THE TRAIL of DESTINY

JOHN M. FRENCH

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He bared his arm and with his hunting knife opened a vein. The white man had become a Cree.

THE TRAIL OF DESTINY

A Romance of the Canadian Bush

BY
JOHN M. FRENCH

ILLUSTRATED BY
P. J. MONAHAN

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For reasons, which those who have known them both will understand, this book is dedicated to

A. McLean Macdonell Esq., K. C.

By the author

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THE TRAIL OF DESTINY

A Romance Of The Canadian Bush.

Author’s Preface

For the historical accuracy of the following tale, I make no claim. The main events occurred shortly before 1885, the year of the uprising in the Canadian Northwest, but the troubles of that time did not spread to the district of the “Moose,” nor, so far as I have any knowledge, has there ever been a serious threat of rebellion in this territory.

The grievances of the natives, however, were none the less real and have not been overdrawn, so that during the last forty years, the fur trade has steadily declined and the Indians have largely died off, or have been absorbed by a mixture of white blood, into a half-breed race.

The post of Moose Factory is one of the oldest white settlements in North America. Its origin dates to 1668, when the French explorer, Groseilliers, then in the service of the British, sailed through the Straits into Hudson’s Bay and thence to James Bay at its southern extremity. At this point the first fur trading station was founded in 1661, the year following the granting of a royal charter to “a party of noble traders and adventurers,” subsequently known as the Hudson’s Bay Company, to whom was given, not only exclusive trading privileges, but actual possession of lands from coast to coast, to govern and control as they saw fit, so long as they did not run altogether counter to certain acknowledged rights of France.

It has been said that all great men come out of the North. Some people hailing from other cardinal points of the compass, may hold contrary opinions—and small blame to them—but history teaches that at certain periods when civilization had grown over ripe, (some historians have even gone so far as to apply a more expressive adjective) it had been rejuvenated by an infusion of rugged northern blood, which provided the red corpuscles to stimulate a race that otherwise must have died from ennuie and over-indulgence.

Apart from ordinary affairs of the heart, common to every clime and race, civilized and savage, the East and South have contributed in recent years but little towards romance. In the West it has been overdone and its edge has begun to dull; but the romance of the North is still fresh enough to be fascinating.

In the earlier days, and even up to 1869, when the extraordinary happenings hereinafter related, began to take place, the factor was not only

the chief executive officer of the Hudson's Bay Company at its several trading stations, but to all intents and purposes, he was the governor of the district, with authority of a magistrate who could make and enforce laws as he thought proper. But for the fact that he was responsible to the Company and the Company was responsible to the Government, his power over the lives and property of the people of the Hudson's Bay Territory was absolute. It was therefore desirable to impress upon the multitude the dignity of his office and to guard carefully against all undue familiarity.

This was not always easy when the number of his associates was limited and he came into close contact with them every day; and it was doubtless in recognition of this difficulty that many of the old customs and regulations of the Company had their beginning.

The clerks at the Hudson's Bay Company posts were invariably young men freshly imported from Scotland, and imbued with a love of adventure. They stood in the same relation to their chief as do the aids to a general officer of the army. They were provided with comfortable living quarters and a fairly sumptuous mess. Occasionally, too, they were invited to dine with the factor and his family, when it was always *de rigeur* to appear in evening dress.

Now when men toil all day in a country general store, which after all was the main feature of every trading post; when to hobnob with greasy and sweat-smelling savages was the only break in the routine of sorting and storing heavy packs of furs, of measuring out pounds of tea and quarts of molasses, a man was very apt to slip into slovenly ways, to forget the dignity of his position and to grow careless of appearances. To change, after working hours, from Company flannel shirts to stiff fronts, high collars and white ties, goes a long way therefore towards preserving self-respect and discipline.

The conventions may seem to have been singularly out of place, but they served as a chain to bind a young man to a higher social level. It was a chain whereby he was enabled at night, to drag himself from the mire of low caste associates, to that upper plane to which he supposedly belonged.

So it happened that for a long time, the custom of evening dress at dinner, served a useful purpose. Low company, in the long run however, is bound to corrupt good manners, and gradually the men grew to consider the practice of dressing for dinner as just a plain "damn nuisance." It was at this time that the custom began to wilt, and it soon after died a natural death.

There was another old-time practice at the “Moose” which lasted a long while after that of dressing for dinner had grown obsolete. Once a year the Company’s ship from London passed through the Hudson Straits, south of Baffins Land, into Hudson’s Bay, and anchored as close to the post as the long mud flats off shore would permit. It came laden with general merchandise to supply the several trading stations for the ensuing year, and it carried away the furs collected at the post.

Among a heterogeneous cargo it always brought a complete year’s file of the London Times; and from time immortal, or to be more specific, ever since the “Thunderer” had become a beacon light and a guiding star to the state of Britain and the mentor of every Englishmen of business, a copy had been laid punctually at eight o’clock each morning, upon the breakfast table of the factor.

The soul of the fur trade was in London, and the influence of the “City” was to be carried, like blood, through the veins and arteries of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s system to its fartherest extremities.

The date of the copy was conformed as closely as possible to that of the current day, making allowance for a twelve month’s lapse of time. This practice was maintained by succeeding factors for many years.

That there never was a slight infraction of this rule, it would be unsafe to assert, if some event of extraordinary interest were imminent and curiosity could be satisfied by a glance at tomorrow’s paper; but the factors have always indignantly repudiated the charge of any such nefarious practice.

THE TRAIL OF DESTINY

A Romance Of The Canadian Bush.

CHAPTER I.

The Boy and the Girl—"It Was a Glorious Promise But the Boy Had No Heart for It."

A boy of twelve and a little girl of ten were strolling side by side through a clump of woods, along the banks of the Moose, not far away from, but well out of sight of a motley crowd of Indians, half-breeds and Hudson's Bay Company clerks who had congregated early one morning about the boat landing of the post of Moose Factory, preparatory to the departure, on the following day, of the good ship Hawk, with passengers and furs for England.

They were very solemn and very silent. They felt the twigs crackle beneath their feet and heard the rustle of the wind among the pine tops. A kingfisher screamed and skimmed across the stream, and farther up, the sound of water, splashing its way down among the boulders, grew louder as they walked. Both wanted to speak but neither knew what to say. The boy thrust his hands into his pockets, looked up at the sky and began to whistle softly, and the girl, swinging her little bare arms back and forth, tried to look unconcernedly ahead.

After they had wandered some distance along the well-beaten trail of the old portage, the boy stopped to pick a sprig of wild cherry blossoms. The girl turned and waited for him, and as he handed her the flowers, the eyes of the children met, and in that fraction of a second, spoke a great deal more than could ever be translated into mere words.

Pretty soon they came to a fallen tree, which made it quite convenient to sit down and rest. Not a word had passed between them, but gradually, the right hand of the boy groped its way along the log until it reached a point on the far side of the girl. There it hesitated. Holding her sprig of blossoms loosely in both hands, she inclined her head until it brushed lightly against his shoulder. Immediately the arm of the boy was about her waist. His hands locked themselves over hers, and the discarded cherry blossoms fell to the ground. The girl was the first to break the silence.

"Isn't it just lovely out here?" she sighed.

"It never was more lovely than it is now," returned the boy.

"You think so?"

"Indeed, yes I do, Lucille."

“What a pity it can’t last for ever,” continued the little girl dreamily.

“That is true,” the boy answered after a short pause. “The summer will go and the leaves will be gone from the trees, and the snow will cover up all the ground. But I would not care if you did not also go.”

Neither spoke again for some time.

“I wish,” said the girl at last, “I wish—”

“What do you wish, Lucille?”

“I wish I did not have to go, John. I love the woods and the rivers and everything so.”

“And me, I love also everything. And, oh Lucille, to me you are everything.”

For answer she turned her pretty face upward, and he bent his head so close that their lips met. The girl drew back with a show of reproach that was too artificial to deceive the boy. He laughed, threw both arms about her neck and kissed her.

“I am afraid John,” she said, after she had smoothed her hair and readjusted her hat, which had been for some time clinging by its elastic band from her neck. “I’m afraid we’d better be going.”

“Aw no, Lucille, you would not go so soon? The sun is still high; there is much time yet; and when you go, you do not come back again.”

The argument appeared to be unanswerable, or at least the girl made no effort to controvert it.

“You will think of me some time, Lucille?”

“Indeed I will, John. I shall always think of you.”

“You will think of me for ten years perhaps?”

“Yes, even for ten years.”

“You used to read to me about a fairyland across the sea, where you are going, where everything is different from the bush. And you will be a fairy, too, Lucille, and you will see many strange people. Ah, maybe you forget.”

“Oh yes, of course it will be all very wonderful and very grand, but it will not be home. Do you think I could forget, John?”

“Perhaps not all the time, but you will have so much to see and so many to play with you across the great water, that you cannot think much, and bye

and bye, you come to forget just a little, and then more, and then—and then —" He did not finish in words the thought that was in his mind, but his fingers gripped more tightly the little hands beneath his own.

"Oh, you must not say that, John. If you do I shall not like you any more. No, I will never, never forget these dear old woods."

"Is it only the woods?" queried the boy earnestly and stooping until he looked upward into her down-turned face.

"You silly boy," she responded. "Let us go back to the fort."

The boy was loath to go. He lingered a few moments before slowly relinquishing the imprisoned hands. Then, from the recesses of a trouser pocket, he unearthed a treasure and silently held it out to the girl. It was a flint arrow head.

"Oh thank you so much, John. It is very nice," she said, accepting the offering and stowing it safely away in a small receptacle of shiny, bright leather that hung from her belt. "I shall always keep it to remember you by."

The boy sighed, and starting to his feet, assisted the girl to scramble off the log; then, hand in hand, they made their way slowly back to the fort. Their thoughts, however, traveled in directions far apart. To the mind of one came dreams of a new life in a great world, the world of promise that had been so glowingly painted by her mother, in stories which seemed to differ only in minor details from those of the princes and princesses and the dwarfs and heroes of Grimm, in the land of fairies. There came to her visions of stately mansions and brilliant lights; and music and dancing; and of chariots and horses; and of fair men and beautiful women, all dressed in gorgeous apparel; and the great London shops, where everything one could wish for was to be had; and the wonderful toylands, little worlds, where little people could revel in the miniature reproductions of all that grown up people had; and the pantomime, that wonderful, wonderful pantomime. How eager she was to meet the dainty, airy Columbine and the clever Harlaquin, and the funny Pantaloon, and Pierot, poor fellow. And she was to see them all and to make their acquaintance. But when at last she awoke from her day dream, she found to her surprise that she was not nearly so happy as she thought she ought to be.

At first she could not explain to herself why this should be, but it soon came to her that she would have to pay for all that she was going to have, with all that she already had. She began to realize the worth of the possessions she must give over. There was her father, and John, and Mrs.

Barwick, and the Bishop, and Bubbles, the brown puppy, and old Mucquois, the Cree Chief, who showed her where the largest trout were and how to catch them, and Marianne, his wife, who brought her every Christmas a pair of dainty deerskin moccasins, all beaded and quilled by her own hand; and ever so many dear people; and the woods and the rivers must be counted in, too.

By the time that everything had been summed up and a balance struck, she did not want to go at all.

The boy's imagination was almost as vivid. He, too, had heard of the paradise far away. The stories fascinated him just as did the tales that he and Lucille had read together, of kings and queens and their lovely daughters; and the ogres and giants; and the brave knights and fair ladies; and all the gallant chivalry of ancient times. But it was all for him a story that ended when the book was closed at the final chapter. He did not envy Lucille the pleasure of a new and gayer life, but it was not fair, he thought, that he should remain while she was sent away. The restraint and discipline at the fort and the daily grind of lessons were hard enough to bear when she was by to share them; but now— The very thought made his heart sick.

They trudged along without speaking, until they came to the clearing that brought the old stockade into view, above which could be seen the storehouse and dwellings of the fort. They could see the straggling crowd about the landing, the batteau putting off from shore and the ship far out in the bay. It was coming pretty close to the end.

As they drew nearer, the children unclasped hands, and the boy, picking up a stout birch rod, began to whittle industriously. His cheeks were flushed and his lips closely set. Finally he turned to the girl.

"Lucille," he said, "I am going on that ship."

"Don't be so foolish, John," she answered.

"I am going on that ship," he repeated with a resolute air that had nothing of mere bravado in it.

"I do wish you could, John," returned the girl, "but father will not let you. I asked him only yesterday. He said it was impossible."

"I don't care what he said, I am going on that ship."

As he spoke, the boy broke the rod across his knee.

"Indeed that would be so nice, John, but how are you ever going to manage it?"

“Never mind, Lucille; I’ll get on, and when we are out on the sea, they cannot put me off. I am going on that ship.”

They walked on again in silence until the gate of the stockade was reached. Here they lingered for a few moments before they separated, the girl proceeding in the direction of the landing while the boy passed hurriedly through the gate and entered the living quarters of the post.

Colin King, Chief Factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company, at the “Moose,” had just finished breakfast, during the course of which he had disposed of a generous bowl of porridge, some half-dozen rashers of bacon, several slices of toast, richly buttered and smeared with a thick coating of Scottish marmalade, and had drained the last drop of strong black tea from a huge porcelain cup; then he folded his napkin, pushed back his chair, lighted his pipe and made ready for a comfortable half-hour over his morning Times. The date of the newspaper corresponded to the current month and day but it was exactly one year since it had left the press room of the London office.

This thirty minutes grace before work, which the Factor always allowed himself, was just as much a part of the routine of the day as the morning’s cold tub and shave. Those were times however, before railways had begun to infest the country, when sailing vessels were still predominant in ocean trade, when cables were only dreamed of, and telegraphic communication was limited to thickly populated districts. Then the pace of the world was slow, and because there were no time and labor-saving devices, there was much more leisure to do things. Today the luxury of after-breakfast pipe and paper is confined to the very rich, the very poor and the very lazy.

King was none of these, but he was of conservative Scottish ancestry, and scrupulously followed the established customs of the office to which he had succeeded some nine years previous.

Men wear well in the bush and the Factor was apparently not over thirty-five, though to ascertain his exact age, one would have to add at least ten years to appearances. He was of medium height and powerfully built; his sandy hair was cut rather short and fairly well trimmed, considering the lack of tonsorial accommodations in the North; his moustache was carefully waxed, and he wore a closely cropped beard of Van Dyke pattern. His clothes, though built for service in a rough country, were London made and always of good material.

Of taciturn disposition, King was wont to keep much to himself, though occasionally he would accept a challenge to a game of chess from his

lordship the Bishop of Moosemin, or he would invite the good missionary and his wife to spend an evening at the fort over a few rubbers of whist. His own wife had been dead now almost three years, leaving him a little daughter, one of the only two white children at the post.

The other was a boy, now about twelve years old, a little refugee son of an English adventurer, who had deserted his French Canadian wife and gone, no one knew where. The woman died not long after and the child had become a charge upon the post. His mother had named him Jean Lajoie, but the English-speaking people had found it easier to say "John," so John he was generally called.

The Factor's wife, during the short time she had lived after the boy's adoption, had mothered the little waif, and the two children had been brought up under the same roof. After her death they had been taken in charge by Mrs. Barwick, the good Bishop's wife, who taught them the three R's and instilled into their young minds the rudiments of the Christian religion.

Though the hair of the boy was straight and black and his skin somewhat swarthy, the model of his face was that of the pure Caucasian. In mannerisms and habits, however, certain traits of the half French, half Indian showed themselves prominently. He chaffed under restraint and was wont to rebel, even against the kindly discipline of Mrs. Barwick.

Often he would slip away into the woods to escape the tedious lessons and return at night to take a flogging, administered in good old-fashioned way by the Factor; or to be locked in a room by himself for a whole twenty-four hours, which to him was a far more direful punishment than a dozen floggings. This room was on the ground floor of the men's quarters and was lighted by a window which made escape invitingly convenient. For some unaccountable reason, this fact had never occurred to the Factor. But it really did not matter because the boy never attempted to take advantage of the opportunity. He had given his word to the girl not to do so. She knew very well the sure consequences that would follow and had made him promise.

There was one never failing feature to the imprisonment however, which served to mitigate it not a little. At sundry intervals would come a gentle tapping on the window panes, and an apple, a lump of maple sugar, a handful of dried currants, begged from one of the clerks, or purloined by a little thief from behind the store counter, would be thrust in, with a tiny brown puppy to play with, "so as he wouldn't be lonesome." And Lucille would make him say that he would try not to run away again, which was the

nearest approach to a promise he ever dared to give. He always made an honest effort to keep his half pledged word; but somehow it would happen that old Mucquois, or Indian Jo, or his bosom friend, Francois Têtu, the French Canadian trapper, would drop in at the post for a horn of powder and a bag of shot, or for a new fish line and a few hooks, and when they left, John was almost sure to be missing. Sometimes it would be days before the truant returned.

Were it not for persuasion, the Factor would probably have allowed the lad to follow his bent and have found a home for him among his chosen half-breed and Indian friends. Once he even suggested the idea to Mrs. Barwick, but the good lady refused to listen to it. Rather than turn him loose among those people, she would take the boy herself; and as for Lucille, she had a crying fit which lasted until the threat was withdrawn.

On this particular morning the Factor was deep in one of those interesting and enlightening letters in the Times, wherein an indignant London citizen complained that his rest and that of his family had been ruthlessly murdered at night, by a barbarous Scot across the way, who insisted on playing the bagpipes, with the window open, at two o'clock A. M.; and that when a neighbor's committee had called upon the landlord to protest, they had been referred back to the said Scot, who informed them that he had purchased the block, and that if they did not like the music of the pipes, they could "just aw' move oot."

He had reached a point about midway down the column, when the door creaked and he looked up to see John standing near the entrance, clutching his cap tightly with both hands and looking somewhat abashed.

"What's the trouble now, lad?" he inquired rather brusquely.

The boy stood quite still and did not speak.

"Ye haven't been running away again, eh? Remember what I told ye the last time. If ye—" and the Factor made as if to rise.

"Oh yes, Monsieur, I remember," the boy faltered, "but it is not that, Monsieur."

"All right then, what is it?"

John could not summon up courage to speak.

"Well—well, what's on yer mind, lad?"

"It's about the Hawk, Monsieur," replied the boy, gaining confidence and approaching a little closer. He was not usually shy and the Factor

suspected that his present diffidence portended something out of the ordinary.

"About the Hawk, eh? What do you know about the Hawk?"

"She will sail tomorrow, Monsieur."

"Yes, at noon. I know that."

"And Lucille, she—she—is going too?"

"Yes, Lucille is going to England to be educated."

"It will take long tam, I suppose, Monsieur?"

"I am afraid so, John. For a young lady to acquire accomplishments takes time."

"How much tam, Monsieur?"

"That I really do not know; seven, eight, perhaps ten years."

The boy started.

"Ten years," he murmured. "Ten years—Why that's nearly forever."

The Factor began to see the drift of John's thought and felt really sorry for him.

"Ten years does seem a long time," he said in a more kindly tone, "but it will pass, and I fear there is little use to worry about it."

"Ten years," repeated the boy. "In ten years I will be a man."

"Yes, and Lucille will be quite grown up too."

John stood for a while, working his cap into a ball and shifting uneasily from foot to foot; and then, as if spurred by desperation, he ran forward and threw himself upon his knees before the Factor.

"Monsieur King," he pleaded, "will you let me go on that ship?"

The words nearly choked him and a few tears came despite all he could do to hold them back.

The Factor's heart was touched. He leaned forward, and raising the little chap, drew him to his knee.

"I am sorry for you, John," he said, "very sorry, but there is no help for it. You cannot go on that ship. It would be a whole year before you could get back, and you are too small to work, even for a cabin boy. No, you must stay here and study with Mrs. Barwick, and keep me company also, because I am

going to be lonesome too, you know. Come," he continued, stroking the lad's head, "in a few years you will be big enough to work for the Company, and I will make you a voyageur. Won't that be fine? Just think of it—a voyageur!"

It was a glorious promise but the boy had no heart for it.

CHAPTER II.

With Cargo of Furs, the Good Ship Hawk Sails for the Land of Dreams and Fair Promises.

The greatest of all events at Moose Factory was the annual arrival of the ship with its supplies, its mails and its passengers. It was the gala day of the district and would have been observed as a general holiday but for the work the unloading entailed upon the men of the post. Indians, half-breeds, trappers, voyageurs and the tramps of the bush—for this settlement, like all others, had its quota of itinerant vagrants—flocked to the Factory as to a great fair. They began to gather days before the vessel was due, and there was much hilarity and exchange of greetings all round. The departure was only second in importance to the arrival, but unlike the latter, it imparted a feeling of depression to the community and it lacked all the joviality and thrill of the latter.

To some it meant the severing of the ties of comradeship, and comradeship at these isolated posts, where man depends so much upon man, is a mighty close relationship. An epidemic of homesickness was wont to spread among the settlers, to most of whom, life in the wilds meant either voluntary or involuntary exile, and whose hearts were with people far to the south or across the sea. The clicking of the pawls in the capstan as the anchor was weighed, could have been likened to the sound of clods falling from a grave-digger's shovel upon a coffin.

The Hawk was scheduled to sail at mid-day and it would be no fault of the skipper if the anchor was not fast at the bow the moment the sun crossed the meridian. Preparations for departure began at daybreak and there was much bustle but little confusion. Every man's work was set for him and he was skilled in the doing of it. They did not move fast; if contrasted with the longshoremen at the large seaport towns, they might be counted sluggish, but they toiled steadily as beavers and there was very little lost energy in their efforts.

Each long red batteau, manned by a crew of sturdy Indians at the oars, a pilot at the bow and a steersman at the stern, was drawn alongside the landing, waiting to ferry the several consignments of freight from the shore to the ship far out in the bay. A chain of half-breed voyageurs, a few Canadians and as many natives as could be impressed into service, were busy conveying the great packs of furs and the bundles and boxes of the

passengers from the fort to the landing, where the boatmen stowed them so as to trim well in the long flat-bottomed lighters, while the clerks moved back and forth with pad and pencil, keeping tally of marks and weights.

Besides the Factor's little daughter, one or two employees of the post were to sail for "home" today; others were to be dropped off at points along the Labrador coast, and a few missionaries of the Oblat order and government surveyors from the territory, had come to take passage. There was therefore a fair ship's complement and the Hawk's limited cabin space was more than comfortably filled.

His appeal to the Factor had failed but John was not altogether cast down. A final plan which he had guardedly held in reserve, was a daring one, but to an imagination so strong it seemed quite feasible and the time was now ripe for action.

Along the water front he saw Indian Jo climb from a batteau and hailed him. The two walked to a secluded spot in rear of the fort and as soon as they were out of sight and earshot John suddenly stopped and looked up earnestly into the face of his tall, gaunt friend.

"What's de matter, Johnnie?" queried the Indian. "You want to come to Missinabi Creek, eh, maybe?"

"No, Jo, I want to go on that ship," responded the boy bluntly.

If Jo had been a white man he probably would have whistled, but being red he grunted.

"Huh! For what you be so foolish, eh?"

Without heeding the question, John delved into a pocket and produced a brand new double clasped hunting knife.

"See that knife, Jo?" he asked, handing the treasure over for inspection and stepping back a pace the better to observe the effect of such a stunning bribe.

The redman unclasped the blades, looked them over eagerly and tried the edges. His eyes glistened and he smiled a pretty broad smile for an Indian.

"Dat's a mighty good knife, Johnnie. What you want for him, eh?"

It happened that Jo needed an implement of this kind very badly, but his financial resources were limited and he shot an anxious and inquiring glance at the other party to the bargain.

"I want to go on that ship."

Jo's face should have registered despair, but there is no judging with certainty what emotions are at play in a red man's mind.

"Huh!" he groaned. "Big white Father kill me."

The look the Indian gave him and the tone of his voice were by no means reassuring but John did not give up. There was hope so long as Jo did not actually return the knife and he had made no move to do so but kept turning it over and fondling it with a vague idea that he might perhaps be able to strike some other bargain. John allowed him to admire it for a time and then made a motion to take it back.

"You don't like that knife, Jo?" he asked artfully.

The Indian drew back a step, glanced for a few seconds in the direction of the bay and then to the boy, as if meditating on probable consequences, took a lingering look at the glittering blades in his hand, wavered a moment, closed the knife, put it in his pocket, and the bargain was sealed.

It wanted but a minute of the time when the last batteau must leave with the mails and remaining passengers for the ship. Indian Jo, paddle in hand, stood at his place in the bow and the steersman was ready to cast off. But the Factor's seat amidships remained vacant. He and Lucille at this moment were scurrying hurriedly through the fort in quest of John. The boy could not be found anywhere within the stockade, neither was he at the landing and the little girl simply would not leave without saying good-bye to him. She was so distressed that her father humored her by searching until the last second. When further delay seemed useless, he caught up the child in his arms and carried her, sobbing against his shoulder to the boat. The pilot gave the signal and the big red bun was rowed out to the ship.

The passengers climbed aboard and the Indians began to pass the mail sacks up the side to the sailors on the main deck.

One, two, three, four, five bags were drawn over the bulwarks. A sailor reached for the sixth, but as the bowman in the lighter pushed off, it slipped from his grasp and sank immediately in the sea.

The cry "mail overboard" brought everyone to the side. At the same instant, a tall Indian dived from the bow of the batteau, and a minute later Indian Jo appeared on the surface, lugging behind him the missing bag. It was hauled quickly aboard the boat and after it scrambled the dripping native.

Again the men were about to heave it to the deck. But Jo drew a knife from his belt and before anyone could stop him, the sack was slit from end

to end, and there rolled out the unconscious form of a little boy.

A light breeze came from off shore and the Hawk, slowly gathering speed, began to move steadily northward. Two miles away on shore, the crowd watched her hull sink deeper in the water. A few narrow clouds drifted across the sky and the sails seemed to flap like the wings of a giant albatross, as the glints of the sun fell upon the canvas. At last the sea bird alighted upon the crest of a tall wave and disappeared immediately in the trough to be seen no more.

It did not take long to restore the woebegone little chap to consciousness and the Factor put back to shore in the same boat. King was a man who never could keep cool, except when in the presence of great and immediate danger. He was more than angry; he was outraged, and it was only by the exercise of, for him, most extraordinary fortitude, that he suppressed the outward manifestations of his wrath. But a batteau is not an inviting place in which to hold a heated argument. It is narrow and not over-steady at the best of times, and when floating some miles out at sea, it does not afford sufficient stability with which to withstand in safety the bursting of such a mental tornado as now threatened. Besides, there is nothing quite so upsetting to a man, when fully dressed, as a sudden and undesired dip in the sea, particularly when people are looking on. He loses dignity; and no matter what he may say, nor how fervently he may say it, when he comes to the surface, his audience is seldom prepared to take him seriously.

Subconsciously, the Factor wrestled with these truths and resolved to take no risks. The clouds continued to gather, but the breaking of the storm was deferred for a surer and dryer footing. No sooner was the boat hauled upon the beach, however, than it was ready to burst forth in all its fury, the only deterring influence being that the Factor, for the moment, could not quite decide whether to scatter or to concentrate the torrent of his wrath. For aught he knew, the whole crew might have been involved in the conspiracy, and while he might be wreaking vengeance upon one, the others were not likely to await their turns with complacency. Suspicion most strongly pointed to Indian Jo. The boy could be dealt with later and in more leisurely fashion.

Now, a stalwart, full-blooded Indian, armed with a dangerous knife is not the sort of person that a sensible party will deliberately elect to badger; but the Factor never minced matters with man or devil when occasion warranted. Walking up to Jo, he slammed him heavily on the shoulder. “You infernal scoundrel,” he shouted, “I’ll send you up the river for this.”

He drew back his left arm and aimed a smashing blow for the jaw. But the quick eye of the Indian saw it coming, and the fist shot harmlessly past his ear. Had there been room for the movement, the Factor would have felt the blade of a knife between his ribs, but instead the Indian hurled himself furiously upon his assailant and the two men grappled in a hug that might have shamed a grisly bear.

Back and forth they swayed, straining and bending and twisting in a desperate effort for a fall. For five minutes or more they wrestled without much apparent advantage. Gradually however, the superior height of the red man began to tell. Step by step and foot by foot, he forced his adversary close to the side of the batteau. One inch more and both must tumble into the boat, but the Indian would be on top. But though he could not see the hurdle, the Factor had sensed the danger and swerving slightly, braced his foot against a stone, at the same time, hunching his powerful shoulders, he swung as on a pivot and flung the Indian heavily into the boat.

Jo bounded back like a rubber ball. All thought save that of murder had fled from his excited brain. His knife flashed and for a fraction of a second, it looked as if the days of the chief magistrate at the Moose were numbered. Up to this time the sympathy of the other Indians had been with their brother red man and they had remained discreetly neutral; they could not, however, stand by and see murder done. Two of the voyageurs sprang forward and pinioned the uplifted arm.

“Take him to the fort,” commanded the Factor. “I shall deal with him tomorrow.”

The weapon was wrested from the prisoner and the order obeyed. By this time quite a crowd, including some of the clerks of the post had reached the landing and stood in a semi-circle but at respectful distance from the other leading figure of the drama.

“Where’s the boy?” the Factor roared, as soon as he could trust himself to speak coherently. But nobody knew.

CHAPTER III.

Factor and Savage Fight It Out—Trial and Banishment of Indian Jo —"Le Long Voyage."

John had sought sanctuary of Mrs. Barwick, who having heard his confession, led him to the out-house and sat him by the kitchen fire to dry, while she prepared a dinner for him. Then she proceeded to the fort to negotiate a peace.

The interview did not last long and ended quite satisfactorily. Indeed, the Factor received her very graciously and even laughed over the episode. After he had promised to be lenient she left and the culprit was sent before him.

