his wife, the essence of elegance and the leader of all the fashions that a judicious church would allow. And their son, Henry, a bright lad and a school-mate of Laura's, whom the major had invited as a possible balm to her sensitive nature. Among the guests were both old and young. Several relatives of Mercy Smith were there from a distance in order to show their genuine affection for the lovely bride, the very pick of the whole family connection, and also their sincere regard for the handsome widower when they sanctioned such a mesalliance as that of a man with almost half a dozen children already.

"But it was the Lord's doings." Rev. Mr. Bostwick had said so. And what better authority could they want than that?

And there were the Ingersolls, both great and small. Almost every great house in the town was represented. What more tacit consent could be found anywhere? Mr. Ingersoll had done both wisely and well in taking to himself so charming and pretty a wife, and so capable a young stepmother for his children!

But of the large and representative family of Elizabeth Dewey Ingersoll, there was not one.

As the bride's family were strangers in the town, the groom had considered it best to have the wedding festivities at his own house.

Although still anxious about the absence of Laura, the major, with his bride on his arm, led the way into the breakfast room where tables were profusely spread for the refreshment of the guests. At the head the major took his stand with his bride to the right. Slips of paper bearing the individual names were opposite each plate. And amid the buzz and laughter all found their places. There was only one vacant chair.

The Rev. Gideon, from his great height taking everyone in, glanced round the room to see that all was still and prayerful attention assured from every guest. Then, stretching out his arms like great wings, and raising his eyes toward the ceiling, he poured out in solemn tones the words:

"We thank thee, O Lord, for all the blessings of life, for the good things that thou hast provided for us on this Thy

table; for the new wife in this beautiful home, and for the new mother to these innocent children, and we ask for the continuance of Thy blessing in the name of Christ, the Master. Amen."

They were religious people that surrounded the table that day. They had strong convictions. If any of them had qualms about a man marrying a second wife so soon after the death of his first, these disappeared when their highly-esteemed rector, in such eloquent brevity, asked the divine benediction on the second union.

Just as he reached the words: "For the new wife in the home," the door into the hall opened silently and Laura slipped in. Closing it softly behind her she stood still listening, resisting with all her heart the words about the new wife; but when he came to "the new mother for these innocent children," her eyes wandered involuntarily to the bowed heads of Myra, Elizabeth and Abigail, all sitting still and listening at their little table in the corner.

She waited until the prayer was over and then glided silently around the wall to her seat, almost unnoticed.

Her father saw her coming. He felt relieved and whispered: "I am glad you came, Laura."

"Thank you, daddy," she replied. But it was all that she could say.

After the dinner there was speech-making and toasting the bride and groom. The Rev. Gideon Bostwick, extending his usual felicitations and best wishes of himself and all the guests, was followed by the major's rejoinder, full of the present and the future, the past seemingly all forgotten. So, at least, thought Laura, who stole away as soon as she could to join the children in the back parlor.

Henry Bostwick, the clergyman's son, saw her as she slipped away and quickly followed. He felt that she was troubled and could not help wondering what it was about. He liked Laura; they were in the same class at school and not infrequently had he helped her with her sums and geography lessons. What could have happened to her, anyway? It was just a jolly wedding. People said it was the biggest that they had had in Great Barrington for ever so long. There must be some special reason why she did not attend.

"Say, Laura," he remarked, "I like that pretty frock and the pink sash. It 'ud make you look stunnin' if you could only laugh a little."

"There's nothing to laugh at that I can see."

"They don't think so. Everybody's laughing."

"I'd rather be outside in the woods by myself than here."

"Why? Aren't your people good to you?"

"Of course they are. It's not that. It's the feeling."

"Feelin's be jiggered. You've always been blue since your mumma died; now that you've got a new mumma you'll be all right. Dad was talking about it only yesterday and he said that it was a mighty good thing that the major did not let the grass grow under his feet, but picked up the right lady before anyone else could get her."

"Just like an auction sale."

"Don't you like her?"

"I don't know. If dad had waited twice as long it would not have mattered so much, perhaps. But it looks as if life was all business. Mumma used to tell me it was all love. But here they come. I must pretend, when I like to feel."

"Laura, dear, I was just talking to the kiddies. They are such sweet little things."

"Yes."

"And the house just looks beautiful."

"Yes."

"And the flowers and everything. I never realized how exquisitely tasteful the things in this house could be made."

"Yes."

"We must be very good friends. You will all have a kind mumma again."

Laura broke out with sudden energy:

"I cannot say mumma any more. I'll call you mother if you like."

"That will be very nice, and everybody knows mother is really the word." In her own heart she felt that the child imagined, without understanding it, she had been bought and sold for a price. While Laura realized in her own little soul that whatever other word she used, she could never have but the one "mumma."

The major had purposely left the two together by themselves for a little, that they might the better become friends. But as he joined them again, he perceived that they had not made much progress along the desired road.

"Well, my dear," he said, patting Laura's hand, as he stooped to kiss her. "We are going to take a wedding journey to New York for a few days and are going to leave you as our brave little housekeeper until our return."

Looking the new wife full in the face with her fearless eyes, and extending her hand, Laura exclaimed:

"I hope that you will have a very pleasant journey, mother and dad; you know that I will do my best."

With a sudden impulse the new Mrs. Ingersoll threw her arms around the neck of the child, kissed her and they were gone.

IV

The Wedding Journey

One of the leading thoughts in the major's mind when he decided to take his new bride to New York for their wedding journey was that it would give them an opportunity for an ocean voyage, short though it might be. Although they had each done some yachting in and about Boston harbour, neither of them had had what they could call an ocean voyage, and they were equally eager to take advantage of the opportunity. It would also be their first visit to New York.

The trip by stage to Boston was marked by nothing unusual in character except the roughness of the roads due to heavy rains, rather unusual at that time of the year. But to walk on paved streets of a city already gaining a reputation for its culture, and to spend an evening in the new concert hall, and to hear one of the leading singers of the day was a delight to both Mercy and the major.

"A good beginning for our trip to have such an enjoyable evening," was his comment as they came out of the hall. "What a splendid voice Signora T—— has."

"And that baritone. Who is he?"

"Monsieur M—— of Paris, I believe."

"Isn't it raining, Thomas. I thought I heard it on the windows."

"I am afraid it is, Mercy. I hope it won't storm to-morrow."

"If it does what will we do?"

"It won't be bad enough to prevent us from taking our little voyage."

They were at the wide entrance door. People were crowded together. They couldn't get away.

"Can't we get a carriage? Our hotel is three blocks away."

"There are half a dozen here, but all are engaged."

After an inquiry the major announced:

"One driver tells me that if we wait a few minutes he'll take us."

"Oh, dear, it's blowing a hurricane. I believe, Thomas, that our voyage is doomed."

"Nonsense, darling; we will get there all right, but we may have to stay over a day. Boston's the best place in the country for a stop. Strangest thing in the world, Mercy: on my first wedding journey I was in just such a fix as this."

"Pity that we should have a repetition of such an experience."

"It was in February. We came to Boston, intending to take the boat to Florida. But the storm was so terrible that the skipper would not sail. It was worse, for the boats south only ran every three days. They now run daily to New York."

It was strange, Mercy thought, that he should speak so freely of his first wedding journey. He had only been a widower a little over a year. She had been a widow for more than two. Yet it would be impossible for her to speak to him at all of her first wedding journey. Was marriage only a matter of business with him? Would he marry again if anything happened to her? Of course he would; the first good chance he got. And then he had four children, all girls. And she had one boy. She had intended to bring him over. Now she thought she wouldn't. To turn one boy loose among so many girls would really be a bad policy. No, she would leave him with his grandmother. She used to think that she would like to have a daughter. Now, she didn't. There were quite enough of the first wife's children without any of her own. She really hoped that the good Lord would not give her any. Was she really wise to have married again? Still, the major was good and kind. It could not be helped now. She would do her best to be a good mother to his children. Strange that Laura should insist on calling her "mother." What did she mean by that? Then she caught herself being amazed at the wide series of thoughts that had been rushing pell-mell through her brain, while the tumult of the tornado was rushing past outside.

"What's the matter, Mercy? You have not spoken for five minutes. I spoke twice and you did not answer."

"Sorry. I did not hear you. The wind blows so, it is almost impossible to hear anything."

Perhaps, subconsciously, he had read her thoughts.

The storm raged all night, but there was a lull towards morning. The skipper of the *Rattler* declared at the breakfast table that he felt sure sailing would be safe and that he would set out for New York at ten o'clock, particularly as there were several passengers who were desirous of returning to that city at once.

"If they can go I don't see why we can't," said the major.

"Neither do I," said his wife.

With a strong wind from the north, which had become steady, the *Rattler* made good progress for several hours, but owing to the heavy sea she tossed a good deal the whole night. To make the best of time they kept almost in sight of

shore, moving at a moderate speed.

Towards evening a change came and Mercy was obliged to retire to her stateroom, the rolling being too severe for her.

There were shouts overhead. The captain was giving orders and the major, hearing them, went on deck.

"The wind's changed," roared the captain. "Heavy sky. Try another point to larboard, mate."

"Another storm, after all," noted the major.

"Looks like it. We must keep off the rocks."

A tremendous lightning flash was followed by a peal of thunder and a squall that almost turned the ship on her beam ends.

"If I go below can I get back?" asked Ingersoll, as the hatches were closed.

While anxious about his wife he wanted to face the storm.

"Yes," was the captain's answer. "Come up through my cabin."

"How now, Mercy?" he asked, as he entered the stateroom. Mrs. Ingersoll was grasping the side of the berth with both hands.

"Not so well as I would like to be," was her answer, "but I'll be better soon. If you want to escape you'd better stay on deck."

Like an obedient spouse the major did as he was told.

The *Rattler* hammered away with a vengeance all that evening and night, and the major groped his way up and down to Mercy's side, clinging tightly to the stair rail, many times during those long weary hours.

The captain was something of a humourist, and would have made light of it even if he thought that probable disaster was ahead.

"There's compensation in every storm," he muttered as the major dropped on a bench at his side when the boat made another tremendous lurch.

"Indeed, what?"

"What we lose in speed we gain in grub," came with a grin. "There won't be an ounce of victuals eaten on board to-night except by the crew, and everybody knows they can live on nails."

"If things balance why not have the storm continue?"

"That's what I say. Only we'd never get there," said the skipper.

"What matter, so long as we enjoy ourselves?" answered the major. At that moment another big wave came aboard and rolled to his knees.

"I see you are having a good time. The rest of the men and all the women are missing it," noted the captain.

"Except the Indians yonder," noting a group farther down the deck.

"The Mohawks of the Six Nations always stay on deck. There is some arrangement talked of between the governments to send a lot of them over to Canada. And these men are interested in the scheme," said the skipper.

"Is that big man with the embroidered buckskin leggings the chief?"

"Yes, it's Brant, the Chief of the Iroquois tribe."

"I'm glad to know it. One of my reasons for going to New York just now is to see that very man."

"I thought it was your wedding tour."

"So it is, but two stones often kill one bird, you know. If I can make my way along this deck I'll go and see him now."

"Better be cautious, major. When a white man gets seasick, like those fellows downstairs, it lays him flat; but when an Injun gets flabbergasted it makes him mad as a hatter, and he is ready to kill the first man he meets. If you speak to Chief Brant just now he'll tomahawk you, sure."

With a glance at the captain he saw a twinkle in his eye, and taking hold of the railing, made his way cautiously toward the stern of the boat where the four Indians were standing looking out to sea. Brant was the nearest.

His face bore a very solemn expression, his attitude remained unchanged and his gaze was fixed on the far distance, until the major, within a yard of him, spoke.

"Chief Brant, I believe?"

Instantly he turned.

"And you?"

"Major Ingersoll."

"Yes, the man who was to shoot me at sight."

"Yes, and the man who was to tomahawk me the moment I spoke to him."

The two hands for the moment held each other in a strong and friendly grasp, while the big eyes of the Indian chieftain took in the face of his new acquaintance with evident pleasure.

Just then there was another brilliant flash and a tremendous peal of thunder.

"The Manitou is angry to-day," said Brant, again looking out to sea.

"He will not remain angry for ever," noted the major.

"But it will keep us out a long while. The skipper says we may not reach New York until to-morrow, when the sun goes down. Well, the Iroquois is big enough. My people will wait."

"Is the Iroquois the hotel where you always meet?"

"It is."

"I have heard of it. Will it take white men as well as red?"

"Yes, just one floor reserved for my people. The rest for yours."

"How long will you remain, chief? I want to have a long talk with you."

"For two days. I shall be glad to talk. Are you alone?"

"No, my wife is with me."

"Happy man. I have no wife. Brant had a beautiful squaw. She died three winters ago."

While they were talking there was a tremendous crash as another wave swept the deck and the mizzen mast was carried away.

"Clear away," cried the captain; "cut that rigging loose." Fearing her excitement by reason of the accident, the major hurried down to his wife whom he was glad to find asleep.

Major Ingersoll was a matter-of-fact man and perhaps resolution was the predominating trait of his character. There might have been no definite underlying principle to guide it: but if he arrived at a decision, no matter how much it might differ from an earlier one, he always had enough determination to carry it out.

That he had loved his first wife was undoubtedly true. But it was a matter-of-fact love. She was one among many. He had been deeply engrossed in business, forging ahead, willing to devote time and energy in every attempt to make financial success sure.

To make life comfortable, to have a home to go to where the personal comforts of himself and family would be judiciously attended to, and to put an end to the perpetual running after this fair one and that, he had felt he must really take to himself a wife. But there were so many to choose from that he had much difficulty in making a choice, until at last it had almost come to the toss of a penny which of two it should be.

The venture had proved a great success, Elizabeth Dewey had made him an excellent, affectionate and faithful wife, and had been a good mother to their children. He had never for a moment regretted his decision. But after the first fond rush of affection, the ardour of his love had gradually abated. Not that he was untrue, for it was not in the Ingersoll nature to be that, but the elevated enthusiasm of higher emotion ceased to exist, and before Laura, the eldest child, was born, Elizabeth was in some respects a disappointed woman. Perhaps it was this that made her lavish a greater affection upon Laura than upon the other children.

When the end had come and he laid the body of his devoted wife in the grave, he felt that it was the fortune of war. Something had gone irretrievably wrong; but there was no use moaning over the inevitable past. The present and the future were what needed his attention. The past, if not forgotten, must at least be laid aside for the sake of his children and himself. So in due time, as we have seen, Mercy and he were married.

But it was not in this alone that Major Thomas Ingersoll evinced his assumed normality. Up to the time of the tea-ship incident he had always been an ardent Loyalist. It took some time to shake his faith in the final issue of British diplomacy, but when his fellow colonists, under the control of an able leader, took up arms with the determination to fight it out to the end he rejoiced and aided his people to obtain what they wanted.

In some ways the after results were not what he anticipated. How rarely expectations are realized! There was sophistry and favouritism in the high offices. Men who had never before governed could not do it now except with friction and annoyance to themselves and others. Men who had given time and strength, and money and blood, to the cause found it difficult to wait for the tardy arrival of results. Business was being lost, patrons were moving away and there was fire in the soup.

During and before the closing years of the war a party of folk had sprung up who styled themselves United Empire Loyalists. Until independence was actually acknowledged they had been received with open arms at the Canadian frontier. The glowing descriptions of their reception and subsequent treatment sent back to their friends remaining south of the line made many of the doubtful ones wish they had taken the same action, for throughout the New England States and along the border line there was again much unrest. Ingersoll, like others, tried to investigate these matters without taking positive action, and yet be prepared to assist the government if necessary in suppressing revolt.

Although he had never before met Brant, Ingersoll knew much of his history. He knew him to be a strong-minded, educated Mohawk, the chieftain or leader of the Iroquois Six Nations. With the consent of the United States and English governments, Brant had come now to induce his people to cross to the north of the line, and establish themselves on a

reservation already arranged for. Ingersoll determined to sound the chief on these affairs and to obtain from him whatever information he could of the conditions of the land and people already over there.

The major came on deck no more that evening, and as the storm gradually abated, Mercy and he had a comfortable night. In the morning the sea was still. A complete calm had followed the storm, and although the sails had been set they were not even wind-filled.

"Grub will have the advantage to-day," the major greeted the captain.

"Still, it will be short, for we'll have wind by noon," was the response.

Landing at the Battery, at New York, Ingersoll, his wife and Brant went on shore together, the attendant Mohawks following them. So earnest were they in their conversation that Ingersoll for the moment forgot their box.

"Just wait a little," he directed, leaving them for a moment. His handsomely-dressed and good-looking bride, in company with a full-blooded, natively-costumed and well-armed Indian, naturally attracted much attention.

As the pressure from the gathered crowd was great they moved a little farther on the dock. While they could stand here with more comfort, it gave the curious a better opportunity for observation and comment.

"Most amazing thing I ever saw in my life," said some one, with an eye to the bizarre.

"For a red man and a white woman they are a perfect match."

"Yes," whispered another, "each in full regalia."

"He's got a good motto, too. 'Hands off.' Look at the dagger and that glistening tomahawk."

"He's liable to arrest, though, for carrying arms."

"But look at that eye of his. He'd brain the first constable who would dare to touch him."

"But here comes some one else, a white man. The question is, which is which?"

"You must excuse me, Mercy," Ingersoll explained. "I should have attended to that box earlier. I couldn't find the purser, but we are all right now. How far is it to the Iroquois, chief?"

"It is up Broadway, but not half a mile."

"Shall we walk it, Mercy, or take a carriage?"

"Whichever you like."

"We are all going to the same hotel. I see a carriage yonder. Perhaps the chief will go with us?"

"Men of the forest never ride if they can walk," said Brant, with a smile.

"I think that I would rather walk, Thomas," noted Mrs. Ingersoll. "After such a trip as we have come through one needs exercise."

"Very well, Mercy. We'll go three abreast."

And so, with the tastefully-gowned bride in the centre and a handsomely-attired cavalier on either side, the party walked up Broadway to the Iroquois Hotel, admired and criticized by many people on the way.

Renewed Disturbances

The bride and groom spent several pleasant days in New York, seeing the sights of the city, which were just as enjoyable to the visitors of that time as are the infinite variety of attractions to the tourist of to-day. They drove up and down Broadway, and the other avenues, and among the beautiful forest of trees later to become Central Park.

One evening, accompanied by Brant, they went to see "The Merchant of Venice." It was the first time that the chief had ever seen a play. He was strongly impressed by the tragedy of Shylock and seemed to have a pretty clear idea of what the play was intended to imply.

The next day was the last before leaving for home, and while Mercy went out to purchase some trinkets for the children, the most important to be for Laura, the major and Brant sat by themselves on a little verandah, overlooking what was at that time the greatest and busiest street in the new world, embracing the opportunity for a long and final talk.

"It is ten winters since I last saw the city. To-day it is double the size," was Brant's comment. "Fifty summers ago it was as large as a man's hand, now it would cover a Pawnee's blanket." There was a touch of sadness in the Chief's voice.

"You would not have it otherwise, would you?" said the major. "Progress is the law of life, you know."

"Yes. The white man moves forward, the red man backward."

"Why not stop the backward run?" said the major. "Why not follow the white man's lead? He'd be glad to show the way."

"Can a beaver stop building his dam, or a moose shedding his horns? The red man couldn't build cities like this and fill them with people as thick as squirrels in a corn crib; and with buildings like mountains and machine shops that rattle so loudly you cannot hear yourself think."

"Perhaps so. Each to his breed."

"Pack our people, as you do here, like muskrats in a barrel, and they'd die like rabbits on a poisoned trail."

"That's a gloomy picture, chief."

"But a true one. We are the people of the forest, the mountain, and the prairie. On the prairies and by the lakes we build our homes. For thousands of winters we have faced the ice and snow, and for as many spring times seen the green leaves of our trees. Our game and our corn grew side by side, with no one to stop us on our way, until the white man came. Then all was changed as in a night; and now," he continued almost fiercely, "we cannot stop it. Look down this street, a hundred men in sight, all doing different things. Look the other way. Just the same thing. They are not fighting. It is just work, work, work, all day long from daylight till dark. And then, to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, year in and year out. And yet they live. Red men could not do that. They would die like bees when the hive is frozen or papooses when there is famine in the land."

"But there are a lot of Indians yet. And it is for men like you, Brant, to do all that is best in every way for your people."

"But why were you English people not content with your own lands and your own ways across the sea? Why come over and trouble a people who were contented and happy? The Manitou gave us the land. Why come over and drive us out?"

"Because we were too crowded. We had not room for our people."

"Why did you not come over and live as we did? We still could have spared you land without murdering our people."

"Because land that would support a thousand people in our way would only support a hundred in yours. And what is more, our way suits us. Yours never would. The two races are cast in different moulds."

"Yes, it must be so," said the Indian gloomily. "What there was before the red man came I know not, but it died. We have had our day, and a bright and happy and long one it was. The Manitou was very good to us, but it is almost over. The white man will take his place and we shall be dead."

"But you are not dead yet, Brant. There is lots for the red men to do still."

"I know there is," came in a cheerier tone. "There is much that may be done to make the red man's life more secure while he still has the chance; and for that reason I am here. If I had my own desire to follow it would be after the moose in the forest, or the caribou on the prairie, or the salmon in the river and lake. But we have to take fate as we find it; Brant and his family have always been loyal. The king's government has always kept his treaties with the red men. So we know that we can trust his word. We are promised a large reserve north of the lakes. Knowing that there are many people of the Six Nations in the Northern States, I am here to help them."

"There are white men as well as red men still going over," said the major.

"I know it. The Government over there deals gently with its people, whether they be white or red."

"Do you know the country well, Brant?"

"I know every mile from the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa, to the Lake of the Hurons."

"Knowing it so well you might help our people who want to join their friends over there."

"It would be a sweet song to do it. The Indian never forgets the man who proves himself to be his friend. Will you ever want to take up land in Canada, Major Ingersoll?"

"I am not sure. To tell you the truth, Brant, matters are very dubious at present in the New England States. There's danger of an uprising against the Government. If it occurs it will have to be suppressed, and I, as an officer, and one who fought for the Union through the Revolution, would still be true to her cause. Although I might ultimately emigrate to Canada it would not and could not be until all rebellion was subdued."

"Strange," said Brant in a reflective tone of voice. "Fight for your country, and as soon as you obtain the victory, forsake it."

"But it would prove my devotion by staying until I had helped her out of her trouble. Besides that, Brant, I would not be going over to an enemy. Britain and the United States are friends now."

"Ah, yes, I see. Well, Major Ingersoll, if ever Brant of the Mohawks can help in selecting a new home for you across the Lakes he will be glad. And if the choice be near the land reserved for the Six Nations, then we will know that the tomahawks and shooting-irons and scalping-knives will be for ever buried."

"Good, friend Brant, this is splendid of you. But here comes my wife. We are packing up to take our leave. Neither she nor I will ever forget you. So adieu, until, God willing, we shall meet again."

And with that they parted.

When the major and Mercy returned to Great Barrington on a bright, sunny afternoon they received a joyous welcome. And as their journey had kept her father unexpectedly long, even Laura awaited with interest the arrival of her

new mother. The house was spick and span, the little ones, led by Laura, were ready to receive them, and while, after the first salutations, she retired to the window, old Chloe was exuberant in her praises.

"Fore de Lawd, Massa Ingersoll, Miss Lau' beat everyt'ing. She's all right, but my, she hev' her own way. And what she want, she want jes' so."

"Wasn't she good?"

"I'm sure she would be," said Mercy.

Cackling to herself, Chloe ran off to the kitchen to look after the roasted chickens, which were to be part of the home-coming feast.

Then came the giving of the little presents. After remembering the little ones, the major having gone up for the moment to his room, Mercy turned wistfully to Laura.

"You are a larger girl, Laura, and I wanted to bring you something which you would like," she said, leading the girl to the sofa. "Your father tells me that you are always very punctual. Wait, dear, until I fasten this around your neck."

"Oh! mother, how could you? Why it's a watch! The very thing that I wanted." And she stood up to give Mercy another kiss.

The act was one of spontaneous gratitude and Mercy, throwing her arm around the child, drew her for a moment closer to her.

A few minutes later Laura ran upstairs to put the gift away in her room for the time being, and meeting her father enthusiastically exclaimed:

"Look at the watch mother has brought me; isn't it a beauty?"

"And when she is so good to you can you not call her 'mumma'?" he queried.

The excited face instantly became grave again, and in a choking voice came the words:

"No, Dadda, I couldn't. There could never be but the one 'mumma,'" and although rejoicing over the gift, something like a sob burst from her as she ran into her room.

A puzzled look came into the major's face as he continued downstairs and he muttered:

"A wayward child, sure enough, but she's true blue."

Although it was a marriage *de convenance*, in great measure so far as the major was concerned, and was also a special effort on the wife's part to obtain a comfortable home and kind husband, it could scarcely be called a misfit. A certain amount of harmonious affinity reigned within the house, but of demonstrative affection, whatever he had had for the first wife, he had little for this one.

This lack, however, was in some measure made up by the love which gradually grew up between Mercy and the children.

Little by little, too, Laura's heart softened and, without forgetting the past, the unremitting acts of kindness were not without avail. Young as she was, Laura possessed an observant nature. And it was not long before she began to feel for the new mother. What she had been afraid of witnessing did not occur. The gentleness and personal kindness which she dreaded perceiving scarcely seemed present, and gradually mute reluctance and opposition melted from sheer sympathy into love.

So the weeks and the months passed by and even the years glided back into the distance, while the tranquility of the home life was never broken.

But not so the outside life of much of the Northern belt, extending through the New England States to the lakes. Seething unrest again appeared, and rebellion against the new American government by the old-time Loyalists broke out, to quench which Major Ingersoll again became one of the most important leaders, and as a matter of principle he did his best.

While the conflict still raged many of the malcontents made their escape across the lakes to British territory.

The southern shore of Lake Erie became the general rendezvous, and the whole northern side the landing place of those who considered themselves justified in departing from a Government which they considered both objectionable and oppressive. And joining the large contingent of United Empire Loyalists were many families like the Waldrons, the Ryersons, the Youngs, the Bostwicks and some of the Ingersolls, who were ready to cross the border on the first convenient opportunity.

Ultimately the little insurrection was suppressed, the malcontents were either beaten, compelled to submit, or driven from the country, and peace was restored.

In due time Major Ingersoll, tired out and rejoicing that the contest was over, returned to his own home.

Although the first two years of their married life were not what they might have been, still there had been no apparent lack of harmony in the family circle. If any unnatural coolness existed between husband and wife, it was more apparent to Laura than to anyone else. At first Laura had been jealous for her dead mother's sake of any visible caresses, although they had never been very noticeable. Still, it was not until the last military campaign was well on, and the major's mind and time fully occupied with the combination of business and war, that Laura noticed anything unusual in Mercy. It might be that she talked less, that she was graver or that she was more deeply engaged in thought; but, as it always passed away when her father returned, she only wished that he would come home oftener.

Then she noticed that Mercy's eye was less bright. She even appeared to be a trifle more slim, and she would sit still longer, but there was never any complaint.

Strange that her father did not notice it. Surely he would the next time, and the next, and the next. But he didn't.

Should she tell him? But why did not her mother speak? Why should either of them speak to him? Had he not enough to bother him? The second war would not last much longer. Then he would see. If not she would tell him.

"Mother," she said one day, "I'm sure you are not well. You must feel sick. Is it anything?"

"Nothing at all, Laura. Just a little tired. That's all."

"Does father know?"

"Know what, child?"

"That you feel as you do?"

"Of course not. I cannot be really sick as you say or he would have noticed it."

"I think I'll ask him what he thinks, when he comes again."

"No, you mustn't, Laura. He has enough to bother him now. I'll soon be all right."

But at last Laura could stand it no longer. It was near the close of the campaign, in the winter of 1787. She was in her thirteenth year and more mature in her thoughts than many girls of her age.

Her father had been away all day and for long weary hours had been discussing terms with a party of belligerent deputies. Although it was nine o'clock, Laura was watching for him, and as he stepped into the hall she stood on tip-toe and whispered:

"Dadda, mother seems ill. I'm sure she is. She needs the doctor. Won't you send for him?"

"Yes, Laura, dear, I will if I need to. She is not any worse to-day is she? I knew that she was not very well."

He stooped down and kissed her as he spoke.

"She has looked poorly to me for a long time," said Laura.

"And why did you not mention it?"

"I thought perhaps you knew and I did not like to."

"What made you speak just now, Laura?"

"Because she never gets a bit better, and I'm sure she ought to."

"Well, we'll see."

And they went inside.

VI

The Second Mrs. Ingersoll

One afternoon, several weeks later, Laura was startled to see the doctor's rig again at the door. She knew that he had visited her mother several times. As she entered the porch, she passed her father and the doctor talking, with grave faces. Was it possible that she might be worse? In passing she heard the words "insidious disease."

What could it mean? She had never heard the phrase before. A little alarmed she hastened in. But Mrs. Ingersoll had heard the footsteps and hastily picking up a bit of needle-work commenced to rock gently in her chair.

"How did the spelling match come off?" she asked, as Laura kissed her cheek.

"Oh!" Laura replied with a sigh of relief. Things could not be as bad as she suspected for her mother's face was all smiles. "It was a fine match, mother, and great fun."

"Tell me all about it, Laura."

"Well, it was this way. The teacher told us that we were to have the contest to-day for all the larger scholars from one of the longest lessons in the reader. We were excited and there were about fifteen boys and girls in the class. He picked out the hardest words and there were a lot of them. It did not take long to spell down nearly all the class. And soon there were only Henry Bostwick and me left. But we both stuck it out and spelled correctly all the words. Then the master said that wouldn't do. One of us would have to go down if it took all night. So at it again he went with the next lesson. But we went on spelling them just the same. At last he said he would only give us two more words. With 'Mephistopheles,' Henry being ahead, had the first try and forgetting himself put an 'f' in it. You see that when 'f' was wrong it couldn't be anything else than 'ph' and I got it right. The other was 'ratiocination.' Being flustered by his first mistake he put in two c's and one t, and I beat him again by using two 't's' and one 'c'."

"And how did Henry take it?"

"He didn't like it and declared that he would beat me next time, and I told him that he couldn't. Then he said that he'd

bet me a penny that I wouldn't."

"But you didn't tell me what your spelling prize was."

"Oh, I forgot!" and she took from her school bag a little parcel containing half a dozen quill pens.

"A splendid gift, too."

"Yes, mother, they do wear out so quickly."

As her father came in just then she ran upstairs to her room to look up in her dictionary, the words "insidious disease!" But she could only find the words defined separately and she felt that she must discover the double relation for herself.

It was a small dictionary which her father had brought over from England and given to her as a Christmas present. And on finding "deceitful and treacherous" among the meanings of the word "insidious," she was appalled at her mother having such a terrible disease. For the doctor and her father to know it was enough. She would never reveal the secret; she would not even tell her mother. "Poor dear mother. How terrible! Would she really ever get well again?"

For a long time there was no change. Laura tried to live in hope. The few remaining months of winter would soon be over. And every one hoped that the return of spring with its balmy air, its forest green, its galaxy of flowers, and the songs of birds, all of which Mercy loved, would help to revive her.

Winter melted into spring, and spring glided into summer, and summer into autumn, and autumn shrivelled and shrank into winter again, but the long-hoped-for change for the better did not come.

Perhaps for a while the clear, white skin of Mercy's face became more waxenly fair; the soft rose tint of her cheek more delicately pink, and the look of her eye more brilliant. But there was a shrinkage of body and limbs, which Laura's eyes could not fail to see.

There was a gradual change, too, in the major's manner. He seemed to be more gentle, more thoughtful, more considerate. And as, little by little, her mother's health failed, Laura herself became more helpful.

At last Mrs. Ingersoll's health gave way altogether, and before Christmas came round again she became a confirmed invalid.

Do as she would, a great sorrow, and a great dread stared the wise and discreet little maiden in the face; for the one whom she had hated to see come into the house, and yet whom she had learned to love was, she saw, about to pass away; and she feared that her father, for whom she had always had a strong affection, in the fickleness of his love, would marry again.

She had once heard her father expound his views upon this point to a friend: "If a man has a family," he said very gravely, in reply to a question upon this point, "I believe that it is his duty to have a wife to control and guide it. Of course, he should secure a good one, but if one dies the quicker he gets another the better. There is no use letting grass grow under your feet. It is one of the misfortunes of war, which anyone may have to face. I had to face it once and I pray God I may never have to face it again."

"But if you have to?"

"I don't think that I will. But whatever happens, I always stick to my principles."

"And what are your principles?"

"To learn by experience; to judge every emergency upon its merits; and then to act with decision."

This had been two years previous and the memory of the words had made little Laura feel sad when she stole away

to think in her ingenious way of the varied joys as well as sorrows of life.

Soon the doctor told the major that the end was inevitable, but the decline might still be gradual.

"Will she suffer much pain?" the major asked.

"Toward the end, yes, but that can be relieved."

It was a period when trained nurses were unknown. "As she will be confined to bed," said the doctor, "you will need more help. Someone especially to wait upon her. Who can you get?"

"We have two maids already, and Laura has helped a good deal. There is no one especially qualified, but I am sure that in kindness our neighbours will be glad to come in. More than that, Laura is anxious to remain from school and do all she can."

"She's very young to undertake work like that."

"She's fourteen and she's strong," said the major.

"She's a fine girl and very reliable, I've noticed that," said the doctor. "What sort of a student is she?"

"Always at the head of her class."

"Still, it will be a long break for the girl," he said, musingly. "And several months will elapse before it is all over."

"I know it is sad for us in every way," noted the major. "But I think that we had better let Laura do as she desires. She is deeply sorry for her mother, and very determined to help. At first she did not care for Mercy at all, but latterly she never thinks that she can do enough."

"Yes, it would be well to let her do what she can. We must see to it, however, that she does not run down. Laura's a bit of good stuff. Any one can see that. She'll pick up again quickly when she gets back to school," was the doctor's comment.

When Laura returned from school that afternoon, she ran quietly through the house and into her mother's room. Patting her hand, she said with a brighter expression upon her face than Mercy had seen for several days: "Do you know, mother, that I am going to stay home for a while just to wait on you?"

"But, child—"

"It is all fixed. Dadda told me so. He was waiting at the gate to tell me. The doctor agrees with him."

"But, Laura, you'll miss your lessons just at the time that a girl should be doing her best."

"Bother the lessons, mother. It's time that you had your broth. I'll run and see if Chloe has it ready."

When the major told Laura that Mercy would need more attention, perhaps until the coming of summer, he had little idea what a complexity of thought raced through the young girl's mind. It would be unjust to believe that Laura was a deliberate schemer, or that she had any desire to make a false impression upon her father, but having a pretty clear perception of what lay before them in the not distant future, she strongly desired to guide him in the right way. She would show him that she could not only take good care of her mother, but she would also let him see that she was strong enough and mature enough to take care of the house and the children as well.

The result, whatever the motive, was both encouraging to Laura and gratifying to her father. The old order of neatness and good housekeeping of both Elizabeth and Mercy was continued.

By and by the days lengthened, the snow ceased to fall, the ice melted beneath the sun's rays and spring was at hand again. With the flowers of May Mercy's days were numbered and the Ingersoll house again became one of mourning.

The major grieved that he had so soon again become a widower, but was glad that Mercy's sufferings were over. He had the comforting satisfaction of knowing that he had done his best, and that at last, after such a long, distressing illness, she was at rest.

The friends and outside dear ones shed tears, shook their heads, wondered, and commiserated with the little ones. These little ones in their black dresses were very sorrowful and walked about with dainty steps, as if afraid of disturbing the dear one who had come to her last long sleep; while Laura felt in more ways than one the depth of the loss that she had sustained. The great cry that ran throughout her distressed little soul was "How long, how long?"

VII

Changed Conditions

There was great stillness in the house for the next few days. The many friends who had recently been dropping in almost daily, either in sympathy or to give help, naturally ceased to come, except in a much more occasional way. There was one exception, however, that of Mrs. Robert Ingersoll, the major's brother's wife. Although they lived miles apart, the association of the two brothers had been very intimate. When Thomas urged Matilda to stay with the children for a few days until the domestic atmosphere would be more settled, she readily consented, and keeping her fingers busy she prepared the children for school again. At the end of the week she returned home.

"And what of Laura?" Matilda asked, as the rig drove up to take her away. "Will she return to school soon?"

"Here she comes. Let her speak for herself. This little daughter of mine has a will of her own," said the major.

"Lucky for you, Thomas, it's always in the right direction."

"Our life has been a sad one for a long time now. The worst of it is that Laura seems to want to carry the whole burden."

"I was asking your father, Laura, how soon will you want to return to school?"

Laura looked first at one and then the other before she spoke.

"Not for a long time. What will be the use? In a few weeks the summer holidays will be here."

"Quite true; not until after that," noted the major.

"Yes, that will be best," said Matilda. "And when the holidays come, your uncle Robert and I want all of you to spend a couple of weeks with us."

"That will be fine and it will be a rest for Laura."

Laura's eyes brightened for the moment. "Thank you, aunt. We shall be glad to come."

It was a big house for Laura to superintend. Chloe and Persiana were old domestics who had been in the family for many years, but as in both mumma's and mother's time, it required vigilant care and oversight to keep everything in order, so, Laura had made up her mind that in no point should anything fail.

The weeks passed in quick succession. The old order continued to prevail. The children, after school and supper and play were over, were regularly put to bed, and the major spent the hours of evening at home smoking and reading, while Laura sewed or turned the pages of a book.

Often they talked, and sometimes Laura would detect his keen eyes looking at her very hard. Was he reading her soul? But there was one great gladness in her heart, he spent every evening by her side in that great old house. The only question was would it last?

Some people said it wouldn't. Some said it shouldn't. In a whispered way it soon became a matter of gossip. In the rural towns of New England the ladies had always been accustomed to that sort of thing. And Great Barrington was no exception to so general a rule. Two of them, in particular, were much addicted to exchanging views. They were neither too old nor too young for the job—old enough to have had much experience, and wise enough to know how far to go and when to stop. Yet they were not old enough to be too stiff in their limbs to gather and ventilate the news.

It was a matter of religious decorum, even in neighbourly gossip, not to be too hurried in comment. So a month was allowed to pass, even a month and a half, before it religiously took its place, and then only with due sobriety and caution.

"She was really a very nice woman," said Mrs. Chauncey.

"Indeed she was, and so patient," replied Mrs. Rattlesides.

"And the major was so good to her."

"Yes, towards the last."

"Wasn't he always?"

"But you know she was his second and that makes a difference."

"I don't know that it should."

"But it does. When a man marries again before his first wife has been cold in her grave for much over a year, he cannot have real love for the second."

"I wonder if that's the reason they didn't have any children?"

"Goodness knows; it might be. I never thought of it in that way. The poor thing didn't really pine away did she?"

"I have often wondered if he married the right one."

"I have sometimes wondered that, too. You know, a lot of people called on dear Mercy, until the doctor said she was too ill to see anybody. Well, one day when I was there, Mrs. Backus called. She was very nice about it. She did not go into the room at all. So that Mercy did not know that she was there. She just smiled and talked to Laura a bit and left a bunch of roses. I heard her whisper as she went away to tell her mother that a friend had left them."

"Wasn't the major a little attentive to her at one time?"

"Yes, there were the two young widows, each with one child; Sarah Backus with a girl and Mercy Smith with a boy. Curious, wasn't it? People said that he was a little attentive to both. But suddenly, the war being over, Mrs. Backus went south with her father, Gamaliel Whiting, to Virginia and she did not come back until some months after he had married Mercy."

"The very time that he is said to have gotten cool on his wife."

"It's a shame how people talk."

"I would never mention it to any one if I were you."

"I don't intend to. But just think of it. If he had waited as any decent man ought to have done, a couple of years, before he had married again, no mistake could have been made, and he might have married Sarah."

"He may do that yet for aught we know."

"For that matter, I think that men are so crazy sometimes that we should have state laws passed to make them behave themselves."

"That's funny—in what way?"

"No woman should be allowed to marry again until she has been a widow for three years, and no man until he has been a widower for two years at least."

"But why the difference?"

"Because the widow can look after her family and her husband usually leaves her something, but the man cannot attend to business and children too, and needs the woman much more than she needs the man."

"But that cannot be said of the major. Little Laura Ingersoll is as good a housekeeper as you can find anywhere."

"Why do you call her little?"

"Just for her years. She's big, but only fourteen."

"She's grave and matronly enough to be twice that age."

"I'd give a penny for her thoughts any day," said Mrs. Chauncey.

"I'd give a shilling."

"An incomprehensible child."

"Too old for her years, that's all."

And they both nodded their heads.

"Well," said Mrs. Rattlesides, as she took her leave, "we'll wait and see if Sally gets him after all. But mind you, don't say a word."

"No, I won't."

And with mutual nods the two friends parted.

The weeks of the spring and early summer passed without further change in the Ingersoll homestead. But as time wore on they were sometimes rather weary ones for Laura. It was when her sisters were at school and her father at the office that she felt it most. And to relieve herself of the cares of the empty house she would sometimes wander with a book down the long garden and throw herself on the bank of the river, more to think than to read. The Housatonic swept past the foot of the garden on its way to the ocean. Born and brought up in Great Barrington, she had always lived near the river and for years had longed for the time when with a boat of their own they could row upon its waters. If there had been a good-sized boy in the family they would have had one long ago, but as the major had no taste for the water and would not run the risk while his children were young, the purchase of one had been delayed.

Possibly one of the chief reasons why Laura looked with so much expectancy to the holiday visit to Aunt Matilda's was the fact that while Uncle Robert's was miles away up country, it was still on their own river; her Cousin David had both canoe and rowboat and would no doubt treat her to many a ride on the stream so long and unavailingly loved.

The question was, when was the visit to be made? There seemed to be no hurry. Everything was running smoothly at the house. Perhaps that was the reason. Then the holiday season commenced, but there was neither word from her aunt, nor talk from her father about it. Perhaps when he came home so regularly and found the harmony in the family circle so complete, he did not care to break it, even with the promised visit.

So June had passed away, and July was almost over, yet there was no word. Laura was perplexed. The school was going to open in a few days. Something must have happened.

At last the major announced that Uncle Robert would arrive the next morning with a double carriage to take them out to his farm. There was great clapping of hands and shouts of joy among the children.

"And have you everything ready, Laura?"

"Yes, we've had for weeks. All except the packing and we'll fix that to-night."

"Good for you, child. I'm glad to hear it. I'll help you to pack."

"But what will you do, while we are away, father?"

"Chloe and Persiana will manage for me. Aunt Matilda knows I can get along. She will keep you the full two weeks, and perhaps a little longer."

"But why longer, father?"

"I did not say that she would. She will be glad to have you all and she thinks that you need a rest, Laura. That's all."

"Good, kind, Aunt Matilda."

Aunt Matilda certainly did her best. The burden which had been carried by Laura's shoulders for more than a year must be taken off, for a time at least. And it was. Mrs. Robert Ingersoll took entire charge of the three younger sisters and Laura had nothing to do for any one but herself. Putting aside the sedate, matronly face she was glad to romp and play with her cousins and the rest.

In less than a week her cheeks were rosier and her face fuller. Long rows on the river with Cousin David made the whole time pass pleasantly. David was a manly sort of fellow and three years her senior. Having a dark complexion and strong features he was quite struck, in boyish fashion, with the fair face and beaming eyes of his winsome cousin. And she was equally infatuated. The scholastic Henry Bostwick and the muscular, laughing David Ingersoll were of opposite types. Which of the two she liked best she didn't know. But David could do things, and, what was more, he was her cousin. What a pity it was she hadn't a brother like him.

And then they had long rows on the Housatonic in a boat large enough to carry them and their Cousin Jessie as well. But Laura had never been in a canoe in her life. She had noticed David's birch-bark more than once.

"Suppose I take you out in my canoe after supper," he suggested, one day. "There is no wind. I'm sure you'll like it."

"I think I would. But it's such a little thing. Is it safe?"

"Quite. Of course it's small. I bought it from an Indian. It's only intended for two. Although I have had three in it, it will be splendid just for you and me."

Laura laughed and after supper they raced down to the bank for her first canoe ride on the smooth waters of the river, for in that region the Housatonic was very wide and tranquil. Boy and girl-like they talked on many subjects. David was to be a farmer, possessing large herds of cattle, pens of hogs, and stables of fast horses. He didn't see why the new United States shouldn't beat England in the steeplechase. The new world had beaten the old world on the battlefield, with all her big ships and cannon and red-coated soldiers, and he didn't see why she couldn't beat her in everything else, if she tried.

Laura was touched by his enthusiasm. He seemed like such a capable and handsome fellow, but she had read more and was not so sure that he was right. They might be able to fight, but there were lots of things that the people didn't know. They needed more knowledge. All their books came from England. She thought she would be a teacher some day.

"And will you ever write a book?" David asked, teasingly.

"No, but I'll be glad to study the English books until we get some of our own."

At another time they were talking of Canada. So many people whom they both knew had gone over there.

"Father thinks that the Government of Canada is very generous to our people who go over," said Laura. "A friend of his named Waldron is to have a grant of three thousand acres for locating settlers."

"Yes, I know," replied David. "You can get any amount of land over there for sixpence an acre. Does Uncle Thomas ever think of joining them?"

"I'm not sure. I know that before the last rebellion he thought somewhat about it. That Mohawk Chief, Brant, was a friend of his and tried to persuade him to go over."

"Yes, and father and he were talking about it again, lately. But father and I don't quite agree on that point. This new country is quite good enough for me. Even if dad did go I think I'd want to stay," said David.

"But if my father wants to go I'll want to go with him," said Laura, who ever since Mercy's death had called him "father."

"Unless I succeed in persuading you to stay with me," remarked David. "You and I would make a splendid team, Laura. Just think what a glorious time we'd have. Four years from now I'll be twenty-one and you eighteen. You will be full of book learning and I of land knowledge. Don't know but I might be a Senator some day." The lad had rushed along so rapidly that Laura couldn't stop him.

"Cousin David," she cried at last. "What nonsense you talk. Who knows but four years from now you may be marrying a Choctaw squaw, and I a Cayuga brave. It would be just about as sensible, don't you think?"

"Both of us getting back to the aboriginal type," he answered, with a laugh. And then he continued with a more serious face. "Which really means, if there is anything at all in what you say, that eventually as the Choctaws are all over here, I shall stay perpetually in Yankee land, while as the Cayugas are now all in Canada you in the long run are bound to become a Canuck."

"I think it's about time we went in."

"So do I."

The time for returning home was more than due. The Great Barrington school must have been open for fully two weeks, but there had been no word from her father. Much as she and her little sisters enjoyed their visit, Laura was getting uneasy. Something must surely be wrong.

But there was no use in alarming the young girl. So Aunt Matilda quieted her mind as well as she could.

At last two letters arrived, one for Mrs. Ingersoll, requesting her to retain her troublesome guests for two weeks longer if she could manage it, giving tangible reasons for such an astonishing request, and the other to Laura, stating that it had been such a long time since there had been any renovation of the house he had decided to have it done now, while they were away, and the house was empty.

Laura was perplexed, puzzled, doubtful. The house had not been painted for a long time, but they had become so accustomed to its condition that no one had suggested any change. If it were really necessary, why did they not have it done in dear mother's time and not afterward?

Instead of a pleased look, trouble was on Laura's face when Mrs. Ingersoll came out of her room; but as she spoke reassuringly, Laura was better satisfied.

"There is no doubt, but that the house will look better when painted again," said Mrs. Ingersoll. "Another thing, paint adds to the durability of a building and is cheaper in the long run."

Two weeks later another letter arrived which announced that the house decorations had been completed. So their uncle said that he would drive them the dozen miles back to Great Barrington on the following day.

After tea Cousin David gave Cousin Laura her parting canoe ride on the river.

"Be sure and make it very short," said Matilda to her son. "Laura has some packing to do yet."

"Not more than half an hour, just to the bend and back," was his answer. So, as frequently before, away they went.

"That newly-painted house proves that you are not going to catch the Cayuga brave after all," was David's teasing remark. "No Canada for you; just dear old Barrington, for ever and ever."

"I'd like to know where you'd find a better town."

"And you'll be queen of it until Elizabeth is big enough to take your place. And then I'll come and carry you off to the most splendid house on the Housatonic River."

"Don't be too sure, Cousin David. Perhaps the Cayuga brave will outwit you."

"If he tried to I'll tomahawk him, that's sure."

So with laughter and badinage the cousins turned at the bend of the river and were soon home again.

VIII

Ingersoll's Third Marriage

As they started away the next morning, Aunt Matilda parted from each with a lingering caress, particularly in bidding adieu to Laura. It was a long, bright and breezy ride for the three children occupying the second seat. Laura, who sat in the front with her uncle, was in graver mood, and let him do most of the talking.

"It's a bran' new house you're going to," he remarked in a cheery tone, for he detected a somewhat perplexed look on his niece's face. "Your father has made a fine job of it. It's painted white again with grey trimmings and green shutters. And what is more, he has torn down the old porch and built in its place a handsome new one."

"But why did he do it?"

"I suppose he wanted to freshen things up a bit. The fact of your being away gave him the chance."

"It was very good of him," Laura commented. But to herself she wondered if there was any other reason. And counting the months upon her fingers she felt that it was too soon for what she feared to have happened. For the rest of the journey she was more cheerful.

They reached Great Barrington before noon. It was just as Uncle Robert had described, and their father, with a bright, glad face, was at the gate with open arms to receive them. Never had a home-coming been more enthusiastic.

The brothers shook each other very heartily by the hand as Thomas exclaimed: "Jake will take care of your horses, Robert. You are in splendid time. Dinner will be ready in half an hour. We'll go right in."

Everything was fresh and enchanting, while Chloe and Persiana stood chuckling at the kitchen door, ready to greet the new-comers. At once the children ran upstairs to investigate their rooms.

Robert cast an approving but questioning look all round. "Come into my den and have a little talk before the youngsters come down," said Thomas, closing the door as they entered.

"You certainly know how to do things, Thomas," his brother commented. "But why this devilish hurry?"

"Principally on Laura's account."

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes, honest Injun. The girl has been working herself to death for almost a year now and all the time worrying unnecessarily about something and at the same time missing her schooling. You must have noticed how much she had run down when she went to you more than a month ago. It was high time to make a change."

"Yes, Matilda and I both noticed it, but how did you manage to fill the gap so quickly?"

"That's what I want to tell you about. I know that people will talk, but I would rather let you have a straight story. When the girls went away I had nothing in view whatever except to give them a rest, particularly Laura. Well, the evening after they left I was taking my usual walk along the bank of the river when I met Sally Backus. She was coming from the Main Street. I was going to it. I am quite positive that the meeting was unintentional on both sides. I hadn't seen her to speak to for more than five years. So we talked a little and then I turned and walked home with her, and we renewed our old friendship."

"What followed? Were you not rather sweet with her when you got in with Mercy?"

"Of course we hadn't got very far, but it was for fear that something might happen that she was taken away."

"And now something has happened."

"Yes, we are to be married to-morrow."

"And all little Laura's praiseworthy efforts to prevent her father making another hasty marriage will come to nothing."

"Good heavens! that was not her object?"

"It was nothing else. Did you never see it?"

"Pon my soul, I didn't."

"You must be blind as a bat. Every one else saw it."

"Well! It can't be helped now," said Thomas, grimly. "And as things have gone I wouldn't help it if I could. But to go on with my story, there are some splendid points about Sally. Mercy knew that we had been intimate. The real reason she went south was that she was not strong and her father insisted that the care of my four little girls would break her down."

"But what now?"

"Oh, she is quite well again, and the children being older will need less care. Another thing, Sally agrees with me that Laura must return at once to school, and make up for lost time."

"And after having fixed up your house so well will you give up the idea of eventually going to Canada?"

"Not by any means, altogether. But for a while. The fact of having to marry a third time will be the very thing to increase my desire to leave Great Barrington. The gossip about the man who has had three wives in five years would

never die out. So in the end we'll move across the border."

As the two men returned to the living-room they heard the buzz of merry voices, for the children had descended the stairs and were discussing their many discoveries with Chloe and Persiana.

"Who put up the new curtains and fixed the rooms?" said Elizabeth.

"Chloe and me did a lot," said Persiana.

"And who helped?" asked Myra.

"Dey was Mis' Whitin' and Mis' Backus—" Chloe nudged Persiana; she stopped and giggled.

"Dey was just heah, when Massa was away," put in Chloe.

"Oh, father, how splendidly you have fixed my room," cried Laura, who while the others were talking turned to the major. "I thought that I would have to do it, and everything is finished."

"I am glad you like it. I'll tell you all about it later." And they sat down to dinner.

After the meal was over and Uncle Robert had taken his leave, the younger children caught sight of a new swing in the garden and went out to enjoy it. Laura was left alone with her father.

"I suppose you are still full of curiosity, Laura?" he said, as he took her by the hand and led her into the best room. "There are some things that I considered it better not to mention until you were home again."

"Yes, father." Already her heart was quaking.

"I've been thinking a great deal about you, Laura, since you went away. You were working so hard that you looked tired and, what was more than that, worried. I know that, like the rest of us, you grieved at the loss of your mother. But there was something else in your mind. What was it, Laura?"

"Must I really tell?"

"I think you should. Of all people in the world I am the one who ought to know what is troubling my little daughter."

"And you won't be angry?"

"I will try not to be."

"But won't you promise?"

He became very grave, for he knew that he was being tried by his own child, and turned his head for a moment before he replied:

"Yes, I promise."

She folded her hands and held them tightly together as if to strengthen her confidence, while her eyes filled with tears which she bravely held from falling.

"It was this way, father. I loved mumma so much that I didn't think you should have married mother so soon. Then when mother died I worked hard so that you wouldn't need to marry soon again."

"My poor child, that's the very thing I'm going to do." Ingersoll thought that since the news was inevitable it was better to have it over at once. "I'm going to be married to-morrow."

Suddenly covering her face with her hands to hide the tears that were falling, Laura rose to her feet. He seized her

hands but she snatched them from him and with "please don't," she ran out of the door and upstairs to her room.

The major was nonplussed. He had never seen such an outbreak in the girl's life before. Was it temper, was it grief, was it shock or simply misunderstood, outraged feeling? What was the matter with himself? There must be something wrong somewhere.

And what should he do? Should he go up to her?

No, after all it would be better to let her cry out her feelings. He would see her later.

Although Laura possessed an unusually mature sensitiveness she was not what might be considered an emotional girl. What might produce a laugh on other children's faces might only provoke a smile upon hers. And foolish things which made others cry would not be sufficient to arouse her sympathy. But deeper things she took to heart. And further, she could not unburden herself to others and thus lessen the load.

This outspoken revelation was a terrible shock to her. From what she knew of her father's nature it was not something that she might not expect sometime. But to have it come so soon, without a moment's warning, and from her father's own lips, was a different matter. The harshness of the announcement, with the tumult of feelings which it occasioned, she could not understand. All that she realized was that the shock was terrible, and hastening to her window she threw herself into her new rocking-chair, and buried her face in her hands. How long she continued to cry she did not know, but the flow of tears relieved her feelings, and by and by when they ceased to come she felt better and commenced to think it all out.

She remembered very distinctly her aversion to the second marriage. It was only to obtain a good housekeeper that her father had been speedily untrue to the memory of her own dear mumma. As for the matter of school, that need not signify, for she herself was already making a plan for home study.

And it was all in vain. He did not care a button for her housekeeping and all that she had been willing to do for his comfort. Now he was going to rush off and marry another woman only three months and twenty-nine days after his second wife had been laid in her grave. The thing was an outrage, a disgrace to the family, and to the very name of the town in which they lived.

Laura's eyes were quite dry by this time. She sat up and looked out of the window. She was sure that her father had not gone out. He might still be in the room waiting for her to come down again, and she began to think more kindly of him. Were there not two sides to every question? She had rushed away so quickly that she did not know who he was going to marry. She had not given him time to explain. And had he not always been kind? Although he had perhaps been colder to mother Mercy than to her own dear mumma, he had always been good to her. And then about herself. Had she not been out of school for nearly a year? Was her father not always anxious about her education? If he married again could she not go back to school at once?