"John," he said, "I am not going to ask you why you tried to trick me. I can guess that to my own satisfaction; and to be frank, I can hardly find it in my heart to blame you. It was a fool thing to attempt, however, and for the sake of discipline I should not overlook it. But if you will tell me who it was put you into that bag, I'll let you off."

The boy hung his head and remained silent.

"Come now, answer me. Who was it?"

John slowly raised his head and met the piercing gaze of the Factor with an air of quiet determination.

"I cannot tell you, Monsieur," he replied quietly.

If there was anything the all-powerful Factor could not brook, it was defiance.

"You can't, eh?" he demanded in a greatly altered tone.

"No, Monsieur."

"Then, by God! I'll make you."

The boy's cheeks burned and the hands at his side doubled into fists.

"I will not tell you, Monsieur," he repeated.

King brusquely rose from his seat and eyed the boy savagely, but the little chap refused to be awed and returned the look with equal determination.

The Factor paused long enough to decide that further persuasion was useless, then he walked briskly to a corner of the room and returned with a short rawhide dog whip.

"Take off your coat," he commanded.

The boy obeyed and closed his lips hard.

The Factor bent the weapon forward and back once or twice to test its pliancy, administered a few vicious cuts to the air as a preliminary and advanced upon his victim.

"I'll give you one more chance," he said. "Who tied you in that bag?"

"I won't tell you."

The Factor raised his arm to strike and brought the whip down smartly, not upon the back braced to receive it, but on the table beside him.

"You're all right, John," he said. "But I've got to know who did this thing." "Come now," he added, after a pause, "It was Indian Jo, wasn't it?"

The boy hesitated.

"Jo jumped into the sea and saved me," he answered slowly, "but you must not say he put me in that bag."

"Then how did he come to know you were in it?"

"I don't know, Monsieur."

"Look me in the face and tell me again that you do not know and I will believe you." The Factor laid his hand upon the lad's shoulder as he spoke.

John hung his head again and said nothing. Taken off his guard, he had unwittingly lied and could not think what to answer.

"Never mind, lad," continued the Factor after a pause. "You have told me without speaking. And look, you boy, if you had betrayed your friend, I should have been done with you. You may go now. Be back tomorrow at one o'clock."

Punctually at the hour named, the crew of the batteau was summoned to the office of the Factor. When all the witnesses to what had happened the previous day were assembled, Indian Jo was brought in handcuffed, and took his place stoically in the center of the room.

Every man knew that an issue of life or death was to be decided for the Indian, and with judge and prosecutor against him at the start, the finish was

not likely to be favorable to the prisoner.

John sat as far from the solemn semi-circular group of men as he could, a picture of quiet despair.

It seemed an age before the Factor began to speak.

“I want you first of all to know, Jo,” he began, “that this boy does not appear against you. I questioned him closely to find out who was responsible for his being in that bag; I even threatened him but he refused to answer. So don’t blame the lad if I happen to know all about your connection with the affair. It would be useless for you to deny that you tied him in the sack; loaded it into the batteau, and tried to pass it up the side of the ship. It is also true that at the risk of discovery, you rescued it after it had fallen overboard.

“As to what happened after, I want to be just. You had some provocation, and had you fought fair, I would have been disposed to pass over the little affair on shore. But you drew a knife on the chief magistrate of the district and I could hang you for it. Up to yesterday however, you have always been a good Indian and faithful to the Company, so I won’t be too hard. You will go up the river for two years, and if you are caught in the Company’s territory within that time, you will suffer the fullest penalty I can give you. I have nothing more to say.”

The irons were removed and the Indian, accompanied by his guards, strode out of the room with the same sang froid as when he had entered.

The sentence of banishment was considered, next to hanging, the greatest of all punishments in the territory. Frequently there was no time set for return. This was tantamount to perpetual exile, which in turn meant that the culprit was condemned to eke out a miserable existence in some distant settlement. If he had held hunting lands he lost them, and he was barred from any connection with the fur trade. To barter with an outlaw was itself a crime punishable with the same fate.

It was practically useless for the wanderer to return in defiance of the penalty, because he could trap nowhere without being guilty of trespass and even if he did collect a few pelts, he could only dispose of them to independents or other trappers aware of his position and ever ready and anxious to profit by it. In fact he would be like a thief who had stolen goods to sell. No one dared trust him because his business was illegal, so therefore he would be forced to accept any terms an avaricious fence chose to offer.

There were times, but not often, when banishment from a territory was literally intended as a sentence of death. But instances of this kind were rare, and the practice was confined to the traders of long ago, when an outlaw's life was of as little account as that of a horse thief of the Western plains.

It was only the white man who could be punished to death by the "Long Voyage." The Indian, born and bred in the bush, can neither be lost nor starved there. He knows instinctively where he is and what direction to take. At saving himself from stress of weather he is a master. For him the streams are full of fish and the woods abound in game; so that given a fair supply of matches, an axe and a knife, he can live indefinitely in any wooded country.

Within an hour after Indian Jo had received his sentence, he was poling his way up the Moose, alone, heading for the height of land; while far from the curious crowd, a small boy stood disconsolate against a tree watching the receding figure slowly fade into a speck upon the water, and disappear behind a distant point.

When a white man was sent adrift in the older days, conditions were far different.

If he could endure, he might in time reach a settlement, or find temporary asylum in some lone pioneer cabin; but if he got through it would be luck—mighty good luck.

The "Long Voyage" it was called because it had no visible end.

From the midst of a group of men, toughened and hardened in the fur trade, a man once destined for the "Long Voyage" stepped lightly into a little fathom-and-a-half birch bark canoe, turned with a smile to the crowd, and waved adieu.

"Bon voyage et bon courage," they shouted.

"Merci," he called back.

"Bon courage," God knows he will need it. A few sharp strokes, and the frail craft bounded off towards the nearest point of land, the clack, clack, clack of the paddle beating time against the gunwale to the familiar tune of the old French Canadian chanson.

“A la clair fountaine,
M’en allant promener,
J’ai trouvé l’eau si belle,
Que je m’suis baigné.
Il y a longtemps que j’ai t’aime
Jamais je ne t’oublierai——”

The refrain grew fainter, and as he rounded the bend, it died away.

The man knew that he had but one chance in twenty to get through, and that chance hinged upon speed and endurance. He bent his back to his work. After a time he stopped singing to save his wind, and paddled, paddled, paddled. Point after point he passed. The current began to press harder against him. The sweat poured from his face and trickled down his spine.

Stroke by stroke he crept closer to the bend in the river. He heard the faint sound of rushing water. It grew louder as he forced his way against the eddies, and great white sheets of foam floated about him. He rounded the point and made a sharp turn to the portage at the foot of the rapids. He threw his pack upon his back, adjusted the tumpline across his forehead, raised his canoe above his head and made his way along the trail.

The path led up a steep and slippery bank. He dug the heels of his shoepacks into the stiff blue clay, and step by step, climbed for half a mile to the top. A few hundred yards on the level gave him a breathing spell, and then there came a gully. It was very deep and the mud at the bottom took him almost to his knees. Stumbling over snags and steadying himself by the branches of the scrubby cedars, he struggled to the summit and for two miles fought on through the thick brush. Again the sound of rushing water and he was at the head of the chute. He paused long enough to light a pipe and headed again up stream into the thick of the wilderness.

For six days he went on: paddling, poling, wading, portaging. It had rained steadily for forty-eight hours. His matches were wet. The last of his rations had gone and he was very weary. How far must he go? Fifty miles sure, it might be a hundred. He had lost all sense of distance and knew not where he was.

As he drew closer to the height of land the stream was deeper and swifter. The rapids were many and the portages hard to find. Not a sign of life and no sound but the splashing of the water and the rustling of the wind among the trees.

The river broadened into a lake and he could not find the outlet. He followed the shore for one whole day. At night he came upon a clump of reeds and tall water grasses, hiding the mouth of a shallow stream, half marsh, half creek, and threw himself upon the sodden ground to sleep. He found the track of a moose in the mud but looked in vain for the marks of a human foot.

Still he dared to hope that the trickling water might lead near to the river source. He turned from the lake and painfully fought his way through the heavy underbrush. Tripping over roots and stumbling across fallen trees, torn by thorns and tormented by flies, he went on and on, into the thick brush.

Summer passed and winter came and went. In the spring a party of Indian trappers came upon a small canoe, half sunken on the open lake; but the owner was never found.

CHAPTER IV.
The Home of the Big Cree Chief Mucquois.

Mucquois, the Cree chief, was one of the last of the Indian trappers to bring in his furs that fall. To John's great joy he arrived at the post one day with his son Ottumna, and the Factor was only too glad to let the boy go away with them for a time. Hitherto the clandestine visits he had paid to the Chief and his family, had always been clouded by the thought of the punishment that was to follow. Now he was to go in the bright sunshine of a clear conscience.

The old Indian's canoe was at the point and John helped him to load it. There was a new rifle, a double barrel gun, a box full of powder, shot and percussion caps, an axe, a hatchet, a couple of hunting knives, keen and shiny in their leather cases, fish lines and hooks galore and several pounds of maple sugar. There were also shirts, blankets, clay pipes and tobacco for the men, and for Marianne and Susanne were many yards of blue flannel, bright calico, colored wool, beads, spangles and other finery becoming ladies of fashion in the bush.

The remaining cargo space was filled with flour, beans and salt, for ordinary consumption and some pork and molasses for extraordinary occasions. People of rank and position lived well in the North.

John's pack, with tumpline attachment, had been lying by the upturned canoe hours before the little birch bark craft was finally trimmed evenly in the water, with Ottumna in the bow and the old chief in the stern. The boy, perched amidships upon a bale of blankets, completed the crew, and they were off to the land of Mucquois.

It was rather slow going at first because the shallowness of the water did not afford a fair purchase for the paddles, and they had to pole a considerable distance up stream to the portage. There the cargo was strapped into packs and carried over in one trip on the backs of the men. Ottumna returned for the canoe while Mucquois built a fire and prepared the mid-day snack.

The stretch of water above the portage was deep, and though the current was strong, the three paddlers made good headway against it. The shore on both sides was low and covered with thick brush above which the trees did not tower to any great height, and there were not many bends in the river.

The only sounds that varied the monotonous clank and splash of the paddles, were the occasional drumming of a partridge in the bush, the wail of a loon and the crashing of a deer bounding back from the runway.

The boy held his own and kept time with the short, quick strokes peculiar to the Indian. But the silence became oppressive and after a while he broke into song; not very melodious song nor always true to tune, but good enough for practical purposes. It enabled him to stop wondering how far they were from the next portage. They reached it shortly before dusk and camped at the head of the rapid.

Early in the morning of the third day the voyageurs came upon what in some countries would pass for a river, for it was deep and much too wide to span in a jump, but here it was considered as no better than its name implied and was known as Missinaibi Creek.

The canoe left the main stream at this point and proceeded up the narrow waterway, winding alternately from left to right under overhanging birch and willows, for nearly two miles. As they approached a sharp turn Ottumna fired two shots into the air. Within a few seconds came an answering report, and they were welcomed home by the women and children of the camp. No need to trouble further with the canoe and freight; the squaws could attend to that. The work of the voyageurs was done.

Mucquois, as behooved the hereditary chief of a distinguished tribe, lived in a cabin. It was built of logs and, following the style of architecture universally adopted in this country, was of but one story, buttressed at the rear by a substantial wing, especially designed for culinary uses in the winter time. In summer the cooking was done out of doors.

The furniture of the cabin was plain and substantial, and every piece had been wrought by native mechanics, from lumber hewn in the neighboring forest. For tools they had had but an axe and a knife. Tin plates, panikins, steel knives and three pronged forks with bone handles, were stacked upon shelves set about the fireplace. An iron pot and tea kettle were swung above the fire, and from the walls of the extension hung fry-pans, platters and other culinary utensils of iron.

For beds the walls of the sleeping apartments were lined with bunks, upper and lower, after the manner of steamboat staterooms.

The residence of the Chief was not without its decorations; some unmistakably meant as such, and others quite unintentional. Sundry objects d’art represented products of the Hudson’s Bay Company stores. An old

print, tacked to the door, depicted a trading scene of long, long ago; a market place on the shore of a great lake, where around the camp fire the honest but simple minded aborigine was induced to barter his foxes and beavers for a few yards of cotton, a pound or two of tobacco, or a handful of beads. A faded steel engraving of Prince Rupert and of another governor of more recent date, and one or two picture calendars belonging to years long since passed, completed the intentional adornments.

The decorations which, however, appealed most to the erudite traveler, were the skin plastered walls of the cabin itself, its curtains of deer hide, the gaily painted stem and stern of the canoe swinging from the rafters, the rusty flint-lock over the door with shot canister and powder horn, and the motley collection of bows and arrows, hanging in delightful disarrangement from any convenient peg.

To one side of the cabin, sheltered by the low trees, a couple of tents were pitched to serve as sleeping quarters for the family and guests of the Chief in the summer season, and opposite was the cookery, where Marianne baked most delicious bread, sinking the dough over night in great iron pots beneath the hot ashes of the fire. From the cross-bar above swung the kettles, one for tea and the other for soup and for the boiling of rabbit and partridge stew.

At sunrise next morning Mucquois and Ottumna, armed with an axe and a knife, disappeared in the bush, and when the position of the sun indicated high noon, they returned bearing a huge roll of birch bark, two long saplings, a number of small cedar logs, split longitudinally into sections, and a bundle of spruce roots. Selecting a suitable spot along the margin of the creek, Ottumna proceeded to draft the lines of a canoe upon the fine wet sand, consulting with the Chief as he did so and before night of the following day, had completed a craft which in lines and finish was comparable with the finest models ever turned from a boat-builder’s shop, not a nail, nor so much as a tack, had been used in construction, and every scrap of material had been gathered from within a few yards of the builder’s cabin.

Next day, piloted by her builders, the canoe made her maiden voyage to the beaver meadows.

CHAPTER V.

Missinaibi Creek, Home of the Beaver—Adventurous Days of Francois Têtu.

Missinaibi Creek ran through the land of Mucquois and was the home of more than one colony of beaver. The foundation of the first dam, a few miles beyond his cabin, had been laid by the great-great-great-grandfather of the present occupants of the pond which was the smaller of two owned by the Chief.

It was out of season and Mucquois and Ottumna had no thought of taking beaver, but for some time they had suspected poachers. At the first pond they found nothing out of the way and paddled on some miles to the second. Here the dam was so strong that they walked across it. At the far end the glint of a steel chain in the mud caught the eye of Ottumna and entangled in a maze of reeds, weighted down by the heavy trap, lay a drowned beaver. It was certain now that the dam had been tampered with, because a beaver trap is not baited, and it was highly improbable that the animal would have been attracted to it unless for work of repair. They examined the superstructure closely, testing the soft spots. Near the center they overturned a loose sod and found buried beneath it another trap and chain. In the former was the body of a large gray squirrel. The red men solved the mystery without effort.

Two apertures had been cut in the dam and two traps set. The squirrel had seen the poachers leave something on the dam, and as soon as the coast was clear, had gone to investigate. His curiosity had cost him his life. The water of the pond began to fall and the beavers hastened to repair the leak. One was caught but the others completed the object of their visit, finding an opportune piece of material in the heavy bands of steel holding the dead body of the squirrel.

The Indians were very angry, but the wrath that boiled and bubbled within them, remained to stew indefinitely for want of an adequate flow of strong language to carry it off. It would indeed be an act of charity for some good missionary of broad mind, to extend his instruction sufficiently beyond the rudiments of education to enlighten the poor red man concerning the alleviating practice of—of—well, not profanity of course, but let us say, just plain, soft swearing. It would be the means of saving many a man’s life. It is

not the dog who barks that bites, but beware of the brute that sullenly growls, likewise of the man who silently nurses his wrath.

After all it had not been such a bad find; five brand new traps and two skins saved from the thieves. Marianne fed them well upon their return, and a few pipes of tobacco were as salve to their blistered feelings. But the scars from such wounds remain.

Next morning Francois Têtu paddled up to the camp. Francois was one of the few white men always welcomed by the Chief. He was not a half-breed, but a full blooded French Canadian who had begun life as a cook's boy in a shanty on the upper Ottawa and had stuck to the bush ever since, except for that annual five days' frolic at the end of the drive, when he never failed to blow in the full proceeds of a winter's work and come upon the lumber company to stake him to a second-class railroad ticket to the end of the line at Pembrook. Here there was always the chance of picking up one or two enthusiasts from the States, active members of some rod and gun club and of piloting them to Mattawa or to Eau Clair and down the Mab du Fond in quest of trout.

At finding the likely spots Francois was almost as expert as an Indian and much more dependable, besides being a far better cook. An Indian was always willing that his patrons should have as much fishing as they wanted but not too much fish. He had been an ardent conservationist long before the game clubs and forestry associations of North America had awakened to the wholesale waste and destruction of natural resources and made some effort to repair the white man's ravages of a century.

The attitude of Francois however was altogether different from that of the native who lived upon the actual fish and game and who took to guiding as a secondary occupation or, as a commercial traveler would put it, as a side line, to be pushed only when the main business at hand fell short. The Frenchman collected his chief sustenance from the pockets of the tourists, and resorted to fish-line and rifle himself only when the pot over his own camp fire was empty. To extend his business he had to make a reputation and sustain it, whereas, so long as the needs of the hour were satisfied, his Indian rival did not give a whoop for what might happen tomorrow; hence the different position assumed respectively by the white and red guides to the amateur hunter and fisherman.

The Hudson's Bay Company found in Têtu a man useful in many ways and frequently employed him. He spoke the English, French and Cree languages fluently and being an excellent canoesman, made a reliable

courier, which was more than could be said of the average red man. Nature, too, had been kind in bestowing upon him a pair of eyes that might have been reserved for an angel and a manner so engrossing and convincing that the veriest Shylock would have trusted him. A man so gifted should have been well off, but always in the spring time, the pent-up flow of eleven months' wages would burst its dam and disappear in one big carousal down the Ottawa.

John's mother had been second cousin to the Têtus, but beside the tie of kinship, a genuine bond of affection had sprung up between the man and the fatherless boy. The little chap revelled in romances which to him were none the less delightful because of a suspicion that they could not be really true. He would crawl close to Francois when the embers of the fire were burning low, and clasping the knees of his idol, beg for a story. The bushman would tell of his adventures along the drive.

Once upon a time, he and Henri Gagnon and Pierre Chartin were caught in the current above the Long Sault, and their canoe was crushed in a mass of tangled logs at the head of the rapids. So loud had been the roar of the big curlers and so dense the spray cast up by the waters smashing against the rocks and timbers that he never knew how it came to happen, but he stood alone on the topmost stick of the jam. One solitary log went shooting by in the current. He speared it with his pikepole, and standing erect rode it down the raging torrent. It sunk and splurged and rolled and reared like a bucking broncho; but, burying the calks of his heavy boots into the bark, and swerving his pole from side to side, he held his balance.

Down he swept for half a mile or more, straight for the great cellar. The giant wave dipped fully ten feet below and its crest curled high above his head.

"Mere de Dieu!" he prayed and closed his eyes. And then the timber beneath his feet split upon a sunken rock and tossed him far into the air, over the boiling chaudier, into the swift but silent waters beyond. Henri and Pierre were never seen again, poor chaps.

Then there was that other time, when the crib went to pieces in the slide and he was carried away with the crashing timbers and jumped from stick to stick and from log to log until he reached the shore more than a mile away.

And that night on the raft, when he and Gaspard Lavigne had drunk the last bottle of whisky blanc and fought for the love of the most beautiful girl in all Quebec. Even now he can sometimes hear Gaspard shriek as he pitched him into the blackness of the river. Two weeks afterwards the body

of a man, torn and battered on the rocks, was picked up along the bank, and Francois was sent to jail. They would have hanged him if Gaspard himself had not come into court at the last minute and pleaded for his life. Poor old Gaspard, he was killed for sure next winter by a falling tree.

John would spend days in the little shack up the river where Francois would teach him many things. He learned to tell the time of day by the sun, and to travel by the stars at night. He came to know the haunts and habits of the animals, and the French and Indian names of the trees, without looking at the leaf. He was too small to handle an axe effectively, but with a knife he had become quite proficient.

And then they would paddle back to Mucquois, where his education was continued by the old Chief, who taught him much about the various uses of certain roots and herbs, and how to cure and tan the skin of the deer, and to make snowshoes and moccasins and toboggans. In a short time the forest was to become to him a storehouse out of which he could draw all the necessaries and many of the luxuries of life at will.

CHAPTER VI.

Old Dick, "City" Clerk, Meets the Hawk on Company Business and Makes a Mess of Things.

One morning the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, in London, received a note from one of his directors, Sir James Langdon, enclosing a letter from a Mrs. Muirhead of Northfield House, Devon, apprising him of the expected arrival of her granddaughter, Miss Lucille King, on the Hawk and wondering if he would be good enough to meet the young lady at the pier, as she was a total stranger to London. Sir James, of course, would have liked to oblige Mrs. Muirhead, a lady of much consequences in his county and an old family friend; but he was forced to leave at once for the continent on business that would detain him some weeks; he therefore took the liberty of passing the request to the Governor, with many apologies and every assurance of his sincere sense of personal obligation, etc. The note was promptly acknowledged and Sir James informed of the great pleasure it would afford the Governor to be of service to him and to his friend Mrs. Muirhead. The chief executive of the Company pulled a bell cord and dispatched a messenger to Mr. Crannel, chief clerk, whom he informed of the business at hand, with a request that it be attended to.

Crannel, chief clerk, in turn sent for Fusby, clerk, in charge of manifests and ships' papers, and assigned him to the duty.

Richard Fusby, commonly known as "Old Dick," was of the old-school, steady, reliable type of clerks who had entered upon a business career in the "city" as soon as he was old enough to write a fair hand and tote up a column of figures correctly, and who had grown from gray to bald, in the service of the Company. To "Old Dick" jobs outside the usual run of office routine were generally entrusted.

"Mr. Fusby," began the chief clerk, as soon as his subordinate had answered the summons, "the Hawk has been sighted and must be close to the mouth of the Thames."

"Quite right, sir, quite all right," responded the junior. "The tug is waiting and the papers are ready for your signature, sir."

"Very good, Mr. Fusby, very good," returned the chief clerk, "but there is an entry to pass which is not on the manifest. No fault of yours of course," he continued, in a diplomatic but somewhat trite effort to be jocular and talk

the old fellow into good humor before imposing upon him a piece of work not included in the duties for which he was paid £3.5s every Saturday at noon.

"It appears that a young lady, a daughter of our Chief Factor at the Moose, has been consigned in care of the Company for trans-shipment to an elderly relative somewhere in Devon. You will please put the shipment through. Here are the papers."

Mr. Crannel smiled complacently as he handed the clerk copies of the correspondence between Sir James and the Governor.

"But sir," began Fusby, "there may be—"

"Yes, yes, of course. You were going to allude no doubt, Mr. Fusby, to the matter of disbursements. The office will provide the required funds in the usual way, and you will file your receipts as vouchers.

"Old Dick" knew his place too well to prolong discussion. The chief clerk evidently regarded this business as in the nature of a consignment. Technically it might just as well refer to a bale of Virginia tobacco or an importation of French brandy. In practice, however, a young lady cannot be handled quite so informally. Complications threatened which gave the customs clerk some concern.

Fusby was a bachelor. A bald head fringed with gray made him none the less so. Had he even been a family bachelor, with a mother or sister in the house, it might not have mattered, at least not quite so much; but he lived by himself in lodgings where the greater part of his existence had been passed, and his intercourse with women during all these years, had been limited to business interviews at stated weekly intervals with a plain—very plain, matter-of-fact landlady, and it must be added, an occasional mild—very mild, flirtation with a convivial little barmaid, across the counter of his favorite "pub." What should be expected from a distinguished lady, the daughter of a high official of the Company he had but a vague and exaggerated notion. His position embarrassed him not a little.

Promptly at 2:30 P. M. the vessel was made fast to her pier, but for nearly an hour Fusby had paced the dock rehearsing a little speech, laboriously drafted the night before and committed to a very uncertain memory. His silk hat and boots glistened brightly in the sun and his black morning coat and gray trousers, though perhaps a trifle shabby, were carefully brushed and spotless. He had purchased quite a showy neck-tie and a pair of bright lavender gloves for the occasion and this gala attire was

topped off with a white carnation. He was in fact as fair a specimen of the old-fashioned "city" clerk as could be found anywhere within a radius of five miles of Threadneedle Street.

Recognizing old Dick Fusby of Head Office, the skipper in sailorly fashion smote him heartily on the back, called him a name tabooed by polite society and invited him to his cabin for a little something. The clerk endeavored to explain that his business was of consequence and pressing, but no excuses went with the skipper at his home dock after a four months' cruise. "Miss King? of course," Miss King was below with the only other female passenger, packing up the last of her belongings. She could wait for him.

The captain led the way along the deck to his quarters and there was nothing else to do but follow. Two dock officials required no invitation and the party of four crowded into the little cabin. The host reached into a cupboard alongside his bunk, produced a generous black bottle and set the required number of glasses upon the table.

They were getting along quite nicely after the second round, when the first mate and ship's doctor dropped in and ceremonies were begun again. The skipper spun his favorite yarn of the good ship Polly Ann, off the Solomon Islands in the early thirties where he had fallen among the headhunters and cannibals. There had been a great battle between the men of the beach and the inland natives, and a great victory followed by a royal banquet at which he was to furnish the piece de resistance. The water was bubbling merrily in the kettle and the royal chef was briskly applying a piece of flint to his carver, when all at once——.

The captain was unable to complete the story because the mate who had heard it several times before, broke in with a better one that had to do with the Arctic Circle and the Northwest Passage, in which he and sundry Polar bears played stellar roles.

The doctor told about a boat that was spilled over the side of his ship off Rio de Janeiro when the captain's only daughter would have made a meal for a shark had he not jumped overboard in the nick of time and driven a knife into its upturned belly.

By popular acclaim, Old Dick was called on for a song. Another three fingers from the black bottle and the old bachelor clerk was off to the tune of seventeen verses and a chorus which ran like this:

Oh, she was plump and she was fair,
She'd blue eyes and golden hair,
That prettiest, wittiest, merriest
    Little damsel.

She'd swiped most everything I had,
Left me high and dry and sad,
That prettiest, wittiest, merriest
    Little d——n sell.

At this stage a messenger came from the customs officers, and after a parting glass, the party broke up, leaving Fusby so plumb full of good spirits that he was ready to make love to a duchess. It was getting rather late, however, when the skipper appeared with Lucille on his shoulder and introduced the young lady. She accepted the old clerk's rather too profuse salutation with some reserve.

"Are you going to take me all the way to my grandmother's?" she inquired in a tone that savored too much of anxiety to be altogether polite.

He explained that his mission was to place her on a train bound for Exmere and that the guard would attend to her safe delivery to her friends at the station. "And we'd better be going, Miss," he added with an anxious glance at his watch, which showed that they had but thirty minutes to make Paddington station through three and a half miles of traffic.

"Oh but I want to see London first," responded the little girl. "I want to see the queen and the princes and the pantomime and Punch and Judy, and a whole lot of things."

"I'm afraid we can't, Miss," said the clerk, growing very uneasy. "The queen is not very well today and the princes have been sent to bed because they have not been behaving right; and the pantomime folks are having a holiday; and Punch and Judy have been locked up for quarreling. But I can show you the docks and London Bridge and a piece of Hyde Park. We've no time, Miss, we'd better be going."

"Can't you ask the train man to wait?" pleaded the child.

"I'll tell you what, Miss, let's go right away and ask him."

Lucille fell in with the idea, allowed the skipper to kiss her and went off with the clerk. He opened the cab door and she climbed in to enjoy her first ride in a carriage.

Fusby was frantically helping the driver to load the boxes on the front seat when Lucille remembered that she had not said good-bye to Toby.

Toby was a cabin boy, a lad of fifteen, who in his few spare moments during the voyage, had entertained her at dominoes and “beggar my neighbor,” and with stories about London which were not at all like those that anyone else had ever told. She liked Toby and was not going to leave without saying good-bye to him. When Fusby turned from the box, she was out of the cab and half way across the pier. He succeeded in grabbing the ends of her broad blue sash, just as she was mounting the gangplank.

“For God’s sake, cabbie,” he called, “make Paddington by four-thirty, and I’ll double your fare.”

The driver responded by laying the lash of his whip across the back of the horse and the animal sprang forward.

Along the embankment they drove as fast as the cabman could steer through the maze of carts, trucks, busses and other vehicles; past London Bridge, Blackfriars and Waterloo; through Trafalgar Square, thence into Regents Street and Piccadilly and a section of Hyde Park; and on through a network of small streets and lanes to Paddington Terminal.

It was a brave effort but it failed. As they drew up to the station the engine shrieked a parting blast and left them standing on the platform. Here was a pretty fix. What was to be done with the child? How was Fusby to explain at the office? Old Dick internally swore at the skipper, the mate, the doctor and himself. What a devil of a mess anyway. However there was nothing to be gained by fussing, so he spent the greater part of half an hour composing a telegram which he figured would come reasonably close to the truth without convicting him of negligence.

Fusby’s first thought was to take the little girl back to the ship, but on reflection he decided that this would not be altogether wise. The truth would then come out in its nakedness and the devil would be to pay. If only he could ship the child off next morning without any of the Company officials being the wiser, there was at least a fighting chance that the incident might be overlooked. So it happened that Lucille did see a few things that had not been scheduled for her afternoon’s entertainment, and before the time came to turn her over to his landlady, Mrs. Hutchins, for the night, Old Dick and Lucille had become fast friends.

CHAPTER VII.

Lucille's First Glimpse of a Wonderful Old World—A Stately Old "Grandmama" and a New Boy.

Seated at a table by a window of Mrs. Hutchins' little parlor, Lucille had allowed her tea and toast to grow cold and left her egg untasted, while she watched the passing show. Indeed, it possessed all the fascination of delightful novelty to a child who, up to this time, had not even so much as seen a horse, and whose notions of carts and carriages and other appendages that go with the animals, had been derived from hearsay and colored picture books. She had read of the "Bobbies" and the firemen and the costers and the chimney sweeps and the soldiers and sailors and of the ladies and gentlemen of fashion, and now she watched to see if she could pick them out as they went by. When she saw a character that she did not feel quite sure of, she would turn to Mr. Fusby for enlightenment.

There was that ragged urchin at the corner, dodging in and out of the traffic with a broom. What was he doing that for? She was informed that he was a crossing sweeper, a very needful avocation on muddy days. Those other lads, much like the sweepers in appearance, but who carried boxes instead of brooms, would polish your boots for a penny. That fellow pushing a cart along the curb and wailing loudly as he went, was not suffering from a stomach-ache nor singing a Japanese song. He was an Englishman announcing in his mother tongue that he had fresh fish for sale.

Mr. Fusby did not expect the Lord Mayor to drive by in his coach at six that morning. Probably the axles were in process of greasing or the horses were being shod.

The lad with the squint to his eyes, acquired from long habit of taking in cellar and attic windows at a glance, with a basket on his arm, and yoddling a jargon intelligible only to himself and to the London housekeeper and her feline pets, was the cat's meat man.

No, that policeman in the center of the street, holding the old lady by the arm, was not taking her to the lockup. He was merely telling her to take the third turn to the left, the second to the right, then four blocks east and across the square, a sharp turn to the left again and then straight ahead to Allsop Place. The other elderly and somewhat portly individual of the masculine kind was probably waiting his turn to ask how far it was to Waterloo Station;

and what bus he should take; and at what o'clock the 6:32 train from Eastbourn came in; and if he thought it would be late; and what time it was now?

That smart dashing young chap in the bright scarlet coat and brass buttons, with a pill box balanced on his left ear, and sporting that great white belt, was a soldier. No, he didn't use that little twenty-four inch walking stick to kill men with. He wore these bright clothes so that everyone could see him a long way off; it made it easier for them to shoot him. But the girls all loved his red and brass, and if the truth were known, that was why he was in the army.

Yes, that short, stocky chap in the blue blouse and trousers that flapped in the wind and the low pie plate straw hat provided with a gutter all round to catch the rain, was one of Her Majesty's naval bull dogs. Probably his name was Jack. He was a useful fellow and popular wherever he went, especially with the women.

"No, Miss," Fusby continued to explain, "that is not a lord. It's a junior clerk in somebody's counting house in the city. And don't you think you had better be getting on with your breakfast?"

Lucille was about to accept the suggestion with resignation, when from the pavement there floated up the strangest conglomeration of sound. She sprang from her chair and leaned far out over the sill. In all probability you would have done so yourself if this were the first hand organ you had ever heard or seen. A short, swarthy man with a monkey on his shoulder, was grinding out a touching and popular English melody to a lyric that began with:

> "Oh fair dove, Oh fond dove,
> Oh dove with the white, white breast."

The poor old decrepit instrument had inhaled so many London fogs, that had it been alive, its owner would have been taken in charge for cruelty. It wheezed and it coughed and it stopped a bit every now and then to catch breath.

The child clapped her hands and shrieked in unalloyed delight. The Italian grinned and bowed and turned the handle faster. When Mrs. Hutchins entered a moment later thinking to remove the breakfast things, Lucille had not tasted a mouthful, but the cab was now waiting to take them to the station.

At the train Fusby had to show her the engine, describe its mechanism as best he could, explain what the rails were for and how it was that the wheels did not run off. He bought a parcel of sweet cakes in the forlorne hope that she could not eat and ask questions at the same time. She really did find some difficulty in so doing and suspended eating. But at last he saw her securely locked in the carriage, and the guard promised to keep an eye upon her and to deliver her safely at her destination.

Shortly after noon the train reached Exmere and the guard assisted Lucille to alight. She was recognized almost immediately by a lady who introduced herself as Miss Hemming from Northfield House, and who hoped that she felt none the worse for her journey. Miss Hemming explained that she was to be her new governess. Lucille shyly returned the greeting.

It was quite a long drive to Northfield House, almost five miles. The road was rather hilly, with many turns and long rows of elms stood like grenadiers at attention along both sides. Estates to right and left were fenced by tall hedges of rhododendrons and hawthorn, with here and there a brick wall and ponderous iron gate to mark an entrance.

To the child who had spent the only ten years of her life in the virgin forest, along rough waters, where the only roads were the river and portage trail, and where primitive log houses were the only dwellings, the carefully trimmed trees, the narrow streams with artificial banks and culverts, the smooth macadamized carriage roads and the ancestral stone mansions were very wonderful and very beautiful. The mannerisms of the people, too, and the forms of speech, differed more or less from what she had fancied they would be.

The culture that Lucille had known sprang from an acknowledgment of the rights of others because of mutual dependence. She had now entered a life where dependence was so indirect as to be of little effect, but where education had engendered an expression of the highest forms of politeness, some of which would be as mystifying to a native of the bush as his own customs and conventions are misunderstood or belittled by the people of more advanced civilization. The finer points of both are not always appreciated.

Miss Hemming spoke of that stately old lady of Northfield House of which Lucille would one day be the mistress; and in a quiet way endeavored to impress upon her pupil the dignity of her coming position. But after the first half-hour, the interest of Lucille began to wane and gradually her thoughts drifted back to the Moose. As she approached her new home to

begin a life of magnificent promise, the joy that she should have felt was tempered by a sense of loneliness.

At last the carriage turned into an open gateway between two great pillars, partially concealed by vines and massive foliage, and proceeded for a quarter of a mile along a broad gravel roadway and drew up at the entrance to Northfield House.

A maid led the way up a wide landing, thence to the right and up a second but narrower flight to an apartment reserved for her on the first floor.

A man had carried up the luggage and the maid at once began the work of unpacking. When the somewhat meagre wardrobe had been spread upon the bed, Miss Hemming selected the most suitable frock and the maid dressed her as becomingly as possible to meet her grandmother.

It wanted but a quarter of an hour of lunch when Miss Hemming took her by the hand and led her into the great drawing-room, where a very white and a very stately and a very handsome old lady sat upon a great chair that might have been the throne of some ancient queen.

"This is your grandmother, Lucille," said the governess, urging the child forward as they entered the room. But Lucille was quite fearless and urging part of the ceremony was merely perfunctory. She advanced to the foot of the throne and held out both hands. The old lady rose, took them in her own, stared intently into the upturned face, then stooped and kissed her.

"You are very like her, my dear. Yes, very like her," she said. "Turn your face a little to one side. No, not quite so far, my child. Yes, that's better. A perfect profile of my poor, dear Evelyn."

The old lady sat down again and drew the little girl to her knee.

"You remember your dear mother?" she continued. "Was she not very beautiful?"

"Oh yes, Grandmother." The smile which accompanied the answer showed that Lucille was not altogether oblivious to the compliment.

"Call me 'Grandmamma,' dear."

"Yes, Grandmamma. You know I was seven years old when she died."

"And that was three long years ago. It seems like twenty since she went away with your father into that wild land. I never saw her again. As I look at you now, I see my own little girl, come back to me in her babyhood. I didn't want her to go. She could have done much better in England. Lord Waldron

was infatuated and she might have been a countess and very rich. But she loved your father, child, and nothing else counted with her. I couldn't help being angry then you know; but when she wrote to me that you had come and that she had called you 'Lucille'—that is my name too, my dear—I forgave her. Now that he has sent you to me, I forgive him also."

The butler announced that luncheon was served and they went into the dining-room and took their places at the long mahogany table. Miss Hemming, sitting beside her pupil, watched her select the several silver implements beside her plate to see that she made no mistakes. She did not make many, and before the meal was over, both ladies concluded mentally that, with very little training, she would do quite nicely.

Later in the afternoon they went for a drive and after dinner Mrs. Muirhead busied herself with knitting needles and wool while Miss Hemming played familiar airs on the piano, Lucille sitting close beside her. The only instrumental music she had ever listened to before, had come from the fiddle of Francois Têtu and the Italian's hand organ in London.

The following day a visitor arrived in response to a special invitation. He was no other than the little Lord Barnewell, only son and heir of the Earl of Waldron, whose estate adjoined that of Mrs. Muirhead. He was a manly little chap, a few months older than Lucille, and while rather shy at first, they got on famously before the afternoon was spent.

After they had wearied of croquet and sailing boats in the garden fountain, the boy suggested playing Indian and cowboy, but the girl said she did not know how, whereat the former expressed great surprise, as he had been told that she had come from America, the home of the Indians and cow-punchers; however, since she didn't know, he would show her. So he illustrated how the Indians raided the ranches and scalped the pale-faces; how the white men tracked the savages to their tepis and the Indians mounted their ponies and tried to get away; how the cowboys lassoed them from their horses, and afterwards how all that was left of both sides sat around the camp fire at night and smoked the calumet of peace.

Lucille had but a vague idea of cowboys and did not recall that Indians acted that way; but it was a jolly game which lasted until the groom came to fetch his master home.

"It has been a great pleasure to have met you," said the boy, bowing politely on making his adieu.

Lucille felt that in the matter of nice speeches, Lord Barnewell had an advantage, but she intimated that it had been quite a pleasant afternoon, and hoped that he would come again.

"I'll tell you what," returned the boy, "I'll come tomorrow in the pony cart if you care to drive."

The girl would be "delighted, if it didn't rain."

CHAPTER VIII.

Life at Northfield House—The Field of Honor—The "Grand Surprise"—Rocks Ahead.

During the first two years of Lucille's life at Northfield House, before she had passed beyond the care of a governess and her education had been taken over by a young ladies' seminary in London, thoughts of her old home and associates had an uncomfortable habit of crowding upon her. Occasionally she found more or less difficulty in controlling her feelings; but in course of time, the periods of depression grew shorter and farther apart, and the indentations, when they came, were not quite so deep. As the years went by, she became so reconciled to her surroundings that she at last began to consider herself part and parcel of them.

Little Lord Barnewell proved a faithful friend and the drives in the pony cart continued at frequent intervals, until they had outgrown the vehicle and taken to the saddle. From time to time, Lucille found herself drawing mental portraits of the young aristocrat, who would one day succeed to a goodly part of the beautiful country through which they rode, and contrasting him with that other boy who for so long had shared her joys and sorrows in the bush, and who was destined to the life of a voyageur for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Physically they were much alike. They were fairly tall and well set up for their ages, and both had dark eyes, black hair and somewhat swarthy complexions. John, however, was older by two years and stronger. He also was the more serious of the two, as if he had had a greater mission in life, which was of course absurd. The difference in speech and manner was marked, the one being of French and the other of English extraction. The conditions under which they lived also accounted for peculiarities of behavior. Sometimes she wondered how they would act if transposed, one to England and the other to the bush. She imagined they would fit in very nicely with their changed surroundings. Lucille was not quite old enough to reason why she thought so; subconsciously it was because both lads were free from the taint of snobbery, which, by the way, is just as prevalent in the wilds of Hudson's Bay as in the House of Lords and all the way between. She was not too young, however, to see a vast social gulch between the two —a gulch which might be bridged to allow of transient passage, but which never could be filled in.

Lucille's acquaintance now included all the young people worth knowing who were within driving distance. Her romantic origin and fund of anecdote about a life which had a peculiar fascination for them, made her a prime favorite with the boys, among whom developed not a little rivalry. The little girls were polite but dignified and not over effusive. If the truth were known, they were a wee bit jealous of the attentions paid her by the young cavaliers.

Once, when all parties concerned were about the age of fifteen, Sir Roderick Seymour, Bart., gave the lie direct to Lord Barnewell in a quarrel over a disputed claim to a dance, and there was therefore only one thing to do according to the code of schoolboy honor. The lads met with their seconds, in a secluded spot. Their coats were on the ground, shirt collars turned back and sleeves rolled up, when Lucille, who had been apprised of the meeting by a disinterested party, appeared upon the scene, took both belligerents by the ears and forced each in turn to apologize, not to themselves indeed but to her. This formal ceremony completed, she informed them they might go on with their fight if they had a mind to.

The boys, charmed by the idea of fighting for a lady, with the prize for the contest looking on, turned to begin hostilities, but Lucille called to Bobbie Rutherford, one of the seconds, to give her a lift, mounted her pony and rode away without taking further notice of them.

The romance at once died out of the affair, and when the two sheepish and dejected young gentlemen again faced about, there was little spirit left for the fray. They stepped forward at the word however, measured each other, eye for eye, put up their hands and then as if actuated by common impulse, burst out laughing. A good fight had been hopelessly ruined.

At eighteen, Lucille had developed into a very clever young woman. She was also a very pretty girl, and when Lord Barnewell returned, after his first term at Sandhurst, he was more devoted than ever. As she saw him for the first time in his cadet uniform, the smart soldierly bearing, his frank, open countenance, his handsome face and trim figure captivated her. Above all, he was to her just the same honest Henry, not the least bit changed. Was it to be wondered that she should fall in love with him?

During the Christmas and mid-summer holidays, his lordship was a regular visitor at Northfield House. Mrs. Muirhead would glance over her knitting and smile. They were both very young of course, but would mend of that in time. The dear old soul was very happy. The bitter disappointment of a generation ago was to be repaid after many years.

As it happened however, Sir Roderick had also taken to dropping in, and not unfrequently the two gentlemen met to the ruin of a pleasant afternoon. Lord Barnewell could not always conceal his chagrin, but of course he had not as yet the right to complain.

To make matters worse, Mrs. Muirhead was rather cool to the young baronet, and because of this, Lucille often went out of her way to be nice to him, which added much to the aggravation of the young peer who finally made up his mind that he could endure the suspense no longer. On the first favorable opportunity therefore, he frankly declared his intentions by asking Lucille to marry him.

Although she was honestly and almost avowedly in love with him, the young lady could not be induced to commit herself. She was only eighteen and he was not much older. It would be more sensible, she thought, to allow their friendship to remain untrammeled by a promise that one or the other might be too honorable to break when the time came for fulfillment. She comforted him however by an assurance that if he came to her with the same question, say three years hence, when he would be twenty-one, she would give him an answer. She even expressed the hope that it might be favorable. He carried back to Sandhurst at least one consoling thought: “There was little to fear from that fellow Seymour.”

For a whole week preceding her twentieth birthday, Lucille had lived in a state of excitement. Her grandmother had promised her a “grand surprise;” something so wonderful, that it would be but waste of time to try to guess it. The night before she had not slept an hour, and when early in the morning, the old lady sent for her in the library, she slid all the way down the stairs on the banister.

The greeting was unusually cordial, even for a birthday. In due course the grandmother produced a handsome jewelled cross and chain, such as ladies wore in those days, and presented it with the hope that she would like it. It certainly was very beautiful, but Lucille’s especially loud exclamation of delight was in a measure intended to drown any outward semblance of disappointment at the failure of the “surprise” to surprise.

When the summons to breakfast came, Mrs. Muirhead suggested that they honor the occasion by using two very old china cups, heirlooms for generations, which she valued very highly, and asked her granddaughter to fetch them from the closet off the library. Lucille crossed the room, opened the door, screamed, and fell forward into her father’s arms. The “grand surprise” was complete.

The joy of the meeting was not lessened by the fact that she had not heard from him in several months. Letter writing was not an accomplishment of the Factor. His communications had invariably been short and always left too much to the imagination to be satisfying.

Lucille was burning to learn all the news of the Factory. For a time she had endeavored to keep up a correspondence with John, whose replies had been more replete with detail, but for reasons for which she could never satisfactorily account, she had allowed it to lapse, and it was now more than two years since the last letters had passed between them.

Mrs. Muirhead had invited the more notable of the county people to meet her son-in-law at dinner; but the Earl of Waldron sent word regretting that a sudden indisposition, necessitating a hurried visit to his physician in London, would prevent them from being present. However, his brother, Sir James Langdon, now Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, came all the way from the city to do honor to the Chief Factor, and incidentally to acquaint himself concerning certain conditions in the territory.

He learned that the volume of fur receipts had been so far satisfactory, but that the outlook was not altogether promising. Opposition was springing up in the vicinity of the "Moose" and elsewhere. As yet, however, it was scattered; though in the aggregate, the outlaw trading was considerable. The Factor urged Sir James to take measures to curb the incursions of the free lances, who were debauching the Indians with whisky while robbing them of fur, often stolen from their own preserves.

White pioneers from the south had begun to encroach northward, invading Indian lands and the presence of surveyors and prospectors boded no good. The natives were restless and too eager to listen to the tales of itinerant traders, reflecting on the honesty of the Company and the Government.

As a result of much questioning, Lucille, in her turn learned of many interesting happenings since she had left the Factory. The Bishop and Mrs. Barwick were still there, but few of the other white people she had known remained. John had grown to be a man and a very useful one. He was entered upon the service roll of the Company and had been a voyageur now for more than two years. Next season he was to be given the command of a brigade to negotiate with the Indians of the Albany River District. Whenever he happened to be at the post on the arrival of the mails, he never failed to inquire respectfully for news of "Mademoiselle Lucille."

Old Mucquois was as hearty and as aggressive as ever, and frequently at odds with the white poachers. Two years ago he had killed a man on his beaver meadows; at least the evidence pointed strongly that way, and he did not deny the charge very stoutly. But circumstances seemed to justify the assault, and the Factor had let him off with a warning not to kill that man again.

Marianne continued to be quite well. She sent "Mademoiselle" a pair of moccasins, wonderfully embroidered in fine silk upon bleached deerskin.

Susanne had become very fat and Ottumna was correspondingly proud of her. Their daughter, Winona, was growing to be quite a good-looking young squaw, and it was noticed of late, that John had been stopping off at the old chief's cabin quite frequently.

Bubbles, the erstwhile brown puppy, had taken to hunting big game. His last adventure had been an altercation with a porcupine. The fight had not lasted long, but when it was over, it had been so difficult to tell which was dog and which was porcupine, that the Factor had been about to shoot them both, to make sure that the dog was out of misery; but John would not hear of it. For a whole week he worked plucking the quills out of the unfortunate little brute, and oiled him and nursed him and fed him out of a bottle, until he finally got well; but he had lost his penchant for the chase and was now spending his declining years in the immediate vicinity of the cook-house fire at the Fort.

Two new clerks had joined the post, William MacKenzie, a Scotsman from Glasgow, an intelligent fellow and already a good judge of furs, and Thomas Hennessy, an Irish lad, wished on the Factor by someone with influence at headquarters,—a dreamy sort of boy who'd make a better school teacher than a fur trader, and given to versifying, but sharp with his tongue and dangerous in an argument.

The Chief Factor soon became a lion in the county but neither Lucille nor Mrs. Muirhead could persuade him to remain over a fortnight. The place and the people were all right for a time, but the life of an English county gentleman did not agree with the plain rough man of the woods.

Lucille accompanied him to London, where she renewed two old acquaintances in the persons of the Skipper and old Dick Fusby, both now on the verge of retirement. Had the latter been about twenty years younger, he might, through her influence, have been transferred from the "City" to the "Moose." The Factor, however, gave him a hearty invitation to visit the post,

and not only that, but he promised to obtain for him the necessary leave from headquarters.

When Lucille returned to Exmere she was surprised to find Lord Barnewell waiting at the station to drive her home. He was now a full fledged cavalry officer, on his first leave. As much of the precious three weeks as he dared to spare from his family, was passed at Northfield House. The relations between him and Lucille were still unchanged, but his long and constant attention could have but one significance in the eyes of the county people, and it was current gossip that an engagement would be announced before Christmas.

The rumor reached the ears of the Earl and made him furious. The head of the House of Waldron, for some years, had frowned upon the growing intimacy between his son and the young woman of Northfield House. It had been all right for them to play together as children, and to be polite to each other as they grew up, but an alliance between the House of Waldron and a commoner was nothing short of preposterous. The old nobleman swore roundly at his son and declined to listen to a word from him on the subject. He would have disinherited him on the spot, but the estates were entailed and the worst he could threaten was to cut off his current allowance.

"Of course," he sneered, "you have the army pay of a subaltern in an expensive regiment, but no doubt Miss King's relatives will be delighted to make good any deficiency, and so——"

The son checked him with a "Damn it, sir, I will not take this, even from my father. I had thought better of the Earl of Waldron."

The old aristocrat paused and actually apologized, but his mind was made up and he terminated the interview abruptly by ordering his son to leave the room. That night a telegram was sent his London doctor to "come at once."

Lord Barnewell knew to whom he was speaking when he broke the news of his father's threat, to Lucille, omitting none of the details. She at once promised to marry him. For a while, however, she thought it would be well to remain discretely silent about the engagement.

The Earl had a close call that night, but he survived the shock and next day his physician left him out of immediate danger. As soon as he was well enough, he wrote to somebody at the War Office, and within a few days Lord Barnewell received notice that he had been transferred to a squadron destined for Egypt and ordering him to report at once.

When he had gone Lucille wrote her father that she would like to visit her old home at Moose Factory.

CHAPTER IX.

Free Lances—A Fight to the Death—Potency of Whisky Blanc in a Trade of Furs.

The only staple commodity of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Territories was fur, and upon it the natives depended either directly or indirectly for a livelihood. Money as a medium of exchange was only beginning to come into use, and the Indians were not yet accustomed to reckon values in terms of dollars and cents. To them the beaver was still the accepted unit, and a "beaver," translated into currency, was about fifty cents; but the days when fur was selling at this level have long since gone by.

There was a substantial profit to the trader on merchandise he bartered, apart from that on the fur itself. A man importing a canoe load of goods in the spring had no difficulty in disposing of them for a consideration representing many times the original investment. His over-head expenses were practically nothing and his living cost him but little more; so that as soon as the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly was ended, a horde of free lances and some traders representing merchants of Montreal, London, New York and other large cities, invaded the territory.

The Company however gave credit and financed the trapper from season to season. It also held an immense advantage in its chain of posts; and the merchandise it offered was always genuine and good.

The opposition was less scrupulous. The free traders would lay in wait for the trapper on his way to the post and induce him, if possible, to part with his fur at values which they represented, were greatly in excess of what could be obtained from the Company. It nearly always happened, too, that the Indian was in debt to the big corporation, and that his pack would no more than clear the slate for him; so that the temptation was always great to trade with the outsider and let the Company wait. It was a short-sighted policy, because the time always came when he needed help, and except for the Company, there was no help forthcoming.

One of the chief agents, which worked strongly in favor of the independents, was whisky. The Indian never could resist the "eskutchie-wa-boo" that maddened him and incited him to murder. In the early days the Company used to supply brandy; but the practice was stopped and was not revived during the period of the monopoly. The advent of the free traders,

however, who made use of the whisky bottle to advantage, had again forced a general sale of liquor, because the Indian would not take his furs to a store where he could not obtain his beloved beverage. For “fire-water” he would barter his very soul.

Many of the free lances, mostly French Canadians (who must not be confounded with the opposition), maintained amicable relations with the Company and turned in the fur which they had either trapped themselves or picked up from the Indians. They were not over-honest however, in their dealings with the latter and, though the Company was well aware of the fact, it was glad to keep on friendly terms with them to prevent the fur from falling into the hands of its rivals. To ask embarrassing questions would not mend a wrong that already had been done.

The free lance himself was a good-natured, care-free, strong-and-hearty type of man, loyal to his kind, but with little use for the Indian except for what he could make out of him. They were romantic characters these descendants from the coureurs du bois, and if at times their business morals were open to criticism, it should not be forgotten that they were creatures of the bush, forced to become more or less predatory, with life unfettered by community laws and conventions.

Achille Trudeau, a free lance and partner of Joe Latour, accompanied by a vagrant Esquimau from the Far North, who for several years had been half-servant, half-hanger-on to the two French Canadians, had pitched his tent one night, a few feet away from the stockade enclosing the buildings of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Moose Factory.

Achille was an early riser and the stars had hardly begun to pale in the sky next morning, before preparations for breakfast were under way; and a little later, when the rim of the sun began to show above ground, and the rocks and trees to take shape, an Indian could have been seen lying asleep on a pack of furs near the gate of the fort.

The white man went over to the sleeping form and scanned his features in the uncertain light. Having satisfied himself of his identity, he returned, set match to a little pile of twigs and dead branches which immediately flared into a substantial blaze beneath the camp kettle, and proceeded to prepare a mess of pork and beans, humming the while the air of an old chanson.

The water was bubbling and spluttering, and the grease had begun to sizzle on the pan, when the voice of a man singing in the distance was faintly heard. The trapper stood up and listened. Suddenly came the sound of

a shot and the Esquimau, dropping the pail he was carrying, reached for a rifle that lay across a log by the fire.

"Ah, sit down Husky!" sneered the white man. "No one's goin' to kill you. Dat's Joe Latour. I know de voice of Joe for tirty arpent. Put down dat gun. Allez, get de water. I mak' de tea an' de porc an' bean. Joe be mighty hungarie after de long tramp you bet; dat's mighty poor trail, too."

The little greasy fellow paused as if in doubt but finally the nonchalant manner of his companion reassured him and he silently picked up his pail and made off to a small stream nearby.

The voice of the singer grew louder and the words of his song could now be plainly distinguished:

"A la claire fountaine,
M'en allant promener,
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle,
Que je m'suis baigné.
Il y a long temps que je t'aime,
Jamais je ne t'oublierai."

The Esquimau returned with his pail of water, hung it over the fire and stopped again to listen.

"You sure Achille," he asked suspiciously and with ill concealed excitement, "You sure him no Mucquois?"

The trapper turned on him contemptuously.

"Mucquois? You must be one damn fool. Injun no sing lik' dat. Dat's Joe. For what you afraid eh?"

"Mucquois lose him dog. Me find him," explained the Husky rather timidly.

The white man laid the kettle upon the grass and burst out laughing.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" he roared. "You steal dat dog of Mucquois, eh? You be one damn fool some more."

"Dat was ver' fin' dog. He's come follow wit my team," the Esquimau went on, trying ineffectually to dodge the charge of thieving.

"You be one fin' liar, Husky," said Trudeau. "For what you no let him go? Dat Injun kill you for steal his dog. Me know him, big Cree Chief. He no lik' Husky. He no lik' white man. C'est un diable du sauvage." He so

worked on the little man's nerves that he volunteered to release the dog as soon as he got back to camp. "Dat's right; loose him quick. If Mucquois fin' you hav' his dog, you will never hav' much use again for de traineau."

The frying-pan was heaped high with pork and beans when Latour strode into camp. He stopped singing, dropped his rifle and ran forward to shake his partner in an affectionate embrace.

"Ah, c'est Achille, c'est Achille. Comment ça vas? Comment ça vas mon vieu?"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Joe," exclaimed Trudeau. "Mon Dieu, you gon' long tam. For why you not come meet me on de Long Portage? Eh, mon garçon? I wait for you t'ree day."

Joe was about to offer an explanation when his attention was arrested by the sleeping figure on the pack of furs.

"C'etait impossible. Dose dog not let me." He replied, jerking his thumb over his shoulder significantly in the direction of the Indian. "Sapristi, Achille," he continued. "I mos' starve me."

The man had been wandering for days in the bush, and as he sank down wearily upon the log, Achille hastened into the tent and returned with a bottle.

Latour's eyes brightened. "Mon Dieu! du whisky blanc?" His partner nodded and passed him the bottle. He threw back his head and drank greedily. Then Trudeau drank, and they both drank again.

"Achille, vous étes un ange de ciel. Where you get him, eh?"

"Sh-h-h-. You see dat sauvage dere? Dat's Metis. Me an' him an' Charlie Bisson's camp on de portage Big Rock two t'ree day ago. Metis hav' two bottle. He's no want to treat. He's drink one all hisself an' he's cache de odder in a stump by de river. Me find him all right an' tak' him pretty quick. Charlie Bisson's leav' camp dat day, an' Metis is mad lik' he want to kill. He's tink Charlie tak dat bottle."

Both men chuckled heartily and then Latour tackled the pork and beans, and when at last he could eat no more, he called for tobacco and crammed his pipe.

Trudeau pressed him for an accounting, and he spun his narrative between puffs.

“I’ve hard tam wit dose Injun dog,” he began. “I was tak’ some bevaire on Missinaibi Creek. Hav’ good luck, too. Get six, mebbe seven skin one day, an’ fix de trap all right for get some more.”

“Ah-h-h-, Missinaibi Creek?” interrupted his partner. “Dat’s de land of Mucquois.”

Husky started at the name, and with a playful push, Achille sent him reeling across the log. “Sit down you big poltroon you. Mucquois not here.” Turning to Latour—“Husky steal his dog. You steal his bevaire. Bain oui, for sure ’tis good ting big Cree Chief not here.” And the trapper laughed uproariously.

“Pretty soon de sun, she’s just begin go down,” continued Latour, without heeding the hilarity. “I hear de crackle of de branch in de bush. I look. I see not’ing. I look again. A mushrat swim across de creek. I follow him pretty close. He’s just about come ashore. Den I see de track of de moccasin in de mud. I stop me. An’ ping! ping! ping! You see dat, an’ dat, an’ dat?” He pointed to a number of bullet holes in his coat and to his left ear, the lobe of which had been partly shot away.

“I drop de fur an’ run lik’ hell. I reach de dam an’ jump upon a log far out. Sapristi! she sink, an’ splash, I am in de water to de middle. Den big Chief Mucquois jump at me wit knife. He’s just miss me, merci Dieu! I tak’ him by de wris’. We’s fight mebbe fifteen, twenty minute. He’s tough lik’ ash tree, dat ole man Mucquois. He’s hav’ me down, my head below de water. I tink for sure I’m goin’ drown; an’ den a stone slip underneat’ his foot, an’ he’s come too. We’s roll toget’er in de water. I catch him by de troat; an’ pretty soon I come on top; an’ den it be all over. I leav’ his body in de stream. But I was scare come back dat way. I tak’ de long trail by de Moose an’ mos’ starv’ to deat’ to get me here.”