And how much he had done for all of them, right now! Of course, he had fixed the outside of the house and the principle rooms to please the new wife, whoever she might be. But the children's rooms and the new swing were for them. And her own room, how dainty it was. New curtains, and new rug, and the lovely new rocking-chair! How could she think cruel things of her father. Suddenly, her eyes rested upon her dressing table. On it there was something that astonished her. Something that she did not remember seeing for years. It was actually the miniature picture of King George that General Burgoyne had personally presented to her eleven years ago on her third birthday. Why had her father placed it there to-day? On each side of it was a dainty picture of her own mumma, Elizabeth Dewey. For some moments she stood still with her eyes fixed upon them. As she looked and wondered, her thoughts at last found expression in whispered words:

"Yes, I think I know what dear old dad means. Mumma always liked the old régime. She would have remained loyal if she could, and father often said that in the good days to come we might cross the lakes and live in the King's country again. And then, when I got to be twenty, General Burgoyne was going to write me a letter. Does not dad mean that when that day comes we shall be living in Canada after all?"

Opening her door she ran downstairs to have another talk with her father. He had not left the room, but had been busy arranging letters and papers before starting on his third brief wedding tour, vowing to himself that no matter what happened he would never have a fourth.

"Father, I am sorry," was all that she could say.

"So am I." But for what he did not explain. "Laura, you remember Mrs. Backus, who called to leave flowers for your mother several times while she was ill?"

"Yes, and while all the other ladies came in, she never did."

"Was she kind looking? Did you like her face?"

"Yes, I think I did."

"That lady will be the new Mrs. Ingersoll. I am sure that she will be good to you all, and I want you to be very good to her. We expect to be married to-morrow at her father's, Mr. Gamaliel Whiting's, of Bradford. We shall be away for about a week. During that time, Laura, I will leave you in charge. And I am glad to tell you that as soon as we return you go right back to school again. I am sure that, just as you always have done, you will do your best."

"I will try to, father."

For a moment a tear glistened in the major's eye. Then he threw his arm round her neck and with a tender kiss told her that she must break the news to the other children.

And so, on the following day Mrs. Sarah Backus and Major Thomas Ingersoll were married.

IX

An Outlook into a New Life

While Laura's conversation with her father gave her a wider vision, and made him think more deeply, it did not remove from her mind the incongruity of so hasty a marriage. Immature though her mind was, she thought she could see the strength of some of his ideas, and the weakness of others. Still, whatever the result might be, the fiat was inevitable, and the future had to be faced. She thought from what little she had seen of his new wife that she might make a more congenial partner for him.

The next two years passed smoothly and her school life went on apace. She had some difficulty in overtaking Henry Bostwick. It took more than a year to get abreast of him in his classes. They became great companions, and often when going to or from school they would discuss lessons or other subjects, as they followed the course of the river.

He was only a year older than Laura, and had dreams which occasionally swept across his brain, but it was too soon to do more than dream.

And then there was Cousin David Ingersoll, who, although living so many miles up the river, would sometimes paddle all the distance down the Housatonic to give his golden-headed, brown-eyed cousin a ride in his canoe.

On one occasion Henry found them together and when next day they met he twitted Laura jestingly.

"You forget that David is my cousin," was her reply.

"A young man wouldn't row twenty miles to see his cousin," said Henry.

"You haven't got one; so you don't know."

"Yes, I have three, and I wouldn't row five miles to see any one of them."

"You hard-hearted villain. I won't have anything more to say to you," and with a laugh she darted up to the house, leaving him to pursue his way along the banks of the stream.

The next morning all this was forgotten. On the whole the days that followed were happy, filled with the study and life that Laura loved. Henry's walks and David's talks balanced each other, and the congeniality which prevailed in the home circle provided for contentment.

With the major, external matters were not as they should have been. He had been expecting to wind up his business and cross the border in 1791 and had been making arrangements toward that end. He and his wife had long talks upon the subject. She was equally anxious to leave Great Barrington and go where the past would be unknown and the touch of unkind gossip never heard. Their first child was born in 1790 and they hoped to be able to make the change the following year.

Toward that end Ingersoll had correspondence with Chief Brant, who long before this had secured from the Canadian Government the large area of fertile land along the Grand River which had been promised. There were two regions from which the red chief advised his white friend to select his property, the Western La Tranche River district on the road to the St. Clair and Detroit region, or the Niagara district, much farther to the east. This caused much correspondence with Governor Simcoe's Secretary of State at Newark and there were many delays. So the second year passed by. In the third, a second child was born to the major and his good wife Sally.

This, of itself, occasioned further delay and it was not until 1793 that any effective move could be made.

At last the glad announcement came under the authority of the government that a large section of the most fertile territory of the Province of Upper Canada, along the banks of the La Tranche River, had been set apart for prospective settlers from the New England States. Major Ingersoll was to be head commissioner and forty settlers might be located at once. Each was to have the privilege of acquiring two hundred acres and upwards at sixpence an acre. It was a region of great fertility with heavily-timbered forest through which ran a wide, navigable river and in which sugar maples abounded. There was to be a very large reservation for the major and his friends to dispose of. A further clause was added that he might make arrangements for one thousand more American settlers for whom like privileges and rights would be granted on the same terms.

This was a great bonanza offered to disappointed Americans and was seized and acted upon with alacrity. The great opportunity had arrived and must be accepted without delay. But it was not until the following spring that the first movement could actually be made.

How best to do it was the question. That Ingersoll must lead the way was evident. Still how to travel with a large family and two babes in arms through a new and undeveloped country without roads or any wayside accommodation was a difficult problem to solve.

But the many consultations in the Ingersoll home circle soon brought out a solution. Laura was in her eighteenth year. With her school education finished, and being just as desirous as ever for her father to make his home in the King's country, it was decided that while the family, under the care of Mrs. Ingersoll, should remain for the present in their home in Great Barrington, Laura should accompany the major in his initial investigation of the new land.

The most serious break Laura had was the parting with David. Although his father had decided to follow the major and in the end settle in the great Ingersoll belt, it was not so with the young man himself.

David hastened down by canoe to use his persuasive powers to urge Laura to return, and ultimately become his wife, even if she did go over for the present.

He had tied up his canoe by a big maple on the bank of the river and met Laura in the garden. Although in a way unexpected, she would have been disappointed if he had not come.

"I would have come yesterday, but I couldn't," was his greeting.

"Better late than never," was her answer.

"Better late than early, you mean. It couldn't be never."

"Never's a hard word."

"We both use it too often, perhaps. You do when you say that you will never be willing to live on this side of the line again. Don't you remember four years ago that you and I had a long talk? Let us get into the canoe and have another. I do not know when we will have a chance again."

"But what's the use, David?"

"The greatest use in the world, Laura. Come, get in, girlie. We must have a paddle." And taking her arm he helped her into the little craft.

He paddled upstream for some minutes without speaking. Then he exclaimed, looking directly at her as she sat in the bow with her face towards him: "Won't you miss the Housatonic?"

"Yes, I will," was the response. "But they say the La Tranche is a much more beautiful river."

"Yet look at the difference. Here you have a cleared country, a river free from all logs and rubbish, and civilized people and not Indians for neighbours."

"But white people are going in and a lot more will follow as soon as father leads the way. Your father, uncle Robert, will be one of the first," said Laura.

"Yes and more's the pity. Still, he'll leave the old place to me; that's one good thing."

"Perhaps it is, Cousin David. But my father intends to pull up stakes completely and part with everything here."

"That need not effect you, Laura. Suppose you do go over for a bit until Uncle Thomas gets a start. You can come back any time. There'll be a place ready for you. Our old ranch is a mighty good one, even if it is only two hundred acres."

"Ah, you forget, Cousin David," she returned, with a light laugh, "that dad's new farm, as leader of the band, will cover more than as many thousand acres."

"Why do you always call me cousin? You know I hate the term. If we were never going to be anything else but cousins it would be all right. But you know very well that we are. Why not call me 'David' and be done with it?"

"Still, we are cousins; there's no denying that, and yet for the last four years you have been talking about the time when you and I should be married, when you know very well that cousins should never marry."

"Who said they shouldn't, when your kings of England, for whom I have no use, always marry their cousins, and the royal Montezumas of Mexico for generations always married their sisters? Surely I, a simple citizen of the United States, might have the privilege of marrying my own cousin, if she will have me."

"There are other reasons beside that," she replied, seeming to realize the apparent force of his argument. "You know very well, that for one good reason, if for no other, I will gladly leave this country for good."

"Yes," he replied, a dubious expression stealing over his face. "But I do not see why the fault of another should affect you. As my wife you would be Mrs. David Ingersoll, my much-loved partner in life and no one else."

"But the double gossip would still be there and Great Barrington would never hear the end of it. No, no, Cousin David, I'll tell you what to do. Find a good customer for your farm and come over to that great new place on the La

Tranche River which they intend to call Ingersoll, after my father, and I will see that he secures you a grant of at least a thousand acres and lets you pick the spot out for yourself. After that you and I can have a talk."

"That's awfully good of you, Laura, but I don't think I can ever see it in that light. Of course I'm young yet, but I feel deeply interested in the life of the United States, and I am ambitious enough to hope to have a hand in it some day. It would stimulate me more if you were by my side."

"Oh, don't let us talk about it any more. Just father and I are going now. The rest of the family will stay for a while yet. When I have been over there I will know more about it. I do like you, but my liking is not strong enough to make me willing to pass my life near Great Barrington."

"You and Uncle Thomas are not going alone, are you?"

"No, Henry Bostwick and his brother will be with us, as well as several others."

"I see; so there is a possibility in that direction?"

"That is unkind of you."

"I am sorry. Perhaps my love for you makes me insanely jealous."

"You haven't any real cause. I like Henry. For years we have been school-mates. And the reason they are going over now is to take possession of a grant of land presented by Governor Simcoe in recognition of an old college friendship with their father."

"Sorry again, I say."

They had reached the bank and with her he stepped on shore to bid her adieu.

With the words: "Good-bye, Cousin David," she pressed a kiss upon his lips. Then she ran towards the house. But in an instant she relented and turning round exclaimed as he was stepping into his boat again: "You must come and have supper, David. It may be the last chance to have it with us here. I would never forgive myself, if you didn't."

So, as he had often done before, he went into the house with Laura.

PART TWO

In The King's Country

X

Journey to Canada

A deep affection had arisen between Laura and Sally Backus during the four years which had elapsed since the latter had become her stepmother. From the first the new Mrs. Ingersoll paved the way to the formation of a personal attachment. She had learned much about the family history and Laura's sensitive nature in the week of the wedding journey and on her return established for herself a satisfactory place in the household.

There were only a dozen years between Sally and Laura and in a little talk Sally said: "With you, Laura, I am to be neither mumma nor mother, but simply Sally."

"But how can I call you that?"

"Quite easily. Everybody does. I like it better than Sarah, and with you I shall be more like an elder sister. With the others it will be different."

And now, when they were parting, Sally was much concerned about Laura's comfort and safety on that long journey, so much of it by trail through the woods, particularly as she would be the only woman in the party.

"The worst of it is," she said, "that you may have to spend more than one night in the woods without even a tent to cover you."

"I like that," said Laura. "I can look out of my blanket up at the stars."

"There'll be lots of blankets and other coverings. We're attending to that."

"I suppose in the woods there'll be danger of wolves."

"There may be, but the men will be armed."

"The worst of it is that there will be so much to carry and there'll be no horses on the trail."

"Still, it will be a wonderful experience if the weather continues fine. Those Bostwick lads will be splendid companions for you and father for the trip."

"Yes, all the way to Newark."

"Father said there were others going, too."

"Yes, Mr. Ryerson and Mr. Waldron are among them."

"Lots of men. A pity there are not more women."

"There wouldn't have been any if you had not insisted on going. It would have been easier for men alone."

"I know it's my fault, Sally dear, but I'm of age now and would like to see for myself. And going with father I thought I might see Governor Simcoe as well, and the little Canadian capital. If I waited until everyone was going I wouldn't get the chance."

"You'll get it now and it will do you good. I am glad that you will have the opportunity," said Sally.

"I have arranged to take a tent large enough to accommodate Laura and myself," said the major, who at that moment joined them. "We shall have to spend a night or two in the woods before we reach the lake."

"How long will the whole journey take, father?"

"About five days. A long time for a girl to be out on the tramp. My, I wish you were a boy."

"So do I, but I'll try to be as good as one. What's our course going to be, father?"

"By wagon to Albany, over fairly good roads, then up the Hudson for a hundred miles until we strike the Oneida trail. Next, north-west through the woods for sixty miles or so to Oswego and then by sail on Lake Ontario to Newark."

"The beauty of it is," said Laura, "there will be four different kinds of travelling and four different kinds of scenery on the road."

So one morning, early in May, 1794, the whole party gathered together, said their adieux, and started upon the first section of their long journey.

They had two long wagons, each containing half a dozen people besides the drivers, who were to return to Great Barrington with the empty rigs.

Immediately behind the driver of the first wagon sat the major and Laura. The girl was happy in the opportunity to be much together with her father and to have many long talks. She noticed more than ever the strong cut of his face. Ingersoll did not look as if emotion of any kind could ever rule his actions. But he had a firmness of chin and integrity of expression which showed that, whatever he believed to be right, that he would follow, irrespective of consequences. His hair and beard were slightly grizzled, but his frame was strong and his stature above the average. Laura liked her father's appearance. He was a man who could do many things yet, she was sure.

Since the mud of recent rains had dried away they drove along through the balmy air over dustless roads and Laura revelled in the bright sunshine, for it was not too warm.

"If it were all like this," she exclaimed, "the five days would be pure joy."

"The weather conditions will be all right I think, but the forest trail will be a new experience for you. I have seen it and I know what it is," said the major.

"If you have seen it, dad, I shall be glad to follow suit."

"I don't know that you will, girl. They say that the strip of woods in the Oneida valley, where we shall have to camp for one night, is still infested with wolves, and when they hunt in packs they are pretty bold."

"Haven't the men guns?"

"Yes, Ryerson and Waldron have, and so have I. I think that Henry Bostwick has, too, for I heard recently that he had been practising at the musket range."

"I know that he has guns with him," said Laura. "For he told me the other day that he would take a musket and a fowling piece."

"With so many of us armed, then, we are safe."

"But what are your plans, father, when we get to Newark?"

"That depends on several things. We shall put up at a hotel, of course. I shall see the Governor and ascertain if we can carry out at once the choosing of the proposed grant of land. There is a little garrison of English troops stationed there and as I am still an officer of the American army I may be asked to see them. Then after resting for a day or two, our whole party will take a Lake Erie boat above the Falls at Niagara and sail for the La Tranche valley."

"And what shall I do, while you are busy?"

"Probably become acquainted with some of the ladies of the fort and, besides that, examine the little town as well as you can and see if there is an available house which might suit us. If we move over here in September, which is probable, we shall have to find some place to stay for the winter. It would never do to try to live in the forest during the first winter after our arrival.

"That is the chief reason why I consented to your coming with us," the major continued. "With your mother the journey just now would be impossible."

"I like your plan," said Laura, "and when we go to the woods you will put up your shanty and I shall be your cook."

"Do you think you can manage it?"

"I'll do my best."

They halted at a little wayside tavern for dinner and, continuing their journey, arrived in the evening at Albany where they put up for the night.

The journey up the Hudson for the next hundred miles was a slow process. The air being still, the sails could not always be used and, in consequence, a good deal of the river had to be covered by rowing. They travelled the distance in two days, and were fortunate enough at the evening of each to secure accommodation in settlers' houses near the river.

The fascination of the picturesque outlook took much of the fatigue from the long journey. So thought Laura when she saw all that the views of the forest and glen and the smooth waters had to give.

The guide chosen for the long tramp of seventy miles through the forest was an Oneida Indian, well acquainted with the trail. While the major was making the necessary arrangements it happened that Henry and Laura were thrown together.

"Upon my word, Laura, I believe you were trying to avoid me," he exclaimed. "Three days out now and only an occasional word."

"Nonsense, Henry; we talked for more than ten minutes last night, and we sat together for much of the time on the river."

"Still, as old school pals, we ought to be nearer than that."

"I don't see why, for on this trip I'm not a girl any longer, but only a boy, like the rest of you."

"But we'll be pals for the first lap."

"Yes," she replied, "if father has no other plan."

"That's all right," said the major, who had overheard the last of the talk. "Mr. Waldron and I will lead the way. You can come right after us."

As they tramped along, Henry's musket and fowling-piece were slung unloaded on his back.

"This is like soldiers on the march," said Laura, who carried a carpet bag in one hand and a small bundle on her shoulder.

"We'll need all we've got," said Mr. Waldron, who, like the rest of the party, had as much as he could well carry. They were going to a new country where supplies would be nil and some of them had no idea how soon they would return to where they might easily be replenished.

For a couple of hours they tramped comfortably, two abreast, along the highway. Then the road became rougher and before noon they struck an old Indian trail.

"It's crooked, but double width for a while longer," explained the Indian guide. "After that it is single file with off-shoots to Oneida Lake and south."

"Which means that we wind through the woods like a snake and re-adjust our bearings," said the major.

"What do you mean by our bearings," asked Laura.

"Both what we carry and the direction we take," he replied, with a laugh.

"The single file section will spoil our walk," said Henry.

"It will make the walking easier," said Laura.

"But it will knock out the fun."

"Perhaps talking over the shoulder is better."

"That depends on where you are. If just in front of me I would not care, but behind it would be horrid. There'll be lots of room for you between your father and me."

"But dad always believes in fair play. I'm sure he'll want some one else to take your place for the next part of the journey."

So with much talk, laughter and banter among them, and more serious conversation between the major and Waldron, another hour passed by. It came high noon and these travellers from the land of the free Americans, who always took their midday meal on the stroke of the clock, loudly announced that it was time to call a halt. But their guide wouldn't have it so.

"No," he cried, "no water. Creek four miles ahead. Long walk, but good trail. Must get there first." So they tramped on. At last they reached the stream and, glad of the opportunity, they all sat down beneath the oaks and elms to partake of a hearty lunch, produced from the sacks the men carried.

Laura was tired and footsore from the unusually long tramp, and as there were many miles to cover before they would camp for the night, she reserved her strength for the afternoon walk.

While young Bostwick sat there munching his sandwiches, the question of sequence was a serious one in his mind. This had been a chance that he had never thought of before—a tramp for four hours side by side with the smartest girl he knew and the most stunning one he had ever seen. They would be together for a couple of days yet, all the way to Newark. What might not be accomplished in that time?

Laura was seated on a rug beside her father with her back against a leaning tree; the youths were grouped together so near that all they said could be heard. The lunch over and her eyes closed, one could scarcely tell whether, after the fatigue of the long walk, she was taking a mid-day nap or dreamily thinking.

"It'll be my turn next, for the afternoon innings," said John Bostwick in a low voice.

"There'll be no innings for anyone. After this it will be a single line," said Henry, who felt annoyed that the subject should be discussed by his brother.

"But you come after me," the lad returned.

"And I before either of you," said young Captain Ryerson.

"Suppose we draw cuts as to who follows the Ingersolls," said John.

"Well, then," said Ryerson, who was the most facetiously inclined of the three, and especially liked to tease Henry, "I'll ask the major," and stepping forward he put the question:

"Major Ingersoll," he said, just as Laura was opening her eyes, "we fellows are ready to fight a duel as to who should be first on the trail after yourself and Miss Ingersoll; and to save immediate bloodshed we want your permission to draw cuts."

The major had heard the whole conversation, was much amused and replied with a laugh: "Yes, to avoid unnecessary carnage, you may."

And whether he wanted it or not the lot fell to Ryerson. In another hour they were on their way again, with Laura steadily marching between him and her father.

As the afternoon hours wore on Ryerson could not help but admire the steady, regular step of the girl ahead of him.

Her trim figure, her jaunty step, the ease with which she carried her burden, more than took his fancy. Still, the weather was warm and it was tiresome marching on with so many miles ahead of them without a break. Even talking under such circumstances could not be carried on for ever.

"It's a beastly advantage I've got of you, Laura," he said at last. "While you can't get a glimpse of my ugly phiz I can get every line of you, as well as that pretty soldier's knapsack you carry."

"Well, if I can't get the glint of your eye I can get the twang of your tongue," she replied with a little toss of her head. "What other advantage can you take, I'd like to know?"

"I don't know that there's any, but we can each pitch our thoughts over your shoulder."

"And catch them on the wing," said Laura. "Bon mots caught in the air are best."

"Why, I'd like to know?"

"Because the others are always lost."

"H'm, h'm, that scores one for you. It is my turn next."

So Ryerson wracked his brain to see if he could not find something else to discuss. Then a new thought flashed through his mind and he broke out:

"Say, Laura! 'Saving your presence' as an Irishman would say, don't you think that a little of your last and my first would make a refreshing drink for our tramp this hot day?"

"Let me see," was her answer. "I wonder if I can solve your conundrum. Ah! yes, I see. But, captain, you couldn't take it straight. Our seconds (er-er), being equal you would have to take it half and half. I didn't know that you touched the stuff."

"Sol. of Rye. I don't for the best of all reasons. My dad wouldn't let me."

"Train up a child in the way he should go and he will never depart from it," she retorted, with emphatic seriousness.

"Not when you lead the way, Laura. You not only lead in person, but, for ever irrepressible, your first actually leads my last."

"Astonishing, isn't it?" she replied gaily. "But another riddle. What can it be?"

"Why, 'In son (g)' you take the lead. You sing like a sky-lark while I drum like a bumble-bee."

"What in the world are you two laughing so heartily about?" the major asked over his shoulder.

"Just jingling the letters of our names, Dad," was her quick response.

"But we must not forget that the last shall be first," added Ryerson, who even in a bantering mood remembered the old theology of his father which many years afterwards was so strongly endorsed by his son.

The sun was rapidly nearing the red horizon of a cloudless sky when they completed the first day's journey over the forest trail.

"You've chosen a good place to camp," said the major as they came to a halt.

"Yes," replied Nimkee, the guide. "Injun often stop here. Big trees, clean land, more creek, good place for camp."

"Lots of dead wood, too. Great place for a big camp fire," echoed Ingersoll.

"Yes, and there's a splendid spot to pitch your tent," said Henry Bostwick to Laura. "There's a clean sweep where we fellows can bivouac all around you."

"And keep the enemy at bay," said John.

"Wolves never bay," said Ryerson, who wanted to get in his point.

They were a tired, but merry, company and were soon busy, in preparation for a refreshing supper and camp for the night.

While the men built the fire and were frying the ham and boiling the coffee, Laura brought out a big damask spread which she stretched on a level grassy spot to do duty as a table. And after came the bevy of tin mugs and platters and pitchers.

Just as the woods were darkening and the men were cleaning up the dishes, Laura stole off by herself around the curve of a great rock to a secluded spot by the creek. Here she cooled her face and hands in its waters and after resting a little, removed her stockings and washed her sore and tired feet.

While some of the men were putting up the tent and replenishing the fire others were keenly listening for every sound. Their weapons were at hand in case any wolf or bear should intrude upon Laura in her ablutions.

Her toilet complete, the girl felt like a bird ready to carol out a dainty woodland ditty and rival the songsters which still flooded the woods with melody. Almost before she knew it the words came in gentle cadence, gradually rising to higher thrill, as she caught sight of the blaze of fire behind the tent:

 "Under the greenwood tree,
 Who loves to lie with me,
 And turn his merry note
 Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
 Here shall he see
 No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

 "Who doth ambition shun,
 And loves to live in the sun,
 Seeking the food he eats
 And pleased with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither;
 Here shall he see
 No enemy
But winter and rough weather."

As the first sweet tones of her voice rose on the still evening air every ear in that little camp caught the sound and every hand was stilled. The voice rose higher and higher. The branches of the tall trees listened to the fulness of a melody, such as had never before touched them in the centuries of their life. Every heart in that busy group of men melted and they waited, almost wishing that the song would never end. But it ended all too soon. She only sang two verses. The third was not suited to Laura's ethics. She had learned it in her school days as a selection from "As You Like It," and the two stanzas were the only ones that appealed to her and, as she sometimes told her school-mates, she would not sing the third one for a farm.

Her father had never heard her sing it before, and as the great canopy of the leafy vault added softness to the tones, his eyes, unemotional as he was, filled.

Suddenly, with a gay laugh, she was with them again.

"Goodness gracious! what a solemn lot of people," she cried. "That ghost of an Indian maiden frightened you."

"It put us on pins and needles; we want to hear her again," cried Henry.

"That's what we all say; you must let us have another," said Captain Ryerson. But Laura solemnly shook her head.

"Leteeka told me that she couldn't sing any more."

XI

Across Lake Ontario

During the passing centuries of history men have, times without number, gathered themselves in bands, and, under the guidance and control of a single leader, have usually accomplished the objects which they had in view. But, as a rule, on the leader lay the brunt of the battle. His were the brains that evolved the scheme. On his shoulders lay the burden of success or failure. His followers were satellites, ready and willing to do his bidding without responsibility and if success crowned their effort the honor and the glory would be his.

But some of that little band of people who camped that night beneath the elms and oaks of the old Oneida trail were cast in a different mould and guided by their own volition. They were forsaking the land of their birth, the land which for generations had been the home of their forefathers, a land which they loved, farms which they had helped to carve out of the forest, homesteads they had made beautiful and in which they had been happy. They were bound for a land that was as yet unknown to them, for a wilderness of forest that would need to be cleared before homes for their dear ones could be established. They were facing privations and difficulties which long ago seemed gone for ever, and taking upon themselves again the old régime in place of the new.

And in that little band, strange though it may seem, Major Ingersoll was not the only maker of history. It was he who founded a county and established a town which still carries the family name. In the establishment of settlers he penetrated along the windings of the La Tranche valley to the very spot where one of the great universities was afterwards built.

Then there was Waldron, the proud progenitor of the missionary who long afterwards travelled the forest and prairies of the West and fascinated for more than a generation the ears of the people with tales of the Indians, Esquimaux, and their dogs.

And Captain Ryerson, whose son with ultra zeal laid the foundation for a wave of religious enthusiasm which swept the country and established the educational principles which have so long distinguished the schools of Ontario.

Then there were the two sons of the minister, Gideon Bostwick, who will be remembered for their prowess in arms when the day of conflict again racked the nation, and who in their loyalty marched their troops over much of the peninsula; on a road which still bears their name.

But last of all comes the heroine of our tale, "the undaunted Laura," who caroled in the forest, the lone woman who, unafraid, was willing, with none but men for companions, to find her home in a new land.

It was a long and hard trip for Laura. The hills and swamps which they had to pass or cross made the distance greater and more difficult than on the first days of the journey. At last, however, to their great satisfaction and Laura's intense relief, Lake Ontario and Oswego were reached and, securing comfortable quarters, the whole party had a good night's rest in preparation for the sail to their destination at Newark.

Before retiring the major chartered a schooner which had just arrived in the dock, for the voyage of the next day. So

early in the morning they were again on the way.

"How soon do you expect to get us in Newark?" the major asked the skipper as they walked the narrow deck.

"A little doubtful," was the answer. "We'll have fine weather, but with a head wind from the west, the speed can't be great."

"Will we reach port to-night?"

"I doubt it. All depends on how the wind holds. We'll do our best."

The trip took nearly two days, but it was a pleasure to all on board. The second morning gave Henry an opportunity for another talk with Laura. He had not had one since the first afternoon on the trail. He found her on deck at the fo'castle hatch while the men of the party were playing quoits. The vessel was tacking to get the breeze and her father had just left her to speak to the captain.

"We haven't had a talk for an age," he exclaimed. "I'll fetch you a stool." And he brought two.

"That was a jolly talk we had. Where did we leave off?"

"I think it was about our new homes in the King's country," Laura said.

"Oh, yes, I was going to tell you how it happened that our belt of land and the one promised to your father had fallen so far apart."

"I did think it rather strange."

"There are always wheels within wheels," said Henry. "It arose, first, I think, from the fact that Governor Simcoe owed his own appointment to the Duke of Norfolk. In return, when the naming of the counties was proposed, the Governor decided to name one of the best after the Duke. And then, with a similar friendly jump, part of it came to father. And for your sake, Laura, I almost wish it hadn't."

"Nonsense, Henry! How foolish! As if that could make any difference."

"But it will. We are going into the wilderness to live a long distance apart. And we've got to clear our land and build our houses before we can be sure of anything more."

"Why think of anything else at all then, Henry? You are only a boy yet, just nineteen. Coming to a new country you shouldn't think of anything but that for years."