Husky, who had been listening with open-mouthed attention, heaved a sigh of relief as Latour finished his dramatic story, and Trudeau grinned a broad smile of satisfaction. He was about to give voice to his delight, when he noticed that Metis had awakened and was sitting up on his pack, his little black beady eyes blinking in the distance at the blaze of the camp fire. Conversation came to a sudden halt and the men turned their attention to a matter of more pressing concern.

They hailed the Indian, and the old fellow returned the salute with a grunt. The white men were eager to see the fur. Metis opened the pack and proudly displayed an assortment of six beaver, three mink, four fox, five otter and ten rats.

Trudeau invited him to a snack, and while he was feeding him with the remains of the pork and beans, Latour made a minute survey of the skins.

The Indian was allowed to eat himself into an amiable frame of mind before Latour cautiously broached the subject of the furs. Metis, however, was not very enthusiastic. His experience with the free lances had been dearly bought and he had no intention of dealing with them again. He was willing, however, to listen to what they had to offer. He even feigned stupidity in order to draw them out; but always with a silent determination not to be inveigled into a bargain. The others were equally resolved to get possession of the skins and they knew his weakness.

"What do you want for de pack, Metis?" asked Latour.

"No sell," responded the Indian, speaking with his mouth full and shaking his head.

"No sell?" exclaimed the white man in an injured tone. "For why you no sell? We giv' you just sam' as Companie—An' look here you ole rascal, we giv' you dis to boot." He produced a cheap hunting knife, bearing the imprint "Made in Germany." It had been carefully burnished and in outward appearance, looked fully as good as the best English cutlery which it was represented to be.

Metis wanted a knife and examined this one critically. The blade was bright and the edge keen, for it had never been tried against anything tougher than a man's thumb.

"How much you giv' huh?" he asked.

Latour looked up at the sky for inspiration and offered two hundred beavers, the equivalent of approximately one hundred dollars.

"No sell," repeated the Indian; but there was no expression to the weazened face nor emphasis to the voice to afford a clue as to how near he came to speaking his mind truthfully.

At this point Trudeau approached from the tent with the whisky bottle in one hand and a panikin in the other.

"Voci Metis," he said, "un cou." A liberal portion was poured out and handed to the old man, who grunted his satisfaction and drained it at a gulp.

While waiting for the liquor to take effect, Latour called Trudeau aside and whispered the information that there was one fox in the pack alone worth a hundred dollars at the post.

“Come, what you say, Metis?” continued Latour after a silence of some minutes. “We mak’ it two hundred an’ fifty bevaire an’ you keep dat knife.”

The Indian had already begun to feel in better humor and more conciliatory. He came back with:

“Me keep fox. You keep de rest—T’ree hundred bevaire.”

“Mon Gee, you ole castor, we tak de whol pack,” returned the white man. “Hav’ nodder cou, Metis.”

The “nodder cou” was duly stowed away and Metis made a counter offer of four hundred beaver for the pack; but Latour would not agree.

“Non, non, we giv’ two hundred bevaire, an’ you keep dat knife—An’ you keep dis also,” he added, drawing a small hatchet from his belt and handing it over for inspection.

“Tak’ nodder cou, Metis?” urged Trudeau; and again the contents of the panikin was drained.

It was not long before the Indian forgot all about the furs. His very soul was steeped in happiness and his face beamed with an indescribable joy. He staggered to his feet and flapping his scrawney old arms in the air, hopped about from foot to foot as though in imitation of a Greek dancer—supposing the dancer to be barefooted on a carpet of live coals, while the two white men accompanied the gyrations with appropriate song, beating a rhythmic cadence upon the bottle as they sang:

“Les glous-glous
Et les joyoux flons-flons
Sont toujours mes compagnons
Allons, buvons.
Tin-tin-tin-tin,
Tic-a-tic-a-tic-a-tin
Vive le bon vin,
Tin-tin-tin-tin,
Tin-tin-tin-tin,
Tic-a-tic-a-tic-a-tin
Vice le bon vin—
Vive le bon vin.”

Finally Metis slowed down and asked for another cou.

“Non, no more. I brak’ de law for giv’ you dat,” replied Trudeau.

“Nodder cou,” pleaded the Indian.

“You hav’ too much already, you ole fox,” said Latour. “If de Factor see you now, he send us up de river pretty quick.”

The Indian held out the panikin and begged for “nodder cou.”

Trudeau held up the bottle. “De pack, Metis,” he said. “De pack.”

The poor fellow looked towards his bundle of furs,—the product of a whole winter’s work—and the tin dish dropped from his hand to the ground.

Trudeau for a second stood motionless and silent, and then moved as if to put the bottle away.

“Gimme de bottle. Gimme de bottle,” shrieked Metis.

“It’s a bad chance for white man giv’ Injun whisky,” replied the trader. “I don’t lik’ do it, Metis; but you my frien’ Metis, eh? You tell no one, eh?”

“Non, non. Gimme de bottle. Gimme de bottle.—Tak’ de pack.”

“Here you are den. Now go in dere.” Taking the Indian by the arm, Trudeau led him to the tent and pushed him inside. He and Latour first helped themselves liberally, and then passed in the almost empty bottle.

“Now den,” they sneered. “Drink you ole crow, drink. Drink till you can’t see.”

CHAPTER X.
A Last Adieu to Old Comrades—Joe Latour Starts On the Long Voyage.

Latour and Trudeau were much elated. A large pack of valuable furs at the cost of less than a pint of whisky blanc, stolen from the very man who had parted with the skins. The liquor had likewise its effect upon themselves, and their exuberant joy found expression in the usual way. They danced about their ill-gotten gains and sang:

Michaud est monté
  Dans un pommier,
Michaud est monté
  Dans un pommier,
Pour cueiller des pommes
  Et pour les manger
Pour cueiller des pommes
  Et pour les manger
La branche a cassé
  Michaud est tombé
Ou est Michaud?
  Il est sur l'dos
Oh, relevè, relevè, relevè,
  Oh, relevè, relevè Michaud.

While they were giving vent to their feelings, the gate of the old fort swung open and King and William MacKenzie, his assistant, came out and stood for a moment watching the men, who were so intent upon their work that they did not hear them approach until the factor greeted them with a "Hello." They sprang to their feet, pulled off their caps and returned the salute with the customary "Bon jour Monsieur."

"When did you get in Latour?" inquired the Factor, fixing his eyes sternly upon the trader.

"Just about wid de sun, Monsieur King," he replied uneasily.

When the Factor was intent upon reading a man's conscience, he had a way of focusing a look upon him that was disconcerting, and Joe's reputation had been none too good.

The trapper quailed before the glance and was only able to partially conceal his anxiety.

“I’ve a word to say to you,” the Factor continued, as Joe stood shifting his feet and twirling his cap without attempting to speak. “A few things have come to my notice about you which will serve your interest that I keep to myself. I have warned you before remember, and if I find that you have again been trapping on Indian lands, I’ll send you from the country.”

Latour seemed to be more interested in the holes he was kicking in the sod with the heel of his boot than in the words of the Factor, but he responded meekly.

“Oui Monsieur.”

“You are a smart fellow, Joe. You serve a useful purpose to the Company, and I don’t like to do it, but I can take no more chances. The Indians are restless; there’s trouble brewing, and you and Trudeau, and a few others like you, are at the bottom of it.”

Latour stopped boring holes in the ground and raised his head. “Non, non, Monsieur——My word——I swear——Le bon Dieu——”

The Factor cut him short. “Stop it, Joe. Don’t perjure your soul for the Company. Every runner who comes in brings word of poaching. Old Mucquois is coming on the fort.”

When Husky heard this astonishing bit of news, he dropped the pail of water he was carrying and would have fled if Trudeau had not seized him by the shirt collar and almost strangling him, forced him to sit down and remain quiet.

“His beaver have been cleaned out,” continued the Factor, “and white men have been snaring on his preserves. If you are mixed up in this, you’ll leave the country by the first canoe, and if you are again caught in the district, by God! I’ll hang you.”

Latour again hung his head and dug still deeper into the sod with his foot.

“Remember, I don’t want to be hard, Joe, but I have my orders from the Company and the Company has its orders from the Government, you understand.”

The poacher understood only too well. An Indian’s life was sacred; and visions of the hangman’s rope loomed up with most distressing clearness.

“Oui Monsieur, for sure, but will Monsieur please say what I have done me?”

“You know very well what you have done,” said the Factor impressively. As he spoke, his eyes seemed to search into the very corners of the bushman’s soul.

“You were trapping on Mattowana’s land last fall——”

The gleam of hope which this unexpected accusation brought, changed the whole bearing of the trapper. It was evident that the Factor as yet knew nothing of recent events, and the poaching of eight or nine months ago might be difficult to prove.

“Monsieur, de man who’s tol’ you dat, he’s lie.”

The Factor smiled. “You say so, eh? Are you quite sure? Am I then to tell Jean Lajoie that you call him a liar?”

“Sapristi! Lajoie? Non.”

“I thought not and I won’t take the trouble of doing so; but, one word more,—Where have you come from Joe?”

Latour drew a dirty red handkerchief from his hip pocket and mopped the perspiration from his forehead.

“I’ve come from——from——from Abitibi, Monsieur.”

“From Abitibi,” repeated the Factor.

“Oui Monsieur.”

“Well, as the Rob Roy went up two weeks ago to meet the Temiscamingue canoe there, you must have met her at the Abitibi post.”

“Oui Monsieur,” the man responded blankly.

“And you spoke with Newata, the captain?”

“Oui Monsieur,” repeated the trapper, not knowing what else to say, and trying to nerve himself for the inevitable.

“When did he say he would make Moose Factory?”

Latour was thinking desperately. He began haltingly and very slowly:

“He say Monsieur,——he say dat——dat de wedder’s bad——an’ dat ——” Joe would have broken down hopelessly at this point had not providence mercifully intervened.

There came a screech from the tent, and Metis staggered out, shouting wildly and calling down the maledictions of the Great Spirit upon every white man. In his right hand he brandished his high-priced hunting knife and in his left he waved his equally expensive whisky bottle.

King and MacKenzie ran forward and disarmed him after a short struggle; but not before Trudeau, who had been listening intently to the conversation between Latour and the Factor, had glided up to his partner and whispered the much needed information that the Rob Roy had left Abitibi five days previous; that she was now due at the post; and that she had on board the mails and the Factor's daughter.

Both King and his assistant were so preoccupied with the Indian that they missed this little piece of important by-play.

"Metis drunk again," roared the Factor. "Where did you get the liquor, you old reprobate? Who gave you the liquor? Answer me, or by God——"

But Metis was hopelessly beyond the possibility of an intelligent reply, and at MacKenzie's suggestion, he was taken into the fort to sober up, Trudeau lending a helping hand.

King again turned his attention to Latour.

"Now, Joe, when is the Rob Roy due?"

The trapper, now quite self-possessed, responded glibly.

"Newata's tell me, Monsieur, he's expec' to come in perhaps today. He's say to me dat Mademoiselle King's come on her."

The Factor was mightily astonished, but there was no refuting the evidence that the man was telling the truth.

"That will do, Latour," he said. "You have come from Abitibi. If you had lied to me, by God! you'd have gone up the river sure."

The troublesome waters passed, the trader lost no time in directing the attention of the Factor to the furs, and they were examining the pack when MacKenzie and Trudeau returned with the information the prisoner was for a time dead to the world.

It did not take such experts long to strike a bargain, and the skins were finally taken over and paid for by a Company warrant for two hundred and ten dollars. The two traders carried them into the fort, where Trudeau remained to receive the Company's order and sign the receipt.

Latour had taken only a half-hearted interest in the transaction, and did not linger for the glass of wine at the completion of the formalities. Emerging from the storehouse, he seated himself on the log by the remains of the camp fire, lighted his pipe and gloomily looked into space.

"De big canoe come in today," he murmured. "You bet I get me out of here quick. I suppose I never come back—never come back to dis bush again."

"What' de matter, Joe?" asked the Husky.

"I'm goin' away Husk."

"Go away? Up rivair? Com' bak' soon?"

"Yes, up rivair, but I never com' back." He was resting his elbows on his knees and as he spoke he dropped his head between his hands and stared blankly at the ground.

"Joe, you doan' mean dat," cried the little Esquimau, squatting down beside him.

"I wish I didn't Husk; but if I stay here till de big canoe come in, dey send me up de rivair, anyway, an' I lik' better me go myself." He ambled over to the tent, got out his traveling pack and busied himself sorting the contents.

There were all kinds of wares and knickknacks in this kit which he carried on his journeys in the prospect of a trade. There were knives, hatchets, fishhooks, watches and brass and plated chains for the men. For the women there were mirrors, scissors, needles, thread, skeins of silk, beads, and sundry other trinkets.

Picking out a nickle-plated watch, he showed it to the Esquimau. "Husky," he said, "you've been' good fren' to me. Tak' dis an' some tam tink of Joe Latour."

The little fellow turned the time piece over once or twice, and then Latour wound it for him and placed it to his ear.

"What dat, Joe," he asked in a somewhat awe-stricken voice.

"Dat's a watch, Husk."

"Watch? What him for?"

"Watch, for tell tam."

"Tam', what's dat?"

Despite the dullness of his spirits, Joe could not help laughing.

“Ho! Ho! I forget me, Husky. Dis’ bes’ for you,” he said, replacing the watch with a double-bladed jack-knife.

The Esquimau grinned delightedly. “Wah! Wah! you ver’ good Joe.” He picked up a piece of wood and began to whittle vigorously.

Just then Trudeau returned from the fort. “Dat’s all fix, Joe,” he exclaimed. “Warrant on de Company, four hundred and twenty bevaire—two hundred an’ ten dollar,” and he held out the piece of paper. “Dat’s not much, Joe, eh?”

“Ah, what’s de use,” sighed Latour, “Dey won’t pay more, an’ we had to sell pretty quick. Did dey ask you wher’ we get dem, eh?”

“Non.”

“I tot’ non. Dey nevair ask what dey do not want to know. Et non Achille, I mus’ hurry mak’ de long voyage you know.”

Trudeau’s face fell. “De long voyage, Joe?”

“Vrai, you know de big canoe come in pretty soon. Monsieur King, he’s fin’ out I not be at Abitibi. He’s fin’ out about Mucquois, an’ den——Well you know. I bes’ go me right away,——up de Moose an’ down de Missinaibi.”

Trudeau stood for a moment as if stunned. The men had been partners and close friends for many years. They had had their ups and downs and shared equally the luck of good and evil times. They had nursed each other in sickness and gone on the rampage together. They had seen each other out of many tight places, when a man’s life was less certain than the toss of a coin. Together they had braved poverty and hunger, just as they had shared the spoils of ill-gotten gains, without so much as a word of difference or complaint. Now each must go his different way with little prospect that their paths would ever cross again.

“Mais Oui, I suppose dat’s so Joe,” Trudeau replied dejectedly. “Mon Dieu, I no lik’ see you go. You’s been good partner to me, dat’s five—ten year; but for sure you mus’ go. Go quick. Tiens,” He took up his own well-stocked voyaging pack, with tumpline attachment already adjusted. “Tak’ ma pack. Ma canoe, she’s down by de point dere.”

Latour silently threw the pack upon his back, adjusted the tumpline across his forehead, picked up his rifle and turned towards the river.

“Hol’ on Joe. I mos’ forget me. De warrant. Tak’ her.” Achille held out the scrap of paper, good for two hundred and ten dollars at any bank or trading post in the country.

Latour tried to say something, but the words would not come and he gently brushed aside the hand that held the paper.

“Keep it, Achille,” he managed to say at last.

“Non, non, mon pauvre, Joe. You go far away to some strange place. You fin’ it pretty hard to get along, mebbe. You need de money. Some tam perhaps you be rich man; and den you tink of Achille and send him l’argent. Tak’ her Joe, tak’ her.”

Latour no longer refused and tucked the warrant in the bosom of his shirt. They walked slowly to the point by the river and turned and shook hands.

“Adieu Achille.”

“Adieu Joe.”

Latour sprang quickly into the canoe. One stroke of the paddle and he was well into the stream; and as he disappeared around the bend, his partner for the last time heard him sing the old chanson, his voice growing fainter, until it died away in the distance.

“A la claire fountaine,
M’en allant promener,
J’ai trouvé l’eau si belle,
Que je me suis baigné.
Il y a longtemps que Je t’aime
Jamais je ne t’oublierai——”

Trudeau walked back to the tent, sat down on the log and tried to light his pipe; but somehow it would not draw. After wasting half a dozen matches he gave it up, and though he knew he must be gone before the Indian recovered from his debauch, he did not move. An hour went by and he was still staring vacantly towards the point by the river. His reverie was broken by the sound of two muffled shots and he started to his feet.

“Dat’s de Rob Roy,” he muttered. “Joe not get away too quick.”

CHAPTER XI.

The Big Canoe Comes In—Home Again—Lucille Greeted by the Grandes Dames of Moose Factory and by Tom Hennessy, Clerk and Poet.

Scarcely had the echo of the shots died away before they were answered by the Hudson's Bay Company men, and again the salute was repeated by the canoe in the distance. Indian boys, armed with bows and arrows, and squaws old and young, some carrying papooses securely strapped to their backs, seemed to spring out of the earth, and began to congregate close to the point where the Rob Roy was expected to make a landing. All were jabbering loudly and much excited. As the nose of the big canoe came into view around the bend, the boys shot their arrows into the air, paddles were waved and the excitement and cheering were redoubled.

Among the passengers were some bushmen who sang at the top of their lungs, keeping time to the short, rapid strokes of the paddles. Immediately the refrain was taken up on shore:

En roulant ma boule roulant
        En roulant, ma boule.
Le fils du roi s'en va chassant,
        En roulant ma boule,
Avec son grand fusil d'argent,
        Rouli roulant, ma boule roulant.
En roulant ma boule roulant
        En roulant ma boule.
Deux beaux canards s'en vont baignant
        En roulant ma boule,
Visa le noir, tua le blanc,
        Rouli roulant ma boule roulant
En roulant ma boule roulant,
        En roulant ma boule.

The canoe approached amid promiscuous gun firing and arrow shooting, and the crowd, augmented by practically the entire white and Indian population, swarmed about the landing. The steersman jammed his paddle down. On the left, the crew continued a half-dozen strokes and the right hand paddles were lifted skyward, as the big six-fathomed craft, with its

crew of twelve stalwart men, some half dozen native passengers and upwards of a ton of freight, swung smoothly alongside the wharf and was made fast.

The first to step over the gunwale was Lucille.

"Lucille! Then it is really Lucille at last," exclaimed the Factor. "A hundred times welcome, my dear."

The crowd respectfully made way, and after the first fervent greetings, the two walked up the bank, through a long, narrow lane of admiring natives.

The girl, clinging to her father's arm, gave it an affectionate hug.

"I am so glad to be at home again," she said with a sigh that gave truthful expression to the sincerity of the word.

"And the old home has been waiting for its mistress these many years," he responded. The thoughts of both father and daughter crowded each other so fast that there was little room for utterance. Finally the Factor broke a silence of several seconds.

"How well and how charming you look!" Then after a brief pause he added, "There is so much more that I want to say, Lucille, but the words do not seem to come. I'll think of them bye and bye, my dear."

"Don't worry about them, Father," she answered. "All those words you so much want to speak are just as true as if you had said them. Dear old Daddy."

She flung her arms about his neck and kissed him again and again.

The men were now busy with the unloading and the squaws gathered in mute admiration. As they began to close in, the Factor turned to Lucille, and opened the formal ceremony of introduction.

"Allow me to introduce to you my dear," he said, "the ladies of our social set at Moose Factory. They all move, if not exactly in, at least close to the highest and most frigidly exclusive circle in the world."

The women crowded close about them, and Lucille opened a satchel that swung by a strap from her shoulder.

"See," she said, "I did not forget my old friends." Then, delving among an assortment of colored ribbons, handkerchiefs and small head shawls, she proceeded to distribute them, as each squaw was formally presented.

“This, my dear, is Minnie, wife of Sontag, one of wise counsel; Chief Justice of our Supreme Court.”

Lucille made a low courtesy, and the fat old squaw, in a brave effort to imitate her, sank beyond her balance and sat down quite heavily upon a nest of young thistles, which rather disturbed the dignity of the proceedings for a moment.

“This is Minsota, wife of Matowana, a rising young parliamentarian of these parts.” Again the courtesy and again the imitation, but the younger squaw was more agile and made her bob quite successfully.

“This is Winona, daughter of Ottumna, elder son of the great Cree Chief Mucquois—a crown princess in her own right, who, according to current gossip, may aspire to the hand of the Company’s most promising young man. Eh, Winona? Ah, she may be queen of the factory, my dear, when you are only a dowager.”

While the presentations were in progress, the mail sacks had been carried into the fort. Now, the mail invariably receives premiere attention, and the moment the pouches were opened and the letters addressed to the Factor assorted, MacKenzie, as in duty bound, came to announce the fact to his chief. He was, however, a little diffident about breaking into the ceremonials, and stood respectfully silent, holding his cap in his hand.

“Oh MacKenzie,” said the Factor. “Pardon me. I quite forgot that you had not met before. Allow me to introduce you to my daughter. Lucille, this is Mr. MacKenzie, my assistant at the post.”

The man’s face flushed. He tugged at his mustache and assuming a made-to-order smile, took the young lady’s hand.

In view of his position, the assistant felt that it was incumbent on him to say something, and as soon as he could find the words, he remarked that it was a fine day. Lucille agreed with him.

“Do you usually have such fine days at the Moose, or has this one been especially prepared for me?” she asked.

MacKenzie cleared his throat, hemmed and hawed a bit and finally intimated that it had looked a little like rain the day before; and when the silence which followed Lucille’s acknowledgment of the news had reached the limit of tolerance, he turned to his chief.

“The mails are waiting for you, sir,” he said.

“Already? Then I must leave you, my dear, with MacKenzie. These others are just plain ladies of the forest; not quite London style perhaps, but taken as a whole, more healthy. When the levee is over come in and see me.” With that he walked off quickly to the fort.

Lucille resumed the distribution of favors, MacKenzie standing by but taking little part in the introductions.

When the last favor had been given away and all the recipients had retired to a distance and were squatted in circles to compare and admire their new finery, three clerks of the post, who up to a short time before, had been superintending the storing of the cargo and checking the manifest of the canoe, came forward. They were freshly shaven; their hair had been vigorously brushed and plastered into shape; their bronzed faces glistened with a polish of rough toweling and soap; their boots also shone, and they had on their best clothes, with shirt and collar and tie attachments, always reserved for special occasions. MacKenzie, all things considered, did the honors fairly well.

“Permit me,” he said, as the first man stepped up, “Permit me to introduce Mr. Robert Burritt.”

Mr. Burritt bowed low three or four times and then stood twirling his cap without saying a word.

“Speak up, Bob,” whispered MacKenzie, “Why don’t you say something, man?”

Had he been backed against a wall before a firing squad, Burritt could hardly have looked more distressed. He edged close to Spooner, the man next him who declined to make way for him.

“Say Bob,” said Spooner in an undertone, “If you can’t speak, for God’s sake whistle.”

Burritt finally pulled himself together. “Glad to meet you, mam. Glad to meet you,” he began, “I—I—I, Eh-eh-eh—” Then not knowing what he did nor why, he turned, seized Spooner by the collar and slack of the trousers and thrust him forward.

“This is Joe Spooner, mam,” he gasped.

Lucille’s smile of greeting swelled to genuine laugh despite all she could do to be dignified and polite.

“How do you do, Mr. Spooner?”

“Yes, thank you, mam,” replied the discomfitted Spooner, casting a savage eye at Burritt. “Thank you, mam.”

MacKenzie, with much self-possession, whispered a word of prompting. “Oh, pleased to see you. Pleased to see you.”

“And I am glad to meet you, Mr. Spooner, and all the gentlemen at the post.”

“Thank you, mam. Thank you, mam.”

At this the third young clerk, who had been biding his turn, inquired of him in a tone somewhat too loud to be polite, if he couldn’t say anything more than “Thank you, mam.”

“Yes, I can. Damn you.”

A loud “Oh!” went up from the entire group, and the miserable Spooner, mopping the perspiration from his face, began an attempt at apology.

“I—I—I, beg pardon,—I—I didn’t mean you, mam.”

“You didn’t,” cried Lucille, feigning much more indignation than she really felt.

“Oh Hell No!”

“What!” exclaimed the now thoroughly astonished young lady.

“Oh my God! I didn’t mean that, mam. Honest,—Yes I did.—No I didn’t. Here Tom,” he shouted, “you talk to the lady.” He bolted and never stopped until he was safely out of sight behind the stockade.

As soon as the excitement and laughter had sufficiently subsided, MacKenzie presented Mr. Thomas Hennessy, a stockily built, good-natured and good-looking young Irishman; and having thus completed his part in the ceremony, he withdrew with that sense of relief which a man feels who pays a bill with a promissory note and thanks God that it is settled at last.

“How do you do, Mr. Hennessy?” Lucille inquired rather hesitatingly and wondering what was going to happen.

Hennessy took the extended hand and drew himself up to his full height.

“Well, I thank you, mam; and I’m proud to know the daughter of your father, mam. We’re all proud. You mustn’t mind now if the boys are a bit shy at first. They’ll make up for that bye and bye and to spare. Sure, they were carried off their heads entirely by the sight of such grace and elegance; and small blame to them.

“Faith we’re all right glad to greet you.
You bet we are, Miss King.
Take all we’ve got
In this lone spot,
Yes, every darned old thing.”

“This was positively refreshing. Your sentiments, Mr. Hennessy,” replied Lucille, “so eloquently and so poetically expressed, touch me more deeply than I can tell you. The subject, I fear however, is hardly worthy of them.”

“Sure they are not worth much, mam.” The Irishman had no sooner said the words than he realized a serious blunder.

“Indeed, Mr. Hennessy,” replied the young lady, assuming a much offended air.

“Ah now, of course, mam, I didn’t mane that. Sure it was my tongue that tripped over my good intentions.”

“You no doubt meant, Mr. Hennessy, as Mr. Punch would have it, ‘something one would rather have expressed differently’; but after all, your words had an intrinsic value peculiarly their own, had they not?”

Thomas Patrick had only a vague idea of what she meant, but he replied quite fearlessly.

“I suppose that’s so. Sure I know it must be so, because you said it. An’ you’d be always right, mam.”

“Not always, but this time yes.” Lucille drew a wild flower from her belt and handed it to him. “A token to a brave and gallant man. Let me pin it on for you.”

She adjusted the flower in the lapel of his coat, and they began a friendly chat about affairs and people at the post, which continued for almost half an hour before the gentleman was summoned by the Factor.

Taking Lucille’s hand, Hennessy gallantly brought it to his lips. “It’s mighty proud I am,” he said, holding out the decorated lapel. “An’ sure it’s nothin’ but the truth I’m tellin’ you:

“This beautiful flower
Isn’t half so fair
As the delicate hand
That pinned it there.”

Lucille was pleased and graciously acknowledged the compliment as the Irishman walked away. She followed slowly into the fort herself; but the Factor was still too busy to claim his attention, so she came out again and wandered in the direction of the bay.

The squaws and boys had disappeared; but not far away, near the mouth of the river, Winona had built a fire. She had expected Ottumna and would have ready for him his tea and pork and beans. He was late but she gave little heed to his absence. Her thoughts were of someone who was later still.

“Jean, he no come to me,” she mused. “He stay till the day grow short; flowers all die; wild goose fly high and moose begin to run. Pretty soon he come and pretty soon he go again. And me, I chase de chipmunk and de squirrel, an’ tak’ de rabbit from de snare, an’ make de moccasin, all alone—all alone. Oh Jean, why you stay? De creek run dry, de wind’s blow an’ de snow’s come an’ de men’s all gone to hunt; an’ you go too. An’ me, I’se wait by de wigwam fire. Look! De log’s burn low. I’se trow on de spruce an’ de pine knot; an’ see, she’s come big blaze. An’ dere—dere, I see me Jean.”

The winter had indeed gone; and so had the spring, and now the summer was well advanced; and he whom she had long expected and yearned to see was still away. She feared for him; for many things had happened and were happening that made the bush no safe place for a white man.

CHAPTER XII.

Enter Jean Lajoie, Voyageur—After Twelve Years, Boy and Girl Meet Again—Alas, Poor Winona—Sometimes Dreams Come True.

Not a rustle of a leaf broke the stillness of this summer afternoon, nor could the sharp ear of even the experienced bushman have detected so much as the snapping of a twig; yet this little Indian girl, sitting dreamily by the fire, caught a very faint but familiar sound and started from her reverie. It was a voice, singing fully a mile away. She placed a panikin of pitch on the coals and sat stoically waiting; and when at last the nose of a canoe showed through the low bushes on the far side of the river, she was ready to greet the man who carried it. He reached the stream, tossed his frail craft into the water and sprang in with an impetus that brought him to the opposite bank, where the girl was now standing.

"Hello, Winona, ma p'tite. You glad to see me, eh?" he asked as he stepped ashore.

The needless question was answered by a nod. Without further words they climbed to the high ground by the fire, and after lighting his pipe at the embers, the man began a minute examination of the canoe. He applied his lips to suspected places. Wherever he was able to inhale the air, he circled the spot with a bit of red chalk, and the girl sealed the leak with a daub of pitch; and then the seams that were strained and chipped during the course of his long, rough journey received a fresh coating.