"Nonsense, I'll be twenty in two months, and father was married when he was twenty-two."

"But look at the difference. Your father was ordained and had a curacy, and other means, and was among the cultured people of Boston before he came to Great Barrington."

"Still, there's another thing in which father and I are alike. He was engaged for two years before he was married. I want just the same conditions. I love you, Laura; I always did. I want you to promise to be my wife. I'll wait any length of time you like. I can do a lot in two years. Won't you promise?"

The major saw the two from a short distance, but he was satisfied with the expression on Laura's face and walked to the other end of the deck. Two avowals within a week at the age of eighteen, were more than Laura was prepared for. If she had been sorry for David she was much more sorry for Henry. She felt like mothering him. They had been more like friends than anything else for years. She knew that she would miss this comradeship in the future. But she did not feel any warmer passion. If there was any genuine love in her heart she felt sure that it would be stronger for the elder of the two. But the sense of the cousinship would help her to forget him. To her, just now, love was not in it at all. It was the new life that she wanted, to forget much that was harrowing in the past, and to go out into the new world even if it was to

be into the depths of the woods.

"I think you are making a big mistake, Henry," she said at last. "I couldn't think of making such a promise. I'm not in love and I don't think you are; and it would be silly to bind ourselves together when we neither of us know what is going to happen. We are both of us too young anyway, no matter what your father did."

"But look here, Laura; I'm in dead earnest. For years I have been expecting to make you my wife some day, and I love you as I can never love any one else. Three of the men are going out with John and myself to hew out our new homes in Norfolk county on our big grant, and if you will promise it will make me work all the harder. You know I have that little picture that I made of you once. I shall always keep it. It will make me think of you."

"You mean that you have that foolish little thing that you painted two years ago?"

"And why not? You said yourself then that it was pretty good work. I've got it in my pocket now."

"Let me see it, won't you?"

"What for? Will you give it back to me?"

"What would be the use? You said just now that you wouldn't think of me if you didn't see that picture. So if I keep it you'll forget me and as we couldn't be married for a great many years, it would be better for both of us to forget."

"You are hard-hearted, Laura. I'm sure that you love me a little, if you would only say so."

"Show me the picture and then I'll tell you." She was touched more by the memory of that boy's sketch than she thought.

When she had it in her hand she looked earnestly at it. It was in a little, carved, wooden frame, several inches long and almost as many wide. The miniature was covered with glass. The outline was well drawn and the shading in colour almost faultless. The dark, golden hair was there, and the brown eyes, and the rose tint of the cheek had evidently been done with consummate care. She had seen it but once and then it had been only casually examined.

Henry's eyes were fixed upon Laura's face, as she so seriously examined the little painting. "You have mistaken your calling, Henry," she said as she handed it back to him. "You have no business being in the woods at all. Your place is in London. You should be an artist."

"It's too late now, though. I thought of it at one time. And if I hadn't met you I might have tried," he blurted out. "You remember that we both did sketching at school. My uncle used to praise my work and offered to send me to a studio in London. My father was willing, but I refused to go."

"You don't mean to say it was on my account that you refused," she said in a low voice.

"But I do," he said deliberately. "We sat on opposite sides of the front row, facing each other in school. You were smarter than I. You helped me get up lessons that I didn't care a button for, and I cared so much for you that I lost my chance. If you must have it, that was the whole story."

Laura's eyes suddenly filled with tears as she turned her face to the lake.

"I'm awfully, awfully sorry," she exclaimed. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I felt so foolish about it, I just couldn't. I knew, too, that you had so much good sense that if I had you would have insisted on my going. Won't you promise, after all I've told you?"

She clasped her hands very tightly together, as she turned her eyes directly upon his. Her words came slowly, but she meant every one of them:

"After that, Henry, more than ever, I couldn't. No man has the right to throw the greatest chance of his life away for

any woman, and without letting her know it. If you had told me then, I might have helped in some way. Now, I can't. And to bind ourselves over a broken reed would be madness and folly."

"That's what I feared you might say; but I thought I ought to tell you," he said, his head bent forward in deep abjection.

"But that does not mean that we may not be just as good friends as ever. We will each have our battle of life to fight. We are interested in one another, and we can never tell what the future may yet bring. Let us forget the past and with all our eyes see what this great new country of Canada has in store for us."

While they were still talking, the buildings of Newark on the little Parliament hill came in sight, and Laura and Henry, with the others, made preparations to land.

XII

First Days in Newark

"What do you see there, Governor?" said Lady Simcoe, who preferred to use his titular name to his given name, to her husband. They were standing on the upper balcony, overlooking the expanse of the lake.

"I think it must be Major Ingersoll and his men," replied Governor Simcoe, taking down his telescope to polish the glass. "I had word that they were coming over a week ago, and expected them here before now. There are a good many people on the deck."

"Are there any ladies among them?"

"I did not expect any this time, but I believe that I noted one in the party."

"I wonder who she can be?"

The Governor put up his glass again. "There must be a dozen people, at least, and I can see a woman's face. She is standing under the shadow of a tarpaulin, without a hat, and looks girlish. If it is Ingersoll's party it is rather remarkable that they have a woman with them."

"Visitors are so few that it will be interesting to know who she is," said Lady Simcoe.

"As you go down, Elizabeth, I wish you would tell my secretary I'd like to see him."

Before the brig reached the wharf Secord, the secretary, was at his side.

"I want you to meet the party as they land," he directed, "and find out who they are. If they are from Great Barrington, Massachusetts, take them to the King's Arms. I've given orders for their accommodation there. Be sure to obtain what information you can, particularly about the lady who is with them, and bring us the news. Of course, if they are not the people I expect, it will be their business, not mine."

A number of people had gathered as the boat reached the wharf, but when the Governor's representative approached they opened a little to let him pass. Meeting the major at the gangway, he gave the message and, almost at once, lead the way to the King's Arms.

Two hours later, when the Governor and his wife sat down to their one o'clock lunch, they were interested in the subject of the new arrivals.

"Did you find out much about them?" said Lady Simcoe.

"Yes, with one or two exceptions they are the people about whom we have been corresponding."

"Tell me again who they are; I have forgotten."

As the Governor had already talked somewhat about entertaining them on their arrival she felt a little concerned about the personality of her guests.

"There are two men, Waldron and Ryerson, of whom I know little, except that they are of good old English stock. You have heard me speak of the Rev. Gideon Bostwick, my college friend. He is too ill to venture over and has charge of the parish at Great Barrington. But two of his sons, fine, stalwart fellows, have come over in his stead. Major Ingersoll and his daughter complete the number, and, of course, they have brought several workmen with them."

"What is Miss Ingersoll's name, do you know?"

"Laura, I believe."

"Didn't Mr. Secord describe her at all?" Lady Simcoe asked.

"Only that she was a fine-looking, well-educated girl and that from something that occurred he thought she understood French. You know that James Secord's mother is a French lady."

"Yes, Madame Madelaine Badeau Secord, one of the most delightful ladies we have in our little social set. Suppose, Governor, that we have a little soiree in their honour and invite guests to meet them?"

"With Captain Talbot among the number," said the Governor. "He is going with the Bostwicks on their journey."

"About how many will we have altogether?" said Clarissa, the Governor's sister.

"Oh! perhaps twenty," said Lady Simcoe. "The only difficulty is that we will have so many more men than women."

"All the better for what there are of you ladies," said the Governor.

When Mr. Secord went to the hotel an hour later to deliver the invitation, the men, with the exception of the major, who had remained talking with his daughter, were all out strolling about town.

The message was delivered formally. The young man had learned much of the advisability of studied politeness in Colonial life. If the unexpected arrival of a charming young maid from the south had affected his outlook, he certainly did not show it. The interview was very brief and with a bow he went away with the acceptance of the invitation.

"But, father, what can I wear?" said Laura in real distress over the scantiness of her wardrobe. "I never expected to be invited to a party at Government House."

"You have your white dress, haven't you?"

"Yes, but it will be crumpled up in my big bundle."

"Well, shake it out and hang it up. There are four hours yet. Then with white stockings, your fine leather shoes, and ribbons you will do."

And after all, the new arrival was a bit of a belle that evening. For when Governor Simcoe led her to first place in the opening quadrille, all the men present, young and old, were ready to do her homage.

It was, of course, an informal affair. No one expected to see knee-breeches, swallow-tail coats, and white satin waistcoats worn by men who had arrived with the main intent of attacking the forest. However, the major, out of honour to the nation for which he had fought and from which he came, had donned his officer's uniform.

"I am glad to see you in uniform, major," the Governor commented as they shook hands. "But if ever we are at war again, which God forbid, you will have to exchange the Eagle for the Lion."

"In that case, of course, it will be '*Dieu et mon Roi*,'" and smilingly, he made obeisance to the lady of the house.

While Lady Simcoe talked to Henry and John Bostwick and Ryerson paid tribute to the little bevy of demoiselles, Waldron laid siege to the daughter of the Government treasurer. And while the others hobnobbed with more matronly ladies, Captain Talbot tried his almost-forgotten French with the witty and charming widow, Madelaine Badeau Secord.

The tumult of voices was loud enough to permit an almost whispered conversation as the secretary chatted now more freely with Laura.

"*Ces messieurs, sont-ils vos parents?*"

"*Non, Monsieur; et ce n'est pas probable quelqu'un le sera.*"

She did not know why she emphasized her "*Non, monsieur*." Although the eyes of Secord had met hers as the question and answer were made, his look did not change, but he followed her words in English.

"I must introduce you to my mother; she speaks much better French than I do." And he led her over to the sofa where she was still chatting with Captain Talbot, who immediately passed on to the other ladies.

James Secord, although little more than a youth, was mature in appearance. In height he resembled his father; in everything else his mother. He had the dark hair, the big black eyes and aquiline features of the Frenchman. His moustache had grown unusually early, as well as symmetrical. Nicely formed and black as ebony, it almost filled his upper lip. With the manner of a cultured Frenchman and the brains of his English progenitor, who had carved out his way to success in a new land, he had been quite the one to fill intelligently the place of secretary in the Governor's office, where the intimate association of the French and English Provinces made much correspondence necessary. More than that, youth though he was, close association for two years with business affairs had strengthened his judgment, increased his urbanity and made his self-control more definite.

Casting her eyes round the room, while chatting with his mother, Laura could not help noticing how different he was in both appearance and manner from the friends with whom she had come.

"I am glad we are to have some new blood from the south," said the madame, after a little, with only a trace of French accent. "There's a difference between the people of the old world and the new, and we need them on this side, no matter where they come from, if they are loyal."

"Don't you like the English when they come?"

"Yes, but they are old-fashioned and a little stagey. Americans are not."

"Father expects to bring over nearly a thousand settlers from the New England States and New York," said Laura, enthusiastically.

"It will be a fine thing for Upper Canada if he does. Those folk know better how to clear the land and do things than the raw settlers from England and France. But what are you going to do, Miss Ingersoll? You are not going right into the woods with your father?"

"I hope so. It is what I came for."

"But that wouldn't be a wise thing. You don't look as if you had ever worked a day in your life. What could you do among so many men? It would kill you, *mon enfant*."

"Oh, no, it wouldn't; I've done a lot," Laura replied merrily.

"Even granting that, Miss Ingersoll, it would be much better for you if your father and his men went west, established themselves, and then came back for you."

"Please, Madame Secord, don't call me miss. Just Laura. I am only out of school. Nobody calls me anything but Laura. And then, you see, the men are not all going with us; only three right through with my father and myself. We leave the rest, I believe, at a place called Port Dover, in some new county, I forget the name."

"Norfolk, isn't it?"

"Yes, I believe it is."

"Laura! Yours is a pretty name. I like it. It is so admirably suited to you in every way."

"Ah! *ma mere*," remarked her son, who had joined them in time to hear his mother's suggestion, "Mademoiselle will add a little sunshine to Newark, if we can persuade Major Ingersoll to leave her with us for a month."

"With that I perfectly agree," she replied, glancing from one to the other. "If Miss Laura is going into forest life we can give her a little insight into what it is before she goes."

"For that matter, you and I, mother, could take her to my Chippewa farm, and show her how we do things in the woods."

"We can think about it at all events. I shall talk to Lady Simcoe," replied his mother. "Ah, here comes Lieutenant Campbell. I believe he is to take you in to supper, Laura."

An hour later, while the guests were conversing before their departure, Governor Simcoe and the major were seated on a divan before one of the wide casement windows, through which the perfume of early flowers was being wafted.

"Yes, the present arrangement, I feel sure, will be satisfactory, for the Colonial Secretary has already notified me that the measure has received the Royal sanction."

"It will be a good lift to this section of the Province," said the major. "The men who will come over the lakes will be yeomen of the forest, and a good acquisition to the country."

"That's the point I laid particular stress on in my letter."

"What are the terms, as near as you can tell me from memory, Governor?"

"There are sixty-six thousand acres all told. Our regular set price is, of course, sixpence per acre. But I expect twenty per cent. will be gratuitous to yourself and friends for services already or shortly to be performed; the remaining eighty per cent. to be sold as quickly as possible to desirable settlers. Of course, no others need apply."

"What about these other men, the Bostwicks, and Waldron and Ryerson?"

"Grants to these men have already been arranged for, but to what extent I am not quite sure. For that matter you had better come over in a body to-morrow and discuss the whole situation. The officers of the different departments will all be there."

"Certainly, that will be better."

"How soon do you purpose to resume your journey to the promised land?" asked the Governor with a smile.

"In a couple of days, if possible. The season is advancing and the quicker we get in among the trees the better."

"You are right. But what about this young daughter of yours? You don't intend taking her into the woods with you?"

"That was our intention and her own desire. It was to accompany us that I consented to bring her with me."

"Ah!" said the Governor with more gravity than he had previously shown. "I see, I see. At any rate, when you come over to-morrow you had better bring the child and leave her with her ladyship until we are through with our talk."

"Thank you. I know that she will be delighted."

As the major and Laura walked back to the hotel that night beneath a canopy of stars Laura was in unusually high spirits. So far as she could remember it was the brightest and most enjoyable evening she had ever passed in her life. The spacious room had glittered in splendour. Their Excellencies had been kindness unbounded. Every one had been good to her. Sometimes, during the very middle of the gaiety, she had felt almost as if she could have cried for joy. And then as she reached the door of the hotel she knew that it was merely one of those phantoms of life which might never be repeated.

"When are we going on, father?" she asked.

"Day after to-morrow, I think. Will you be ready, Laura?"

"Yes, father," was her answer. Her face was grave again. But she did not tell him how many people had urged her to prolong her stay.

XIII

Madame Badeau's Party

There was little formality at Government House next morning. Through the window Lady Simcoe saw Laura with her father, as he was on his way to the cabinet offices, and she ran out to the lower balcony to meet her.

"It is such a beautiful morning," she called, as Laura came up the steps, "one cannot stay inside. With that gentle breeze from the lake a walk should be delightful. What say you, Miss Ingersoll?"

"I would love it. But don't call me Miss Ingersoll, please."

"Well, if you will call me Elizabeth, I will call you Laura."

So with gentle laughter the agreement was made.

"Wait until I run in for my hat."

Laura had with some difficulty managed to bring a broad-brimmed gipsy hat. It suited her complexion and was daintily trimmed, and as she rearranged the band which held it in place, she wondered what Lady Simcoe would wear. When that young lady reappeared she was delightfully surprised, since her hat was almost the image of her own, the latest fashion in New York and Boston. Why not in Newark? And the very fact that their headgear and light dresses made them look almost like twins seemed to cement the friendship which had already begun.

"We'll take a walk by the lake shore and on to the cliff," said Lady Simcoe, "and then around by the hill. Coming back beneath the trees we shall pass some pretty places."

"You must have read my thoughts, Elizabeth. It is the thing above all others that I wanted."

"I am glad. Are you fond of walking?"

"Yes, but that was not quite what I meant. You see father will be busy, and our stay will be so short that he wants me to go all over the town while we are here."

"Has he any special designs upon our little capital? Does he intend to bring over a big Yankee army to capture it?" Elizabeth asked in a bantering tone.

"Not the whole city," was Laura's laughing answer. "Just one house."

"Are you really serious, Laura?"

"Yes, actually serious. The undertaking father has in hand will take up so much time that he thinks of bringing mother and the whole family over this autumn. And as it will be impossible to complete our house this year he would like us to spend the winter in Newark."

"That is truly delightful. And you are the house-hunter?"

"It's something I never heard of until father told me that he wanted me to do it. I'm completely ignorant. But do you know of any that might possibly suit? All I would need to do would be to find out where any possible home was situated. He could do the rest."

"I'm afraid I cannot help you, Laura. Almost the only people I have anything to do with are those that are invited to the house."

"I suppose empty houses are scarce."

"Of course I walk a good deal. Most English girls do, but I do not remember seeing one anywhere. We can keep our eyes open while walking. I am sure, however, that Mr. Secord would know, if any one does."

"It will be nice if he does. It will help us, I am sure."

"There is no one I know that would be more willing. It is astonishing how much that young man knows. His powers of observation are almost marvellous. Those big black eyes of his can see almost everything."

"And yet he seems so matter of fact."

"That is chiefly from training. He was different when my husband employed him first. He had to be taught to become what he is."

"I have never seen much of social life," said Laura, uttering her thoughts innocently, "but I do think that Mr. Secord is the most composed and self-restrained young man that I ever met."

"Ha, ha. For all that I do think you made a very favourable impression on him. You did on everybody last night. You were certainly the belle of the ball."

"Oh! Elizabeth, do be sensible. I'm silly enough, but please don't make a fool of me."

"Yonder he is, coming out of their own house. If he is not in a hurry perhaps he will wait for us. We might ask him."

"From this distance it looks a pretty place."

"So it is—small, but embowered with trees."

"Have they two homes?"

"Yes, they have a large farm on the Chippewa near the Niagara River, above the Falls. It was a government grant to Mr. Secord. He died several years ago and left it to his sons with a life interest to his widow. David, the elder, was married two years ago, about the time that James came from school at Montreal. The professors at the college recommended him to my husband as Secretary. That accounts for Madame Badeau, as we often call her, being here with her son. The appointment was said to be only a temporary one, but it has lasted two years."

Secord had waited and, lifting his hat, gravely took the outside place by Laura's side.

"Miss Ingersoll tells me that they may possibly want to spend next winter in Newark. Do you know of any available vacancy that might suit them?" asked Mrs. Simcoe.

A bright expression flashed across his face, but it was there only for a moment.

"That will depend upon the size of the house Miss Ingersoll desires to secure."

He had already taken lessons in diplomacy. Laura laughed a little as she answered:

"Which means, I suppose, whether it be for two people or ten?"

"Oh! not at all, Miss Ingersoll. Two people might require many conveniences, and ten might call for few. I know of two houses that will probably be vacant this fall. One is big, the other little. Which would you like to see?"

"The outside of each, the inside of neither. Father would do that."

"The little one I have just left," nodding his head backward over his shoulder. "The other is much larger and has a wide balcony. It overlooks the bay. We can see it after the next turn."

"You surprise me, Mr. Secord," said Mrs. Simcoe. "Does not Madame Badeau like your beautiful little cottage?"

"Yes, but for the winter we think of leaving it, as my mother for several reasons wants to spend that season at my brother's on the farm."

"And what will you do while she is away?"

"Probably put up at the King's Arms. I find that I can obtain good accommodation there. As to our cottage, it looks smaller than it is. There are several rooms at the back which are hidden by the trees."

"Are you going to remove the furniture?" asked Mrs. Simcoe.

"Oh! dear, no. We wouldn't think of it." Then turning his eyes upon Laura, with a slight smile he continued, "We hadn't thought of renting it at all. But yet, I am sure that my mother would be delighted to let you have it for the winter."

His gentle phraseology pleased Laura more than she knew.

"Here's the larger house. It is much bigger than ours and has more rooms, and the view of the water is an advantage which our house does not possess."

"But I did not tell you that our family is a large one," said Laura. "I have several sisters younger than myself and a little brother. There are two black servants as well."

"That would make the ten," he remarked, with a smile.

"I should like the smaller house better," said Laura as her eyes caught sight of the wide open space. "The lake beyond would be covered with ice through the whole of the winter. It would be cosier among the trees."

"Are your servants slaves, Laura?" Lady Simcoe asked.

"Yes, I suppose they are. I know that my father and mother each brought one from the south long ago. But we don't like the word slaves and never call them that. I once heard my father say that if he came to Canada he would give them both their liberty, and let them decide for themselves about coming over."

"I admire his decision of character," said Secord.

"I really do not think that we will need them," Laura noted. "My sisters, although younger than I am, are large girls and I think we might get on very well without servants."

"Yes, and you would require less room," commented Lady Simcoe.

"It would be an excellent plan for mother to invite you to spend a short time with us before you go west, to see if our cottage would suit you," suggested Secord.

"A most excellent idea, Laura," said Elizabeth.

"I will speak to my mother about it," and lifting his hat Secord turned into a bypath which led up to the offices.

"What a sedate young man!" ejaculated Laura, as he disappeared from view.

"Yes, I told you that he was very self-contained, but it is quite evident that he would like you to occupy their house next winter. It is convenient to the school, too. I suppose that your sisters will want to attend."

"That is one of the reasons why we might stay here next winter, for there will be no schools where we are going."

The discussion at the offices that morning resulted in a little change in the projected plans. It was discovered that Mr. Waldron had travelled farther west than was necessary. He would have to return by the lake shore for some distance before he could reach his grant. Captain Ryerson's projects were undecided, since he was going east to New Brunswick before settling down; while the Bostwicks, with their men, would accompany the Ingersolls and land at Dover.

As they sat, an hour or two later, about the big round table at the hotel for dinner, Laura could not get her mind away from the fact that their own party would be reduced to five. It seemed almost inconceivable that she should leave it and so make it one less. In her quiet moments she had studied the map of the country, and from what she could trace they would have to penetrate many miles into the forest after leaving Lake Erie, before they could reach their journey's end. To remain in Newark longer would entail a double journey for her father over the whole distance, costing much in time and money. How could she possibly be so selfish as to think of it? She came to be a help and not an impediment in his way.

After dinner she soon slipped away to her room to rest and think.

Scarcely had she left them seated in a group on the verandah, when Mr. Secord again appeared and presented to the major a dainty little envelope with the corner turned up. Opening it the major read:

"Madame Madelaine Badeau Secord
requests the pleasure of the company
of
Major and Miss Laura Ingersoll
for tea at six o'clock this evening
with her compliments."

With a smile of pleasant acceptance Ingersoll glanced up at the messenger and then exclaimed:

"Just wait a moment, please, and my daughter will write a note."

In a few minutes the major returned with the desired acceptance, and the young man, with a pleased expression, went away.

Madame Badeau was a gracious hostess that evening, and the son, who sat at the opposite end of the table, was equally affable. The official mask planted on a young face and worn with assiduity sometimes renders the features almost inflexible, before the thickness of the enamel wears away, but James dropped his at the stand with his hat, and at the table was the genial, laughing host who could talk and entertain his guests as freely and pleasantly as his mother, and that was saying a great deal.

There were only two others present, a younger brother and sister, and in orthodox fashion the major sat at the lady's right, while her son gave Laura the like honour.

After tea and general conversation the party gradually divided into couples. While the brother and sister played duets on an old French spinet the madame entertained the major with a folio of old paintings which she kept in store for any state occasion like this, and James and Laura talked of many things at the open window.

"I hope you like our little capital," he said, gently stroking his moustache.

"How could I help it when people have been so kind to father and me?"

"Very good of you to say so, but I mean the town itself, with its little hills and woods and lake. It seems to me that, take it all in all, we have throughout this region one of the best bits of natural scenery in the world. You have not seen it yet, but we have in the Niagara Falls one of the finest things that nature anywhere can give."

"I am sure you have. I shall love to see the Falls."

"And I shall love to show them to you. Stay three more days and I will."

Slowly shaking her head she replied: "We cannot stay that long, but we shall pass them on our way. To-morrow we will be buying and packing and we leave the next day."

"That is, if you go with your father. Can you not stay longer? So many of the ladies desire you to do so."

"It would be very pleasant for me," she commented gratefully, "but it would be unjust to father."

"You argue, mademoiselle, like a Parisian lady, determined to have her own way."

She looked up quickly. Was he making fun of her? But his face was grave again.

"It would be unkind as well, when I promised to be company for him and help all I could."

"The major has a valiant fighter," he returned with a laugh. "You ought to have been an officer of dragoons. Is there no compromise possible?" Then to change the subject he continued, "You have not seen this house yet or the deep garden and grove where the big hammock swings between two old apple trees. They were planted by the Jesuit Fathers fifty years ago."

"Still more interesting. I wish I could remain, but I can't."

When Major Ingersoll and his daughter re-entered the King's Arms that night the young men of the party, sitting a little to one side, were not unobservant of their arrival.

"I wonder if they were at Government House again?" said Henry Bostwick.

"I am sure they were not," said Ryerson.

"Are you positive?"

"Didn't you notice who brought the invitation?"

"No."

"I did."

Travelling West From Newark

Before retiring to their rooms that night, Major Ingersoll and his daughter had an unusually long talk. The recent experiences of her social life and her coming responsibility had a maturing effect upon the young girl's mind. The sense of duty had been a strong force in the formation of her character. Now she had a keener perception of values and the major was in doubt how Laura would receive the many proposals to remain; but he had concluded to leave it for her to decide.

"I didn't know that my little girl could make so many friends in so short a time." The diminutive was one of appreciation which he occasionally used.

"What have I been doing?" came in a questioning tone.

"Doing so much that they insist on your doing more. Perhaps you know it already. They want me to leave you behind."

"Do you think that I could agree to such a thing?"

"Wait until you hear. The Governor suggested that it would be a wise plan to leave you for a month or so and then when I had made the trail and founded a camp, to come back for you. He said that he had the support of her ladyship in the thought. Miss Jones and the treasurer's wife expressed the same opinion."

"Just because they pity me and think that I am too young and know too little to be any good to you, father. You don't think it, do you?"

"If I had I would not have brought you."

"I saw Madame Badeau to-day," he continued. "And she urged me to allow you to visit them now and said she would be glad to have us occupy her house during the coming winter. My reply was that we would be glad to accept the latter offer, but as to the visit I would leave that for you to decide."

"The decision is already made, father. When shall we start?"

"In a couple of days." His glance of approval thrilled her. "I shall be busy making purchases and packing to-morrow," he continued. "And you will need to help. We shall require a whole kit of things—cooking utensils of all sorts, provisions of every variety and farming implements, too. For, my dear, as you have decided to go on with your old dad, it is not at all likely that we shall return until I bring you back for the winter."

"That shows that I was right," she exclaimed, suddenly clasping his hand in both of hers. "Yet, oh! how they urged."

"And my undaunted Laura would not yield."

"Why should I, when I have such a dad?"

"The Governor is going to assist us generously. Secretary Secord will be given a day off duty with some men to help us past the Niagara Falls and along the river to Lake Erie. And after that to Fort Erie where we shall take the boat again."

Laura opened her eyes. "So we shall see the Falls!" In her own mind she was pleased with the news and wondered if she would possibly see the Secord farm, but did not mention it.

The next day they saw every one again, but on the following morning they commenced the last lap of their long journey.

The day was fine and clear and they started early, for they desired, if possible, to reach the lake at a point opposite the new town of Buffalo where the Niagara River formed the outlet of Lake Erie. It was a winding and irregular road for that caravan to travel; still it was picturesque as they wended their way in and out along the upland paths of that wonderful gorge. The road was rough and uneven, but it was sufficiently tracked to use teams during this part of the journey.

Horses had been provided for the whole party as far as the Falls. To Laura there was a wild enchantment in that rushing, tempestuous torrent and what heightened the pleasure of the moment and unconsciously increased the charm was the fact that the man who told her the story and dilated on the beauty of the scene was for the moment by her side.

For a while it was too grand, too vivid, for expression. She could only listen, as young Secord dwelt upon point after point of detail with which from boyhood he had been familiar.

When they came to a turn in the road where the whirlpool in its fullest effect could be viewed, the cavalcade stopped a few moments, for not one of the New Englanders had seen it before.

"And you have lived where you could come to a scene like this nearly all your life," said Laura in an undertone. It seemed to her almost like sacrilege to speak above a whisper in the presence of Mother Nature's enchantment.

"Yes," responded Secord, "and I don't think I shall ever want to live far from old Niagara. The Hurons used to think that the rush of the waters was a sign of the Manitou's strength and that if they came here to pray before a battle with the Iroquois they would be sure to win."

"And did they?"

"Not often, I'm afraid."

The rushing river, the whirlpool, and the velocity of the rapids prepared them for the greater grandeur and majesty of the Falls, which they reached in another half hour.

"While the men are resting here we might vary the programme," said Secord to the major as they stood on the brink and looked downward over the great abyss, "if you and Miss Ingersoll are willing. Our farm is three miles farther. We might drive over. I should like to show it to you. The rest of the party can overtake us."

"What say you, Laura?"

There was little question as to Laura's assent.

So after a word or two with the other men, the major, the secretary and Laura continued on their way to the Secord farm.

Various indeed were the thoughts that passed through the minds of several of those present as the three drove on.

The major was gratified more than he had thought possible by his reception at Newark, and particularly for the escort of guides from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie. The opportunity of seeing the Secord farm would also be gratifying, and would give him the chance to see a Canadian homestead of note in the new land.

James Secord, too, was having an opportunity he had not expected. Miss Ingersoll would actually be a guest in his prospective home. How glad he would be to show her his garden, orchard, and fields before she went farther west. It was too soon to expect to win her love, but when she came back to spend her winter in Newark at his mother's home he might.

Laura was exhilarated. This exemplary young man was so different from any she had met that the more she saw of him the better she was pleased. She wondered what sort of a house it would be. It was rather remarkable that her father and she should be guests in Mr. Secord's two homes in as many days.

And there was Henry Bostwick, pondering upon the same subject, but in a different way. He had heard that Laura had been urged to remain for a time in Newark. If she had done so the chief attraction, he felt sure, would have been the presence of the young Adonis. He had not had the opportunity to talk with her much since that memorable conversation before landing. But when he saw that the wisecracks were all wrong and that Laura was to accompany them the whole of the way to the new settlement his spirits revived. He would have her to himself again and, what was more, he had discovered by closer examination of the map that their two camps in the woods, for the summer at least, would only be fifty miles apart instead of a hundred. And what was that to a youth who believed that he was heart and soul in love? But his recovered ardour received a rather unpleasant damper when the major and his daughter, leaving the others, went on in fine spirits to visit and lunch at the Secord farm. Still, he comforted himself that it was only four days after all and in the wilderness of love how little could be accomplished in so short a time.

The Ingersolls were very favourably impressed with what they saw at the Chippewa farm. Then, too, the elder brother had good news for them.

"Fortunately for you," he said, as they saw the rest of the party approaching from the Falls, "the bridge over the Chippewa is at last open and you can drive across."

"And what about the trail to Fort Erie?"

"That has been widened into a road-track, and if your loads are not too heavy I'm sure you can drive right through."

"That's good news," said the major.

"This would make a good military road from lake to lake," Captain Talbot remarked to the major as they trudged on ahead across the bridge, while the others were making ready to follow.

"Yes, if ever it would be necessary, our command of yonder side would be a good one."

"But what we would have in position they would have in numbers. There are ten times as many people in the Republic as in Canada. Buffalo is growing fast, while our Fort Erie exists only in name."

"But we are not going to have any trouble."

"There's no reason why we should. They've half their country yet to gather from the Indians and we've nearly all of ours."

"You speak as if you were fully identified with Canada already," said Talbot.

"Why shouldn't I? Are we not both receiving from his Majesty's government free grants of land, and am I not returning as a loyal subject to the régime and authority which I acknowledged for more than three-fourths of my life?"

"You are right there. But we'll never have to fight again."

"No, I don't believe we will."

In due time the whole party reached Fort Erie. A little freight house and a few buildings were there. So all were able to store their goods and obtain accommodation, such as it was, for the night; and the men and their conveyances were soon ready for the return trip.

"Do you think that you can remember Newark?" Secord asked, as holding Laura's hand for a moment, he bade her farewell.

"Do you think that I could forget it?"

"Thank you for that. When you return we will make you still more welcome."

Then he turned to the major and continued: "You will have to remain a night before sailing, but there will be a brig

before morning from Buffalo on its way up the lake to Detroit. There's a regular weekly service and to-morrow, I know, is the up day."

"You're right," cried a fisherman who had just rowed in with his catch. "I saw the *Titan* sail into Buffalo harbour not two hours ago. She'll be sure to go out again to-morrow."

So, in the morning, all were ready for the next section of the journey. They did not have long to wait. Before nine o'clock the brig *Titan* drew up at the little projecting dock.

"Good heavens," cried the skipper, as the major led the way to the boat, "I've seen your face before. Isn't this Major Ingersoll?"

"And isn't this Captain Seagram, of the *Rattler*, of Boston, who did his best to wreck his ship on the Atlantic coast nine years ago?"

"Man, is it so long as that?"

Recognizing each other so quickly, the two men stepped aside for a little chat, leaving the mate to attend to the details of business.

"How did you happen to leave the Atlantic for a lake boat?" said the major.

"I was sorry, but I had to. The family were coming to Buffalo to live; so I had to come to keep the peace. But how is it with you, major? Then you were on your wedding journey to New York with one of the prettiest little women that I ever set eyes on. Now you're leading a whole gang of men out west to the Lord-knows-where, and only one woman. Good looking, too. Another wife, is it, and honeymoon number two?" the skipper concluded with a laugh.

"No, that's my daughter," said the major, who felt averse to entering into particulars.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, but where are you going? Right through to Detroit?"

"No, we are all migrating to the King's country to the north."

"The devil you are! But where? There are not many places to land on this side except into the bush. There are several prospective ports, perhaps fifty miles apart. The first is Colborne," said Seagram.

"Oh, yes, that's Chief Brant's reserve. You will remember he was on the schooner when we made that memorable jaunt," said the major.

"Exactly. Well the government have done splendidly by that old Iroquois Chief. I heard the other day that his territory is fully seventy miles long and twelve wide in one of the richest belts in the country, with the Grand River running through it from end to end. You must excuse me; I think so much of that big Indian that I like to talk about him."

"What's the next place," inquired the major.

"Beyond Colborne quite a long distance are two spots that are likely to develop into places of importance. I don't think that the names are yet fixed, and the most treacherous spot in the whole lake divides them, that devilish Long Point. Port Dover is the first."

"That's where we leave some of our men."

"Why don't you stop there? I've dropped several settlers on that very spot, but none farther west."

"Because I go to a tract where there are no settlers. It lies away north and west along the La Tranche valley. And to reach it we've got to go through the woods."

"An independent kind of cuss, aren't you?"

"Not necessarily so."

"I think I know where you mean. It lies fifty or sixty miles west of the Dover place. Quite a distance beyond the Point. There's a big camp of Hurons often stationed there."

"That's it, I'm sure. When will you get there?"

"Not until to-morrow morning. West wind, you know."

"What about the Indians?" the major asked. "Have the Hurons and the Iroquois buried the hatchet for good?"

"A hard question to answer. Luckily the Government has separated them fairly well. You'll find your Hurons pretty peaceful, I reckon. I'm wanted; see you later."

So the next morning Talbot and the Bostwicks and their men were dropped at the little harbour ultimately named Port Dover. Not much passed between any of them except farewells and best wishes coupled with strong assurances that in good time they would all meet again. And even the parting between Henry and Laura after another talk—much as he would like to have it otherwise—was only cordially diplomatic.

Late in the afternoon they reached the camp of the Indians at the entrance of the capacious harbour, long afterward named Port Burwell. And while the brig was anchored, the major and the captain went on shore to parley with the chief.

XV

Life in the Woods

Although there were more than a score of Indians, men, women and papooses, visible, there was only one old cabin in sight. The rest of the dwellings were wigwams. The weather being warm, the Indians were almost all bare-footed, with one notable exception. This was that of a chief who still wore his moccasins and headdress.

The attitude and facial expression of the Indians seemed so full of pleased expectancy that the major beckoned for Laura and the others to follow them.

The feathered chief, with two others at his heels, at once came forward, extending his hand with the exclamation: "Ugh, Ugh! Red Hand."

"Major Ingersoll," "Captain Seagram," with successively extended hands, and equally polite responses.

"Come to stay?" asked Red Hand.

"Yes," was the reply, indicating the five. So the chief and the two men talked for some minutes. He evidently knew something of the English tongue.

While the major's men tried to make themselves understood to the others, Laura's clothes and personality attracted the attention of the young squaws, who cautiously touched her dress with grinning faces, and uttered their exclamations of pleasure.

"Go on in boat?" said one.

Laura shook her head.

"Stay in tent?" cried another.

They were crowding around a little too freely, and Laura, feeling nervous, moved toward her father.

The major had handed the chief some tobacco and was listening to his harangue, having already told him the main things that he wanted.

"We spare big wigwam for all, for night. And big supper. Fish caught to-day. You pick your men and when the sun rises go on trail to Tranche River."

"How far is it?" the major asked.

"Near trail, not so good, twenty mile. Long trail, tirty mile. Better place, tirty mile."

"Why is it better place?" the major asked.

"Ugh," returned Red Hand, shrugging his shoulders. "Place in woods twenty mile, no clear. Tirty mile, big clear, good land, no one there."

"How did that come? Who cleared it? White men?"

An expression of disgust swept over the red man's face.

"I think I would like to go there, but tell me more about it."

"It was Huron's home by beaver dam on La Tranche River. They raised corn and sold skins of beaver. Our old men and children's children born there."

"Then, Red Hand, why did you and your people leave?"

"Old story. Tell you later."

"I think you are in good hands, major," said Captain Seagram, a few minutes later, as he was stepping into the boat. "The Hurons are a simpler people than the Iroquois, and more reliable. Still, I would get the rest of the story before venturing too far. I will be passing here in return in four days and a white flag would bring me in."

While the major was talking their goods had been brought ashore, and stowed in wigwams.

It was not long before Laura got into conversation with the Chief's squaw and daughter, who each had picked up a little English. Laura liked the girl's face and in the great loneliness which awaited her she thought that she would be glad to take her with them.

"What is your name?" she asked. At the same time putting a little necklet of blue beads in her hand.

A gleam of pleasure danced in the girl's eyes, although no thanks were offered.

"Meta. In your talk, 'Bright Eyes.'"

"She squaw, too," said the older woman; "she got a brave."

"And his name?"

"Square Toes. There him stand; look his foot."

And there he stood not six feet away, with open eyes and mouth, taking it all in.

Laura's quick intelligence had been keeping pace with the vivid experiences of her journey. What if these two could go with them? But her glance fell at once upon the young Brave's feet. He was bare-footed and the broad expanse of his toes at their extremities made the foot seem nearly as broad as it was long.

The delicious odour of broiled fish was in the air and it was not long before the hospitable tribe had a steaming supper spread out for their white guests near the farther wigwam. With the food supplies which the major had brought they considered themselves fortunate in being so favourably entertained by the Indians.

After supper the major had a long conference with Red Hand. The points discussed were all in favour of the thirty mile route to the clearing.

While the trend of road-building through the province was in lines east and west, parallel with the lakes, Major Ingersoll had fortunately struck a future port on the direct line of the Indian trail north and south between lake Erie and Georgian Bay, one which later was to become one of the great Provincial highways.

"The King paid us for our land," said Red Hand. "It was well for the Hurons to go west and north to Penetanguishene and Christian Islands to our wigwams and the setting sun. So we gave up our village on La Tranche. It is for Iroquois and Hurons not to see each other. The hatchet is buried and Hurons do not want to dig it up."

Then the major explained to the chief that he wished to take with him some good men to work in his new settlement; men who could wield the axe and help him to build, and to carry goods to their destination. Laura had overheard part of the talk and coming closer she whispered to the major: "Father, try to have Square Toes and Bright Eyes go with us. I will need a woman. They are married and I like her."

"Have they any children?" the major asked of Red Hand, indicating the two. He had never before known how much he was undertaking in bringing Laura with him.

"No. Had squaw two winters. Both good. My squaw will spare Meta. We come and see her when you in your big wigwam."

So the arrangement was made for them to start early the next morning to reach their destination by sundown the same day.

"But how come you, chief, to be here if your home is on Lake Huron or Georgian Bay?" Ingersoll asked.

"Easy told. We come here to fish in summer and go back to Penetang to shoot deer and trap for skins in winter."

And not long after he had smoked a pipe with Red Hand, the major and Laura, with the song of the whippoorwill in their ears, sought their rest in preparation for the tramp on the long, lone trail of the morrow.

We need not go into the details of that march. In many respects it was similar to the two-day tramp at the commencement of their journey, except that it was rougher, and that the Bostwicks, Ryerson and others were absent.

Laura knew that the companionship and the society of the loved ones in Great Barrington were also things of the past; and it required whatever strength of will she possessed to retain her equanimity.

The major watched his daughter with much concern. If she ever dropped a tear of regret he did not see it. But what he did see was a brave-hearted girl, who to aid her father and help him in this new fight, was sacrificing a great deal of what every young girl estimates as the chief joys of life.

After a stop for the mid-day meal among the beeches beside a little stream, during which Laura lay down for an hour's rest, they again pursued their journey, arriving at their destination as the sun was setting.

"Home at last," cried the major, casting his eye over an area of open space covering several acres which had long ago been cleared of trees, but which was now covered largely by old huts and brushwood. "Rather uninviting, but we'll make it better. These scattered old shacks will do for the men and we'll soon have the tent up."

"I'm glad it's so near the river," said Laura.

"Some corn growing, see," said Meta, who was already talking, in Indian fashion, with her young mistress.

"Big crop last year," put in Square Toes. "This not planted. Drop from old seed, but clean up, make good."

The major had taken the precaution to bring from Newark a good supply of food stuffs, and the evening meal was quickly made ready, also a big camp fire, around which gathered Indians and whites.

"And you will be contented here in the woods, Laura?" said the major several hours later. The two were sitting by the door of their tent, near the smouldering embers of the camp fire.

"Why shouldn't I, when you are here?" Her hand sought his, while her eyes filled with tears.

"Never mind, dear," he returned gently. "We'll soon build a house. We won't be long alone in the wilds. Very soon many more will join us, both men and women. On this very spot we shall lay the foundation of a great settlement, and eventually of a great town, and we shall make these old woods blossom like the rose."

"I know you will, father."

Then, throwing her arms around his neck, with a great sob she kissed him good night. Ere long she was asleep on her bed of cedar boughs whose balmy odour gently soothed her tired body and spirit.

But the major, deep in thought, lingered on, and it was not until long after Laura had forgotten all else, that he retired to his own couch.

The suddenness and intensity of Laura's pensive mood touched him to the quick, while her self-control assured him of the strength of her spirit; and he was impressed more than ever with the mass of difficulties which he had assumed.

If he had realized at Great Barrington the possibility of conditions as they existed here in the woods, he felt sure that he would not have brought Laura to endure the privations she was obliged to face. She was courageous and would stand it without a murmur, he well knew. But why had he allowed her desire to overrule his better judgment?

Then, too, for the first time, he took a mental inventory of all the conditions. For aught he knew they were at least fifty miles from the home of any white man. Stock of all kinds as well as food supplies were equally distant. There was not a lumber mill nor hardware store nearer than Buffalo. And yet, knowing all this he had brought Laura, who had never known a physical privation in her life, to face these conditions. What a blind fool he had been. He felt that it would not be at all unfitting if he had the words *anathema maranatha* inscribed after his name.

If he had come alone he could have faced everything with his men as he had so often done before in army life. But now he not only pitied his daughter, but he also pitied himself. He was in a way bound hand and foot by her very presence. As a business proposition she had no right to be there. To establish forty settlers scattered far and wide over eight thousand acres of land, as yet unsurveyed, would require time and labour that would take him almost constantly from his new home. Alone, he could have gone off on the tramp when needed and camped anywhere. Now, duty would call him back when night came on, to be by Laura's side.

Pulling himself together with an effort, he realized that, having made the conditions he must face them, and many of them, at once. What he had brought with him were provisions, a few household essentials and settlers' tools. Of building material he had brought nothing. Of course he had the resources of the forest, but of hardware and glass, the nearest place that he could draw upon was Buffalo; and it would take a large order to fill the bill. Still, when actually needed, it would be good policy to get as much as possible at once.

Whom should he send? It would take a large part of the gold he had brought with him and who was to be trusted? Not being able to go himself he must send some one, or give up the project, which was impossible. They must not stagnate. Progress must be made.

Just then, late though it was, Meta and Square Toes came up from the river, where they had been taking a moonlight bath.

"Pon my word, the very man," said the major to himself. "Red hand said that he was absolutely honest; Meta would

still be here as a hostage, and Square Toes' face was just as square as his toes."

So as they passed to their own wigwam between himself and the dying fire, he returned their smile with the words: "There's something I want you to do to-morrow, Square Toes."

"Square Toes be glad."

"When will the *Titan* be back?"

"In three suns."

"I want you to go back to camp to-morrow, with a package for the captain, and also a message for Red Hand."

"Ugh, that'll be good."

"The parcel is very important. You must give it to no one else."

"Yas, I take it," was the solemn answer.

"Square Toes good runner," said Meta. "He come back quick, too. Meta stay with Laura."

"But why so soon? Next day do just as well."

"Because I want Huron braves to make a wagon track through the woods, working at other end while we work at this, making it big enough for a team to drive through all the way."

"Good, I see. Start when sun an hour high. Stay on road and work on way back."

"You must give the parcel to Captain Seagram yourself."

"I will," holding up his right hand as an Indian oath that he would.

Then as they went on their way to their tent the major took out his writing-tablet, and stirring up the fire again, penned the following letter to the captain of the *Titan*:

Southern Bank of La Tranche River.

May 31, 1794.

Captain Conrad Seagram,

Dear Captain:

You see I have reached my destination, but I can't get rid of you nor you of me. I still need many things, for which I send in this parcel a goodly lot of the King's guineas. If there is anything left after you buy what I want, pray keep it for your kindness and trouble. If not enough, let me know and I will send more. You have a good-sized ship and I think can bring everything, viz.: Yoke of oxen and good milch cow, low truck wagon and long chains, plough and harrow, good dry lumber and some glass, hinges, screws and nails. Also, tools for splitting shingles, and some shovels and forks. Bring what you can in your first trip, but stay a day or two longer if needful to get all together. I would also be glad if you would bring a good man, handy with tools, to help with the building. I can promise him a good two hundred acre lot if he will come.

Yours gratefully,

THOMAS INGERSOLL.

After this he calculated the various items, took out of his chest a lot of gold coins and said to himself, "Yes, I think that will do and leave a margin. As I have to trust him, full confidence is best."

Then he went to his couch and slept soundly for the balance of the night.

"What time will you reach the camp?" the major asked next morning as Square Toes tightened his belt.

"By sun at noon," was the laconic answer.

"And the package?"

"Tight in belt. Keep it sure. Give it Captain. No one else."

"Will you stay there and wait until the boat comes?"

"No, work with men on road. Go back in time."

And like a shot he was gone.

The next few days passed swiftly away. The major divided the men into two lots, the one headed by Richards, to cut the trail through the woods, and the other, directed by himself, to clear the spot for the new house, and to cut the logs of which it was to be built.

After all, Laura was surprisingly happy. As the solitary white woman in an area of more than a thousand square miles, it was a joy to have Meta with her. They chatted and laughed, and worked together, clearing the brushwood and litter from round her own tent and the Indian girl's wigwam. Then, as it would be weeks before their temporary log cabin could possibly be ready, she spent many hours decorating the interior of their own little canvas habitation. There can be the refinement of a lady's touch even in the decorations of a tent, and Laura was not wanting in taste. It amused her to be busy, and intimate association with little things kept her from thinking.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," was the laughing remark of her father as he entered one day while she was arranging a long ribbon round a miniature that she had hung up. It was the lightness of her attire, combined with the daintiness of the interior, he referred to, but it was the picture of her own mother, Elizabeth Dewey, that occupied Laura's thoughts.

"I intend to keep it for ever," she said without turning. "I am hanging it here until we get into our house. You know, I always have kept it hung in my bedroom. What kind of a house are you going to put up, dad? Some of the logs are so short and others are so long."

"You will be disappointed in one thing, Laura. We cannot obtain the necessary material soon enough; so I am going to build a shanty of three rooms at once. This will do us until we leave in the fall; and during the summer we can put up the house for next year's use."

"A capital idea it is," she returned, much more enthusiastically than he had expected. "And what an interesting thing to watch the building going up. May I make suggestions?"

"Yes, in your mother's place, a young housekeeper already!"

"Getting old before I am nineteen."

"You'll never learn younger, child."

In due time the road was cut through, the desired goods came, in the suggested three weeks the shingles were made, and the builder having arrived, the shanty was duly finished and ready for occupation.

Before the summer was half through the little settlement was a hive of industry. Saws, axes, hammers, sledges and chisels were all going, and there was neither time nor mood for either sadness or regret in the band of new homemakers.

It was too late for crop-producing that season, but the whole crude Indian clearing was made ready for both garden and field for the next year. What was more, the wagon track having proved itself available, the expected forty settlers commenced to come in. The major's busy hands were fuller than ever. No surveys had as yet been made, nor concessions struck, nor even townships named in that county of the future Oxford. Claims could only be made by the immigrants as they arrived, the simple precaution being taken to locate them sufficiently far apart, and with due regard to longitudinal direction.

In July the expected happened. Uncle Robert and Cousin David arrived; the one to remain, the other to return to Great Barrington. They came by Buffalo across the lake.

"I told you that I would come," said David as he kissed his cousin, while the two brothers were greeting each other.

"I expected you would and I am glad to see you."

"No gladder than I am to see you, Laura. Ever since you left I have been longing to know how you liked living in the woods. If father had waited much longer I certainly would have come alone."

"It is fortunate that you didn't come sooner. If you had we shouldn't have had a place to put you. We only moved into our elegant mansion three days ago. Don't you admire its beauty?"

"Of course I do," came in low measured tone. They were still outside and from the moment of their arrival he had been casting his eyes about upon the Indian wigwams, the tent and the finished shanty. There was no sign of the big, new, log house of which in the past he had heard Laura talk so enthusiastically. Was this it? A rough log shanty, twelve by thirty, and not eight feet high. A shade of disapprobation crept into his face. But Laura would not give him time to think.

"This is where dad and I live, the living-room in the middle and our own rooms at either end, I must show you how prettily we have it all fixed, and of course," she continued with a majestic wave of the hand, "we reserve the use of our tent for our friends."

"You beat everything, Laura. I am taking it all in. But are you never a bit sorry?"

"Sorry for what, David?"

"For forsaking the former home."

"Sorry! I haven't had time to be sorry about anything. I'm just as busy as a bee all day long. And when evening comes and the work is done, dad and I take in the beauty and glory of it. Sometimes we canoe down the river, or catch trout in the little pools by its side, listen to the music of the birds, or watch the glow of the sunset among the trees. And when night comes we can hear the whippoorwill's song much more clearly than we ever could in Great Barrington."

"Temporary fascination, but will it be abiding?"

"That remains to be seen. Of course, you know this shanty is only for present use until father has time to build the house. The men are getting out the timbers for it now. They are to be of the very best picked pine."

"Do you expect to be in it this year?"

"No, it cannot be completed before next spring and then the whole family from Barrington, together with father and myself, will move into it."

"Ah, they're wanting me. We'll have lots of chances for a talk before I leave."

"But you won't leave very soon. We'll have plenty of time yet. I know that dad is waiting to paddle you and Uncle Robert down the river to a big lot that he has picked out for him, if it will suit."

A few minutes later the three men were gently paddling down stream beneath the overhanging branches of spreading

beeches and maples. The stream here, being wide and smooth, with tree-lined banks, was really a shadow river.

Laura did much thinking while they were away. Even after the few weeks of separation, David looked more mature. He was a good-looking fellow, manly and erect, and in a few more years would be a very handsome man. Laura saw all this. She liked his laugh, and talk, and banter, and always felt happier when he was with her. But how was it that she never longed for him in his absence? Why did she never thrill at his presence or his touch? How was it that, the exact date of their arrival being unknown, the first sight of him did not quicken her pulse or heighten the soft colour on her cheek?

Laura was aware of all this. While she rejoiced at his coming she almost saddened at the thought, for she knew in some undefined way that he came determined to know his fate. If she was in the quagmire of indecision when she left Great Barrington she felt that she was deeper in it now. His name had been associated somewhat with that of a young woman who also lived near the waters of the Housatonic, but on twitting him he had affirmed very positively that there was nothing in it. Was it possible that this had been revived? However that might be, she felt from his look and manner that the interview would be decisive before he went away. She realized that her only plan would be to keep him as long as she could and sound her own heart to its very depths. She knew that she already had his.

"I see they are drawing up the logs for the new house. How smooth and straight they are. With that man Myers in charge they will make a handsome building," David noted, a day or two later.

"And it will be large, for we need it so," said Laura.

"But crude, of course. You cannot get fine lumber and finish in the woods."

"Still the broad axe can make everything smooth as well as strong," said Laura.

"How will you furnish it when it is finished?"

"With our old Great Barrington furniture."

"Every piece of it?"

"Yes, everything worth bringing."

"And then you will all come over here and settle down in the middle of the great forest, and forsake the charm, life, and culture of a region that has been settled for hundreds of years?"

"You are growing eloquent, David."

"Why shouldn't I? I cannot think of you, an accomplished and lovely girl, with a mind like yours, casting everything aside and burying yourself in a leafy desert like this."

"I am not worthy of such words, David. Please don't use them."

A great wave of conflicting emotions swept over her. His words seemed to engulf her in she knew not what.

"It is simply this, Laura. I don't want to leave you here." He went on a little more calmly. "This is all very well for your father and my father and the rest of the families. But it is not the place for you and me. I love you with all my heart and soul and I want to get you out of it. And I am sure you love me a little. When we get together our love will grow with the passing years. I have ambition, and with that cultured mind of yours you could help me as no one else ever could. We will have a beautiful home to ourselves on that, to us, the best of all rivers, the Housatonic, and the best of old friends to welcome you and help to make you happy."

She was gathering herself together. The test of all tests must be made.

"Is it a fable or is it true that the test of a man's love is his willingness to allow his bride to choose where their

home should be?"

"Oh," he returned with a little show of impatience, "why go back to the old shibboleth? How is it possible for me to consent to come here to live, to a country that is still all woods and to a government that I hate? In that respect, I offer you everything and you offer me nothing."

"Would not my love be anything?"

"I am afraid it would be too deeply bought at such a price."

"Well then, Cousin David, it is useless to discuss this any further. I do not love you well enough to be your wife."

He stood a moment aghast. Was it possible? Out in the Canadian forest, not another white woman for fifty miles, beside a miserable little shanty, when he had so much to offer, to be positively and absolutely refused; and not because she was his cousin, but because she didn't love him?

"But you cannot mean what you say. This is not absolutely final."

"But it is, David."

Two days later the separation came.

XVI

Meeting Brant Again

When Laura, from the door of her shanty watched David descend the long slope of the hill for the shore road, she hoped he would turn and look again, but this did not happen. As he disappeared in the far distance beneath the overhanging branches, she turned away in disappointment. The tie that held them together she had snapped asunder, and he had taken the issue as irrevocable. Henceforth their lives would lie apart. He would go his way and she hers, and that would be the end of it.

The thought for the moment had a depressing effect upon her. She had not only severed connection with David, but she had also severed the only bond which still bound her to the land of her birth. She knew that it had been the King's country when she was born. And now the double bond having been broken, she felt that she would never want to live in that land again.

The act being irretrievable, she tried to believe that it was done for conscience sake. While David Ingersoll, on Seagram's brig, tried to whistle "There are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught," Laura Ingersoll, in more homely fashion, whispered to herself: "There's no use fretting over spilt milk," and picking up a pail she ran down to the margin of the river where she gathered some wild strawberries for dinner.

Soon everything was forgotten in the rush of work. There were only a few more months to do it in, but that new house must be gotten into good shape for completion before winter could possibly close in. The wild strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and huckleberries, of which there was such profusion upon the old Indian clearing, helped to fill their summer larder.

Then there were the new settlers who came up the lake road, now open. They came in singly or in twos or threes or fours or more. Sometimes they brought stock with them. Sometimes not. And though they brought provision of some kind, they always needed additional care before the major could place each settler on his much-desired lot.