They had been bending earnestly and silently over their work for some time, when the swish, swish, swish of a pair of feet making their way through the long coarse grass, caused them to pause and look up. They saw a young white woman walking towards them. The Indian girl who had met the intruder only a short time before, and who was wont to treat unexpected occurrences as a matter of course, took little heed of the visitor, but the man was both interested and puzzled, because strange young white women were a rarity at the factory. His surprise increased when she came forward and greeted him in familiar French.

"Bon jour, mon garçon."

"Bon jour, Mademoiselle," he replied, drawing himself up and removing his cap.

“You are——?”

“Lajoie, Jean Lajoie, Mademoiselle.”

The young woman’s face lighted with a glow of pleasure.

“Lajoie——Jean Lajoie,” she repeated. “It surely can’t be. Why yes it is ——You do not know me, John?”

“Know you?” said the man. “Know you?——” He regarded his interrogator intently, paused a second as if bewildered, then throwing pipe and cap to the ground, leaped over the upturned canoe towards her.

“Yes it is——it is Lucille——Mon Dieu——Where you come from Lucille, eh?” Checking himself suddenly, he took her extended hand and bowed respectfully.

“Ah, pardon Mademoiselle. I forget me. Pardon, Mademoiselle King.”

“Not ‘Mademoiselle,’ John.”

A shadow—it might have been one of fear fell across the young man’s face.

“Ah, then you are madame, perhaps, eh?”

“No, indeed, but always ‘Lucille’ to you, John.”

“I——I——thank you very much,” he answered solemnly, but the darkened expression remained and he gave no further evidence of pleasure at this unexpected meeting with his old friend.

“But you do not seem so pleased to see me,” returned Lucille.

“Ah, that is not so, Mademoiselle.”

The strained silence that followed was broken by Lucille.

“Well, have you nothing to say? You were not always so diffident.”

“I was just thinking, Mademoiselle,” said the voyageur seriously. “I was just thinking—Mon Dieu! I wish you did not come just now.”

Lucille was plainly surprised and disappointed.

“You are very contradictory; but please do not worry; I’m here. You must make the best of it.” Then she caught sight of Winona and the look the Indian girl gave in return was not a pleasant one.

“Oh, I see,” she continued, “I have interrupted a little tête-a-tête. I’m sorry, John. Forgive my being in the way. It was quite unintentional. I’ll go

at once." She started to move off but he detained her.

"Please do not go, Mademoiselle. I was confuse when I see you; that's all. I never dreamed to meet you here. I thought you were four thousand miles away. Glad to see you, Lucille?—Glad? I was so glad, I came near to make a fool of me." He took her hand again in both of his and kissed it.

Lucille's petulant manner changed at once; and soon they were seated as familiarly as of old, upon a fallen tree with so much to say that neither knew where to begin.

"Oh it is great to be home again," she sighed.

"And you, Lucille,—you used to make the whole bush bright for me, for everyone. You have seen that big world over the divide, across the great waters; where they go down to the bottom of the sea like the muscalonge and high in the air like the eagle; where they make stars to shine brighter than the moon, so they have no night there; where they but whisper and they hear a hundred miles away. Yes, tell me, Lucille—that fairy land we used to read about—it is all true, eh?"

"Oh, yes, all true and much more."

John paused and looked meditatively over the tree-tops.

"Then life must be to those strange people, one long, bright dream," he said. "Why do they come here to take from the poor red man his little sustenance, to destroy his home and drive him to the sea?" He spoke with dramatic emphasis that imparted to the words their deepest meaning.

Lucille was somewhat perturbed. She had become one of a class of honest people, people of high principles and unimpeachable honor, according to their lights, who could never stoop to cheat, and who took pleasure in being generous to those who needed help, but whose code of justice stopped there; who believed themselves entitled to everything they could acquire by so-called legitimate means, and that any interference with this right was unlawful, even criminal. The doctrine preached by John was to her nothing short of heresy.

"I heard a man talk like that once to a mob in London," she answered rather brusquely. "They called him a socialist and sent him to prison. You must not be a socialist, John. The course of civilization is as resistless as the tides. It spreads over the world like the spokes from the hub of a wheel. It ——" But John interrupted her.

“Civilization. Yes, they call that civilization, that lies, that cheats, that deadens men’s hearts to men, that blinds the windows of his soul, so that he see nothing but himself—himself. He have so much, he cannot use; but still he cry for more. He offer gold; but we have no use for money in the bush, and when we will not sell, he come with the gun, he shoot, he kill, he plow up the land, he fertilize it with the bones of the red man, and he call that civilization.”

He was very earnest, and Lucille, taken by surprise, did not know how to answer him.

“Are you really that timid, boy?” she asked, “who twelve years ago lay at my feet in these very woods while I read aloud the stories of ‘Ivanhoe’ and ‘Jack the Giant Killer.’ I can see you as you looked up at me then; mouth wide open, eyes dancing behind stray locks of a very bushy head. You squeezed my hand so tight. I screamed, and you ran away, to come back with a peace offering—a live chipmunk, a robin’s nest, a young owl, or some other treasure of your forest home.” She removed her belt as she was speaking and handed it to him. “Do you remember this, John?”

He recognized the buckle. It was a flint arrow head.

“I remember,” he said, and his face lighted up with a smile. “I found it at the foot of the Long Portage fourteen years ago.”

“Do you recollect the day you gave it to me?”

“It was the time the big ship leave the bay and take you across the water. Ah, I never forget that. I want so much to go me too. Mon Dieu! I feel so lonesome, Mademoiselle. You were the only white compagnon I had ever known, and when you go I feel like I want drown myself.”

“Yes, and you came very nearly succeeding, too.”

John laughed. “You think of that some time, eh?”

“As if I ever could forget it. Yet I never guessed your plan till Indian Jo spilled you all dripping from the mail sack.”

John hung his head. “Poor Jo,” he said, “he was good to me. He’s dead now, Jo.”

“Tell me. How ever did you manage to get into that bag?” asked Lucille.

John recounted the story of his negotiations with Jo; how he had slipped into an empty sack; how the Indian had held it as one of the clerks sprung the padlock on the staple, and how he had carried it to the batteau. The

remainder of the episode had been witnessed by Lucille herself and she was loud in her praise of the red man's pluck.

"I was angry with Jo for doing that," said John. "I wanted me to drown."

"Drown, why?"

"Because I was alone, Mademoiselle, when you were gone. I was foolish boy you know."

Lucille paused at the doubtful compliment. "Oh, I suppose you were," she sighed, and nothing was said for a while.

"You are going to stay here long this time?" he asked at last rather anxiously.

"Until the end of the summer, perhaps."

"And then?"

"I am to spend the winter at Ottawa and go to England in the spring."

"But you will come back again?" he inquired eagerly.

"I don't know. Perhaps. Why do you ask?"

"Why do I ask," he repeated. "Why do I ask, Mademoiselle? Do you then think life is so delightful here that we do not need your presence to make it bright?" He reached over and took her hand. She made an attempt to withdraw it; but the effort was too feeble and failed.

Winona had been pitching the canoe, making more trips than necessary to and from the fire, the better to observe the couple. She paused now and looked at them, her hands clenched, her face ablaze. John's hunting knife lay upon the ground. She seized it, plunged it through the upturned bark and leaving it there, ran off into the woods. As she did so Lucille saw her. The behavior of the girl also frightened her, and she was thankful to hear her father calling at this opportune moment from the fort.

When she had gone John turned regretfully to his damaged canoe. He looked for Winona, but she was nowhere in sight. He gave a shrill whistle and waited; but she did not come back.

"The ways of a woman, like the ways of providence, are an unblazed trail," he muttered with a shrug of his shoulders. He withdrew the knife, stripped a piece of bark from a tree nearby and proceeded to mend the rent.

He had partly completed his task when he was surprised by the Factor who he thought had been too busy with the mails to be disturbed, but who

had been too eager to hear what he had to say to wait for him to report.

“What news, John?” the latter inquired after formal greetings had been exchanged.

“Bad news, Monsieur,” replied the Voyageur. “Mucquois’ beaver meadow has been stripped. The old man’s killed. His body was found in the creek above the dam. Ottumna and the other young Crees will soon be coming on the fort. I met a crowd of young men already on the way to join him. They may be heading this way now, and God help the white man who runs across their trail.”

The Factor lighted his pipe and sat down beside the bushman.

“John,” he said quietly, “as Chief Factor, I shall be held accountable for this; but my hands are tied. The Company to the right, the Government to the left, the white pioneers to the rear, the only course is straight ahead against the Indian. We have half a dozen good men in the fort, and if the savage comes too close to the stockade, the rights of property may quickly be settled for all time. There is one open chance left. The Indian bill may pass the House next session.”

“But if it does not pass?”

“Then as the Company holds all the powder and shot in the Territory, I fear it will go pretty hard with the Indian. I dare not leave the post, John, as you know,” continued the Factor, “but you can plead our cause at Ottawa, better perhaps, than I could myself. And then there is Lucille,——my God!——she must be taken from here at once. When can you leave?”

“I can start tomorrow, sir.”

“All right. Let it be tomorrow, with the sun. Oh, by the way, I have a letter for you from England.”

“A letter for me from England?” exclaimed John. “There is no one I know now in England.”

“Well, it’s plainly addressed to you.” The Factor produced a long, imposing envelope from his pocket and handed it to the Voyageur. “I see by the inscription that it is from a firm of solicitors. John, beware of lawyers. If you need advice, come to me.”

King returned to the fort and left the bushman turning over the imposing document and speculating on its contents.

“ ‘Thompson, Brander & Scott,’ ” he mused. “I know no people of that name. Yes, there was a man here once by the name of Scott. I ran him out for stealing fur. It can’t be Scott.”

To further satisfy his curiosity he opened the letter, and read:

Mr. Jean Lajoie,
Moose Factory,
Hudson’s Bay Territory,
Canada.

Dear Sir: We have the honor to inform you, that as executors to the estate of the late John Robert Langdon, Earl of Waldron, Viscount Barnewell, Baron Trewsdale, Etc., who has recently died leaving considerable property, we have come quite by accident upon certain documents, which show that the said John Robert Langdon had been twice married and had left a son by each marriage. The present holder of the titles and estates is the younger son who is at present absent from England, and as yet unaware that he has an elder half-brother living.

One paper, which is in the handwriting of the late Earl, states specifically that in 1861, he had married in the Province of Quebec, one Marie Louise Lajoie, who died two years later at Moose Factory, leaving him a son.

A search of the Hudson’s Bay Company records reveals further that there is in the employ of that company, one Jean Robert Lajoie, resident at Moose Factory.

There is little doubt in our minds that “Jean Robert Lajoie” is really “John Robert Langdon.” If therefore your mother left a certificate, showing her to have been the legal wife of John Robert Langdon, then, as the elder son, the titles and estates are yours, and will be made over to you upon identification.

It will be well for you to come to England as soon as possible.

We have the honour to be Sir,

Your obedient servants,
THOMPSON, BRANDER & SCOTT.

John was more amused than excited by this astonishing bit of news. In fact he had but an imperfect idea of what it all meant to him. His knowledge of any world beyond the boundaries of the Hudson’s Bay Territory was limited. He had heard and read about dukes and earls and lords and barons and knights; but his acquaintance with giants and dwarfs, and with Jupiter and Pluto and Venus, was almost as intimate; and since he had grown beyond the age of fairy stories, this did not now amount to much.

In the course of his experience he had occasionally met men of title who had come north on pleasure trips, and he could not see that they differed from any other white men except for their profound ignorance of life in the bush, and for the fact that they were supplied with money to pay for guides,

and that they had neither the inclination nor the strength to carry their own cumbersome and superfluous dunnage.

He laughed at the idea that he might be one of them himself. What did it matter that he should be called "Earl Waldron" or "Jean Lajoie?" Of the two he much preferred the latter name; so why change it? Yet those Thompson, Brander & Scott people seemed to take it for granted that he would go all the way to England for the privilege of so doing. There was no sense to that he thought. As for money, he only reckoned it in terms equivalent to what he wanted to buy with it, and there was nothing that he needed that he did not already have.

Naturally he was curious about those other worlds across the sea, and south of the divide; but as for living among those strange people, the notion was just as absurd to him as a suggestion to emigrate to Mars.

His sole interest in the letter centered in the establishment of his paternity, and the identification of the man who had deserted his mother and himself. This man was now dead and of no further account.

"Then I am not Jean Lajoie but John Langdon," he mused. "I am more. I am what they call a lord—Lord Waldron, that is my name, eh? Lord Waldron, voyageur for the Hudson's Bay Company. Bah! What is that to me? I do not want the name. Jean Lajoie I have always been. Jean Lajoie I will always be. I am rich now I suppose, like the Factor and those English swells who come here to hunt. But what use have I for money in the bush? I have good rifle, good canoe, good dog, plenty to eat. What more can a man want, eh? Non, let my brother keep his name and his money. I stay, Jean Lajoie, Canadian Voyageur."

He crushed the letter, threw it away, and went on with the mending of his canoe.

As he worked he paused to listen to the strain of an old English melody from the fort. It was Lucille singing as she unpacked her belongings and prepared to make herself snug in her new quarters. John had never heard such a voice before. It surpassed by far the sweetness of even Francois Têtu's fiddle. His thoughts wandered far astray, beyond the woods, beyond the sea, beyond the earth itself——but it did not much matter where——to some paradise of his imagination, where they two should be the only dwellers.

But the dream ended with the song. "Bah!" he said to himself, "Mademoiselle King would not marry with a voyageur."

Lucille began to sing again, and once more he stopped to listen. Then he picked up the ball of crumpled paper at his feet, smoothed out the creases as best he could, and stowed it in the bosom of his shirt.

CHAPTER XIII.
The Man, the Woman and the Trail of Destiny.

The Voyageur extinguished the embers of the fire, threw his pack over his shoulder and started for his quarters at the fort. As he reached the gate of the stockade, it swung open and he stood face to face with Lucille. Had the meeting been prearranged it could not have been more opportune, for there was much to say and little time to say it.

"I am so glad to find you here," she began. "I feared——."

"Of what were you afraid, Mademoiselle?"

The subject however was one which she preferred not to approach too abruptly, so she parried the question by asking another.

"Where is Winona?"

"Winona?" repeated the Voyageur, in a tone which indicated unmistakably that the whereabouts of the young squaw, at the particular moment was of little concern to him.

"Yes, the little Indian girl."

"I do not know. She run away somewhere. You saw her go, Mademoiselle."

He wished devoutly that she had chosen some other theme for conversation and made an attempt to turn the drift of their talk into a more inviting channel; but Lucille was not to be cajoled.

"I am afraid I came upon you so unexpectedly this morning, that in the excitement of our meeting, we were rude to the girl, and I fear she is not a young person to be lightly ignored. I hope I have not got you into disfavor, John."

The Voyageur smiled in an effort to laugh away the subject. "Please do not think too much about Winona, Mademoiselle."

"Oh, but you mustn't treat this matter too flippantly," she answered. "That girl loves you, John, and I dare say you have given her some encouragement. Come now, own up."

John told her of his friendship for the Cree chief's family. The truth of the girl's infatuation had been so evident that he could not have been

oblivious to it, though he had tried, so far as he was able, not to notice it. As the protégé of her grandfather and the friend of her father, he had made her little presents and paid her little attentions from time to time. He could hardly be blamed if she had accepted them all too ardently.

His work and his intimacy with the men of her family had brought them frequently together. He had always been scrupulous in his behavior to the girl, whom he had known ever since she was born; but it had been left to him to discover that to play with a child was one thing and to pay the same sort of attention to a woman was quite another.

The Voyageur had made a confidant of Winona who brought him much information about the tribe. He did not consider this as spying upon the Crees. He was their friend and his loyalty could not be questioned; but he was a white man, and though he held their confidence, there were sometimes things which they preferred he did not know, because they feared he might not approve. Occasionally, however, he had found it necessary to save the Indians from themselves, and little of consequence escaped him, thanks to the vigilance and loquacity of the young squaw.

“Ah, Mademoiselle,” he said, “I do not understand a woman. She lead you through the bush, but she leave no trail, and when she go, you are lost in a thick bewilderness.”

“Then you should blaze your way as you walk, John. No, a good woman is the paddle that holds the canoe straight, that heads it off the rocks, around the eddies, safe behind the point of the portage.”

“That may be so, Mademoiselle, but you forget that it is never safe to trust to one paddle.”

He spoke without measuring the words or of realizing the interpretation which might be placed upon them.

“You are most ungallant,” she retorted.

“Non, Mademoiselle, non. You do not understand. Some time a man is in the rapids, his paddle break and he is lost.”

The simile of the woman and the paddle became so involved at this point that it was pursued no further.

The Voyageur and the Factor’s daughter made their way along the old familiar trail by the river, the same which they had trod that eventful morning when the big ship was waiting in the bay to carry the little girl across the sea. The twelve years that intervened had made but little

difference in the appearance of the woods. Young shrubs had grown into trees and old trees had returned to the earth to fertilize the soil for future generations, but who could see the change?

Again they listened to the droning of insects, the warbling of birds, the rustling of leaves and the splashing of water; but how much pleasanter the paths, how much sweeter the harmony of the sounds now than then? The spirits of the girl ran high and she had for a companion, not a forlorne and disconsolate little boy, but a man strong and serious, flushed and happy, whose heart beat fast with great expectations. Her stay was to be very short. Within a few hours she was to leave the bush again; but there was joy in the thought for the man. This time he was to go too. He was to be her protector on a long journey, to that wonderland from which she came and to which she would be his sponsor.

The more distant future, it was true, was dark, and no one could tell what it might bring forth; but why mar the certain and delightful present with fears of what might not be? . . It was his day. The cup of happiness at his lips was running over.

They came to the fallen tree across the trail, upon which they had told the "old, old story" long ago, when he was twelve and she was ten. The seasons had left their marks upon it. In many places the moss had grown thick where the bark had been, and the sinews of the sturdy old trunk had lost the fiber of former years; but it could still carry weight and it beckoned them to stop and rest.

The Factor had told his daughter of the impending danger, and that she would have to leave early the following morning. She was assured however that the storm would soon blow over, and that she could return before the summer had been fully spent. She was anxious to learn John's news of the situation. He was not as optimistic as her father. It was trouble, he said, of an old standing. There had been wounds that were deep and which would take time to heal.

He spoke of the grievances of the red men and the aggression of the whites, in which the Company was vitally concerned. The future of the fur trade depended on a settlement that would preserve the territory for the Indian. The land was a birthright. He had enjoyed it before the country had been discovered by the Europeans. His title to it could only be questioned upon the brigand theory that might is right. The Company had been given ownership of the land, but its value would shrink a hundredfold, if the

Indian were dispossessed. Its interests were bound up with his, and hitherto it had been able to hold him safe.

There had, of course, been differences at times between the Company and its tenants, but these had been merely individual quarrels which occasionally are bound to arise between all buyers and sellers, especially when the former hold a monopoly. In the main, the natives had had little to complain of. Not only had they been fairly treated but the Company had been to them a shelter from political strife, of which they knew but little, but in which they would long ago have perished, without that strong roof above them.

But the years bring changes under which the mightiest nations of the earth have succumbed; and the powerful Hudson's Bay Company had begun to weaken under the attacks of rival forces and the ever shifting sands of trade. The time had arrived when the title of the native to the land, hitherto protected by tenure through the Company, should be directly confirmed by the government of the nation of which he was a ward. The civil law was clashing with the law of possession. The former was based, not upon individual rights, but upon contracts made with a commercial institution, privileged to exploit them to its own advantage. That it had been careful not to trespass unduly upon these rights was to the credit of the Hudson's Bay Company and its affiliations.

The Voyageur was alive to the decaying power of the Company against legalized encroachments, and in its service had preached the doctrines of right and truth. With the knowledge and support of the Company, the Indians had time and again laid their grievances before the authorities; always to be well received and reassured but just as surely to be disappointed by pledges unfulfilled. They were irritated by delays which they could not understand. So it happened that they had lost not only patience but all confidence in the good faith of the Government.

The Indian was a child, conscious of his own weakness and helplessness, who up to this time had trusted implicitly the good word of his Great White Mother, but at last he had begun to realize and to act upon the adage that Providence helps only those who help themselves.

The Voyageur waxed eloquent in describing the situation to Lucille. He was proud of the part he was to play. He was proud of the confidence of the Factor; but above all was he proud to command the expedition for the safety of his daughter.

Since she had to go, Lucille was glad of such valiant company, and delighted at the prospect of being of service to him at the Capital. Her aunt was the wife of a man of great influence there, and she felt sure that for her father's sake, her uncle would do what he could.

"Strange things happen, John?" she said. "Who knows? Perhaps you might some time go to live in that new world. You would make an apt pupil, but you have much to learn."

"Tell me, Mademoiselle," he asked eagerly. "I want to know all about it. Yes, you say, some times strange things do happen. It may not be all a dream to me about the world up the river and across the sea. Tell me, Mademoiselle."

She told him many things of the great world,—a "Vanity Fair," she called it, so mysterious, so wonderful to the simple man of the woods. He hung upon her words and asked many questions. They talked until the sun, sinking slowly behind the trees, cast long shadows on the ground warning them it would soon be time to return; and yet he had not spoken what had been all along uppermost in his mind. He had waited as his courage ebbed and flowed—at one time hoping for the opportunity, at another fearing it might come.

"I have a story to tell you, Lucille," he at last began. It was the first time he had been bold enough to use the privilege she had given him to call her by her Christian name.

"A story?" she replied. "Oh, and I, too, have a story—a story that I know will interest you because—"

"Because?" he interrupted.

"Because it concerns me."

The face of the Voyageur clouded and a faint suspicion crept into his mind that he was not going to like this story.

"Only you, Lucille?" he inquired in a tone that might have opened the eyes of the girl had she not been so absorbed in what she was going to say.

"Me and somebody else," she replied, with rather pointed emphasis on the "somebody else."

"Somebody you think a great deal of perhaps?" he inquired nervously.

"Yes."

"Then tell me your story first."

“Once there was a little girl,” she began, “who was sent to school in England. At first she was very lonely, even in that great big bright world. She missed the perfume of the pines, the song of the rapids, the rest and stillness of the days as of the nights. She missed the cry of the loons and the foxes, and the harmony of all those sounds that make the music of the forest.”

“And did she miss nothing else?” the Voyageur asked, clinging to a desperate hope.

“Now don’t interrupt the story. Of course she missed a great many things, but I am not going to make you vain by repeating them. Her days were spent mostly in a narrow school room. She pined for God’s own wild land, where nature is the only teacher, and where there are no rules and stupid conventionalities. But she grew at last accustomed to her surroundings, even if she never got quite to enjoy them.

“One day the little girl left school and became a woman. They dressed her in a gown of white, low at the top and very, very long at the bottom. They put jewels about her neck and ospreys in her hair, and took her to fairy land to see the queen. There was a young man, an officer in the army, whom she had known ever since she had come to live in the new world . . . Do you know, John, that he looked so like you; black hair, dark serious eyes and broad shoulders—and so—and so—”

“And so?” the Voyageur repeated, as he anxiously watched the face of the girl for any change of expression. “And so—?”

“And so—Oh, I may as well admit it at once—The girl fell in love with the man.”

And so, the truth was out—a truth which, had he been a man of the world, he would have guessed long before she had spoken. It came like the thrust of a knife, to splinter all those new found hopes, to roughly awaken him from a short dream of a new life, in a new world—to blot out that paradise he had painted so vividly. He was stunned and conscious only that he must do something to conceal an emotion he could not altogether suppress. What he was suffering she must never know. He dared not trust himself to speak because he feared his voice would betray him. Again he took refuge in a laugh.

It was not a reception that Lucille had looked for. It had been a serious story if lightly told, and she was just a little piqued at the levity.

“Why are you laughing, John?” she inquired in an injured tone. “If you have taken it as a funny story, you must have a strange sense of humor.”

“Non, non, Mademoiselle,” he stammered. “You must pardon me. I laugh only because I am glad.—And you, you are going to be married, eh?”

“Yes, to the man of my story. But it is a secret, John. You must not tell.”

“Non, Mademoiselle, you may be sure your secret will be safe. Ah, I am glad . . . Glad the little girl is going to be so happy. May her joys always shine bright—bright as the light in her own brown eyes.”

“Thank you, dear old John, ever so much,” she said. “I knew you would be pleased for my sake. Now tell me your story.”

John had forgotten that he had suggested a narrative of his own, and was taken aback.

“My story, Mademoiselle?”

“Yes, the story you promised. Your life, I suppose; your plans, your hopes, your ambitions. After Father the Company looks to Jean Lajoie. You will be Chief Factor some day, John, and rule over this great wild land. Now begin. I am all attention.”

“I—I thank you, Mademoiselle. You are my very good friend always,” said the Voyageur; “but I have nothing now to say because you yourself have told just now my story. One word, like the short stroke of a paddle, and you have changed the course of my life. Only a moment ago I was foolish enough to think I should like to go to that great world, that ‘Vanity Fair’ you call it. I would be like the man in your story. It was wrong. I must stay here and work for the Company and for these poor people. There is much to do, Mademoiselle. Yes, there is much to do.” He rose as he spoke and clenching his hands, looked up to the sky.

“Bon Dieu!” he prayed. “Give to me the force to do it.”

CHAPTER XIV.

The White Man and the Cree—The War Cloud—The Time Not Ripe to Strike.

The Voyageur had not imparted to the Factor all the details of his recent parley with the Indians. He was acting on his own best judgment and was going to play his hand alone.

A few days before he had met Ottumna and his chief advisors at their council. The younger Crees were maddened by the murder of their old chief and would not hesitate to take vengeance on any white man who crossed their path. The Factor and employees at the post, who had had no hand in their grievance, might be spared for a time, but rebellion, once kindled, would spread like a forest fire. It could not be checked. It would burn up the whites like tinder.

Such was the atmosphere of the council. The young men were for immediate action. There was no use to wait longer. Already they had waited, for what? Indian property had been ruined. Everywhere brigandage was spreading. The fur was growing scarce and the white men taunted and defied them. In the south they had been driven off the land. The time had come to act, to strike swift and strong at the throat of the wolf howling at the doors of their tepis.

One or two of the more ardent grew violent in their eloquence. It were better, they said, to die quickly by the rifle than to perish miserably by famine. A few more inflammatory speeches, and the decision for war was unanimous.

Then Ottumna spoke. He, among all the nation, had been the most aggrieved, but a student of the subtle teachings of his father, and in closer touch with the Company, he was inclined to caution. He weighed more carefully the consequences of war and measured the chances of success.

“My people,” he said, “we have suffered much wrong and our blood has been spilled; but if we take up the rifle now, only more will be shed, and it will avail us nothing. The white people are many. They will come from far across the divide. The police will strike from the west, and we will indeed have poor chance. They will take our land and leave our bodies for the crows. The Factor says he will help if we will wait.”

“Wait, yes wait,” sneered the young men. “Let him wait who has the body of a man and the soul of a rabbit. Let him wait till there is nothing more to wait for; then let him die. We will strike, Ottumna.”

There was no choice for the Chief. He raised his arm and agreed. A shout of triumph went up. They knew that what Ottumna promised would surely be well done.

The Voyageur had been a silent listener at the council. He asked now that he might speak. Jean Lajoie was their friend and they would hear him; but one of the young Crees objected because he was not of the nation.

“There is a bond even stronger than blood,” the Voyageur pleaded, “and I pledge you my heart; but if you will listen only to a Cree, then let me be a Cree. Let my blood mingle with yours. Let it pour out with yours into the ground, as a sign that Lajoie and the Crees are one forever.”

He bared his arm and with his hunting knife opened a vein. Ottumna did the same and their blood flowed in a common stream to the ground, where they buried it in evidence of the compact. The white man had become a Cree.

The ceremony over, the new member of the tribe addressed the council.

“I am now a Cree,” he said. “I have lived in your tepis and your cabin. I have served you in peace. I will die with you in war. To fight, a man must be strong. He must endure. He should be slow to strike but when he strikes be sure. My brothers, you are strong and you endure much, and the time is near, but it has not yet come. Already at the great Council in Ottawa, they prepare a promise for the Indian. They will give him his land for himself. When they sign that promise, no longer will they let the white man burn his bush and steal his fur. I ask, my brothers, that you wait. I go myself now to those big white chiefs. I bring to you back the pledge they sign, or I take the rifle with you until they do.”

Continuing, he pleaded with them to once more lay their grievances, let it be for the last time, before the Company; to leave the rest to him; to wait till he came back; it would not be long.

The advice prevailed and it was agreed that a delegation go to the Moose as soon as Jean Lajoie had paved the way with the Factor. Fate had played into the Voyageur’s hands. He was about to be sent on a mission to the Capital, not only as a representative of the Company, but as an emissary of the Indians themselves.

By the time the Voyageur and Lucille had separated at the gate of the fort it was almost dusk, and a departure on so long and arduous a journey would entail considerable arranging during the few hours remaining before the dawn of next day; but in the bush people travel light. Bundles are condensed into the smallest possible space, and there are no more of them than a well defined necessity demands.

John did not trouble himself with details. The order would go forth from the Factor to a clerk, and at dawn everything would be alongside. For crew he would have the men who had brought in the canoe the previous day. He himself would however take the bow, and they would be off with the sun.

The Voyageur had been privileged to select an assistant to accompany him and he had chosen Hennessy. The Frenchman and the Irishman had always been close friends. MacKenzie was undoubtedly the best judge of furs of any man at the post, except the Factor, and held the right of seniority. It was men and not furs however they had now to deal with.

As soon as he had parted from Lucille, Lajoie sought his companion. Hennessy was elated at the prospect of a trip and profuse in his gratitude to John for having chosen him. Personally, he was not greatly concerned with the affairs of the Indians, but he dearly loved anything that savored of adventure or controversy, and if the only solution of a difficulty was a fight, it added but zest to enjoyment.