And then there was his own reserve to attend to. By cutting into the lighter side of the woods, he was able to clear and summer fallow several acres for winter wheat. He also commenced a big chopping for the next year's clearing.

So neither Major Ingersoll nor Laura had either time or inclination for much thought or introspection during those fast-going months of seventeen hundred and ninety-four.

From Great Barrington letters could come rarely; still, what did arrive were satisfactory. Elizabeth and Myra were almost as large as Laura now, and added postscripts to their mother's letters. While eager to get into their new forest home, they raved over the delights of the social life of Newark which would so soon open to them. What a time they would have during the coming winter in the little capital of Upper Canada!

Possibly Laura had elaborated a little too freely upon the attractions of old Niagara. At any rate they all looked forward to the new experiences in store for them there.

In due time the major and Laura were ready to leave and take up their residence for the winter in Madame Badeau's cottage. Sheds had been put up for the stock and a rough barn for the implements, and hay, which had been harvested from a low flat by the river. Meta and Square Toes remained in charge of the shanty.

"And with them," said the major, "I will leave men to work at the house and chopping, while Barnes will return with us."

"And what about the other Indians? You must have half a dozen working," said Laura.

"They will return to deer-hunting and trapping at Penetang. White men always work better in winter than the red skins. Luckily Square Toes is quite willing to stay with Meta."

"I like Meta," said Laura. "She is a good cook already."

"Thanks to your teaching, girl. A fine thing, too. It is for that reason that the men are willing to stay."

"Will you be back at all during the winter?"

"Yes, once or twice on snowshoes, possibly."

"And when we get to Newark shall I go all the way through with you, or will I remain there until you come back with mother and the rest?"

"You've had such a long hard summer, Laura. I think you had better remain."

"But where will I stay?"

"I don't know, yet. We'll see about it later."

In two days everything was arranged; and the major, Laura, and Barnes were again on the *Titan* by Captain Seagram's side.

"History repeats itself," exclaimed the Captain as he shook each one heartily by the hand. "You are going the opposite way and in fewer numbers. Are you giving up the business and going back to the land of promise?"

"No, Seagram, but in due time we will come back to it."

"But why so far inland, major? You bury yourself in the forest like a woodchuck does in the field. It's five months since I landed you in the middle of an Indian village and I haven't had sight of you from that day to this. Even the Indians have disappeared."

"Thou shalt not let thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," quoted the major. "If you have not seen me you have seen my men and others who have followed fast on my trail. As to the Hurons, they've left their fishing for their

hunting grounds."

"I'm only joking. But why don't you fellows develop the coast line and build up trade and commerce? I know I brought several batches of stuff for you this summer. If you'd start on the coast it would soon be ten times as much. On this very spot, man, you've one of the finest sites on the lake for a big port."

To satisfy the curiosity of the skipper the major detailed some of the things that he had already accomplished and his intentions for the future.

It was still in the early forenoon of a beautiful October day and with a strong breeze from the west they sailed over the blue waters of the lake at a rapid rate.

"Will you reach Fort Erie to-night?" the major asked.

"A hundred miles if the wind keeps like this will get us there by dark. I usually strike Buffalo first and then run into Erie the next morning. Wouldn't that suit as well?"

"We demand the right of the majority, captain. You have two Yankee passengers and three Canucks," said the major with a laugh.

"You shall have it," returned the captain grimly.

It was a typical October day, with a touch of Indian summer in the air. And as Laura took her seat beneath the shadow of an awning, she thought she had never seen a landscape of such inexpressible beauty as she could now see for miles along the shore. The glory of the Canadian forest was there, varying in every shade of colour. The tints could not be counted. The brush of the primeval naturalist had been painting its colours day after day, from early dawn till dewy eve.

And yet as they swept past the long line of forest shore, seemingly so full of marvellous possibilities, not a single human being could be seen.

"I see one yonder," said Laura at last. "Yes, two of them. Are they Indians or whites? They are walking along the shore, but so far distant that I cannot distinguish them."

The major raised his telescope, which he was careful to carry on each lake journey.

"They are Indians and are carrying nets. They are near an old wreck. I think they must be leaving it."

"Those are not nets," said the skipper. "That craft was wrecked four months ago on Long Point curve. Those fellows are salvaging its canvas for their winter wigwams. It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. There are some devilish shoals along this Long Point, I can tell you. When the east gales come, hell just sizzles round the whole length of the blasted island. I've known three wrecks already. It's almost as bad as Sark in the Channel."

As they sailed on Laura's mind reverted to other men than the Hurons who were trudging along the shore. What of the men who had landed farther up the coast a few months ago? Henry had declared solemnly that he would be sure to come and see them before the summer was over. Not that she cared very much. Why should she? But the expectation had buoyed up into hope, and in the lonely life a visit would have been welcome. But if it had ended like David's did it was well that he had not come. Still, her eyes were fixed intently on the shore as, not more than a quarter of a mile away, they swept by the landing place. She knew it by the shack that stood so near the edge of the water. As they drew nearer they saw a boat rowing in.

"A couple of fishermen returning with their catch," said the captain. "White fish and lake trout, no doubt."

"Both white men and middle-aged," said the major.

But no one else was in sight.

The Bostwicks and the Talbots were evidently far inland, and Laura thought of Henry and wondered where they all were and what they had been doing. Was he still in the woods or had he gone back already to Great Barrington? Would he go later or would he go at all?

But the breeze was strong even in the hazy atmosphere and the brig sailed buoyantly on toward Port Colborne.

Soon the major's attention was arrested by the sight of a dark object which appeared in the distance on the lake.

"What can that be?" he asked.

"It looks like a boat, possibly Brant's war canoe," was the answer.

"Surely the Iroquois and the Hurons are not at war."

"Far from it. They'll never fight again unless the white men lead the way."

"Suppose you use your glass, major."

"Yes, it's Brant, sure enough. He's there with five other Indians."

"They've been out fishing. It's the best use they can make of that big canoe of theirs," said the captain.

"Can't we hold up a little and have a talk? I haven't seen him since that trip of ours nine years ago."

"We might stop for half an hour. It looks in the west like more wind coming. Then we'll have to move on."

"They're coming this way, too."

"Yes, but they are some minutes off yet."

"Brant's a wonderful man," continued the skipper. "He's Indian to the backbone, yet he can put on as fine a polish as any man I ever saw."

"I have heard some great stories told about him, too."

"The best I ever heard was about his visit to the King."

"What was that?" asked the major.

"Well, to make a long story short, for they'll be here in five minutes, he had to go overseas to complete the title to the reserve. And while in London there was a big reception at Buckingham Palace. As a great chief he was invited with the rest of the big guns. On inquiry he found out that the guests would go in full regalia and that the big men from all nations would wear their regimentals and swords. He wasn't going to be beaten by anybody. So he put on his Indian toggery with feathers, wolf robe, leggings, moccasins, wampum, scalping knife, and tomahawk. He looked so formidable and kept such a solemn face that most people gave him a wide berth. But an East Indian from Calcutta, wearing a long flowing robe, silk sash and all the rest of it, was too deeply interested to keep his distance. As Brant walked round and round he drew closer and closer, appearing to think that Brant was a sort of wild animal that the English were taming, and he wanted to obtain a good look. Brant became angry. At last he could stand it no longer and turning suddenly round he seized the Hindu by the hair, made a great flourish with his scalping knife, and letting off a tremendous war whoop, tossed the man in a heap on the floor, then turning unconcernedly, as if nothing had happened, he continued his walk. Everybody was amused; nothing was said. But the disconsolate Easterner in much chagrin gathered himself together and quickly left the room, vowing vengeance on the savage who dared to insult him so flagrantly."

While talking, Seagram had waved his kerchief and the next minute the canoe was alongside.

"Come on board, chief; we have an old friend with us," called the captain.

With a single bound the Indian sprang upon the deck of the larger vessel.

"Chieftain Brant, Major Ingersoll."

The two men clasped hands with gleaming eyes.

"So long ago."

"And yet so short a time."

"Yes, both are true," said the major. "This is my daughter."

"Yes," was the answer. "White Fawn from the forest." And the Indian with the gallantry of a Frenchman, lifted his hat. "Beautiful, like her mother, but different. Do you know, White Fawn," he continued, giving a sharp glance at the captain and then looking gravely into her face again, "that the beautiful white squaw, your mother, saved our lives. But for her presence I am afraid that the captain would have had the scalps of both of us."

A bewildered smile came into Laura's face as she glanced from one to the other.

"It is very interesting, but I don't understand," she said at last.

"It means," said her father, "that Captain Seagram is a practical joker. The last time we met he told me that if I didn't shoot Chief Brant, he would tomahawk me."

"And," said Brant, "he told me that if I didn't tomahawk him first, I'd be sure to be shot."

"He knew very well that neither of you would believe him," said Laura.

"Yes, but the chief is a gallant lady's man. He would have you believe that it was only the presence of a lady that prevented the shedding of our blood."

"But major," exclaimed Brant, turning directly toward him, "that is only a few years past, and White Fawn has seen many summers."

"Yes, but White Fawn had another mother."

"I see, I see," said the chief, lightly elevating his eyebrows. "But where is the new mother? Is she not with you?"

Laura turned her face to hide the twinge that crossed her features, but the major's expression remained unchanged as he replied:

"No, the new mother will not come, not until next year when the new house will be finished."

Then came a little discussion concerning their formerly-discussed plans which the major, on his part, had not been able to carry out.

"Still, after all," said Brant, "you are on the La Tranche and I on the Grand. Both are good rivers and the land on each is as good as the prairie. Governor Simcoe has been very good to us."

"The wind is rising, major," interrupted the captain. "I'm afraid your palaver will have to stop. We've got to make port to-night. Good-bye, chief."

"Good-bye, White Fawn," cried Brant. "I must see your new mother again when she comes. She stole the heart of the Indian. She has a big piece of it still and you must know that the red man never forgets. And, Major Ingersoll, when and where shall we meet?"

"Why not in Simcoe, the Governor's town?"

"Yes, and why not in June, when the moon is at the full?"

"No reason in the world, Brant, that I can see," returned the practical major.

"Be sure to bring the new white squaw with you. As the Manitou lives, I must see her again."

"Ah, yes, we'll see," returned the major gravely, as they again shook hands. He knew very well, of course, that "the new mother" would not be there. But why need the chief ever know that she had been laid to rest, and that it was only the newest mother that he could ever see?

XVII

Back to Good Friends

Pursuing their journey, the Canadians saw that they would reach Fort Erie as the sun was setting.

"You'd get better lodging in Buffalo and a quicker road to Great Barrington than you could by Newark," the skipper commented as the brig was entering the Niagara River. He was not pleased with the delay and he knew that he would have trouble in crossing the river to Buffalo.

"Sorry to disappoint you, captain," returned the major lifting his glass again, "but I see a wagon and horses, yonder. I think I know the man. We may not have to delay here at all." Someone was standing at the head of his team watching their approach.

"It's Mr. David Secord from the farm," whispered Laura.

"I wonder how he happens to be here?" inquired the major.

"That's easy told," said a boatman who had overheard the latter remark as they reached the shore. "Secord brings his grain here and ships it to Buffalo."

"Better go and hold his horses, my man. They are restless and he wants to speak," said the major.

"Yes, I do," said Secord, as he hurried forward. "James told me that you would likely come down on this trip with the *Titan*. So to kill two birds with one stone I brought my wheat to market, and will take you back to the farm for the night."

"It was very good of you to think of us," said the major.

"But how did he know that we were coming?" asked Laura.

"He got that from Captain Seagram. He's our weekly telegraph and scatterer of news. It won't be a very comfortable seat," David continued a little later, as he spread a horse blanket over the rough boards on the wagon box.

"It's a carriage compared to what we have had," said Laura with a laugh, and placing the box and carpet bag behind, away they went.

After passing a comfortable night in the big house on the farm, David hitched up again and drove them past the Falls and down the gorge to Newark.

"I may as well take you straight to mother's," he said, slowing up as they passed the whirlpool, "as that is to be your winter home."

"I couldn't think of intruding in that fashion," returned the major, "until arrangements are completed. Thank you very much, but the King's Arms is the place."

"But perhaps Miss Laura will go there while you and your man stay at the Arms."

"Equally impossible," said Laura. "But after a rest I shall be glad to go over with father to see Madame Badeau."

After dinner at the hotel that evening, with a maiden's intuitive sensitiveness, Laura went up to her room, arranged her hair as daintily as she could and dressed her prettiest. She had no new finery to put on, since not a single new article had been added to her wardrobe. Her crushed dress, which had been packed and repacked, and worn and reworn, must do duty again. But her ribbons had been ironed out before they came away and her white stockings washed, while her patent leather shoes were still almost as good as new.

Of course, someone might call that evening. It would be a little peculiar if they didn't. And she tried to believe that she hadn't the slightest idea who he, she, or they would be. And the major, whatever he might do later, on Laura's persuasion remained with her.

As they sat awaiting the arrival of possible visitors, the thoughts of each were fixed with a sort of semi-consciousness upon the same subject, their parting on the morrow.

But before the hour was half spent, Laura felt herself honoured, for a messenger came, bearing a message of finely-worded welcome from Lady Simcoe.

And then came Miss Jones.

"And how well you look," she exclaimed. "A little bit tanned, but not a freckle. I tell you, Major Ingersoll, the rose of Laura's cheek and the glint of her eyes make her a dangerous person to throw into our midst."

"But just look at my hands. Scratches here, and blisters there, and the other parts all as hard as leather."

"Yes, I see a wild, woodland maiden, fleeing from the forest to have her wounds healed. And will you ever return to the land where the natives have treated you so badly?"

"Of course I will when the springtime comes, gentle Annie."

"Who told you that was my name?" Miss Jones exclaimed, with a ripple of laughter.

"I beg you ten thousand pardons. I hadn't the slightest idea that it was. You were talking such nonsense I felt like doing it, too."

"So our fair maid of the east has come back from the west," exclaimed Madame Badeau, coming forward with outstretched hands and followed immediately by James Secord. There was a flush on his face and an eager look in his eyes as he greeted her.

"You are thinner," continued Madame Badeau. Then she whispered in a tone so low that no one else heard her, "but more beautiful. And how did you enjoy it up there in the woods?"

"Very much, indeed, from first to last."

"Do you mean that they didn't keep you busy?"

"How could they when I had plenty of honey and nothing to do," Laura had heard so little of light raillery that she felt lost when thrown in the midst of it, and her attempts at small talk were rather lame. Her father came to her rescue.

"Do you know," he said, "Laura has had the biggest experience of her life. For five long months she has been mistress of all she surveyed, queen of a little oasis in the midst of a leafy desert. She has had from first to last a quartette of white men to do her bidding, and a dozen red men at her beck and call. And best of all she has had the Princess Meta,

the ah—shall I say—ah—the stately daughter of an Indian Chief—ah, and her brave husband—ah—Square Toes, worshipping perpetually at her shrine."

"Bravo, bravo," came from different quarters of the room, for others had come in, all desirous to see the man who could do things, and the young woman who single-handed had gone in with her father to open up the trail.

The next morning, leaving Laura at the little house among the maples to talk to Madame Badeau at her leisure, the major went on to the Government offices to consult with the Governor, who was deeply interested in his work. He felt keenly the advisability of filling the south-western peninsula with thrifty settlers. He had good reason to believe that if the right kind of men could be induced to come in it would become the wealthiest part of the province, the ultimate garden of Canada.

"How many families do you think you have already secured," he asked, in a lull of the talk.

"About twenty-five, I think, who will become permanent settlers, besides others who are seeking as much for pleasure as anything. But what we need and must have, Governor, are surveys. The lots are all taken up in haphazard fashion, one here and one there. The only guide so far in the selection and direction of shanty building has been the compass."

"I know it," said the Governor. "I am arranging for a couple of good men to take the matter up. We will have concessions and townships and lots all laid out as soon as we possibly can. The surveyors will be here during the winter, and if you are with them it will greatly facilitate the work."

"I expect to be, much of the time, and will be glad to help them all I can."

"And you will move your family into Madame Badeau's house at once, will you?"

"That is our intention."

"Most excellent plan, and I feel sure that her ladyship will do something toward making the season pass pleasantly. You have two or three other daughters growing up, have you not?"

"Yes, they are in regular gradation. The older one at home is two years younger than Laura."

"That's gratifying. I presume they are somewhat after her type. Did you say that they are pretty well educated?"

"I didn't say, but I think they are. We have given them the best that Great Barrington could offer."

"Satisfactory. In this new country of ours we want nothing but the best."

"At Madame Badeau's Laura was making an equally favourable impression. The children were at school and James, to Laura's great satisfaction, was away at the offices so that Madame Badeau was alone and each had the other to herself. They had intimate chats which women only when by themselves can have. Laura was shown every room and pantry and closet, and was told the history of many things away back into the ages. Throughout it all was a gentle, unobtrusive suggestion of James. Any fond mother might have said as much to any one without a thought. At last the visit was over.

"And you will stay with me until your father's return with your family? It will not likely be more than a week or two, and you need the rest after your summer's work. I know it must have been arduous, though you will not acknowledge it. More than that," she continued, confidentially, "as I expect to leave the house under the charge of yourself and your mother for several months, I shall have much rearranging and packing to do, and I am sure there is no one I would like to help me so much as you."

Laura was moved by the gentleness and almost passionate candour of the little French lady. She was irresistibly drawn towards her. "Yes, Madame Badeau," she answered, as the two stood together holding each other's hand, "I will ask my father and if he is willing I shall be glad to stay."

As she stepped lightly down the pathway to the gate she felt very grateful that the son of the home had not been present during the conversation.

XVIII

Life at the Canadian Capital

As the major kissed Laura good-bye, at Madame Badeau's door next morning, he was unusually impressed by the farewell. It seemed to involve so much more than that of parting with his family in May. And yet this was only leaving one child for half as many weeks as he had done for months with the others. He tried to analyze his feelings as he and Barnes walked down to the brig that awaited them. He knew that she was of a self-repressive nature, and that her thoughts, her feelings, her aspirations would express themselves in actions rather than in words. However, all things had gone well so far. Why should they not do so in future?

Before leaving her at the little Maple Villa he had not forgotten the true fitness of things. His wife and other daughters would come over with fully-replenished wardrobes provided with all the essential frills and furbelows needed for the enjoyment of the gay life of the little capital, whereas Laura had nothing to wear.

"After all, Laura, this invitation of Madame Badeau is the best thing that could have happened. You need a new outfit and no one here could help you better than Madame. Whatever she advises you to buy and have made, follow her advice. Here's the money to do it with." As he spoke he thrust a well-filled purse into her hand.

The two weeks passed swiftly with Laura. She helped to pack the Madame's goods and chattels and to fill her own wardrobe with graceful and dainty things. The goods that she needed could be purchased, but to get them made was a different matter. It was, even in those early days, as everywhere, where civilization existed, the busiest time of the year for ministering to the legitimate needs of a lady's wardrobe. And Newark was no exception to the rule.

Still she managed to get all she needed accomplished. During the passage of those two weeks James Secord, although he appeared quite regularly, accepted the situation with discretion. He knew that he could count upon being a welcome guest at his old home and he had no desire to arouse either anticipation or suspicion in the mind of his mother. She was too dear a woman to risk disturbing her equanimity unduly as to the possibilities of his own future.

He felt that to press personal attention upon Laura at the present time would be injudicious.

In due time the Ingersolls in full number arrived. Cordial greetings and welcomes were exchanged, and the next day James drove his mother to her other son's home on the Chippewa River. Then the weeks passed swiftly. The size of the house had been carefully considered by the major, and the two faithful old slaves, Chloe and Persiana, who had been in the possession of the family since they were born, had been given their freedom, and were in positions procured for them in Great Barrington.

There would be plenty in the house to do the work and, with the assistance of Barnes as handy man during those winter months, Mrs. Ingersoll was satisfied.

When Sally Backus had come into that family, not five years before, she knew she was facing a great problem. As the years passed it grew upon her that to mother successfully four girls and her own little children would be no easy task. And much as she had desired to leave Great Barrington, the thought that she must dwell in the wilderness of a new country which she had never seen had been appalling. She often wondered how she had dared to run the risk of marrying Thomas Ingersoll upon such short notice. And when they were married and away upon their trip the thought entered her mind, is it possible for a man to love and marry again before his other wife has been cold in her grave quite four months? What a fool, what an idiotic fool she had been, she thought on that memorable wedding journey. It could not be actual love on her part. It was simply an obsession. She had heard that word. She did not know what it meant, but it suited the

case exactly. But having put her head into the noose she had done her best.

Thoughts like these had passed through her mind very frequently during the four years of her married life. And then, on the head of all this, to suddenly leave civilization and plunge into the woods, even if the family did get a few thousand acres of land for nothing, was a bitter cup to drink.

But that winter in Newark removed many of her doubts and fears. The Ingersolls had always been a well-to-do family. Although they had lost much in the war and what followed, the major had educated his daughters well, and as far as opportunities would allow, they were accomplished girls. The two elder ones, Elizabeth and Myra threatened to rival Laura in attractiveness; and Sally Backus, good mother as she tried to be and was, believed that even now they were better looking.

When the Joneses and the treasurer's wife, and other people of Newark bade them welcome, and the government officials rivalled each other in their attention, while Lady Simcoe opened her house to them all to her teas, Sally Backus' heart became lighter.

The way was already opening up and, in her imagination, the time could not be far distant when the girls would all be married and the major and she would have, with her own little ones, the new home in the west to themselves.

After his mother's departure for the farm, James Secord lost much of his reserve and became somewhat more attentive. From his rooms in the King's Arms he would step over in the evening, often with a friend, not infrequently alone.

One evening about a month after they had been settled in Madame Badeau's house, several people had dropped in. What seemed to do much to draw James and Laura to each other was their equal fondness for music. On more than one occasion before this they had passed an hour together at the spinet. While both could play he had the better training, and as his baritone added much to her soprano they sometimes sang together. This time, while the others were trying a new game of cards, and the major, who had just come in, was talking to Sally, Laura was standing at Secord's shoulder. They had just been singing a French love song duet, and he was turning over the leaves of a music book looking for something else, when he said suddenly:

"Here are some old English songs. Do you know any of them?"

"A few, I do."

"Some of them I like, particularly this one. Can you manage it, Laura, if I play for you?"

"I think I know it. I can try."

"I am sure you can. It will suit your voice beautifully."

"Then as he ran his fingers over the keys of the instrument she began:

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss within the cup
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sip,
I would not change for thine."

During the singing of the latter part of the verse Laura's thought and feeling, as well as the attentive ear of Secord, were so carried away with the beauty of the song that neither of them heard the light tap of the knocker on the outer door. One of the young men rose and opened it quietly. On the threshold were two youths. Beckoning them to enter, strangers though they were, he raised his finger to indicate silence until the singing should be over. But this was scarcely needed,

since they both recognized the voice which one at least had often heard before. Hence the mere tap on the knocker. Just as Laura reached the close of the second stanza she became aware of the unusual sound. As the two turned to ascertain the cause, their eyes met.

"Oh! Henry, is it you?" Laura exclaimed, stepping quickly forward and taking his extended hand. But in that brief moment preceding Henry had seen it all. In all the years that he had known Laura Ingersoll he had never received a look like that. How much he would have given to exchange places with that spruce young man who, with such freedom and abandon, ran his fingers over the keys.

"Yes," he replied, a sort of dry sadness in his tone, "John and I have just arrived and we thought we would run in and see you and the major in your winter quarters."

Laura thought he laid particular stress on the word major. He had less gush than usual. Had he noticed her love song and that James Secord had played the accompaniment?

Greetings were general, introductions were made, and the major rose to shake hands with the young men. "And your father, how is he?" he asked.

"Very ill, I am afraid. Our real reason for being here," continued Henry, who felt more on his dignity than he had ever been in his life before, "is that my brother and I are hastening home to see him before it is too late."

"It is sadness you bring us," said the major.

The general expression of sympathy over the news of the illness of the Rev. Gideon Bostwick dampened the spirits of the young people for some time. A sympathetic revulsion of feeling in Laura made her carry Henry off a little later to have a quiet talk with him.

"I hope you won't find your father as ill as you expect."

"The doctor says that his case is hopeless and that it will be impossible for him to live many weeks."

"So you won't be back again this winter?"

"We wouldn't in any case. But we didn't intend to leave until we had our new fallow cut."

"But why didn't you come to the La Tranche and see us, Henry? You know you promised."

"One of the promises made to be broken. What was the use? You didn't care. Why should I?"

"I didn't say that I didn't care. What I did say was that we were very young yet and as we were both starting out on a new life we should leave the future to decide for itself and not bind ourselves by promises of any sort."

"What a wise philosopher you were trying to be, aged fifty instead of fifteen."

"Don't be silly, Henry. In another week I'll be nineteen."

"And I am twenty past. Are we not old enough? We have staked out a big claim of several thousand acres on the River Lynn. John and I have already built a good-sized shack. We expect to make a mansion of it some day. Won't you promise, Laura?"

"I thought you said promises were made to be broken. If you break little promises why not big ones? You are going back to the woods in the spring. So am I. What guarantee can any one have that you will ever cross the woods between us and come to see my father's little shanty?"

"Well, as a mathematical proposition, I will guarantee to solve the problem," he said with a humorous flash.

"I used to like arithmetic. Go on, please."

"Well, you tell me that the major has constructed a road along an old Indian trail due north from the lake. I am starting a trail west from our own lots. It will be called 'Bostwick Road' because it will not be straight. And what is more, Captain Talbot is commencing another parallel to it, called Talbot Street, because it will be straight as a string. Now, Laura, here is where the mathematics comes in. By one of these roads I will go due west, and striking your father's road at a right angle, I can leave our Simcoe camp in the morning and reach the Ingersoll shanty, as you facetiously call it, by night."

"And how soon will you do all this?"

"Next summer, but I shall not come alone. John will be with me. And while I come to declare my love again to Laura Ingersoll, John may devote himself to her sisters, Elizabeth and Myra, if he likes to do it."

"Then," he continued, "I tell you, Laura, that wild bush life will do wonders for them. You never carried such a superb colour in your life as you do now, and Myra will look just as stunning as you do," dropping his voice to a lower tone; "if these infernal cads of Newark do not carry some of you off before anyone else can get a chance."

"Henry, I'm ashamed of you," returned Laura, biting her lip to control her annoyance.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything. They are nice fellows, I've no doubt, but they are different from us."

"Yes," was her answer to his previous remark, as she followed his glance to where the two girls were seated near the centre of the room, gaily chatting with John and Lieutenant Campbell, who had already become a frequent visitor to the house. "Elizabeth is dark like my father, which makes the contrast more striking."

"Of course, Elizabeth will be pretty," he continued in a discriminating tone, at the same time looking directly at Laura and then at Myra. "But she'll never be in it with Myra."

"Myra follows the Dewey type," returned Laura laughing gently.

"But they are only buds yet. Wait until they have had a summer in the woods to blossom out. Yes, you must keep your promise this time, and be sure to bring John with you. It will be something to look forward to, a meeting in our woods and paddling on our river in August."

"Yes, we'll be sure to come." He grasped her hand to give zest to his promise, but it only lay limp and passive in his.

That winter was a memorable one for the Ingersolls. The major and his wife had means enough and hospitality enough in their hearts to keep open house, and the days passed by with flying feet. There were sleigh rides over the gradually widening stretches of the farming belt around Newark, and the long toboggan slides to the water's edge and out over the frozen surface of the lake. Sometimes there were fencing tilts between the young officers at the fort which, on more than one occasion, the young ladies were privileged to attend. More than once her ladyship welcomed to her evening gatherings all the social set of the little capital at the Government House. And whether there or at the houses of the lesser lights, none received a more gracious welcome than the three girls who, everybody knew, were like fleeting shadows, here to-day but away to-morrow.

It was generally conceded during that winter at Newark that Laura was the belle of the company. No one had more gracious attention from the many hostesses of the little town, nor more gallant chivalry from the men. The bloom of her cheek, the dark gleam of her eye, and the grace of her manner were known to everyone.

But Laura was not altogether happy. While the attachment between herself and James Secord grew steadily stronger, it seemed to be shrouded with little difficulties. She, with natural openheartedness, desired to be judiciously free to all. He, on the other hand, wished as much as possible to keep her to himself. As a gay cavalier, he wanted all or nothing. The latter he would not consent to on any account, but he must have as much of the first as could possibly be granted, particularly since she would be leaving again so soon. He had reasoned it out in his own way. If he, when accepting the position of Secretary to his Excellency the Governor, could suppress his natural tendency to frank open-heartedness of manner and readily control into evenness his dealings with the outside world, reserving all demonstration of feeling for

those for whom he really cared, could not she, the girl whom he loved with all his heart, keep everything that was best in her nature for him if she really loved him, which he felt sure she did?

More than once he declared his love and when he did so it was with all the passion of his French nature; and she felt a responsive chord in her own heart as never before. Still she would not allow it to tell its own story.

But he took her love for granted. "I know, Laura, that you love me. I have known it ever since you sang 'Drink to me only with thine eyes.' I know that it is true. Then why go back to the woods at all? Your father and mother and sisters can go without you. On the very last day before they leave we can be married and this little home among the trees can be yours."

But Laura would not consent, for with outward calm there was inward tremor. While she accepted his love she would not yield by giving a hurried consent.

So the winter came and went and the snow disappeared. And with the passing of winter the promise and bloom of an early spring was in sight. The warm showers of April, the green of the meadows, the flowers of the forest, the buds of the beeches and maples foreshadowed development. So the major decided to make an early move. Late in April the family were despatched under the guidance of Barnes for the La Tranche farm. Then he went to Great Barrington to pack and ship his goods.

At last, all other adieux having been said, came Laura's final parting with her lover. The evening was warm and they had wandered down to the edge of the lake and seated themselves on a rustic bench beneath the shadow of the spruces.

"Is it impossible to keep you from going back to those terrible woods," he exclaimed, with impassioned ardour. "Is not my love strong enough for that?"

"I'm afraid not, James," was her answer, with a great effort to steady her voice. "A man always woos a woman at her home. You have not done that yet."

"If that's the price, my lady fair, I'll get you."

"And when will you do it?" she asked, teasingly.

"Oh!" he replied, with a gay laugh. "Sometime not many moons hence, through that forest of yours. I'll pounce upon you like a thief in the night, and carry you off body and soul to a happier spot than you ever knew in your life."

"But if you ever do, dear heart, you'll have to do it in more orthodox fashion than that."

"Sweetheart, it will be in any fashion you like." And they plighted their troth in their first lovers' kiss.

XIX

Laura's Betrothal

The ensuing season was a busy and memorable one on the Ingersoll farm. Unusually early as the spring was, the warmth of summer followed with such a rush that the two almost blended into one. It was well that those May days were as bright and open as they were, for so many of the thousand things gathered during more than a hundred years could not be transferred from Great Barrington to the upper ranges of the La Tranche valley in a day. It took more than a week to do it, and the active hands and busy fingers of everyone, including those of Bright Eyes and Square Toes, were required to put them in their several places in the big new house when they arrived. There wasn't a shower during the whole of the

week and it was not until everything was in place that the summer rains commenced to fall.

Then there were the carrots, corn, and potatoes to be planted; and the flowers to be raised and nurtured in the soft brown earth: the hens to be made to cackle and the roosters to crow. There was little time for any one to ponder and think regretfully of the past and what had been lost in the great exchange. When they did steal time enough for contemplation there was the inspiration of the thought that there was no stagnation in this new forest life. However small the beginning might be, there would ever be a constant evolution into greater things.

Sometimes, as Laura and her sisters would pause for a moment and listen while their eyes rested upon a black squirrel leaping from branch to branch of the oaks and elms, or the red squirrels and chipmunks darting along the zigzags of the rail fence, their ears would catch the faraway sounds of the new settlers who continued to arrive.

This summer Henry Bostwick kept his promise and made a visit. Possibly it was because in the meantime his father had died and in the sadness of his heart he wanted to relieve his feelings. John came with him, the youth being just as anxious as Henry himself.

So, after the morning's work was over, in which the visitors were always ready to do their part and the long afternoon and twilight followed, the young men and maidens would ramble by the beaver dam, or canoe on the river, or vie with the birds in the songs they sang.

Laura and Henry were rarely by themselves, and once only did he have an opportunity to speak as he wished. This was the second evening after their arrival.

"You see," he noted, with a laugh. "I have solved the mathematical problem. With two straight lines and the right angle of a square I have found you; and we have covered the whole distance, as I said we would, in one day."

"For which we give you the greatest credit in the world."

"It proves, too, Laura, how short a distance we are from each other after all, and what I have done once I can do any time again."

"Yes, Henry. The thought is a splendid one. Father was speaking of it the other night. He said, 'How glad we all are to have Henry and John with us. It is a reminder of old times.'"

"That was kind of him, Laura. But you know very well that I mean something different from that. I want to make the trail I am laying out a lovers' road rather than a highway, although it may very well be both."

"And why not? A lot of good old New England families, some from the State of New York, have come in already. Father told me last week that the John Perrys and the Peter Armstrongs had taken up lots farther down the river. They both have daughters. And then, as you know, Uncle Robert, with aunt and my two young cousins, Elsie and Ruth, are not much farther away."

What was the use of arguing with her if she would not touch the point of all others that he cared about?

"You know very well," he continued, "it is yourself and no one else that interests me, Laura. With the glamour of the other young men all far away, you can surely listen to me. You know that I love you or I would not now be here. Have I still a right to speak? Tell me."

"I do not love you, Henry, so what's the use of talking about it again? Still that need not keep you from coming. There are other Ingersolls besides me. You once told me that Myra was better looking."

"More fool was I. You just tantalized me into saying it."

"But you must not let this little thing stand in your way. Old friends should never forget each other. You will always receive a kindly welcome at the Ingersolls'."

The young men did not leave at once. Two more days passed before they took their departure, and although both declared that they did not know when they would come again, Laura, whose eyes were always open to the future possibilities, did not believe that it would be long until they appeared upon the scene again.

And then, when August came and the government officials had their holidays, Laura had another visitor. But "Drink to me only with thine eyes," was not enough for him this time. It was with her words, her lips, and the deep yearnings of her heart that he wanted her.

"You told me once," Secord said, "that faint heart never won fair lady, so now I've come to the wooing o't! And, sweetheart, when and where shall it be? You have told me, Laura. They say that double confessions are good for the soul. I made mine long ago in full measure. Won't you make yours, and accept my suit?"

"Yes, I will, if my good old dad will give me up."

"And when did this dear heart of yours turn toward me first?" he asked, clasping her hands in both of his.

"You will be surprised when I tell you. It was when I was a guest in your mother's house. It was your complete self-control that really captured my heart. Then I felt sure in some way that you really cared."

"And you pretended all along that you didn't care a jot."

"But why should I? If you could control yourself, surely I should be able to do so equally well."

"But now that it is all settled when are we going to be married? I don't want a long engagement, but I think the first of October, the commencement of our beautiful Indian summer, would be the best."

"You are stealing my prerogative, sir," she said, pretending to pout.

"I beg you ten thousand pardons. As in King Harold's day, I am your devoted cavalier."

"Make it just two months later, December the first. That happens to be my birthday."

"But think, Laura, almost in the depth of winter. We can celebrate your birthday afterward."

"But I have a little secret I expect to celebrate on my wedding day."

"Won't you tell it to me?"

"I can't."

"Well, the date being fixed, how about the wedding itself? Where and how can we have it?"

"For that we shall have to ask father—and mother also."

Although the major had apparently been unobservant of the trend matters were taking, he was not surprised when young Secord asked him on the following morning for the hand of his daughter. And then, after a talk with Laura herself, much to her stepmother's pleasure, he gave his consent.

"But why choose such a date," exclaimed Sally, "when everything may be frozen up? Why not October?"

"The bride has always the privilege of selecting her own day," said the major, re-echoing Laura's thought. "The other two important points are, where will the marriage be celebrated, and who will tie the knot?"

So they went into a council of four to discuss the whole situation. It was finally decided that their new home, large and well-furnished though it might be, was too distant from a populated centre to warrant bringing in a qualified clergyman. And as it would be impossible to obtain the required trousseau in the middle of the forest, a hundred miles from anywhere, Laura could not be married at home.

Then again, although the whole family had passed the previous winter in Newark, it had been in a furnished house which could not be obtained again.

"Let me suggest," said Secord, with a wistful look, "that Laura make a visit to my mother in November, just before our wedding. I am sure she would be glad to have her."

"No, that would never do," was Laura's quick response. She had too deep a sense of the proprieties of life to accept such a proposition.

"How would it do, father, for you to take me to the King's Arms in the middle of November? We could both stay there until the wedding day. James might ask Madame Badeau to secure a dressmaker for me. There would be lots of time for me to have my gown made."

"And after all is over?" asked Mrs. Ingersoll.

"Then will come our wedding journey," said James.

"And where will it end?" the major asked.

"At our little home among the maples. For the present, that's where it will be. My mother will keep it warm for us till then."

"And then," said Laura, "when we get home again, and the ice and snow are thick upon the lake, I would love to have Elizabeth and Myra come to us, for a visit."

XX

The Wedding

Several weeks later, when the September frosts were beginning to tint the leaves of the forest, the major thought it high time to acquaint his brother with the news of Laura's engagement. Although only ten miles apart, Robert's thousand acres, being farther down the river, were considerably nearer the Lake Erie shore. This made a shorter road to the lake possible and consequently their meetings with each other were not very frequent.

So he and Laura paddled down the river together. Robert, too, had made quite a clearing. A field of tall corn bearing fast-ripening ears was almost ready to cut. The cows were browsing among the trees and brushwood near the barn, and on a little rising ground not far from the stream stood the square log house with blue smoke ascending through a stone chimney above the roof.

It was near noon, and not far from the barn three men with a team of oxen were hauling in what seemed to be a load of oats.

"Father, I believe those two men who are walking are Uncle Robert and Cousin David," cried Laura, in some excitement, as their canoe touched shore. It would be bad enough for the news to reach her cousin second-hand, but to have to break it face to face was a different matter. When had he come? Surely he had not been there long.

But they had been seen and all met at the door of the house.

"Really a blessing to have a visit from Laura," was her uncle's greeting.

"Very lucky, too," said David, "that she could come while I am here."

"You were surely going to pay us a visit?" said the major, surprised that they had not heard of his arrival.

"Yes, I intended to paddle upstream to-morrow and see how your clearing compared with dad's."

"Our corn will not compare with yours," said Laura. "But I am sure that our potatoes and flowers will." David was cooler and more collected than she expected to find him, after what had passed between them last year. She wondered if he had already heard the news.

Just then Mrs. Robert Ingersoll rushed out to meet them and bid them welcome.

"You are just in time for dinner. The children will be delighted to see Uncle Thomas and Cousin Laura."

But it was not until they were all seated and half-way through the meal that the major made the announcement and only then with a little reluctance. Knowing, as he did, of the intimacy that had existed between the cousins, he would have done it far more cheerily if David had not been there.

"What we really came for to-day," he said, "was to tell you a bit of news. Sally and I are going to lose a daughter and gain a son."

"What?" exclaimed David with sudden energy, looking at the flushing face of his cousin across the table. "Is Laura going to be married?"

"Yes, and the happy man will be James Secord of Newark."

"And when is the wedding to be celebrated?" This time the tone was triumphantly unruffled.

"On the first of December."

"Congratulations, Laura," David said, stretching his hand across the table and taking hers in a warm grasp. "But I am a little ahead of you. My happy day will be the fifteenth of October."

This time a flash of relief and pleasure suffused Laura's face as she still held his hand.

"And who is the fortunate maiden? She has my congratulations already."

"Miss Susanna Briggs of the Great Barrington post office. You will remember her—black hair, green eyes, turned-up nose and square chin. She was, next to Henry Bostwick, your chief competitor for prizes."

"But why traduce her in that way? Her hair was the same colour as mine. Her eyes, instead of green, were blue, and her nose as straight as that of a Grecian goddess. For that matter she was the cleverest girl in the whole school, as well as the prettiest."

A general laugh followed the little tilt, with discussion of the coming events. A little later, when the two were alone for a few minutes, they had a more intimate talk. This time his words were very earnest.

"I am not marrying from pique, Laura. I was always fond of Susan. I suppose it was because I knew you so well and that we were cousins that I liked you so much. But after all it is much better as it is. Full cousins never should marry. What I used to say about the Kings of England marrying their cousins was all rot. They married their seconds and thirds, and fourths, and why shouldn't they?"

"You couldn't have made a better choice than Susanna, and I am sure that you will be very happy," said Laura.

"And I am equally certain that James Secord ought to be. He is a most lucky man and I hope to meet him some day."

"I don't see why you shouldn't and I hope above all things that you will."

Under happy conditions it never takes long for the months to speed away. October, on the heels of September, soon

made garniture of the leaves, scattering them deep upon the forest floor and leaving the trees bare. Yet, although the stolid limbs of nature's monarchs stood stiff and gaunt, the warmth of the humid atmosphere in the soft radiance of the season was still there.

Right up to the departure of the major and Laura for Newark, Indian summer reigned.

Sweet and gentle were the partings and many the wishes and kisses when they started on their journey, and almost equally cordial were their greetings when they reached the little capital.

Although the major and Laura positively declined to remain elsewhere than at the King's Arms, during these prenuptial days, her Ladyship and Madame Badeau arranged everything else. A reception was to be given at Madame Badeau's house. The accommodation was limited, but the guests could come and go. The next day the ceremony was to be performed by the rector at the little Anglican church, and after that the wedding breakfast was to be given in the big reception room of Government House.

At last the day arrived. Laura had never explained to anyone why she had insisted upon selecting her birthday for her wedding day. Neither had her father alluded to it after she had so decidedly expressed her opinion. But during the last day or two, while contented and joyous over the future, always greeting her lover in the way that he expected, the major's keen eyes noted a slight touch of suspense in her look, wisely concluding that in its own good time even this would have an end.

Although she returned early from Madame Badeau's reception, she did not sleep well that night. Brides rarely do. But there was something else upon her mind; something that came from the long past. Not of the thing itself did she think, but of all that it meant. After that it became a blank and was almost forgotten. Yet, on the day that she promised to be James Secord's wife it had all come back again.

And now, on the eve of her marriage, it was all a myth, and there was nothing in it. Still, there would be twelve hours before the sacred knot which would hold her in all the beauty of its strength for life would be tied. What might not happen in that length of time? So she took out of her treasure box King George's miniature, then unwrapped it from its many folds in which it had laid for years, and placed it upon her dressing table, almost praying that it might prove a talisman for good.

Before she went to bed her father stepped into her room to wish her good-night. He saw the picture, but only smiled as he went out and closed the door.

Towards morning, but before the day dawned, the door noiselessly opened, and someone stepped gently over the floor, and, placing a little package and an envelope in front of the picture, as silently stepped out.

When Laura awoke the sun was above the horizon, and her first glance saw the package. The talisman had acted. Her first thought was of the letter. It had actually come. Bounding out of bed she grasped it and tore it open. It ran thus:

Leicester Square, London, England,
Dec. 1, 1795.

My dear little big Laura:

Seventeen years ago I was present at your birthday, and added the picture of good King George to your list of treasures. I told you that on that very day my own daughter Laura had reached her twentieth year, and that you reminded me of what she was at your age. Also, that she was soon to be married, and that in memory of the two birthdays I would write you a letter on your twentieth birthday and honour myself by sending you a wedding present.

The wings of the morning have kept me in knowledge, and the fairies have wafted me a message. Your birthday is to be your wedding day, and in response to my promise, and with my love, they will carry back to you this little circlet, and so swift will be their flight that after you retire to rest and before you wake in the morning, they will have delivered their

message.

Your old friend, and still a soldier of the King,
BURGOYNE.

"Goodness gracious," she exclaimed aloud, "what a beautiful letter. I was sure it would come, and the present! What is it?"

But she did not keep herself long waiting. It was a necklet of pearls set with minute diamonds with a little gold clasp bearing her initials, "L.D.I."

Three hours later, James Secord arrived to pay his last call on the blushing maiden, and when she showed him the general's gift she explained "the secret." Then with a cordial expression of approval he clasped it round her neck and went his way to meet her an hour later at the little church where they were united as man and wife.

PART THREE

The Conflict

XXI

Pre-War Days

After that the years came and went in quick succession, for they were happy and prosperous ones for James and Laura. In her little villa among the maples Laura led a busy life. Her domestic and social duties were many and constantly growing. But they were lightened somewhat by the arrival of Bright Eyes and Square Toes, who from that time onward helped to carry the burden of family life. As in her father's and her own dear mother's case, the early children to bless the home were all girls. And they were beauties, every one of them. Around the future of each history still weaves its romance.

Added charm was given to the Newark life during those passing years by the frequent presence of Laura's sisters. Elizabeth and Myra were often there and not infrequently both Sally and the major. They danced at Lady Simcoe's balls at the garrison. They played cards at the Joneses and the Campbells, and sipped their tea at the soirees of all the leading homes of the little town.

During those early years there was growing prosperity in the land. Settlers were coming in on every side. But the influx from the south was becoming so great that the residents along the border became alarmed. Was it not possible that the immigration was merely a ruse to obtain possession? E'er long these doubts and fears reached the Governor's ears and the news was forwarded to the home government. Then the offer of sixty-six thousand acres for settlement was in a measure withdrawn and the further offer of claims for a thousand settlers from the New England States cancelled. Still more than that, the large grant of land to Major Ingersoll himself was reduced to twelve hundred acres and direct payment for services already rendered in promoting settlement of the La Tranche belt by people from the New England States was promised. This was not, however, until more than half a hundred settlers had been located.

How much justice there was in the idea it is difficult to say. If the scheme had been allowed to develop into

established fact, as was proposed, evil might possibly have been the result. Cupidity and not patriotism might have induced the restless ones from the south to cross the border and take possession of the now well-known fertile belt, which lay along the shore north of the lakes.

However this might be, it did not affect the region around Newark. The properties of the Secords and the Ingersolls were far distant, and were separated by the great Iroquois reserve which the government had granted to Brant, after the one, and before the other, had come into being.

The Secords were true blue United Empire Loyalists who came over in a body before the war was declared between the colonies and the mother country, and established themselves throughout the Niagara region. Its rich soil was in very truth a gold mine to become in due time the garden of Canada. As the years passed it drew from the old land the pick of many of its settlers. They came on ships over the ocean and up the St. Lawrence to Montreal; and by ship, by foot and stage still westward until Lake Ontario was reached. Then, charmed in passing the magic beauty of the Thousand Islands, the little brig would carry them over the last lap of their journey toward the mighty falls already known to them in song and story. These people, like the Secords, were steadfastly loyal.

In the west, beyond the region of Chieftain Brant and his Iroquois, it was different. The Ingersolls and the friends who came with them, although faithful and true to their new allegiance, were not United Empire Loyalists. The change came after the war was over and not before. And while this difference existed, there was still a strong connecting link which bound the two sections of settlers together, that of the marital bond between the Ingersolls and the Secords.

During several of these earlier years, Laura, with her husband and children, remained at the family home at Newark, James Secord retaining his position as Secretary even after the withdrawal of Governor Simcoe. Soon there was rumour of a great change. Politics were as nothing in Canada. As long as they had a good Governor, equitable laws for the punishment of crime, cheap lands and free trade for the British goods, what more could they want? It was too soon to expect representative government. What did it matter to good loyal people in the new land who was in power. Whig or Tory were alike to new settlers with whom politics were only a temptation and a snare.

So in Upper Canada, after an interregnum of several years, during which period Governor Simcoe had been transferred to San Domingo, Governor Hunter was appointed in his place. And with this change James Secord lost his position as secretary.

In the meantime the war in Europe still raged. The fact that England was the acknowledged mistress of the sea and that it was only by the sea that the new French and American Republics could hold communication with each other, strained the relations of the two Anglo-Saxon peoples rather tensely.

The colonists along the Canadian frontier watched with increasing anxiety the trend of coming events. And to the people around Newark and its little garrison, the strongest and most thickly populated region of the west, the situation was a formidable one.

Buffalo was a growing town. So also was Detroit, the latter being still in the hands of the British. There was a rapidly-growing population along the whole length of the American border. The means of access of invading troops was consequently infinitely greater than the possibility of defence in the north. And above all else was the bewildering and overwhelming fact that the new republic to the south contained ten times as many people as the whole of the British possessions in the north.

Still, a man will give his life for his home. And before they were actually needed for warfare little bands of settlers everywhere gathered and took up military drill.

It was about this time that James Secord was appointed Ensign of the Lincoln militia.

But changes had long been imminent, and in 1796 the capital was removed from Newark to York.

At last a question came up for final decision between James Secord and Laura. Should their home be at the farm, at the little village of Fort Erie, the dying town of Newark, or at Queenston, which was already named after Queen Charlotte and, from its situation, would be sure of rapid growth?

One day they had driven back from the falls and had sat down on the bank of the river for a rest.

"Which of the four shall it be, Laura?" James asked. "The Americans across the river have already commenced to build Lewiston. Shall we settle down here and help to build Queenston?"

"Why not?" was Laura's quick response. "I shouldn't want to live on a farm or above the falls. Newark will soon be dead, now that the government has been moved to York. If the Yankees can build a town on the other side we can surely build one here."

"Yes," he answered in hearty approval. "We have just as good a country back of us as they have and our site here is as fine as theirs."

"But if there should be war again?" asked Laura.

"Please God, there won't be. But if it ever comes we can defend our country as well from here as anywhere else."

James Secord meant what he said. He used all the influence he had. He built his first shop. People commenced to come in. Then he established a store and mills, and became a leader and magistrate among a hive of busy men.

And happy were the years that the Secords passed at Queenston. Happy in their home life, happy in their social life, and happy in all that this world calls prosperity.

But the dreaded cloud loomed up with all its unhappy threatenings. And finally, after seventeen years of joy and felicity had crowned them with their choicest gifts, war broke out.

XXII

The War Clouds Break

On the nineteenth of June, eighteen hundred and twelve, the long-looked-for event arrived and the Trent affair became the so-called, if not actual, cause of war.

In looking back from the present-day standpoint it appears as if England was even more to blame for the war of eighteen hundred and twelve than she was for that of seventeen hundred and seventy-six, which ended in the independence of the American Republic. In the latter, the British were fighting to enforce obedience from the inhabitants of territory which was their own. In the former, they risked a conflict to revenge an insult to their supposed kingship upon the seas. In it they had absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose. On the other hand, the Americans believed they had nothing to lose and possibly much to win. Why not grasp the opportunity and in return for an insult to their invincible Stars and Stripes, seize the unprotected strip of colonies to the north, in which were already settled so many of their own people, and wrest it from the crown? Why not, at one fell swoop, possess the whole northern half of the continent from Hudson's Bay to the gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific? Then, separate from all other nations, they could lead the world.

The declaration of war was kept secret from Canadian officials for several days until troops could be gathered and conveyed by the Americans to the border. And it was not until June twenty-fifth that General Prevost, in command of the eastern Canadian forces, was able to convey the news to General Brock, who at that time was acting as President and administrator of the Province of Upper Canada.

He had, however, known the state of affairs beforehand and was making all the preparation that the limited facilities at his command would allow. Word was sent as speedily as possible along the line of the lakes to the militia to gather themselves together under their officers, and be ready for any emergency that might arise. General Brock owed much of

the detail of his information to private dispatches from Mr. Astor of New York, a strong personal friend, and was thus enabled to prepare for the first serious engagement in the west.

General Brock had returned from Detroit with his men, but as he reached Niagara he recognized the dangers which immediately awaited him. News came in, both en route and on his arrival, that the Americans were massing their troops upon the other side of the river. And that it was the intention of their commander, General Van Rensselaer, to attack Queenston Heights on the following morning. This was on the afternoon of October the twelfth.

Leaving his tired troops in ambush in the immediate vicinity, Brock hurried on to Fort George, formerly Newark, and still the headquarters of the army, such as it was, for any dispatches which had arrived during his absence. Colonel MacDonnell had a special one of importance.

The evening of the same afternoon Ensign Secord, having heard very disturbing rumours, stopped his mill. Then leaving his store in the hands of a clerk, he rode throughout the surrounding country to arouse and gather together his men. He directed them to assemble at Queenston on the following morning, with all the arms they could muster, for he did not know how soon resistance to invasion might be required.

His face was very grave when he entered his home, and the glances from his wife and daughters were equally anxious.

"Any more news—any more definite word?" he asked, as he threw off his coat and flung himself into a chair by the fire, for he was very tired.

"Not very much," returned Laura, who with the girls had been working hard all day. There was much to be done if war had again to be faced. She approached and with her hand resting on her husband's shoulder said: "But what we did hear was not encouraging. A Caughnawaga Indian was in the store and whispered to Ainslee that the Americans intended to attack Queenston in the morning. And Jim Eccles said that from the hill just at dusk he could see a lot of American soldiers coming into Lewiston from the upper road."

"And I saw several men who looked like soldiers walking along the shore," said Mary, the elder daughter, who resembled her father in feature as well as manner.

"If they do cross, what can we possibly do?" asked Laura, in genuine alarm. "What protection have we? Not a cannon nor a fortress anywhere."

"None nearer than Fort George," was the answer. "But General Brock is preparing to rush in some troops tomorrow morning."

"By that time it may be too late," said Laura. "A pity we had not known sooner."

"The difficulty is that we have so few men, and so little ammunition. We can only do our best," said Secord.

"But what of the women and children?" said Laura. "We cannot have them shot down like rats. The women could fight if they had guns; but not the children."

"They've got to be saved, that's certain. I was talking to Baxter and Ross and Turnbull as I came in. They are all very anxious. They have each of them as big a family as we have, and they are planning, in case of an attack, to take them all at once to the shanties back in the forest," he said.

"And how are we to know?"

"There will be a watch kept all night. And the moment they are sure, a runner will at once warn every house to be ready."

"And what of yourself? will you have charge?"

"No, but I will have to help defend Queenston. As a strategic point the enemy will try to rush the Heights before they molest the town, and in this delay will lie the people's safety."

"Well," said Laura with a little of the old ring in her voice. "I will get the children away, but once they are safe I will come back, and help to defend our home."

So, before retiring to rest that night hours were spent in storing away things that were valuable, in dread of looting in the morning. And they lay down in their clothes to snatch what sleep they could while ready on a moment's notice for any emergency.

Tired though he was, General Brock, at Fort George, arose before the break of day. He knew from the trend of events that a contest would take place at once, and that the American forces were larger and more concentrated than his. Van Rensselaer had nearly a thousand regulars and a hundred Indians as well as twenty-eight hundred militia; while Brock had not, all told, one-half that number. Prompt and efficient action would be their only salvation.

"You are up early, general," said his aide-de-camp.

"Yes, but the Yankees are up earlier," was the answer. And as he finished speaking they heard the distant roar of cannon.

Accompanied by the aide-de-camp and a small guard, he hastened with all speed after his troops who were already on the way to Queenston. But doubt filled the brave man's heart before he reached the village, for the Van Rensselaer men and guns were already upon the heights.

The American General had not been slow in realizing the situation. He knew from the reports of his scouts that the Canadian forces were not by any means strong. He could see with his field glasses many men in and about Queenston. Still, the Heights were so well wooded that it was impossible to judge accurately the strength that might oppose his attack. So he commissioned his brother, the Colonel, to cross the river with two hundred and twenty-five regulars, and scale the Heights under cover of the night. It was done in the early hours before dawn. There was no moon. The sky was cloudy and it was very dark. They muffled their oars and shaded any lights they were obliged to use. So effectually did they mask the effort that not a light nor a sound reached the few sentries scattered along the Canadian side of the river. But the Yankees were too wise to run any unnecessary risk. They knew that if they secured command of the Heights the village would be theirs, so in crossing they steered wide of its boundaries.

At the break of day the Queenston residents were roused from their beds by a heavy cannonading poured upon them from guns already planted upon their own hills. And at dawn Van Rensselaer found himself already ahead of the redoubtable General Brock.

The latter knew the desperateness of the situation. The scarcity of available troops, the fact that they were chiefly raw volunteers and militia, and the lack of ammunition cast a wave of doubt over his heart. But he was too brave a man to flinch.

Gathering his men as quickly as he could, he called for a ringing cheer and led the way up the escarpment. But at once they were repulsed by heavy musketry fire from above. The tall figure of the General on his horse was an outstanding target. A bullet penetrated his wrist and a moment later another passed through his chest.