For those he liked Hennessy was always ready to go the limit. It mattered not a whit which side they were on, or what their claims and pretensions were; he was ready to shift his convictions, the moment they ran counter to the good will or aspirations of his friends. His principles, except for this, were sound and his nature was whole-hearted and unselfish. It was fortunate for him that the persons he chose as objects of philanthropy and loyalty were seldom unworthy. He admired the Factor whose word was law, but he would have died for Jean Lajoie.

The Voyageur and the clerk had a serious talk. John, confident in his friend's unswerving loyalty, could say more to him than he ever dared tell the Factor, because the latter would accept no advice that did not happen to coincide with his own peculiar way of doing things, and having the power, he would brook no interference; on the other hand Hennessy never troubled to balance the debits and credits of any statement presented by a friend.

He heard with complacency the particulars of the council meeting, from the new member of the Cree tribe, and he foresaw more plainly than John, the seriousness of the probable outcome, because he was more conversant

with the working of legislative machinery. He knew quite well that if the Indian bill went through by the end of the session, it would be a piece of rare good luck. He was equally sure that the Voyageur would not hesitate to fill his compact with the Indians to the letter; that a rebellion was therefore staring the territory in the face, and that the lives of the leaders in the coming fight were staked against its success. Yet he did not waver. That his friend Jean Lajoie was for it, was to him sufficient. He would stand by to the end, and might God help them both.

That night John found Winona at the tepis of an Indian family near the post, and confided to her a letter to her father.

“I have told the Factor,” he wrote, “that you are coming on the fort. But it is not yet time to strike; so be careful what you do. See that the young men do not harm the whites. I go tomorrow with Hennessy to Ottawa. I will see the Big Chiefs there, and if they will not listen, I will come back to you. Then we fight.”

The girl was still sulky, but she promised to carry the message.

CHAPTER XV.
Up the Moose and Down the Ottawa—The Dawn of Higher Civilization.

Daybreak next morning found the Rob Roy at the landing, loaded and ready to be cast off. John and Hennessy stood alongside, chatting to their confrèrés of the post, and the crew, having breakfasted by the light of the camp fire, were sitting on the bank, smoking and waiting the word to take their places.

Inside the fort, the Factor was exchanging confidences with his daughter which included sundry messages to his sister and her husband, Senator Burton, with whom Lucille would stay during her enforced sojourn down the river. He explained that he did not consider the immediate situation serious and that he had decided on her departure, merely as a precautionary measure. She was to wire her uncle from Pembroke of her approaching arrival, and a letter which he entrusted her to deliver would make matters clear to him.

As he approached the landing, the men stepped smartly into the canoe and John took his place in the bow. Hennessy assisted Lucille to her seat; the Factor and onlookers shouted a “Bon Voyage”; eight paddles dipped simultaneously into the water, and the Rob Roy was off on her four hundred and forty mile journey to Mattawa.

It was slow going up the swift and shallow Moose. The water for long stretches afforded no purchase for the paddles, and, foot by foot, they poled their way against the current. When they ran ashore at the third portage, it was beginning to grow dark, and the day had netted them less than twenty miles.

The men were tired but worked rapidly and with mechanical precision. Within five minutes the dunnage was on the bank and the canoe hoisted to the shoulders of three of the crew. It took even less time for the others to swing the packs upon their backs; and the procession moved in single file over the rough and narrow trail, to the head of the rapids. Half an hour later, the tent was pitched, beans were sputtering in the pan and steam began to rise from the kettle.

After supper, chunks of withered spruce and knotted pine made a brilliant flare, casting a wide circle of light upon the shore; while its ruddy

glow vied with the silver reflections of the moon against the dark rippling surface of the river.

The men baited a few night lines, and before the sun was up next morning, they breakfasted on a five pound string of black bass.

It took thirteen days to reach the post at the head of Lake Abitibi, where they lunched with the Company officials and rested while the big canoe was being overhauled and freshly provisioned.

The timber, as they advanced into the region of the lake, grew much taller and thicker. Scrubby hemlock had given place to forests of spruce, that lined the banks of the waterways and stretched inland for a radius of a hundred miles south, east and west, and which many years later, were destined to furnish food for gigantic paper mills at Iroquois Falls.

When they pushed off again, John relinquished his position in the bow to an Indian furnished by the local Factor, who was familiar with the streams and rapids on this side of the Divide. Once over the height of land, progress was much faster.

At the end of the third day they were in Lake Temiscamingue, the source of the Ottawa. The low white-washed houses of the Hudson's Bay Company were in sight and another welcome awaited them.

Before the voyageurs now stretched fifty miles of water, wide and deep, churned into a surly mass of whitecaps. The wind was blowing stiffly from the north, and hoisting a blanket upon two stout poles, they ran before it at a pace that carried them by nightfall to the head of the Ottawa.

The pilot must have good light for the rapids, and the sun was well up next morning when the big canoe began to manoeuvre cautiously to a point midway in the stream, and swung about to face the long white ribbon a mile ahead.

The bowman stood erect, peering into the curlers and signaled to the steersman. The others rested upon their paddles. Into the first great dip they sank and rose again, and from the bow shot up a cloud of spray that fell like heavy rain upon the passengers and crew. Again the sturdy craft cleaved through a mound of water and dashed on with the speed of a greyhound.

Suddenly out of the swirl of seething foam, the jagged edges of a rock appeared, not a boat's length off and straight ahead. The passengers bent forward, and clutching the gunwales tightly, held their breath, awaiting the seemingly inevitable shock. His paddle poised, the bowsman stood steady as a man of bronze. One second—two seconds passed. A quick motion of the

head, and two broad blades, at right and left, respectively, of stem and stern, dug deeply over the sides. One powerful simultaneous stroke, as with a crow bar, and the canoe shot past, safely into the smooth and eddying current beyond.

At Mattawa the Voyageur got his first glimpse of that higher civilization of which he had dreamed. The village, bisected by the Mattawa river which empties into the Ottawa here, was then merely a trading post or supply depot for lumbermen. On one bank a few log cabins, a couple of wigwams and a tent or two, betokened an Indian settlement, behind which, on the slope of a hill, stood the mission house and little white church of the Oblat fathers. On the other shore, some half dozen general stores, three or four private dwellings, a livery stable, a photograph gallery and a blacksmith shop, completed the skeleton of a Main street. A flotilla of upturned canoes dotted the banks of both streams.

In fall and spring, when the lumber-jacks were refitting and passing through, en route to and from the shanties, straggling groups of men might be seen ambling aimlessly up and down the solitary thorough-fare, or congregated in the stores and crowding the bar-rooms.

His paddle poised the bowman stood ready as a man of bronze. One powerful stroke and the canoe shot safely into the smooth current beyond.

Between seasons, the village was as dead as that patch of ground, covered with long bleached grass and studded here and there with weather-worn wooden crosses, at the rear of the church. Only the occasional tinkling

of a cow-bell and the perpetual humming of grass hoppers, broke the grave-like stillness of the place.

As soon as the big canoe had been housed in the Company's shed, the Indians were paid off, and straightway made a bee line for the nearest bar. After the three white people had made a tour of the village to gratify the curiosity of the Voyageur, their baggage was loaded on a four-wheeled conveyance that did duty for a stage, and they were driven to the steamboat landing two miles down the river.

John had never ridden on anything more cumbersome than a dog sled. As a matter of fact he had never seen a real live horse before. The bouncing on the thank-you-mams and the shake-up along the interminable corduroy bridges, were to him novel and delightful sensations.

The little white steamboat, "La Patrie," with its walking beam, smokestack, paddle wheels and engine, he reckoned must be one of the seven wonders of the world. Here was a boat, many times the size of the Rob Roy which, without so much as a sail, could go twice as fast, and neither wind nor current could stop her.

More than twenty miles they steamed down stream, at the reckless speed of nearly nine miles an hour, to the head of the rapids of Deux Riviers.

The stretch of navigatable water between Deux Riviers and Rapids St. Joachim, carried them almost thirty miles on a steamer even larger, more imposing and speedier than "La Patrie." But the long periods of enforced idleness on these self propelling boats, might have been desperately monotonous, were it not for the company. Even as it was, John was not sorry to hear again the roar of the rapids, notifying them that the next portage was near at hand.

It was nearly dark when the party reached St. Joachim and stopped for the night at McDonald's Hotel.

It was indeed a well appointed inn. A mud scraper on the top step and a polished brass knocker on the main door, imparted at once an impression of cleanliness and refinement. It was comfortably, even fashionably equipped with the most modern of antique furniture. In the hall stood an immense hat and coat rack, flanked on either side by umbrella holding attachments and drip catching receptacles of bright green that might have seen service in the house of a Quebec seigneur some time after the conquest; and a mahogany bench with arms shaped and carved to represent a pair of massive scrolls at

either end, for the convenience of guests who would withdraw overshoes, shoepacks, and moccasins on emerging from the snow drifts.

The carpet on the parlor floor, of multi-colored pattern and somewhat faded, was protected from wear by wide strips of unbleached linen, leading to the chairs in each corner of the room. There were no signs to ‘Keep Off the Carpet,’ but for the most part people understood and accommodatingly kept to the pathways.

The furniture was of mahogany, upholstered in horse hair, and each piece had pinned to its curved and arching back, an embroidered or crocheted square, known to persons of erudition as an *antimacassar*, to others as a *tidy*, and to the general run of guests as a *nuisance*.

Opposite a melodian which occupied a space along the side wall, stood a wide open-hearth fire place, built for the consumption of infantile sawlogs in winter time. The mantlepiece supported an oblong clock, three feet high, with a glass door to it inclosing the face, on the lower panel of which was a painting in yellow and green, depicting a rural scene somewhere in the Highlands of Scotland. Above the clock, to the right and left respectively, hung a twin pair of crayon portraits, in oval frames, of the hostess and her husband on their wedding day, before an elapse of forty-three years. Other pictures of lesser celebrities decorated the sides of the room at regular intervals and at even distances from the ceiling.

Lest for some unexpected reason a guest should be tempted to walk diagonally across the room, a round center table of generous circumference, barred the way. Its other usefulness was to support a coal oil lamp, the light from which was effectively dimmed by a green paper shade with an edging of crimson chenille. The pedestal of this lamp was embedded in a fluffy mat of crocheted yellow wool, bordered with green. An album stuffed with faded cabinet and tintype photographs of dear ones to the third and fourth generation, a family bible ten inches thick, bound in brown morocco, embossed and ornate with gold, and two enormous sea shells, completed its further appointments.

The dining-room, to the rear of the parlor, looked as if it might have been built about its narrow table. Chairs and covers were permanently set for fourteen people. The plated knives and forks were worn in spots but always scrupulously clean. So also were the spoons, which reposed, bowl upward, in a glass receptacle—a sort of cross between a drinking goblet and a sugar bowl. The tablecloth was of white linen, tolerably free from tea and coffee stains.

Directly preceding each meal, a huge pitcher of water, another of milk and several platters, heaped high with thick slices of bread and a proportionate supply of butter, were placed at convenient reaching points along the table. The remainder of the food and drink was brought on in installments as called for.

Lucille had been entertained at this hotel on her way north and the dinner scene was not new to her. Hennessy was too hungry and too preoccupied to give it a thought; but to John it was the uncertain and mystifying dawn of a higher education rising above the brink of a new world.

The guests this day had included a motley collection of lumber-jacks, a half-breed and an Indian. Now, the half-breed, when he comes to town, is quite a different person from the half-breed in his native bush. However proud he may be of his Indian blood, he feels it incumbent upon occasions of this kind, to assure his white brothers that he is competent to mix with them on even terms.

The man had approached the dining table for the first time with native caution, facing straight ahead, as did the others, but his eyes glinted surreptitiously from side to side, in search of the proper cues.

A folded square of linen, lying between knife and fork, conveyed the idea that he was expected to "wash up" at the close of the meal, but he paid no particular attention to it, until the shanty foreman opposite shook out his napkin with a resounding flap and tucked it under his chin. The half-breed comprehended, and forthwith the front of his gray flannel shirt was decorated in similar fashion.

When the soup was set before him he waited, as did everyone else, in deference to established etiquette, until the last man at the long table had been served; and as soon as the silent caution "All ready" was followed by the mute command "Go," he dipped in like the rest, and they were off, with the precision of a well-trained eight-oar crew. Thereafter it was go-as-you-please race to the finish.

The portions of meat came on one by one, and though the gravy on the plate of the man nearest the kitchen door had been congealed like the ice upon a pond, when the mercury stands at twenty below, he held steady like a true sportsman, until the line-up was even again for the second heat.

The shantyman, while waiting the word, made ready for an instantaneous start. Seizing his knife in his right fist and his fork in his left,

he brought them down smartly upon the table in perpendicular position, like a pair of flag poles. Instantly, up went the knife blade and fork prongs of the half-breed towards the ceiling. No white man could steal a handicap on him. *No Siree.*

He advanced upon the condiments and pickles with the stealthiness of a skirmisher; but as soon as the solid phalanx of pie was in line, he up and attacked it vigorously with the cold steel, after the manner of the veteran opposite. At last, when the general retreat was sounded, he raided the bristling bunch of toothpicks and marched off the field, with the satisfied air of a man of the world who has tackled a difficult proposition and won out against great odds.

The Indian, on the other hand, did not care a whoop for appearances. Nothing could phase him. With spoon and knife and fingers, he attacked everything as soon as it showed a front, and bending low to shorten the circuit, worked rapidly and with mechanical precision. Nor was he in the least particular as to the order in which he helped himself. A deep bite into a lemon pie was followed by a knife-blade full of mashed turnips. Food was food to him and he enjoyed it more than most people.

He was absolutely fearless and never hesitated. With reckless assurance he reached for a thin slice of pound cake, smeared it with a double layer of the purest English mustard and swallowed half of it at a gulp. The gullet of no white man born could withstand such a surprise with equanimity; but the red man merely shed a tear or two, presumably out of sorrowing contempt for the roar of laughter that followed, and downed the remaining titbit without so much as the batting of an eyelash.

Next morning, the steamer John Eagan lay at the wharf at St. Joachim to carry the Voyageur and his party forty-five miles down the river to Pembroke, where they were to entrain for the Capital.

The county town, with its gas lighted streets and gay shop windows, its court house, churches, hotels and railroad station, afforded ample diversion during the late afternoon and night spent there. It is impossible to say whether John's delight at all the wonderful and entertaining sights that came into view at every step along Main Street, was greater than that of Lucille and Hennessy as they watched his amazement and listened to his exclamations. Certainly it was the jolliest of times for all three.

After a visit to the telegraph office, they wandered to the station to see the train come in. But the steam boats had taken the edge off this marvel. What affected John most was a performance of Uncle Tom's Cabin played

by a road company, billed for one night only at the town hall. So wrought up did he become at the treatment of the poor old darkey that once he had started to rise from his seat, and it might have gone hard with Simon Legree, had it not been for the restraining influence of the Voyageur’s two friends.

CHAPTER XVI.
The Subtle Art of Social Climbing—Enter the Earl of Waldron.

"A telegram from Lucille," said Mr. Burton, after ripping open a yellow envelope handed him by the butler. "She'll be here tomorrow."

Mrs. Burton lowered the magazine she was reading to a horizontal position and glanced inquiringly at her husband.

"Why on earth is she coming back?" she asked, in a tone which indicated that the news was not altogether pleasing.

"Maybe it looked a little like rain in the North and she is returning for an umbrella," Mr. Burton suggested, handing over the message to his wife which read: "Expect me tomorrow.—Lucille." "The telegram is dated today at Pembroke, from which it is to be inferred that she will arrive tomorrow by afternoon train."

"Whatever do you suppose has gone wrong," sighed the lady, studying the missive as though it were a passage from Browning, from which there might be a vague possibility of extracting some subtle meaning. "Why in the name of goodness, could she not have written?"

"Because it may have occurred to her, my dear, that with an even start, she would beat the letter to its destination. Why worry? Lucille is always welcome and tomorrow you will know all about it."

But Mrs. Burton was certainly perturbed and took little pains to conceal her annoyance. "It really does not matter why, Leonard. What concerns us is that she is *here*, when we thought she had gone for the summer."

"I can't see that you should let the circumstance bother you," the husband retorted as he resumed his newspaper. He was fond of his niece and at a loss to understand this unexpected coolness on the part of his wife. It had happened, however, that Lucille's affectionate aunt had been making plans which had not taken into consideration such an extraordinary possibility as had now come about.

The Honorable L. T. Burton, many years ago, had founded a ship chandler and wholesale grocery business in the Lower Provinces, and since then, certain banks, insurance companies, railroads and shipping interests, had provided opportune stepping stones to a very substantial fortune. His director's fees alone would have qualified him as a wealthy man. These

were the days, too, when the purchasing power of a dollar was many times greater than it is today.

An indefatigable worker, Burton had never known what recreation was until he had been induced to enter politics. He had turned to it as to a game, which was all the more fascinating because he could afford to play with the spirit of a sportsman. It was never for the purse, but always for the glory of winning that he entered the lists, and with the power of a financial world behind him, it was seldom that he lost. An astute mind and a convincing speaker, he became a leader of men. He was invited into cabinets, and might easily have been premier; it was not statesmanship, however, that he loved, but politics. He had no fancy for the center of the stage; he chose rather to stand in the wings and prompt, or to pull the strings that made the puppets dance. It suited him very well to be a senator, and it suited Mrs. Burton to live within a short radius of Government House, hence the Capital, for a greater part of the year became their home.

They had a mansion in the city and a country place on the Ottawa. Here the politician could indulge in his favorite sport, while his wife and daughter struggled gamely and steadily up the steep clay bank of social eminence. All three were ardent devotees of their respective pastimes.

The sigh of resignation with which Mrs. Burton laid aside the telegram is a story of itself, which if told in full, would bristle with yachting parties, tennis tournaments, dances, dinners and mild social intrigues.

Among her recent baggings in a hunt for big game, she boasted of Sir Charles and Lady Lovel, a brace of thoroughbred English lions, who were spending the summer in Canada. She had dined them and wined them during the open season for dining and wining, and had run up such a score against them, that when they took a house-boat on the St. Lawrence for the dog days, it behoved them to even things by inviting the daughter, Isobel, really quite a charming girl, to spend a week on board.

The Olesons of Chicago, who owned one of the largest of the Thousand Islands on the Canadian side of the river, had rented for a night the big ballroom of the Alexandria Bay Hotel and packed it to the last square foot. The wide balconies overlooking the archipelago were also crowded, and the buffets were lined three deep. An orchestra had been brought at reckless expense, from New York; and for the old fellows, too portly to dance, the ante-rooms were stocked with champagne and Scotch, and set with tables for ten-dollar limit.

The last dotted line of Isobel's program was filled and the list of alternates extended well down the margins. All went merry. But before proceeding further, it should be observed in way of explanation of what is immediately to follow, that all ladies, with any pretension to fashion in those days, wore appended to their gowns, a fairly efficient dust collector, more generally and euphoniously referred to as a sweeping train.—All went merry as had been said, until it chanced, that in milling a way through a waltz, when the whirling throng was so thick that there was not even room to bump, some awkward creature happened to jostle roughly against the arm of the young lady and brushed the caudal appendage referred to from her grasp. As it touched the floor, there came an ominous crackling sound, like a feu de joie, and simultaneously, a yard or so of heavy corrugated lace flouncing was ripped from its silken base.

The gentleman immediately responsible for the disaster, stopped short to apologize, but the sudden halt brought on a violent collision, and in the resultant melée, he was so quickly swallowed up, that the withering glance shot by the outraged lady, failed to score. She and her partner changed front as best they could, bored through the massed formation on their left, and after some minor casualties, succeeded in breaking through to the field hospital.

In due course she was discharged as fit and returned to the line; but meanwhile the enemy had come in and surrendered to Lady Lovel. He saw Isobel approaching and smiled a look of contrition. She recognized him and met the glance with a becoming and dignified coolness; but as she moved alongside her chaperon, the latter rose, and to her utter consternation, introduced the *Earl of Waldron*.

Isobel subconsciously raised one hand to her throat to help stifle a gasp, and extended the other to his lordship.

"I am more than delighted to meet you, my lord," she exclaimed on a quick recovery. "We really ought to know each other. Don't you think so?"

"I do, indeed, Miss Burton," responded the nobleman, "and you encourage me to think myself forgiven for that clumsy,—shall we call it *faux pas*?—of mine. I am very sorry."

"Oh please do not mention it, my lord. It was merely an accident of no consequence; unless——" she added, "unless we consider it in the light of a most fortunate occurrence that has made you known to me."

Lord Waldron started to repay the compliment in kind, but the thread of conversation was rudely snapped by some half-dozen young fellows cutting in with dancing claims for which they held certified receipts.

Isobel repudiated these as politely as it is possible to denounce obligations of this kind, setting up the plea of a lost programme and confusion following the accident; and lest these might be taken as lame excuses, she threw in for good measure, a turned ankle, borrowed especially for the occasion, and taking Lord Waldron's arm, suggested a quiet spot at the far-off end of a veranda, for a chat.

"My cousin Lucille has spoken so much about you," she began, "that I feel as though I should know you quite well."

"Tell me about Miss Lucille. She is still in Ottawa, I hope?" he enquired anxiously.

"No, she left about a month ago, for a place somewhere near the Arctic Circle, called Moose Factory. Her father lives there you know."

The young man's face fell. "Oh, I am sorry," he said. "I had intended leaving tomorrow for the Capital, in the hope of renewing an old acquaintance. We were close neighbors in England for many years, as she has probably told you. Now, I suppose, I am too late. You expect her back soon?"

"I can hardly say. I am told that it takes a long time to get to the place, and I fear it is not unlikely that she may remain for the rest of the summer. But you will come to Ottawa, won't you? Mother and father would be delighted to see you."

The Earl seemed to have lost interest in his Ottawa trip; but he thanked the lady for the invitation, and thought it not at all improbable that he would run up for a time. His uncle, Sir James Langdon, was a friend of the Governor General, and his Excellency had very kindly asked him to pay a visit to Government House.

"I ought really to have cabled, you know," he continued, "but I thought to give Miss Lucille a surprise by dropping in. As it turns out, however, the message would have been useless, since I only left the other side a fortnight ago. I came to Quebec, and was persuaded to take the river route to Brockville, intending to go on directly by rail; but I fell in with a late brother officer, now attached to your Royal Military College at Kingston. He persuaded me to remain over for just one night, and here I am."

“I am so glad you did,” Isobel answered eagerly; and Waldron tried not to show his keen disappointment.

“Fate,” he said “has been hard and kind to me by turns. This last has been one of the lucky ones.” He went on to explain his presence in Canada.

His father had died suddenly while he was in Egypt, and Sir Garnet Wollsley had been kind enough to intrust him with some dispatches for the War Office, which had granted him extended leave. He was now thinking of retiring from the army, as he had become interested with some people in London, in a project for the development of certain lands in Northern Ontario and the Hudson Bay Territories. “In fact,” he said, “by a fortunate chance, I have been given letters to your father, who, I am pleased to tell you, is very highly spoken of in England.”

“You certainly have fallen among friends,” Isobel assured him. “Father will do what he can, I know.”

“I am most grateful for your good will, Miss Burton,” Waldron replied and Isobel, having secured the promise of a visit, made a mental resolution to cut short her stay with the Lovels and return home with as little delay as propriety would permit.

Two days later she burst in upon her mother with the wonderful news. Her father was also interested, of course, but in a minor degree.

They would invite the Earl to spend a week’s end at Briarcliffe. That he had business to discuss with the Senator, afforded sufficient excuse, and it was not considered desirable to say anything about Lucille. For one reason, the relations between the girl’s grandmother, Mrs. Muirhead, and the Burtons, had never been a bit too cordial. The old lady in England had forgiven her son-in-law, but this by no means signified that she was willing to take the whole King family to her bosom. Indeed, she had always disliked the Burtons and had never taken pains to hide her feelings; hence the coolness. However, here was a heaven-sent chance to cut in on her charmed circle, and there was much joy in the thought.

The only cloud in the sky was Lucille. Just as all plans had been made and the invitation drafted, along came the telegram from Pembroke, like a shot from a long range gun, and a day later the young lady herself arrived. Mrs. Burton, however, was nothing if not resourceful. There was a distant cousin, a lady who chanced to be under some obligation to her and who could be depended upon to help out; and sure enough, in reply to a written request, there came almost immediately, a most cordial and pressing

invitation to her niece to spend a week in Montreal, which Lucille, in ignorance then of the proximity of her fiancé, was pleased enough to accept.

But Jean Lajoie also happened to have claims on the good offices and consideration of the Senator;—claims of the Hudson's Bay Company which he had no intention of ignoring—so that at Lucille's request, and with the somewhat reluctant consent of his wife, he had invited the Voyageur and his friend to also spend a day or two at his country house.

All might have turned out well even yet, if Lord Waldron had not replied to Mrs. Burton's cordial note, regretting exceedingly that he had to be out of town on the date set and asking that (if quite convenient to her) he might be permitted to avail himself of the pleasure the following week. Unfortunately this happened to be the time fixed for the visit of the backwoods men, and most inopportune, and to further complicate matters, Lucille had spied the envelope containing Lord Waldron's note. Of course she had recognized the handwriting.

Mrs. Burton was in despair; Isobel went to her room for a quiet cry; the Senator chuckled; and Lucille was nearly beside herself with excitement.

Waldron had cabled her the news of his father's death, and had followed the message with a letter in which he could not refrain from expressing the consoling thought that they might soon meet again. As the only obstacle had now been removed, he hoped she would consent to a marriage at the earliest possible moment.

Her reply had been full of sympathy, toned with the regret that there should ever have been cause for a separation. Had she known what the near future had in store, she would not have left England; but she was now about to go to her father in the wilds of the north, where he was practically alone, and it would not be right to leave him, until at least the end of the summer; then, she hoped it might be possible to persuade him to come as far as Ottawa with her where they would spend at least a portion of the winter. She had pleaded with her lover to be patient, and prayed that in the spring, the dearest and greatest ambition of their lives might be realized.

But Waldron had not been content. He had never known what her companionship had meant, until his return to England, to be reminded of her at every turn and crossroad. He had had no heart to enter into the gayety of social life, even if a period of mourning had not proscribed it. He could not endure the utter loneliness of his old home, and if she could not come to him, he would go to her.

It was at this time that the Earl had become interested, through a London friend, in a syndicate for the exploitation of the northern lands of Canada, which, from reliable account, promised marvelous returns in minerals and timber. The project attracted him and, as with everything else he undertook, he threw his whole soul and energy into the scheme; besides, it chanced to offer an excuse, if one were needed, to go to Canada and to meet Lucille.

It did not matter that his uncle, the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, was strenuously opposed to the entire plan. Sir James was an old fossil. He was in need of a torch-bearer to show the way, and this duty had fallen to a youngster not much past twenty, but head of the House of Waldron.

A year's leave would afford ample time for a demonstration; after that he would chuck the army and claim a place in the City, as chairman of a board, or governor of a great over-seas company;—and this young and powerful factor in the commercial affairs of the Empire, was to have the stunniest little wife in all England.

So far the young nobleman had had phenomenal luck. Pitchforked into Egypt in time to fight at Alexandria, he had come out of Tel-el-Kebir with a captaincy and a Victoria cross; he could therefore afford to retire with dignity from active military service, to his seat in the House of Lords. It had never occurred to him that these disinterested promoters, who had handed to him a ready-made career upon a golden platter, were not the kind that, in a weak moment of generous impulse, might be induced to part with so much as a penny's worth of marbles without adequate quid pro quo; nor that it was merely the use of an old and honored family name they sought to purchase at a price. Of course not.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Hunter, the Snare and the Bait—The Fate of the North Hangs in the Balance.

The invitations having been accepted in correct form by Messrs. Lajoie and Hennessy, they arrived at Briarcliffe, the country home of the Burtons, to be welcomed formally by their host and hostess, and cordially by Lucille. A man was detailed to take over and unpack their baggage, to lay out their evening clothes, and to assist in making them presentable for distinguished society.

The experience was new to John. He had never known the luxury of such very personal service; in fact he felt a trifle embarrassed and was grateful to the friendly young valet for a little advice on matters of decorum. The Voyageur however was not awkward. His dress suit, ordered for the occasion, fitted his well proportioned figure perfectly, and save for a tendency now and then, to shoot forward his chin, twist his neck and grapple with his collar, no one would have suspected that he appeared for the first time in the conventional badge of a gentleman. In fact so well did he look the part for which he was dressed, that whatever discomfort he may have felt, passed without notice. Nothing could disconcert Hennessy who was quite at home from the first.

The young Irishman had been the life of the party at dinner. He had parried the jocular shafts of the Senator, who was in a particularly humorous mood, with an ease that won for him a large measure of respect from the astute politician and excited the admiration even of the lofty Isobel who in fact rather enjoyed him. His continuous flow of anecdote, his ready wit and manly personality appealed to her and she actually took some pains to be gracious. Mrs. Burton, on the contrary, was not pleased. She was too self-occupied to enter into conversation with people she inwardly despised, and being utterly bored, chose the first opportune moment after dessert to signal the time for retiring to the drawing-room. Her thoughts were centered upon what was to happen later. There was at least one consolation; the bushmen had acquitted themselves much more creditably than she had expected, and she was relieved to find that she would not be required to apologize quite so profusely to Lord Waldron for their presence.

After dinner Lucille took the Voyageur for a stroll on the terrace, while Hennessy and the younger hostess lingered by the coffee-table. The Senator

had gone in search of a newspaper and the two young people were so engrossed that they failed to pay attention to Mrs. Burton, who had seated herself at a distance and frowned at them over the rim of her coffee cup. Finally she set the cup down.

"Isobel, my dear," she called.

There was no response.

"Isobel." This in a louder tone.