His men were so busy trying to climb the hill amid the hail of bullets that few noticed him as he fell from his horse. Among those who surrounded him was Ensign Secord.

"Don't tell my men. Keep it quiet and have them carry the Heights."

Secord crossed arms with Sergeant Marshall beneath the head and shoulders of the General and led the way carrying his body to a stone house in a recess below the hill sheltered by trees.

So far the battle was against the British, and although Van Rensselaer was wounded twice and had to be carried off the field, in less than half an hour the Americans were victors and the Canadian troops were driven into the woods. This,

however, was only to rally for a second attack.

In the meantime General Brock was rapidly sinking. "I'm afraid I'm done, Secord," he exclaimed in a weakening voice. "In another hour I'll be gone. My inside pocket contains a letter to my sister—I almost knew what would happen.—Add a line or two, when all is over—and send it off. But you men must not give way—you've got to win—God save Canada."

Fortunately the enemy had not seen where they had carried the dying General. He lived only an hour longer. Secord remained to the end, then hurried away to join and rally the retreating men.

Still there was encouragement for the Loyalists, for before ten o'clock Colonel MacDonnell with two hundred York volunteers arrived. Again they attacked the reinforced Americans.

But disaster still followed the efforts of the brave Canadians. During the second brief battle which, like the first, lasted less than an hour, their better position and greater numbers once more gave the Americans the victory.

Although Van Rensselaer had rallied sufficiently to lead his men, he was again wounded, while Colonel MacDonnell of the Canadian force was killed.

After the battle was over, followed by a cessation of hostilities for several hours, each side waiting for the arrival of new troops and the appointment of new commanders, Secord stole away for an hour's rest at his own house. Nothing had been disturbed. Laura was still in the distant woods with the children. Filled with the hope that she would not risk returning that day, he lay down for a while.

Word had already reached the remnant of defeated, but not disheartened, volunteers that General Sheaffe with five hundred regulars was on his way; and with these reinforcements a more decisive battle would be fought before the day was over.

By the middle of the afternoon Sheaffe reached the Heights and gathering on his way many volunteers with muskets he rallied those unwounded in the two earlier skirmishes.

The situation, the new commander saw, was a very serious one, for the two previous engagements had given the invaders complete control of the water front. Men and supplies for the enemy were constantly coming across the river.

General Sheaffe realized at a glance that it was now or never. The Americans must be dislodged from the Heights at once. To delay the conflict for a single day would double their numbers, while all his available forces were there.

Hence, dividing his men into three divisions, under cover of the trees they partly surrounded the enemy. Although shell and shot were fired upon them, the order to reserve firing until within close range was obeyed. Then the regulars, the Indians and the remnants of the volunteers opened fire with deadly effect.

"Save your shot for close quarters. Make every bullet tell," were Sheaffe's last orders before going into battle. "Ammunition is scant but we must carry the Heights."

The orders were followed. But the contest was long and fierce, lasting until dark. Sometimes it was hand to hand fighting with bayonets.

Secord had command of a small force on the hillside immediately adjoining the Queenston valley. For a while it was all he could do to hold his own against greater odds. But towards night he had the advantage and was gaining ground. Suddenly, as he rounded a large flat rock, which separated him for the moment from his men, a bullet entered his side and half a dozen Americans from a little distance saw him fall.

"Take him prisoner," was the American captain's order.

Several rushed forward. Two of the foremost, maddened by the conflict, struck him with their muskets. Just as one of the blows fell, smashing Secord's arm, a woman rushed in from the rear.

"Brutes! Cowards!" she cried vehemently, thrusting herself between the bleeding man and the troopers. "To hit a man when he is down! If you have to kill someone, kill me."

"You devils! How dare you?" cried Captain Wool, who at that moment came up. "My orders were 'capture' not kill. The woman is right, Ingersoll. We'll attend to these men later. They're not fit to fight."

A flash of recognition passed between Lieutenant Ingersoll and Laura. They had not seen each other for eighteen years. The captain noticed the recognition as Laura dropped on her knees beside her husband to staunch the blood from his wound.

"You men will be punished for this," the captain continued, angrily. "You must take charge of him, Ingersoll. Are you his wife, madame?"

"Yes," she replied grimly, forcing back the tears. "The one man broke his arm. The other split his scalp. I saw them do it."

"Sorry, madame. Where is your house?"

"Two hundred yards away, down the hill."

"Have him carried there, Ingersoll. Then join me as soon as you can. This battle is not won yet."

So on a couple of crossed sticks and a board, David Ingersoll and three other men carried James Secord, led by Laura, down the hill. The situation was a tragic one to both Laura and David. To have met her in the maple woods of Thomas Ingersoll's farm so long ago as a rejected suitor, and to meet her again now on a bloody field of battle, where the life of her husband seemed likely to be lost, was appalling.

Secord was still unconscious during the doctor's examination.

"This is from concussion," the doctor said, "but may be only temporary. The broken arm will be all right and the scalp heal. The chief trouble will come from the chest. The right lung is involved and the bullet lodged somewhere."

David remained for half an hour to help dress the wounds. No direct conversation had so far taken place, but he could not leave without something being said. At last he muttered:

"This is bad business, Laura."

"Yes, but whose was the fault?" Her words were low, but sorrowfully bitter.

"Not mine, anyway. I did not hit him."

"But you were ahead of the captain and did not try to stop the hellish work of the others."

"I did not recognize you or I would have. I'm sorry for your sake, Laura. The whole thing is terrible."

"Your country is the one to blame. With ten times as many people as we have, you thought you could whip us into subjection and rob us of our liberty."

"You were once with us. Why didn't you stay?"

"Because we liked British freedom better and never dreamed of this hideous war."

"What think you of it now with your husband dying as a consequence?"

Laura's eyes flashed through her tears. "He won't die," she exclaimed. "We won't let him. Your brave soldiers battered him cruelly. But the doctor has hopes. So have I. Thank God, you have one good man among you. I owe his life to Captain Wool and not to you."

"But what's the use holding out, Laura? You cannot possibly win. We are overrunning the country."

"But we shall. I defy you."

"No use. My time is up. I must join my company." And away he went.

XXIII

Tecumseh Plays a Part

Notwithstanding the unequalness of the contest and the preponderance of men on the American side, the skilful tactics of General Sheaffe and the undaunted heroism of his men made the Canadians the victors of the day. General Dearborn was no match for General Sheaffe.

With the rapid movement of the Canadians, the enemy was kept in ignorance of the limited strength of his foe. Hence the Americans were driven back and forced to retreat down to the waterfront. Having no boats at their disposal to cross the river they surrendered at dark, nine hundred strong. And with this victory the first campaign of the war of eighteen twelve practically closed. It was too late in the season, and winter too near at hand for either side to make any further substantial progress.

The succeeding winter was a hard and busy one for the Canadians. The men had toiled all the year, drilling by night and working by day; and often they had to forsake everything when suddenly called to arms. In cases without number women took their places. While the Americans were steadily increasing in numbers and strength and in men and guns at every available point, Canada could make little progress.

England was too busily engaged in the great contest in the east to give much help to Canada. Even when she did send a few men across the sea as far as Montreal, it was difficult to transfer them to the more distant west. In Upper Canada, it is said, there were only eighty thousand settlers at that time and, consequently, at any strategic point the defence by Canadians would be by minority forces. And when the campaign of eighteen hundred and thirteen opened the only place along the border where the British troops were greater in numbers than the Americans was Detroit.

From Detroit General Proctor advanced with a considerable force against Commodore Winchester of Frenchtown, defeated him completely, and retained as prisoners five hundred men. But throughout the rest of the Province the British forces were less successful.

MacDonnell's brilliant attack from Montreal upon Ogdensburg only gained a partial advantage over overwhelming numbers. General Prevost's expected attack and capture of Oswego never occurred. When, according to all military opinions, there was a fair prospect of victory, he withdrew his forces and lost the opportunity.

Soon the war raged once more all along the line. Positions were lost and won, taken and retaken. Queenston and the Heights were recaptured by the Americans, and Niagara was looted and burned. The American Commodore Chauncey, with a fleet of vessels, crossed the lake, captured the new capital of York, and burned it to the ground, taking many vessels.

It looked like a gloomy day for Canada. With the country devastated and its men everywhere called to the front there was little opportunity of harvesting what crop remained, and little hope of obtaining the much-needed help from overseas.

At the Secord house the prospect was indeed a sad one. Throughout the long and trying winter the captain lay stretched upon his bed. Although not fatal, as was at first feared, his wounds were more serious than was thought probable; and when the war re-opened it was impossible for him to take part in it. His goods were pillaged. His store

was ransacked and burned. But his house remained uninjured. Later it was made a rendezvous by the American officers who, early in the season, recaptured the town and they were quartered upon Mrs. Secord and her daughters. Even when officers were absent from the house other soldiers of the enemy would come to the door. One day three of them entered and asked for a drink of water. As she handed the cup to one of the trio he remarked with a laugh:

"Capital place you've got, Missus. When we get in this is the very spot I shall choose for myself." Quick as a flash, with blazing eyes, Laura returned:

"Yes, but all that you'll get of it will be six feet of earth."

A few days later only two of them came back for another drink. In the meantime one man had suffered what she had predicted and she was almost sorry that she had made the prophecy.

The Indian chief Tecumseh, who took a large part with his braves in several battles of the war, was in the Niagara district for some time at this period and, having formerly been friendly with Captain Secord, he frequently visited him during his convalescence. Tecumseh was a polished Indian as well as a handsome man. Although he had the high cheek bones of his race, he had the piercing dark eyes, straight nose, and white teeth of an eastern king. His manners were affable, yet reserved. His broad laugh would often fill the house with sunshine.

Indian that he was, every one liked him at the Secords'. Dressed in native costume, with wolfskin coat, leggings, moccasins, wampum belt and feathered cap, the chieftain was always a welcome guest.

At times he came almost daily. The younger children called him chief, and watched at the window in expectation of his arrival, while Mary and Charlotte always gave him his name. After a while the intervals became longer, but assumed the regularity of a weekly occurrence. Every one would have been disappointed if this regularity had been broken. Before long his appearance altered somewhat. The feathers in his head-dress disappeared and other changes came gradually.

One winter evening he substituted an overcoat for his regulation blanket. On another, a white collar was worn on a woollen shirt, and later again, a pea-jacket.

But his unassumed gravity was never disturbed in the slightest degree by his change of apparel. The dignified Indian might smile or joke about other things, but never about his clothes.

Tecumseh's interest in one and all, apart from his genuine concern for the sick man, seemed for many weeks to remain the same. At last the idea dawned upon the two older girls that his attentions might be serious, and they discussed the question between themselves.

He was not a gay, but a rather grave and handsome cavalier. There was a quaintness about the whole business. It was amusing. But it stimulated thought. He was a prince of the blood.

They whispered the unspoken thought to their mother. Laura shook her head. There was nothing in it. The idea was unthinkable and as preposterous as impossible.

But Charlotte, a beautiful blond with flaxen hair, skin as white as lilies, eyes as blue as the great vault above, did not think so. Only in her sixteenth year, she was tall and straight as an arrow, with full figure. And sometimes, when the Indian's piercing black eyes would meet hers, a strange wild thrill which she did not try to understand would come into her heart. While a similar glance would revert the next instant to the less impressionable Mary the latter's practical nature yielded no response.

In his burring, musical voice Tecumseh was fond of telling tales of the dark, winsome maidens of the West. There was "White Fawn," who paddled her long white canoe on Lake Temiskaming and always came at midnight to carry the spirits of the braves to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

And there was "Laughing Water," who came every winter on snowshoes from the north to whisper words of comfort to the young squaws when there was danger of famine in the land, and to tell them of the caribou and herds of deer which

always covered the prairies of the Manitou.

And then again he spoke of Maneta, the swift-footed who, one danced around the fires of the red men and sang sweet songs to them when the corn was full on the ear and venison was plentiful in the wigwam.

When Tecumseh told the folk-lore tales of his people there was a musical cadence in his voice and a thrill in his utterance that went to the hearts of those who heard him. And even Laura was almost carried away by the sweetness and dignity of the man, and felt a dread of the future.

But Tecumseh continued to come, punctiliously at the specified hour, never varying a day, after the more frequent visits were at an end. It was to the children like a seventh-day blessing. Instead of being terrified by his knock and immediate entrance, they would clap their hands as he threw down his beaver hat. Then with his "Ugh, ugh, ugh, fine night," he would smilingly take his seat by Secord's side. After general talk upon the happenings of the day, he would join the family in the next room for an hour longer. Then with the punctiliousness of a general in command he would take himself away.

Although Mary and Charlotte differed widely in both form and feature, as well as in manner, Tecumseh scarcely seemed at any time to distinguish the one from the other. Courteously polite, he possessed the cultured Indian's urbanity and was never at a loss to express himself. His stories always affected Charlotte more than Mary. To her, instead of being mere folklore tales, they seemed like simple embodiments of truth. The younger children, too, would laugh when the tales were gay and their eyes would fill with tears when they were sad.

So the winter came and went away again, Tecumseh telling his tales without number. Sometimes they were stories of actual battle and now and then they even ended in a war-whoop that filled them, not with terror, but with wonder. At last he became almost like one of themselves.

All seemed alike to Tecumseh. But it was not so with the girls.

Spring was opening up. The snow was gone. The rivers had risen and water flooded the land. Tecumseh had told Secord six days before that his next visit would be the last and that on the day following he and his braves must start on their journey to join General Proctor, but that before starting he must smoke a pipe with him and they must talk together.

For weeks James and Laura Secord had been deeply and separately thinking. But the night before that final visit they thought and talked together.

"We shall miss him. I am sorry, but I am also more than glad," said Laura.

"I am both," said Secord.

"Yet you never spoke of it."

"How could I. There was nothing to speak of. Tecumseh, although every inch an Indian, is every inch a gentleman."

"If there has been nothing to be seen, what have we to fear?"

"Only the significance of his words. Who knows what he may say to-morrow night? What of Mary? What of Charlotte?"

"Still, he has never paid either of them the least attention."

"Ostensibly, no."

"I am sure he is too true a man to play the dastard."

"I know it. We must simply wait until to-morrow."

On arriving at the house the next evening Tecumseh's greetings were as usual. This time, however, he wore his

native garb. Laying his headdress on the table he passed into Secord's room and closed the door. This was unusual, since he had always left the door ajar. The children commenced to whisper, looking questioningly at the elder ones, but no one ventured a remark.

Tecumseh, although loquacious at times, when matters of importance occurred would go straight to the point. After a shake of the hand and a cheery word he took his usual seat. And while Secord was talking, he fixed his eyes upon a little round knot above the door handle, a spot which he had never noted before. He might have been studying the vexed question of a battle in a far-away forest, or the elusive mystery of an obscure folk-lore tale.

"I leave by the rising of the sun and will not be back for many moons," he said, at last. "Perhaps never, the Manitou only knows. And as a man I must tell my tale."

"And what is your tale?" Secord asked, trying unavailingly to catch the chief's eye.

"Simply that there is love in this house and that when Tecumseh goes he will carry with him the soul of your daughter."

"This is big talk, Tecumseh. Which soul is it that you are going to carry away?"

The imperturbable face of the chief did not waver as he went on:

"It is the White Swan, whose face is like the ripening corn leaf in the autumn sun."

"You mean Charlotte?"

"It couldn't be the other. Our spirits do not speak alike."

"But, Tecumseh, this is speaking at random. How do you know that she loves you? She is only a child. She does not know what love is."

"Eyes that drop dew in sadness, and lips that laugh in joy tell the story."

"You talk in riddles. Tell me straight out what you mean."

"I mean," returned Tecumseh with the passion of intense earnestness, this time looking Secord straight in the eye, "I mean that I love your daughter Charlotte with all my heart and soul, that she loves me and that I want her for my wife."

"How do you know she loves you? You have never courted her. You have never been with her alone. You have always treated Mary and Charlotte alike."

"I know. She is too young to marry. But a true red man can read a white woman's soul."

"But that is the very point, Tecumseh. A white woman cannot live a red man's life."

"She need not do that. Tecumseh has wealth, as the white man calls it. He has forests and prairies of his own, and herds of cattle and many horses. He is king of his people and White Swan can make our home among her own if she thinks it well. But I would not want it until this war is over and the invader driven forever from our shores."

"And what do you want now, Tecumseh?"

"Just to say a few words in her ear by herself before I go. That is all."

"You are a man, Tecumseh, and I trust you. It shall be as you will it."

A tap on the floor brought Laura in.

"Tecumseh is going away," he said, "and while he is saying good-bye to the children, I want to talk with you for a

moment, Laura. Come in for another word before you go, Tecumseh."

Secord briefly told Laura the story.

"He's a reasonable fellow and as true as steel," he concluded, "and from what I myself have seen, I feel sure that Charlotte really cares. Let her see him for a few minutes. No harm can come from it. It will ease their hearts if nothing more."

For some minutes Laura's eyes were filled with tears.

"From all that I hear and believe to be true," said Captain Secord, who was in a contemplative mood, "Tecumseh is the greatest Indian alive to-day. His English is perfect and with his eloquence he can sway his people to anything."

"For all that he is still an Indian," said Laura.

Her old attitude of the fitness of things was as strong as ever. Just as the hurried marriages of her father were objectionable on principle, so the suggested marriage of Tecumseh with Charlotte was, to her, equally wrong.

"Such a union is unthinkable," she commented, with difficulty restraining the violence of her emotion.

Taking his wife's hand in his and fixing his eyes upon her face, Secord continued:

"Tecumseh is known as one of the greatest of humanitarians. He, as head of the Shawnee tribe, with his brother did his best to unite all the Indians of America into one great body, and the King of England, knowing of his greatness, appointed him Brigadier-General of all our Indian forces."

Laura was drying her eyes.

"And," continued Secord, "that is the reason why the Shawnee chief in the battles of the war has been leading Iroquois and Hurons side by side in the fighting, and with Tecumseh to lead them they will help us to retain our rights."

"You are right," his wife admitted at last, and with a determined effort controlled herself.

When Laura returned to the outer room Tecumseh was sitting quietly on a chair with the youngest child on his knee, talking to Mary, while Charlotte was seated by herself on the sofa. Then while the Indian returned to the bedroom for a farewell word with Captain Secord, Laura whispered a few words into Charlotte's ear.

Quick as a flash, a gleam of radiant beauty enveloped the girl's face and her whole body thrilled as she clasped her mother's hands in hers. "Be calm, dearest," her mother whispered.

"I will, mother," was the answer, and she was perfectly composed when Tecumseh entered the room again. Bidding Laura adieu, he touched Charlotte's hand and drew her gently toward the door; and with a smile on his face that she had never seen before and never again after that night, she followed him into the hall.

What passed between them no one ever knew. But they were long in parting. When she did come in her face was buried in her hands, and she went silently to her room. No one saw her again that night.

A new chapter of her life had opened and closed again as suddenly as the passing of a ship in the night.

Swiftly, by land and water, Tecumseh led his men to join the forces of Proctor in the west, and as history tells us, they fought together again against the common foe.

When, at last, in the midst of a terrible contest, Proctor fled, Tecumseh stayed and fell in bloody battle on the banks of the La Tranche, fighting for the country that he had adopted and the fair maiden that he loved.

For long years afterwards Charlotte was known as the most beautiful and highly favoured belle in all Canada, with suitors innumerable at her feet. Then after a time, she went to Ireland where she remained unmarried, for no one could

win her love.

XXIV

Laura's Heroic Exploit

Although Queenston was again captured by the Americans early in the spring of eighteen hundred and thirteen, the house of Captain Secord remained unmolested. This may have been for two reasons; one, that Secord was still confined to his house owing to the brutal treatment he had received; the other, that the house was one of the best appointed in the town, and a convenient place in which to quarter the American officers. While much of his property had already been destroyed, the sick man had sufficient means to supply the needs of the family.

During part of the time the new American officer, Colonel Boerstler, was quartered at the Secords, assuring Laura that the family would be kept entirely free from molestation of any kind.

With James Secord sick in one room, the children still at school, which had not been closed, and Laura, Mary and Charlotte performing the duty of polite, if unwilling, hostesses, the officers began to talk openly and without reserve of what they had already accomplished, and of their plans for the future.

There was nothing to frustrate their efforts, no one to reveal their secrets, and no matter who heard, they had been so successful that nothing now could thwart their onward movement. This part of Upper Canada was now almost in their hands, and by a little persistent effort, they boasted, they would be able to defeat completely the few remaining Loyalists. The Province would be theirs and the campaign won.

They were so convinced of the correctness of their views that they could scarcely refrain from revealing the whole of their intended movements, never dreaming that either Laura or her daughters could possibly frustrate their efforts or even think of trying.

The demure matron of the house thought differently. Touching her lips with her finger so that her daughters might know her meaning, she waited unconcernedly upon her guests, amazing them with the perfection of her solicitude. Actually, it seemed, an angel from heaven had dropped in their midst in the enemy's country to make them welcome. So thought Colonel Boerstler and the officers who sat in council with him.

On the twenty-third of June, having been engaged with General Dearborn in arranging further details, Boerstler came in again to dine with the officers present and give instructions for the plans of the following day.

"Everything is before us," he exclaimed enthusiastically, as he took his seat at the head of the table. "Fort George, Niagara, as well as Queenston have been won. Our armed scouts have scoured the country and have captured every man visible anywhere, both old and young, and have rushed them as prisoners across the river, so that their forces have nothing to draw upon. But the British have one spot yet, DeCou's house between Ten Mile Creek and Beaver Dams, which is stacked with ammunition." "Do you know, colonel, who they have in command?" said one of the officers.

"Yes, Deharen has command of their Caughnawaga Indians, and FitzGibbon of a body of men he has gathered from God knows where. He is the best leader that they have by all odds. What is more, there is a reserve coming up from Kingston. Now if these get together and unite they will give us a world of trouble and, as the British fight like devils, we may not be able to hold what we have. Still, if we can dislodge the men at Beaver Dams, and capture the ammunition at the DeCou house, we shall have finished the job and Canada will be ours."

A few minutes later, he gave orders to his men and left the house. Then he leaped upon his horse and galloped back to Fort George to consult again with General Dearborn, while the other officers went away at once upon their respective duties.

Immediately after they had gone Laura hastened to her husband's room to consult him about the distressing news.

The captain's face was very grave. The door being ajar, he had heard much of the conversation and the drift of the plan. With only Indians and raw recruits to defend the position from a sudden and unexpected attack by more than three times their number, annihilation would be almost inevitable. There seemed to be no possible way of communicating with FitzGibbon in time to be of any avail. Secord himself was too ill to move and there was not a man anywhere whom they could send. What could possibly be done?

"FitzGibbon must get the word. The country must be saved," said Laura in low, determined tones.

"The thing's impossible," returned Secord, dejectedly. "The rains have flooded the country. The rivers and swamps are full, and from the position of the enemy any possible messenger would have to make a detour of over twenty miles. And there isn't even a lad to take the message."

"If there isn't a lad there's a lass, if she is an old one," said Laura. "I'll go myself."

"You go, Laura? The thing is impossible."

"No, it is not impossible. The country is worth saving even if it costs me my life. But it won't. I'll get back again."

"But, Laura, think of it; you will have to pass a host of sentries before you get there. And for you to go alone among those Caughnawaga Indians is as much as your life is worth."

Laura shivered for a moment as she thought of the risk that awaited her, but she reasserted her decision and said in a confident tone:

"You must trust my woman's wit for that. I shall get there before Boerstler does. I shall be on the way to Saint David's an hour before the sun is up. The girls will take care of you until I get back."

Persuasion against the seemingly reckless scheme from either husband or daughters was useless; and before the talk was over Charlotte actually approved of her mother's daring effort in so good a cause.

It was no use arguing any longer. Even James Secord was proud of his wife's insistence and felt sure that in some way she would accomplish her object, but he dreaded very seriously the risk.

The night was hot. The thought of her project was too exciting to allow any of them to sleep, and long before the first streak of dawn Laura was dressed and out of the house.

Every one in Queenston knew her, friend as well as foe. The fact that the Yankee officers were quartered at her house made her figure familiar, even to the sentinels; and as the officers spoke well of their treatment, they looked upon her almost as a friend of their cause.

"Stop! who goes there?" cried a sentinel, before she had got a dozen feet from the house.

"Mrs. Secord," she returned with great dignity, as if that should fully suffice.

"But why so early? The sun isn't out of bed yet?"

"My brother Charles lies wounded at St. David's," which was actually true, "and I want to see him before the sun gets too hot."

"Sorry, but it's against all orders. I can't let you pass."

"If you don't, he may die before I can get there."

"I cannot help that."

"If you don't I'll report you to Colonel Boerstler as an unmannerly ruffian who does not deserve to be a soldier, much less a man," she returned, in scathing tones.

"Keep cool, now. Don't get angry. Is it true? Straight business?"

"Great heavens! Must I repeat? Let me go."

So with reluctance the sentry let her pass, wondering whether he was a fool or not. He watched her retreating figure in the undeveloped light, and with much misgiving shook his head, watching for others to follow, but none came.

Soon Laura took a by-path into the woods, and before long the first streaks of dawn appeared.

She reached St. David's, four miles away, as the sun was rising. A brief inquiry was all she could make of her brother's welfare. And then, her sister-in-law accompanying her, she hurried on as far as Shipman's Corners. The roads and woods were wet, and the sister-in-law complained that her feet were so sore she could go no farther.

But Laura, undaunted, with wet and blistered feet and weary from lack of sleep, refused to stop a moment. She must reach FitzGibbon before it would be possible for Boerstler, with his six hundred regulars, cavalry and cannon to cover the same ground.

Fortunately, she knew how to find the way. But when she reached Ten Mile Creek the stream was almost impassable. Still, on her hands and knees, she succeeded in crawling over a slippery log to the farther side. The windings of the creek compelled her to cross it twice again before she reached the long hill upon the summit of which the Caughnawaga Indians were camped.

Terrified at the sight, for she knew that few of them could speak any English, she climbed the hill as rapidly as she could. As she reached the top the chief, who knew a little English, called out:

"What white woman want?"

It was difficult to make him understand, but at last she got him to know that she must see Lieutenant FitzGibbon at once, that there was not a moment to lose and that a strong enemy was almost upon them. Seeing the danger, he himself led her the rest of the way, as Deharen with another body of Indians joined them. Again the story was told. And sending her with all possible speed to FitzGibbon, Deharen at once took command of the whole of the Indians, awaiting the Lieutenant's arrival.

Grateful beyond measure for the warning, and gallantly kissing the hand of the brave woman who had brought the news, FitzGibbon gathered his men and they hurried off at full speed in the direction of Beaver Dams to join the Indians.

In the meantime, Laura, her heroic act accomplished, and worn out with her twenty-mile trip, was too exhausted to do more than tell her story. But before leaving her, Lieutenant FitzGibbon asked Captain Jarvis to take her to a neighbouring house where she could be made comfortable and rest.

What FitzGibbon with his small force and Deharen with his one hundred and fifty Indians did that day are well known in history. What Colonel Boerstler, with his superior force, and buoyed up with the prospect of any easy victory, failed to do, is equally well known. The Canadian troops and the Indians scattered through the forest surrounding Beaver Dams, opened fire upon the astonished Americans from every side and thus impressed the enemy with their seeming superior numbers. The surprise attack had its effect. FitzGibbon rushed his troops through the forest, attacking from several points, and, without exposing his own men, created havoc among the bewildered Americans. The invaders were driven into a hollow, and fearing further reinforcements for the British which he knew were already on the march, Boerstler decided to surrender.

FitzGibbon drew up terms which were signed by the wounded American Commander.

Almost immediately Boerstler received word that three hundred men were rapidly approaching to reinforce him. At once he asked for five minutes, delay which was promptly refused, and Captain Hill, in command of the approaching

force, having learned of the surrender, withdrew first to Queenston and then farther to Fort George.

So ended the battle of Beaver Dams, which although comparatively unimportant in itself, was the pivot round which the destiny of the Loyalists in Canada seemed to revolve. And so the fate of the country had lain, unknown to herself, in the hands of a brave and true-hearted woman, who fulfilled so nobly her self-imposed obligation.

[End of *Laura the Undaunted*, by Price-Brown]