Still no reply.

"Isobel," she called again. This time the voice could have pierced the din of a boiler shop.

The young lady turned quickly round, and Hennessy was so startled that his cup staggered over the edge of its saucer and broke into a dozen pieces upon the floor.

But Thomas Patrick's presence of mind seldom forsook him, and as he mopped the coffee with his handkerchief and gathered up the scattered fragments of china, he assayed to pour water upon the smouldering wrath of his hostess by an apology delivered in doggerel and intended to shunt the accident to a convenient siding. He began:

"Pray, excuse me, my dear Mrs. B.
Faith it's awkward I've been you can see;
But gosh dern it all,
At that sudden call,
Sure the cup overturned the coff*ee*.
Now what should you——"

He got no farther because the lady had failed utterly to appreciate the poetical appeal.

"No need to apologize, sir," she cut in sharply. "It's of no consequence." Had he smashed a whole set of her best china, she would not have felt half so much annoyed as she was at this little bit of frivolous impertinence.

"An elegant piece of Crown Derby gone to smash, and no consequence. Sure it's very forgiving you are, Mrs. Burton," returned the Irishman solemnly as he made uncalled for efforts to fit the fragments together.

"Pray do not trouble yourself," the lady retorted. "The servant will attend to that. Isobel," she continued, "I want to have a word with you."

The daughter moved to the side of the mother, placed an arm about her and tried to soothe her ruffled feelings with a kiss. Hennessy stood by grinning sheepishly, but with a much clearer perception of the situation than either lady gave him credit for. He was enjoying it.

"You'll find my husband on the terrace," said Mrs. Burton frigidly, after a moment or two of strained silence.

"I wasn't looking for him in particular, mam," he answered, still smiling his innocent smile.

"I said you will find my husband on the terrace," she repeated in a tone that made further misunderstanding impossible.

"Sure, that reminds me I have an important engagement with him," replied the unabashed Mr. Hennessy, as though under a deep sense of obligation for the reminder. "I'm grateful to you. And you'll excuse me, my dear Mrs. Burton," he added with a bow as he turned and disappeared through the French windows.

"Vulgar wretch," exclaimed the lady as soon as he was safely out of ear shot.

"Oh, he's not so bad, Mother," returned the daughter. "I find him rather amusing."

"His antics and his jests may all be very well in the back woods," snapped Mrs. Burton, "but they are certainly out of place here. I cannot understand why your father and Lucille should force those common creatures upon us;—and just as we are expecting Lord Waldron. I was beginning to hope that his lordship would not come; but he has telegraphed that he will arrive on the 9:10 and I have ordered the carriage to meet him at the station. Whatever do you suppose he will think of our friends?" She clasped her hands in an attitude of despair and assumed an expression which might be imagined of a lost soul on the day of judgment.

Isobel heaved a sigh of resignation. "Well, as there's no getting rid of them until Monday, I suppose we must make the best of them."

"The price one pays for being the wife of a public man," continued her mother. "Here I had worked for weeks to secure Lord Waldron and to arrange a visit for your cousin in Montreal at the same time; now in walk these two savages, Lucille cancels her Montreal engagement and we've got all three upon our hands."

“Lucille seems to show quite a partiality for that half-breed man,” commented the younger lady after a few moments of meditation. But her mother did not agree with her entirely.

“Make no mistake, Isobel. The savage amuses her like a friendly collie; but believe me, Lucille knows how and when to play the game. It has even been rumored that she is actually engaged to the Earl; nothing more than idle gossip, of course, but she has taken no pains to deny it. We should be very careful, my dear, very careful.”

“Which means that you must take Mr. Hennessy off my hands,” sighed the girl.

“Let that be your father’s business,” replied the mother, in full realization of the fact that the task of subduing the Irishman, was quite beyond her powers; “and if Lucille tires of the Indian, I will find some new diversion for her. She and Lord Waldron are absolutely unsuited to each other, and I feel it my duty as her father’s sister to prevent such a misalliance.” Mrs. Burton here assumed the air of a patriot who would not flinch before a firing squad.

Isobel quite agreed with her mother. “Lucille would make an ideal wife for some missionary in the wilds of somewhere,” she mused. “Ah poor Lucille.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Burton, “she is a regular little savage. God knows I have tried to tame her; but one can’t make a silk purse out of a cow’s ear, as Longfellow says, or was it Byron?”

“Shakespeare, and a sow’s ear, Mother.”

“Very well, a sow’s ear will do, and it does not matter who said it; but the problem remains unsolved.”

At this point the conversation was rudely interrupted by the sudden entrance of Mr. Burton and Hennessy. The two were engaged in rounding out an argument that had to do with the business of the Voyageur at the Capital.

“All that you say may be quite true, my dear Mr. Hennessy,” the Senator was saying. “No doubt there are many things that should be done, but which, if not impossible, are at least impolitic. To attempt them might ruin the party.”

“Sure, I understand,” retorted Hennessy. “Ruin the party, of course, and too bad. I knew of a party once that was riding a donkey and they came to a

bridge and the baste wouldn't cross, and the party bate him till he went on; and when they were half way over the river the bridge broke. The donkey got to the other side all right, but they buried the party. Now it's this way," he continued; but just then Mrs. Burton came forward and drew her husband aside.

"My dear, do you know that Lord Waldron will arrive in a few minutes?" she whispered. "I want to talk to you." Then with a forced smile to her guest she added, "Perhaps Mr. Hennessy will not mind leaving us for a while?"

Thomas Patrick returned the smile with a broader one. "Sure, it's never a pleasure to part from pleasant company, mam," he answered, "but if Miss Burton will accompany me, I would be delighted."

It meant the breaking of an important tri-party conference, but Isobel had little choice and accepted the situation with gracefully concealed resignation, and the two moved out into the moonlight.

"Sit down, my dear," commanded Mrs. Burton as soon as the other pair were safely beyond the French windows, and the Senator obeyed.

"Well, what's the all important matter now?" he inquired. He was so accustomed to seances of this sort that the present one excited in him only an indifferent curiosity.

"I am very much concerned about Isobel," began his wife.

"What's the matter with the girl?" he asked.

"Nothing physical, my dear, but you know time is passing and Isobel must marry."

"Quite natural, quite natural," responded the father.

"It is our duty to see that she marries well."

"Yes, yes, of course; but why spring the subject now?"

"Have you forgotten," his wife retorted with some show of irritation, "that Lord Waldron is to be our guest?"

Mr. Burton drew a long breath. "Oh, I see, I see," he answered. "Well, my dear, his lordship is an amiable young man; he has money and position and much that go with them; but so far, he is little more than a stranger. Besides I have been given to understand that——"

Mrs. Burton cut him short. "You are probably about to allude to a rumor concerning him and my niece Lucille?"

“Yes. I did hear something—”

“Nothing more,” his wife broke in, “than a little ordinary politeness on one side, and no doubt some encouragement on the other, which has led to nothing.”

“Taking this for granted, what then?” demanded the Senator.

“I am told that Lord Waldron has come to Canada in the interests of an English syndicate.”

“Quite true,—Well?”

“Your influence would be of great value to him,” continued Mrs. Burton, emphasizing each word and lowering her voice so as to be more impressive.

“Possibly; but you must remember my dear, that it is never safe for a man in my position to barter his responsibilities. The syndicate seeks to secure certain rights in territories at present under control of the Hudson’s Bay Company. The Indians who are the wards of the Government, also advance certain claims. Now this young man Lajoie, who for political reasons, as much as on Lucille’s account, is also our guest, comes on behalf of those whose interests are diametrically opposed to the Waldron syndicate—” Mrs. Burton did not want to argue.

“For my part,” she interrupted, “I cannot comprehend what signifies a few scattered bands of lazy, shiftless, improvident savages.”

Her husband grew impatient. “My dear,” he answered, “let us not discuss matters with which you can hardly be conversant.”

But the lady was not to be denied. “I am sorry,” she said, “but they must be discussed. The future of our family is entangled with those creatures. And by the way,” she added, “I’ve heard you speak of a certain Indian bill.”

“The Indian bill,” he answered, “is just now threatening the life of the Government.”

“Oh,” retorted the lady. “Is Lord Waldron opposed to this Indian bill?”

“Yes. Very much.”

“But you can block it? Can’t you?”

“Well, not directly perhaps, but I hold a balance of power that might be applied to that end.”

Mrs. Burton’s face lighted up. “Then kill it at once,” she exclaimed. “Lend your support to Lord Waldron, and Isobel will be a countess.”

The Senator had no objection to his wife's designs, but he did not approve her methods; nor was he willing to enter into her schemes. His life in the political world meant much more to him than even the marriage of his daughter. This could and would, no doubt, take care of itself in due course, and he had no intention of jeopardizing his position for the sake of family affairs.

"My dear," he began again, "I should be sorry to—"

"Not another word," interrupted Mrs. Burton. "You know your duty to your family. Now do it."

The Senator, who had reached the limit of his patience, was about to assert himself and a domestic tempest was narrowly averted by an announcement of the butler that the Earl of Waldron had arrived.

Mrs. Burton, though greatly flustered, managed to get herself under control in time to greet her titled guest effusively. The initial formalities over, the Earl apologized for his tardiness. He had been unavoidably detained, missed the earlier train to the city and hoped that no inconvenience had ensued. He politely declined a wide choice of liquid refreshments and, after volunteering a promise not to keep them waiting long, was shown to his room.

"What a charming young man," commented Mrs. Burton, as soon as he had disappeared.

"A matter of opinion, my dear," replied her husband. "Rather a man of the world I should say from what I have heard." The worthy couple however might possibly have reached a mutually satisfactory conclusion upon the subject of the Earl had not Lucille suddenly appeared from the terrace with the Voyageur.

The sight of the bushman did not tend to abate the annoyance which Mrs. Burton felt at his presence in the house; but she was constrained to be polite. She expressed the hope that he had been enjoying himself and gently reproved her niece for not having taken him into the garden and fitted him with a boutonniere.

"We have been too busy, Auntie," explained the girl. "So much to talk about you know."

"Your place is so delightful, Mrs. Burton, and the company so charming that I do not think even of the flowers," remarked the bushman gallantly.

The lady bowed a cold acknowledgment of the compliment, and casting a significant glance at the Senator, left the room. The latter excused himself politely and followed.

While he had not committed himself, the manner of the Voyageur had not been altogether reassuring and Lucille, though annoyed at the lack of cordiality shown by her relatives, was not sorry of the opportunity to continue a confidential chat. She felt a growing uneasiness concerning the business which had brought him to the Capital and was anxious to draw him out.

"And now John," she began as soon as they were alone, "you have not yet told me what you think of this great new world."

The load on the mind of the Voyageur had become oppressive and he was only too glad to give vent to his feelings, and to share his anxieties with one whom he knew he could trust implicitly.

"It is all that you told me, Lucille," he replied. "It is so strange, so wonderful. It is really true, the fairyland. When I sleep, I live in the bush again; and when I wake, I think I dream all those strange things that I see. But the people here are not the people I have always known. In the bush we have not much; but where there is little, everyone is your friend. The shack on the river is the home of everyone who pass. Here the crowd is big and you are alone. In the bush we take the word of the stranger. Here no one will believe what you say."

"Then you must not talk too much," replied Lucille. "But tell me, how are your plans succeeding, John? When are you going back?"

"I go back soon, Lucille. They tell me always wait; but I grow tired waiting. Wait,—Yes, wait while the white man push the red man off the land. They burn his bush, they snare his fur, and then he have nothing, and so he die. I come to tell the big chief that this must stop, and he say to me wait."

"But you must have patience, John," she answered. "My uncle tells me that the Government is doing all it can. Laws must be made before the right thing can be done, and it takes time to make laws."

"Yes," returned the Voyageur, "plenty of time and money; and we starve while we wait. Only the Company stand by the red man and help him; and the men here would destroy the Company. Already we feel the pinch. The trees are cut, the game is scarce, the beaver dams are broken, the fish are killed; and we must wait,—wait till there is no use to wait more."

“Then what are you going to do?” the girl asked.

“I go to Ottumna, Chief of the Cree Nation; and if I do not give him the Indian bill, I give him the rifle.”

Lucille was now roughly awakened to a danger that threatened the lives of her father and her friends in the North; a war, which if not averted, would bring down their homes in ashes, spread destruction and death throughout the territory, and send the Voyageur himself to the gallows.

“You must not do this thing, John,” she pleaded. “They’d hang you for a rebel. For the Company’s sake, for father’s sake, for my sake, tell me you will not.” She flung her arms about his neck and looked up into his face.

The massive and toughened frame of the Voyageur almost trembled beneath the gentle touch. Surely never was man so sorely tempted. His powerful arms closed about the girlish figure and drew it closer to him. He gazed into the upturned eyes, and his lips moved as if to promise. For one brief second the fate of the Northern Territory hung in the balance. Then slowly his hands sought those upon his shoulders, and while he continued to hold them, he gently freed himself from the embrace.

“You make it hard,” he said, “for a man to do his duty. For your sake, Lucille, I thought I would sell my soul; but I will go.”

The girl drew back. “You will not do this thing, John,” she commanded.

“I will not?” he exclaimed in a tone more imperious than he had ever used before.

“No. I will not let you.” Lucille tried to withdraw her hands but he held them fast and drew her close to him again.

“Between the man of the woods and the woman of Vanity Fair there is a great lake,” he said, “and the waters are rough; but you are my friend?”

“Always your friend, John. You need not ask.”

“Then my friend will not say to me ‘you must not do this thing’.”

“It is because I am your friend that I will not have you throw yourself into a cause that will be killed even as they will crush the life out of you.”

He regarded her earnestly for a few moments without speaking. “You can stop me very easily, Lucille,” he said at last.

“Oh I knew it. I knew it, John,” she exclaimed and waited eagerly for the words than would tell her how.

“You *can* stop me,” he continued, “but you *will* not.”

“I cannot guess your meaning,” she gasped.

“You can betray me, Lucille.” As he spoke he loosened his grasp upon the small white hands and stepped back a pace.

“Betray you, John? Betray you? Surely you do not think——”

“I do not *think*,” he said, “I *know* you will hold my secret, and I will go.”

“But you will wait?”

The face of the Voyageur clouded. “That is what they all say,—Wait. No longer will I stand the insolence of those people.”

“Do listen to me, John,” she entreated. “You are angry because the minister would not see you yesterday. You are unreasonable. You do not understand the ways of very busy men. You must consider them. As Uncle says, you must ‘play the game’.”

“ ‘Play the game’,” he retorted. “Yes, I have played it, even to the clothes.”

CHAPTER XVIII.
Political Rocks—When a Man Loves He Trusts.

Lucille saw the uselessness of further persuasion and could only hope that something might intervene in time to prevent the threatened catastrophe. If she could divert the thoughts of the Voyageur to some other channel, or keep him amused or interested long enough, there was at least a possibility that the Indian bill might pass in the meantime and all would be well. It was only a chance and she feared a slim one. Hennessy had come suddenly into the room. If the worst came to the worst, she would appeal to him. Meanwhile she adroitly turned the conversation. "You do look stunning in evening clothes," she remarked, stepping back for a fuller observation and calling the Irishman to witness.

"Perhaps I look better than I feel," laughed the Voyageur. "I hope so."

She ordered him to turn about for a more minute inspection. The collar fitted snugly to the neck and shoulders. There was not a wrinkle anywhere. Then she turned him round again, brought the coat fronts together with a jerk and smoothed down the lapels.

"Everything perfect,—isn't it Mr. Hennessy? Everything but the tie," she added. "You must never wear made-up ties, John. No, this one won't do at all." With this she made off to fetch one of her uncle's.

"What's the matter with this thing, Hennessy?" asked the Voyageur after Lucille had gone, but his friend could offer no satisfactory explanation. Hennessy had made the purchase and was wearing a duplicate which now caused him now just a shade of uneasiness.

The two men however, had matters more pressing than neckties to trouble them. They had come to Briarcliffe anticipating a long and serious talk with the Senator, upon the result of which would likely depend their stay at the Capital. Already they had remained much longer than they had thought would have been necessary, and though things had not gone entirely against them, they had been unable to secure more than a reiteration of the old-time promise that their grievances would in due course receive careful consideration and that the Indian bill would again be brought before the House.

Unfortunately it would take at least three weeks to convey these assurances to the Cree chief, and Ottumna's people were already weary of

doubtful promises made by men five hundred miles away. The Voyageur and Hennessy knew only too well that it would be useless to forward them. Their long absence too, would be taken as an ill omen, and they feared that unless they returned immediately, and brought with them a signed and definite pledge, the Crees could no longer be held in check.

All efforts to impress upon the authorities the necessity for haste had apparently been unavailing and Lajoie, disheartened by delay, was on the point of breaking off negotiations. Senator Burton was their last hope, and it was a frail one. He was friendly and full of assurance, but like the others, he had held them off and had sought to avoid a direct issue.

Even the light-hearted Hennessy was discouraged. “When do we talk with our gracious and mighty host?” he asked the Voyageur almost as soon as they were alone.

“I talk with him for the last time tonight,” the latter replied. “I grow tired of promises that mean nothing, of words so smooth that they make no ripple, an’ we are caught in the eddy and swallowed up at the foot of the rapids.”

“But he says there’s a chance for the bill.”

“Yes, he say so; that’s easy. Yesterday they ask us to wait; today they tell us the honorable Minister is too busy; tomorrow, next week, next month, it will be the same. Bon Dieu! I go back now, Hennessy.”

His companion knew more from the way he spoke than from what he said, that he did not exaggerate his intentions. “Set your pace a little slow, John,” he pleaded. “You know what it will mean if you leave without the bill?”

“It means that we will fight.”

“It means that you will hang, my boy.”

“Bah!” exclaimed the Voyageur. “There is an end to the life of every man.”

“Sure enough, John, sure enough; but for myself I prefer that my end did not come with such a sudden stop.”

The Voyageur had never yet questioned the loyalty of his friend, but this deliberate summing up of consequences was irritating to say the least.

“They will kill some, yes,” he retorted, “but when the rifle talk they listen, and then the bill will pass.”

“That’s all right,” Hennessy replied, “but where will we be?”

John did not like the question and was not prepared to answer it.

"You ask the priest, Tom," he suggested with a tinge of irony. "Ora pro nobis."

"Amen," responded the Irishman fervently. Then, as a forlorne hope he added, "But are you *sure* that the bill will not pass?"

"It is already dead unless we fight," the Voyageur replied dejectedly.

"Then you are just as good as dead, yourself."

"An' you?"

"Who me?" asked Hennessy, taking out his handkerchief and going through the motions of hanging himself. "Huh! Faith, it ain't altogether a pleasant contemplation."

The flippant bearing of his companion was not to Lajoie's liking. The Irishman was no coward, he was sure of that; but his grewsome allusions shocked him and excited a discomforting suspicion of his sincerity.

"Do you come with me, Hennessy, or do you stay," he demanded sharply.

But he had merely misjudged his friend, and the latter was quick to set him right.

"Sure, you don't think I'd lave you?" he answered in an offended tone. "No, John, it's all right, and we may both hang off the same tree; but for the love of God, be careful now and keep your mouth shut, or our troubles may begin sooner than you think."

"You need not fear, Tom," the Voyageur assured him. "I have only told Lucille."

"Told Lu—cille?" stammered Hennessy. "John, you're a damn fool. Maybe the next tie she may be placing around your neck may fit you snugger."

It was an ill-timed, ill-advised speech. This slur upon the woman he loved, Lajoie was prepared to stand from no man, and the words were no sooner out of the speaker's mouth than he was at his throat; nor did he let go until he had squeezed an abject apology from him. The tempest, however, subsided almost as quickly as it came, and as soon as he was able, Hennessy sought to mollify his excited comrade.

“I take back my words, but sure you must know that Lucille is only a woman.”

“A woman,” replied the Voyageur,—“a woman, yes, and when I do not trust that woman, I will doubt the word of the Almighty.”

Hennessy grinned a compassionate smile. John was unsophisticated, of course. His experience with the outer world had been so short that he could hardly have been otherwise; but it was certainly a shock to find him so utterly lacking in this early principle of mundane wisdom.

“Sure you’re right, me boy, an’ it’s myself that would stake my life on her,” he answered. “But take the advice of a wiser man than me, John, and pick your steps in slippery places. Now I’m just after having a nice little chat with that most charming of young ladies, Miss Burton; and let me whisper,—Who do you suppose is in the house this very minute? No less a person than his lordship the Earl of Waldron.”

John started as if he had been struck. “Waldron!” he exclaimed under his breath. “What do you know about Lord Waldron, Hennessy, eh?”

“He’s the fellow that represents the syndicate that’s after the land in the North. He’s here to defeat the Indian bill. Maybe you don’t believe me, but I got it straight, and a lot more, from the women, God bless them. Start them right and they babble along like the water of a mill stream. Head them your way, and gently, mind you, and you’ll never want the power to turn the wheel.”

Lucille had returned to the room while the men were speaking, but they had been too engrossed to notice her. She had caught the word “Waldron,” in fact she had overheard much that had been said, and might have held back to listen further, but that she had felt ashamed to be eavesdropping.

“Here you are, John,” she called, ending the temptation and advancing with the narrow strip of white lawn. “Now let me show you how to tie it.” She went through the operation, explaining each move.

“First an ordinary twist, so; now fold over one end like this; then a loop in the center; fold the other end and pass it through the loop; now draw out the folded ends until the loop is taut,—and there you are. That’s ever so much better. Don’t you think so, Mr. Hennessy?” She moved off a few paces to admire her handiwork.

“Quite right, mam, quite right,” replied the Irishman, comparing in his mind the new immaculate creation what he himself was wearing.

“For you may be up or you may be down,
But always dress well if you can;
For the fellow that wins
Mostly covers his sins
With the clothes that make the man.”

“Spoken like a poet and a philosopher, Mr. Hennessy,” laughed Lucille. “And now I must leave you gentlemen to prepare for another distinguished guest. I have a surprise for you, John,” she added.

“Tell me,” he asked eagerly.

“No, not now. Wait.” She motioned him back and, with a wave of her hand, disappeared into the outer hall.

The men were not left long alone however, for at this lucky moment, the Senator walked in unaccompanied, fortunately by Mrs. Burton, and afforded the much sought for opportunity. The Voyageur was prompt to take advantage of it, and the three were soon seated in earnest conversation.

“You have not told me,” John began, “of what you do about the bill.”

“I had hoped, Mr. Lajoie, that I might have had something definite to say,” his host replied. “But I fear I must again disappoint you. Matters of this kind, you know, require time for consideration.”

“I have discovered that,” Lajoie answered rather sharply.

“You must understand,” the Senator continued, without heeding the interruption, “that there are many interests to satisfy. The Government, of course, will do the right thing; but we cannot act until the whole question has been balanced.”

“Yes, but while you wait, the rights you would protect are destroyed. The people of the North are tired of the promises you do not fill. I cannot hold them longer.”

The Senator did not relish the tone in which this was said. He scented a challenge and was prompt to accept it.

“Then they must suffer the consequences of any folly they commit,” he responded, “and I fear there is little to be gained by prolonging the argument. I am glad to welcome you and to consider the merits of the Indian bill; but you have not lived long enough on this side of the divide to appreciate the work of the Government. And by the way,” he added, “a friend of ours, the Earl of Waldron, has come to remain a few days with us.

He is interested in the other side of the question. It might be well for you to hear what he has to say."

John saw the last chance for conciliation disappear with this speech. The fight, he realized, was on, and he sprang to his feet with hands clenched and an angry word upon his lips; but Hennessy caught him by the arm and restrained him.

"For God's sake, John, go slow," he whispered. Lajoie swallowed his wrath in a gulp and sat down.

"I have heard that Lord Waldron has come," he replied, with just a trace of sarcasm, "and I will be glad to speak with him, if a man so distinguished will talk to a voyageur."

Fortunately or unfortunately, further discussion was held up by the entrance at this moment, of Mrs. Burton and her daughter. Both were in high fettle over the appearance of the Earl, though the elder lady struggled hard to cloak her excitement with an air of assumed indifference.

"It is getting too chilly to be out without a wrap," she declared. "It is almost cold enough for a fire. And now, my dear, I wish you would speak to Martin about those hedges. They are positively disgraceful."

"And, Oh Father," the daughter broke in, "we've planned such a jolly excursion for tomorrow. We are going to take his lordship over to the Great Boulder and have lunch there. You are to come too, Mr. Lajoie, if you don't mind roughing it a bit," she added ingenuously. "And Mr. Hennessy, you will find so much to interest you in the scenery of the Gatineau; the woods and the river and the rapids and the old saw mill; just the most wonderful spot for a poet. (The Irishman bowed and smiled in graceful acknowledgment of the compliment.) And don't let anyone dare tell me it is going to rain."

They all moved over to the open window where the Voyageur made a hurried survey of the sky.

"The wind is from the South," he said. "The moon is clear. It will not storm."

CHAPTER XIX.
The Meshes of Intrigue Tighten—The Trump Card.

Mrs. Burton sat upon a sofa and gazed into an imaginary fire in a grate across the room, building, piece by piece, a towering superstructure upon foundations already laid, of a lordly air castle. Mr. Burton sat in an arm chair, reading the latest reports from the House. They were awaiting the reappearance of their guest, the Earl of Waldron.

"Isobel is an attractive girl," the lady mused aloud, "and she will have money."

The soliloquy was intended for the ears of her husband rather than for her own gratification, and after pausing for a minute to allow it to seep in, she added: "And you have power and influence." Again she paused; but the Senator still remained deep in his newspaper; so she pitched her voice about an octave higher.

"We must contrive to make plain to his lordship the wonderful advantage of joining our family interests."

As the gentleman continued to read, the lady pressed the loud pedal hard down and repeated: "I said, *the wonderful advantage of joining our family interests*."

The fortissimo pitch worked, and the Senator glanced over the upper rim of his paper.

"We must be very careful, my dear, very careful," the lady continued as soon as she had this assurance of her husband's attention. "He must not suspect."

Mr. Burton surrendered. "Quite so," he responded. "It's a delicate game. We must not be caught at it."

Mrs. Burton could have taken great pleasure in shaking him; but with admirable self-control, she restrained the bellicose inclination and meekly suggested the use of a little tact. "I've never known you to fail for want of that," she added artfully.

The Senator smiled and would have acknowledged the compliment, but before he could frame the words, the door opened and the innocent object of their conspiracy entered the room.

“We’ve been waiting for you, my lord,” Mrs. Burton began in way of supplementary greeting; “and while you are with us we want you to make yourself perfectly at home; ‘sans ceremonie’ you know.”

“I am more than fortunate to fall into such hospitable hands,” replied the Earl. “So sorry I was late. Buttonholed just as the train was leaving. You understand how it is.”

Mrs. Burton and the Senator understood and forgave him effusively. The former poured him a cup of coffee and continued the conversation.

“My daughter tells me you had a delightful evening on the St. Lawrence while she was staying on the house-boat of Sir George and Lady Lovel. Rather a novel idea in this country, but promises to be popular. Sugar?”

“No sugar, thank you. Yes indeed, quite a jolly affair. I was disappointed however, that I did not meet Lucille.”

The familiarity with which the Earl referred to his old friend would have been taken for granted by anyone who had known them in England, but it so shocked the good aunt of the young lady, that she was jolted completely off her guard for the instant and repeated the name ‘Lucille’ quite sharply and with a decidedly rising inflection. Of course she was deeply mortified the moment the word was out, but repentance would avail nothing and an attempted explanation would only tend to make the slight more obvious.

Waldron was somewhat taken aback. “I am afraid, Mrs. Burton,” he said, “that I spoke rather familiarly; but your niece and I were thrown so much together in England that—that, we came to know each other rather well—quite well, in fact.”

“So it would seem,” interrupted the lady, in awkward attempt to be conciliatory; “and now that I come to think of it, she did mention having met you.”

The young nobleman was not altogether reassured by the manner of his hostess; but it was evident to him that Lucille, as agreed, had been reticent about the closeness of their friendship.

“Oh, did she?” he answered, as though the fact was something which he was expected to be pleased at.

“Oh yes, indeed,” continued Mrs. Burton. “She even told me that she had been indebted to you for many little attentions.”

“Very nice of her,” he replied, “but hardly worth mentioning. I feel that I am more than amply repaid by the privilege of meeting her aunt,” and

having delivered himself of this gallant but non-commital speech, he expressed regret that the young lady was not then staying at Briarcliffe.

Much to his agreeable surprise, his hostess set him right on this point. “She appears, however, to be rather deeply interested in certain friends of hers from the back woods,” she continued. “Not exactly the sort of people one usually meets, you know; but Lucille is so eccentric. She insisted on having them although she knew that you were coming, and unfortunately they did not have the good sense to decline. I am sorry, but you may find them somewhat amusing.”

Mrs. Burton was pleased with herself for having paved the way at Lucille’s expense, for an inevitable contretemps.

“I quite understand and I shall be delighted to meet them,” the Earl replied, somewhat to the astonishment but greatly to the relief of Mrs. Burton. “Friends of Miss King from the backwoods, did you say?”

“Yes, from a place called Moose Factory, somewhere near the North Pole. My brother lives there, you know. Wild sort of man; took to the wilderness when a boy and we could never tame him.”

Waldron could hardly help smiling at the ingenuousness of the lady. He had been made quite familiar with the “Moose” and also with the characters who lived there, and was immensely pleased at the immediate prospect of meeting at least two of them.

“Miss King has spoken to me of her father,” he answered, “and of the men at the post. It was from what she told me in fact, that my attention was first drawn to the possibilities of this northern territory.”

This was the Senator’s cue. “You may be disappointed, my lord,” he interrupted. “It is mostly barren land. No white man, I believe, could make a living off it.”

“Don’t conclude too rashly, my dear Mr. Burton,” replied the syndicate representative. “We have had the country quietly prospected and the timber roughly surveyed. The latter does not amount to much, but beneath the surface, we are convinced, there lies a wealth of mineral well worth digging for.”

“I won’t dispute with you, Lord Waldron; but it is a wide expanse of territory that can only be acquired at the expense of the fur trade. Have you considered this, my lord?”

“It is the only real obstacle. The Hudson’s Bay Company is powerful; but after all, the fur is but a bagatelle. It is the gold and silver that count.” And then the Earl added confidentially: “We have only to play our cards carefully, Mr. Burton, without exciting undue attention.”

The Senator had expected that his influence would be solicited—that he would be “approached” as it were; but this reference to “cards,” so early in the game, was crude, and could only be excused by the youth and inexperience of the speaker. He acquiesced however in the remark, but intimated in a jocular way, that “cards” must first be dealt.

“Quite true,” responded the Earl. “Quite true; but fate has been kind in that you are the dealer. I speak quite frankly because you already know that we look to you to shuffle the pack.”

The Senator leaned back in his chair and with his eyes half closed, studied his guest for a minute.

“May I ask what particular game you have in mind, my lord?”

It began to dawn upon Waldron that he might be skating on thin ice.

“I am afraid I may have used an unfortunate simile,” he replied, “but it will answer. It is the game of ‘finesse’ with which you, as a public man must be an expert. We shall play fairly, of course, but we mean to win. The stakes are high and we can afford to be liberal; besides, apart from all selfish motives, the plan has in mind the development of the country.”

“What you say is plausible, Lord Waldron,” responded the Senator, “and I do not want to discourage you. I grant you also that your scheme may be of great economic value; but, as in all progressive measures, the opposition is strong. Take, for instance, this young man Lajoie, who is also our guest; ostensibly he represents the Indian interests, but behind him lies a most powerful factor in the Hudson’s Bay Company.”

“Then, I presume, we must deal with this fellow rather generously?”

“I’m afraid,” replied Burton, “that you will not find him a very good business man.”

“So much the better. He will likely prove a less expensive proposition to handle.”

“You may be right, but from what I happen to know of him, I fear he is likely to prove a most stubborn proposition.”

“Leave him to me, sir,” said the Earl confidently. “He is one of a type met with in all colonization projects.—A little friction,—a little lubrication,—and the machinery runs smoothly again.”

“I am afraid, Lord Waldron, that there are types of men whom you have yet to meet.”

“Am I to infer from this,” asked the Earl, “that this chap is not readily susceptible to—to, well let us say, to ‘commercial influences’?”

“Precisely. In plain words, my lord, I am certain he cannot be persuaded, and I do not think he can be bribed.”

“Then we must go over his head.”

“Presumably.”

“The first move will be to get the Indian bill out of the way.”

“A wise step, if possible,” the Senator replied curtly.

Waldron now sought to draw out the politician. He would have been horrified, of course, at the slightest imputation of bribery; but his brief acquaintance with men of the world had already taught him that every service must be paid for.

“You understand,” he began again cautiously, “that the par value of Syndicate stock is £20 per share?”

“I have heard it so quoted,” answered the Senator.

“But there are considerations—”

“Precisely, my lord,” interrupted Mr. Burton, anticipating what his guest had to say and not wanting to hear him say it. “But it happens that I am not in the market.”

“My dear sir,” replied the Earl, “please do not misunderstand me. I am not trying to market the stock, but merely to—to,—well to, shall I say irrigate it a bit? As an investment however, how would you consider a thousand shares at one shilling each, and a bonus of another thousand if we succeed?”

The young nobleman was setting too swift a pace, and the politician sought to defer further consideration.

“I have no complaint to make of your liberality, Lord Waldron. But you can understand that a man can have too many irons heating at the same time. What do you say to a stroll?” The Senator proffered his guest a cigar, and

leading the way to the terrace, abruptly left the room. The Earl was about to follow, but Mrs. Burton, who had been an eager listener to the conversation, drew him aside and earnestly inquired the precise nature of his offer to her husband.

“We need his services,” he explained, “and the Syndicate is willing to assign him one thousand shares at a nominal price, and to throw in an additional thousand as a bonus, if successful.”

“What do you wish him to do?” enquired the lady.

“Merely to swing his influence to kill the Indian bill. Sounds a little like murder, but there is really nothing criminal to it. The Syndicate plans the development of a large tract of barren land, for the enrichment of the entire Dominion. We are prepared to pay for this land or for the mineral and timber rights, at a fair valuation. If he consults the interests of the country he will help us.”

“Mr. Burton is a very stubborn man,” the wife replied; “but *I* will see that this Indian bill does not pass. You are deeply interested in this enterprise, my lord?”

“I fear rather more deeply than I should wish, Mrs. Burton.”

“And you must succeed at all costs?”

“Well, I am prepared to go as far as I can with honor.”

Mrs. Burton was pleased. The young man’s embarrassment fitted neatly into her scheme.

“Mr. Burton is not easily persuaded,” she said deprecatingly. “To strangers he is adamant; but to certain influences he is as pliable as a piece of thread. Let me confide in you, my lord; Isobel can bend him to her will. You have only to win her to your side, and all the weight of his powerful influence is yours.”

“Your suggestion is very kindly meant, I am sure, Mrs. Burton,” replied the Earl. “But I fear that my acquaintance with Miss Burton, while always friendly, is hardly old enough to allow me to presume upon it.”

The mother grew quite enthusiastic. “Do not despair, my lord. If I know Isobel at all, she has taken a strong fancy to you.”

“Then you think that,—that—perhaps—”

“She is just the card you need for your hand, my lord.”

Further allusion to the daughter was cut short just then by the appearance of the young lady herself, who rushed forward and greeted the Earl so effusively that he actually blushed and could only stammer a polite acknowledgment.

“Everything is arranged for our outing tomorrow,” she blithely announced, as soon as the gushing and handshaking were over. “Have you told Lord Waldron, Mother?”

“Not yet.”

“Well, we’re going to carry you away to the real country,” she cried, addressing her guest. “But what have you two been plotting about?” she added, having noted that her mother and the Earl had lapsed into silence the moment she had entered the room.

“We have just been discussing, my dear, a little project of Lord Waldron. He wants to talk to you about it.”

“Talk to me?” queried the young lady with an ill-feigned show of surprise.

“My dear,” continued Mrs. Burton, “Lord Waldron has something most important to say to you. He was a little diffident about approaching the subject; but I have assured him that he has nothing to fear;” and, turning to the Earl as she disappeared through the door, “Remember, I am handing you a trump, my lord. See that you play it to advantage.”

CHAPTER XX.

An Awkward Misunderstanding and a Devil of a Mess—The Rivals.

As soon as they were alone, Isobel seated herself at one end of a spacious sofa and motioning Lord Waldron to a place beside her, opened the conversation.

“Now tell me,” she began, “what is this wonderful and mysterious matter you have to talk about?”

Notwithstanding all assurance for his peace of mind, showered upon him at every turn by the two ladies, the Earl felt a trifle nervous.

“I am naturally shy in approaching you, Miss Burton, upon a subject of such great personal concern,” he replied. “In fact I hesitate to presume upon so short an acquaintance, no matter how friendly and unconventional it may have been.”

“Oh, I am sure you need not be to diffident,” she answered. “Do you know, my Lord, I feel already as though I had known you all my life.” It was an honest effort to make him feel at ease.

“Indeed? Now that does seem encouraging.”

“Yes, I shall never forget that wonderful evening when we first met. You remember?”

“I’ve reason to, Miss Burton. A crowded ballroom, a whirl of dancers, a blaze of light, a glare of color—the man steps upon the lady’s train—the snapping sound of breaking threads—she retires to repair damages—he apologizes—she assures him it is of no consequence.—Quite a ripping time wasn’t it?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“Which has led to a delightful acquaintance.”

“May I add, to a lasting friendship, my lord?”

“I hope so, Miss Isobel. Already I am going to presume upon it by asking a favor.”

“Indeed, a very great favor?” asked the young lady edging closer on the sofa and looking earnestly into his face.

“Something which may mean everything to me.”

Waldron had no idea that his new friend would have shown so much interest and he was rather anxious to bring the subject to a head. He saw however that the young lady was inclined to be impressionable and thought it well to keep the fire burning.

“Miss Isobel,” he said solemnly, “it is probably in your power to make or to ruin me.”

“Make or ruin, did you say? Is not this a prosaic way of expressing an old story, my lord?”

“I hardly understand you, Miss Isobel,” he answered. “You may call it prosaic if you like, but I fear that, unfortunately, it is too true.”

“Why unfortunately?”

“Why unfortunately?” he repeated. “Perhaps you do not quite understand.”

“Oh yes, I think I do.”

“Then your mother has told you,” he asked more earnestly and drew a little closer.

“She has hinted at it,” said Isobel, lowering her eyes demurely and beginning to toy nervously with her fan.

“And you will speak to your father—you will influence him?”

Now Isobel was as much astonished as delighted at the remarkable rapid-fire progress of this interesting conversation; but though it was undoubtedly leading in the right direction, and to the desired end, the excitement was too prolonged and there was hardly enough directness to it to satisfy. Besides, she felt so sure now of her position that she thought she could afford to take the offensive. She drew herself up rather haughtily and snapped out her fan with a smart flip of the wrist.

“May I ask you a frank question, Lord Waldron?” she inquired.

“Certainly, Miss Isobel.”

“Are you a coward?”

The Earl was taken aback. So far as he could see, there was neither sense nor reason to the question, and it did not augur well.

“I have never been so designated,” he replied curtly.

"Then why are you so fearful? I should think, my lord, that it would be more becoming of you to speak to Father yourself."

"Of course I shall," exclaimed the now astonished Waldron. "In fact I have already done so."

This was too much for an independent young lady of spirit like Isobel. It might be the fashion on the Continent, but was never done in Canada and she did not approve of it.

"Even before you consulted me," she retorted with an air of injured pride.

"I had no idea that you had power to decide the question," answered the Earl in a very much puzzled voice. "Had his reply been altogether satisfactory, I do not know that I should have spoken to you at all."

The lady felt injured. "You seem to take a whole lot for granted."

The young man's face was flushed, his lips were compressed and Isobel did not quite like the look in his eyes. She suddenly decided to change her tactics.

"But what did he say? He did not positively decline your offer, did he?" she asked in a much greatly mollified tone.

"Not finally, Miss Isobel," replied the still bewildered nobleman; "but neither did he consent. He has left me in doubt. Now if you will only intercede for me," he continued, emphasizing the request by drawing nearer to her, "I am told he can refuse you nothing. You will?"

The directness of the question and the earnest way in which it was put almost took the lady's breath away, and again she felt it really incumbent to dissemble for the sake of appearances.

"Really, my lord," she sighed, "you must allow a little time for consideration of a matter so serious. As you have said, our acquaintance has been rather brief."

"But intimate enough perhaps," pleaded the blind young man, "to make me hope, in view of all the circumstances, that you might do for me what one friend might reasonably be expected to do for another. At least you are sure that I am actuated by honest and honorable intentions when I ask this favor?"

Isobel could not fathom this round-about, rather sloppy way of coming to the point. It annoyed her.

“You insist that it be counted in the light of a mere favor then?” she asked in a somewhat offended tone and laying a decided accent on the word “favor.”

“I hardly see how I can construe it otherwise. I own you can make me deeply indebted to you.”

“You honor me, sir,” the lady retorted with every visible sign of irritation.

“That I shall always do,” he replied.

The lady had almost reached the limit of her patience.

“Oh dear! Why can’t you make yourself plain?” she begged.

“God knows I’ve tried to, Miss Isobel. Now if only you will agree to plead with your father——”

“Oh ‘father’ again. Why do you doubt your chances in that quarter?”

“Because apparently, there are other influences at work.”

“Other influences?”

“Yes, that Indian fellow or half-breed or Frenchman or whatever he is.”

“Good gracious! Lord Waldron, you do not possibly mean that Lajoie man? Absurd.”

“I only wish it were absurd,” his lordship murmured disconsolately; “but I have every reason to suppose that he is the only obstacle in the way.”

This was too much for Isobel. “I am afraid you are a coward after all,” she laughed. “I never met the man before this morning; and as for approaching Father? Why, he’s not even a gentleman. Don’t be ridiculous Lord Waldron.”

It was beginning to occur to the Earl that the lady was making game of him. The farce had gone on long enough.

“You treat the matter very lightly, Miss Isobel. I’ve said all that can be said; and since you are inclined to refuse me, let’s forget the incident and join the others.”

As he spoke he got up and stood as if waiting for her to accompany him out of the room. Nothing however, was farther from the lady’s intentions. It was true his lordship had been aggravating to a degree, and she would have delighted in telling him so. She would some day; but now she was

thoroughly frightened. There was no telling what fool thing a high strung animal of his breeding would do when provoked. Perhaps she had been too hasty; at all events, she decided to swallow her pride, and if she could not bring him to a straight out and out avowal, she would do the proposing herself.

"Oh, but I did not refuse you," she cried.

The coy way in which she said this, and the tender twinkle in her eyes, extraordinary to relate, were lost upon the Earl. His thoughts were so concentrated on the thing uppermost in his mind, that he remained wretchedly blind.

"Then you will?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes."

"Thank you ever so much, Miss Isobel."

He was about to enter more fully now into the nature of his request, but she was altogether too impatient to listen.

"I had not intended that you should have won so easily," she sighed, "but you caught me fairly," and before the astonished young man had time to grasp the situation, she was in his arms. Nothing could have been more remote from his thoughts than to have offered such an asylum, but it was a choice of so doing or of allowing the lady to fall to the floor. He was so overcome that it was several seconds before he could even think clearly.

"Caught you," he exclaimed. "My dear Miss Burton. I——I——eh——I do not understand."

"Oh but I do," murmured the lady, looking fondly up at him and determined to settle the momenteous question then and there and for all time. "We may as well be frank, my lord." She clung gently but resolutely to his coat-collar with both hands. "We are worldly people, you and I. I am sure we both understand. You want Father's political assistance and are willing to pay the price. I am merely the poor little medium of exchange. Ah, well! It's the way of the world." Then, as though wrought up by the immensity of the sacrifice, she suddenly let go the coat-collar and entwined both arms about his neck.

So unexpectedly had the situation developed, that the Earl was swept off his feet and engulfed as if by a giant wave.

"Oh my dear Miss Burton," he gasped, upon coming to the surface.

“Why so deliberately formal, my dear Waldron?” the lady purred as she snuggled closer to him.

Lord Waldron raised his head as if in silent and desperate denial of the awful circumstances, and a look of terror, or it might have been of agony, overspread his face.

“Good God!” he groaned.

In the doorway, directly facing him, stood Lucille.

“Oh! Please excuse me,” she stammered. “I——I——fear I am intruding.—I assure you I did not mean to.”

Isobel broke her hold upon the Earl and turned smartly about. Her face was scarlet.

“Oh, of course not,” she snapped. “Well, I’ll leave the explanation to Lord Waldron.” She rushed past her cousin, out of the room and slammed the door behind her.

Lucille and the Earl stood silently facing each other. The former was the first to speak.

“She left you to explain. What have you to say?”

The unfortunate Waldron bore the reproachful gaze of his fiancée like a soldier, head up and eyes front, but remained mute. He was too confounded to collect his thoughts until the strain of the dead quiet became too painful to endure.

“First let me tell you how glad I am to see you,” he cried and moved a step forward; but Lucille retreated.

“Your looks belie you,” she said quietly. “You had better explain.”

“Lucille, I can’t explain immediately or all at once. You must give me time. It’s all a damned mistake.”

“Indeed?”

“I’ve got myself into a devil of a mess.”

“So it would seem.”

“The scene which you so inadvertently witnessed was merely the result of an unfortunate misunderstanding.”

“Yes, very unfortunate.”

“I want you to trust me, Lucille,” he floundered, “and to believe me when I swear to you, on my honor, that there is nothing serious between Miss Burton and myself.”

“Your testimony is forcible,” she replied, “but it is outweighed by that of my own eyes.”

“I admit appearances are against me,” he continued helplessly, “and what makes it hard to explain is that, as an honorable man, I must also say that the lady is not altogether to blame.”

“Then neither party to this interesting scene appears to have been responsible for it. You ask me to believe this?”

“Yes, Lucille, I do,” he pleaded. “I can make everything plain if you only give me time. Meanwhile, I pledge you my word that it was all brought about by a mistake that would be humorous were it not so serious. It will be cleared up in due course. At present I can say no more.”

Lucille understood well the character of the man, and when he spoke like this, she felt that she should at least parole him.

“You bear an honorable name, and I cannot believe that you would be, ——and,——well——” She hesitated a second and held out her hand. “Yes, I do trust you. And now sit down and tell me all about yourself before the others come.”

“It is quite a lengthy yarn, Lucille,” he began, when they were at last amicably seated side by side. “Much too long to be rattled off in a few minutes. You probably know the circumstances of my meeting with your cousin and subsequent introduction to her mother. They were good enough to invite me for a week’s end, and I was only too glad to come because you were here. And tell me, Lucille, you have not told them of our engagement, have you?”

Before she could answer the form of a man appeared at the entrance from the terrace, and both started to their feet.

“Oh it’s John,” she cried. “I am so glad. I did so want to introduce you two.”

Lucille took the Voyageur by the arm and led him across the room to where the Earl was standing. All doubting and troublesome thoughts vanished, her eyes twinkled and her face beamed with pleasurable excitement.

“Henry,” she exclaimed, “this is my dear old friend, Jean Lajoie; and this,” she added, addressing the Voyageur, “is the Earl of Waldron.” Taking the right hands of the men, each in one of her own, Lucille brought them together, and leaning over the shoulder of the bushman, she whispered:

“The man of my story, John.”

CHAPTER XXI.
The Picnic—A Noble Dishwasher—"Tell Me About My Father."

The picnic had been of Isobel's planning, approved by her mother for a specific purpose. The day was a pleasant one and the opening scenes, in keeping with the weather, did not foreshadow the momenteous and disturbing incidents to follow.

It might be as well to emphasize the fact that this was the Burtons' party, and that the mother and daughter were the hostesses, because the niece was the queen bee of the affair and assumed command. Her relatives did not like her easy assumption of the position, but there was no disputing the authority.

Lucille had taken the Earl into favor again, though she could not quite banish an uncomfortable suspicion. When the genuineness of a supposedly priceless jewel is called into question, not every owner is gifted with sufficient courage to apply the acid or the breaking test. Rather than accept the risk of ruining a treasure by an honest assay, they prefer to nurse indefinitely what, after all, might have been but a fond delusion. Not so Lucille. She was prepared to supplement confidence in her lover by an ordeal, which would either return him purged of all suspicion and sanctified, or send him away forever.

Even had she so wished, it would have been difficult for Lucille, on this particular occasion, to have forced a wedge between the Earl and her cousin, unless she was prepared to stand by and see her other two guests neglected. As it was, however, she was content to give Isobel a free hand. Lord Waldron himself had no choice.

John was of a type that appealed strongly to the Earl. He admired his wonderful physical strength, his fearlessness and outspoken speech, and the natural polish of his uncultivated manners attracted him. He felt sorry that he had to fight such a man.

It is not so easy to analyze the feelings of the Voyageur. An inborn love of kinship drew him close to that brother,—that patrician, with all the charm of the aristocrat, who was neither sycophant nor snob. He longed to take him to his heart, to confide in him, to win him to his side. Was it not irony of fate indeed, that he should find in one of his own blood, at once an implacable enemy of his people, and a rival for the love of the woman he worshipped? His giant strength of purpose was put to the test and stood it. The easy

outward bearing, the quiet yet cordial greeting and genuine expression of good will, revealed not a trace of the anguish that wracked his soul. To all appearance, he was just the placid man of the woods, the same Jean Lajoie that Lucille had always known.

It was time for lunch. Within a grove of trees, a white cloth had been spread upon the grass, weighted by table utensils supplemented by sundry bottles, tins, and platters, containing a varied and delectable supply of food and drink. A commodious wicker hamper, laden with reserve materials, was also near by. The fire had been built with the professional skill of the woodsmen; the horses had been stabled in a convenient barn and the coachman billeted at a neighboring farm house. The elimination of the latter's services at the repast had been by order of Lucille, to impart a flavor of the bush, where no class distinctions are observed at meals, and where everyone contributes his share of the work at hand. The only anomaly allowed was a folding chair for Mrs. Burton, permitted in deference to her age, dignity, and dread of rheumatism. Mr. Burton was not of the party.

As the two bushmen had constructed the cookery, built the fire, collected and split the wood, and carried up the water from the river, the Earl had been relegated to fry the pancakes for dessert. At this particular moment he was kneeling, pan in hand, to all appearances intent upon his work, under the more or less doubtful supervision of Isobel. Hennessy was busy gathering material for a bonfire; Mrs. Burton was leaning back cautiously in her chair and fanning herself, while the Voyageur and Lucille reclined upon the ground a few feet off, sipping tea from tin panikins in the orthodox way.

"Seems quite natural to be feasting in the woods, doesn't it, John?" Lucille remarked while waiting for the last belated batch of cakes. "You remember when you and Jo and old man Mucquois and I used to go fishing for trout at the mouth of Big Bear Creek?"

"I think much of that time, Mademoiselle," he replied, "and the creek is still there, but the trout are gone. So many come to take them that they go far up the river, near the Long Portage, but I can find them."

"They never could hide from you. You were a wonderful fisherman, John."

In the midst of his labor, when his mind should have been fully set upon the delicate operation at hand, the Earl had been carrying on an animated conversation with his young hostess. Their heads almost touched, and so engrossed were they in matters foreign to cookery, that they had failed to

notice a thin column of black smoke, rising above the shoulders of the noble chef and filling the air with an ominous odor.

Suddenly Lucille sprang to her feet. “Oh dear! You are burning those cakes, King Alfred.” She rushed over and wrested the pan from the preoccupied cook. “Now look at what you have done.”

King Alfred was very penitent. “By George! I’m afraid I have made a mess of it,” he ruthfully admitted.

“You must not blame Lord Waldron,” interposed Isobel. “It was really my fault.”

“So I am inclined to think,” retorted her cousin. “Between you the cakes are ruined. Well, the cook’s discharged.” With that she dumped the smouldering contents of the pan into the fire. “And now, to punish him, he’ll wash the dishes.”

This was a task the Earl had not bargained for. He didn’t object to the novelty of cooking, but the menial task of dish-washing did not appeal to him.

“O I say, Lucille, can’t you get the man to do that?” he entreated.

“Yes, and you’ll be the man. When you are dining out with people of the bush, you follow the conventions and do your share of the work.”

She moved to the hamper as she spoke and produced a long double-decked apron. “Come here now,” she commanded, and the Earl meekly obeyed. Isobel made an effort to save him, and even volunteered to undertake the disagreeable task herself, but Lucille would not listen.

“Lucille, my dear,” interposed Mrs. Burton, “You are taking great liberties with Lord Waldron. Do not mind her, my lord. You may take Isobel and me to the waterfall.”

“Not yet awhile, Auntie,” exclaimed the young lady, in a tone that implied that she would brook no interference. “When his work is finished he may join you.”

The erstwhile cook cast one imploring glance upon the author of his humiliation, heaved a sigh of resignation and said nothing.

“Stand still a minute, will you,” cried Lucille as she slipped the culinary uniform on the fidgeting Earl. “There,” she added, retreating a few paces to get a better perspective view of the lordly dishwasher. “I’m sorry you can’t see how stunning you look.” But if emotions can be read by facial

expression, the Earl appeared so decidedly miserable that she could not help feeling a wee dint of pity, and so often the punishment, inquired of John whether he would mind assisting the Earl of Waldron with the drying. The Voyageur grinned broadly and magnanimously consented.

Delving again into the big wicker basket, Lucille brought forth a dish cloth and a towel which she presented to the scullions in order of usage. "Now," said she, "to work, both of you. See that you make his lordship hustle, John. When you have quite finished you will find us waiting for you at the waterfall. Come along everybody,—all but the help."

"I'll stay and talk to Lord Waldron," volunteered Isobel.

"Oh that would never do," retorted Lucille. "You and Mr. Hennessy, who has done a man's job, will come with us." Without allowing time for further complaint, she marshalled her squad and marched them off the ground.

The Voyageur, out of charitable regard for his companion, made no remark but gathered the knives, forks, spoons and china into a pile, filled a deep tin basin with hot water, set it upon a convenient stump, peeled into it some shavings from a bar of yellow soap, and proceeded to stir up a good lather of suds. Then he unfolded his towel and stood by expectantly.

It was the other man's next move.

"Have a cigarette?" asked the Earl, tendering an open case filled with an Egyptian variety, each little cube of rice paper bearing the golden imprint of a coronet.

"I thank you much," said the Voyageur, striking a match upon the thigh of his trousers and returning the courtesy with the proffer of a light.

Without more ado Waldron rolled up his sleeves, picked up a plate and dipped in.

John silently watched him swabbing off the china. Presently he asked:

"You never do this before?"

"No."

"What do you do?"

"What do I do?" inquired the Earl who did not quite grasp the import of the question and who was rather anxious to get on with the job without impediment of conversation.

"Yes. You work at something perhaps?"

"Oh yes, but not exactly in this line."

As he volunteered no further explanation, John came back at him.

"You are perhaps just a gentleman, eh?"

"One of leisure I presume you mean," returned the nobleman, handing over a plate for drying. "Well not exactly. I am a soldier."

"An English soldier?"

"Quite so. I have the honor to serve Her Majesty the Queen."

"Her Majesty, she pay you well?" inquired the Voyageur, reaching for another piece of china.

Waldron objected strenuously to this line of quizzing, though he was partly prepared to excuse the impertinence as coming from one who could not be expected to know better; besides he had a reason for keeping on friendly terms with the inquisitor.

"You take a lively interest in my affairs, Mr. Lajoie," he answered, in an effort to evade the question.

"Monsieur will pardon me. I did not mean to offend him. If I ask too much you stop me. But you people who live in this great world are so different from we who live in the bush, that I like to know many things."

The Earl perceived that he was in for a prolonged catechising, unless he could head off his questioner.

"So I perceive, Mr. Lajoie, and I would be glad to enlighten you on matters not purely personal; but there are certain details, sir, which concern only ourselves and which we prefer not to talk about. I would not think, for instance, of questioning you as to what you did for a living."

"Me? Oh I work for the Hudson's Bay Company."

"Indeed? I know your Governor and some of your officers on the other side."

"You know the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company?"

"Yes, quite well. In fact he is rather a close relative of mine."

"Ah, a relative," exclaimed the Voyageur, with an unreasonable show of interest.

"Yes. If you must know, he is my uncle."

"Your uncle, eh? The brother of your mother, perhaps?"

"No, my father's brother."

"Ah! The brother of your father?"

The earnestness with which this last unnecessary question was put, caused the Earl to halt the dish-washing long enough to look inquiringly at his companion.

"Yes," he answered, "He was my father's younger brother. Nothing so remarkable about that, is there?"

"The Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company is Sir James Langdon."

"Quite so. The Honorable Sir James Langdon."

"Tell me. I should like to know about him." The Voyageur made the request with an eagerness that aroused the curiosity of the Earl.

"Why are you so concerned about my family?" he asked.

"Your uncle, Sir James Langdon, is Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. I am voyageur for the Hudson's Bay Company."

"Oh I see. Mutual interests," hinted Waldron with a smile.

Just then a plate slipped from the Earl's hand and broke upon a stone. "Oh damn it," he swore.

John begged of him not to worry. "Tell me something about the Governor," he asked again.

"There is not so much to tell that could possibly interest you, Mr. Lajoie. Sir James is reckoned among the most brilliant minds of England. His only faults are that he is rather obstinate, most conservative, and inclined to drift with the tide. He fails to see that conditions change with the times and that party leaders should shape a course between the rocks of the several factions to provide for the greatest number. In a word, Mr. Lajoie, he is not progressive."

" 'Progressive!' That is to me a strange word," replied the Voyageur. "We can only go so far and then we stop, because there is nowhere else to go. There is enough for everyone if he is satisfied with what he has. But your people, Lord Waldron, are not satisfied. They have very much but they want more; and so they would take from other people. Is that not so?"

This reasoning did not coincide with his own way of thinking, but the Earl was not sufficiently resourceful to find a ready answer.

"Let us not argue further," he suggested.

Both scrubbed vigorously for a time, without speaking; but John's curiosity could not be restrained.

"Your father has been dead long time?" he asked when the silence had begun to grow oppressive.

This was too much for Waldron. "Might I ask how long yours has been dead?" he inquired impatiently.

"I do not know."

"No? Memory of him tangled up in some little family difference perhaps??"

"Perhaps. You do not take all the soap out," said the Voyageur, handing back a fork.

"Oh, sorry."

After he had waited what he thought was a tactfully long time, John began again:

"You live in London?"

"Sometimes."

"You have also a home somewhere else?"

"Yes."

"Where do you stay when you do not live in London?"

Waldron concluded that since it was unwise to provoke a quarrel, he had better submit, but showed his annoyance in the curtness of his replies.

"I have a home in Devon," he answered.

"Your mother, she is dead?"

"Yes."

"You have no sisters?"

"No."

"No brothers?"

"No." The Earl concluded now to take the offensive.

"Tell me, Mr. Lajoie, is your mother living?"

"No."

“Any sisters?”

“No.”

“Any brothers?”

“Yes.”

“How many?”

“I have one brother.”

“Where does he live? How old is he? What does he work at? And does he look like you?” asked the Earl, without so much as a second’s pause between the queries.

John stopped the wiping of a handful of forks and smiled.

“I can see my brother now,” he answered musingly. “He is a fine fellow, but he has much to know.”

“He ought to learn rapidly if he is at all like you, Mr. Lajoie,” the Earl retorted.

“You think so, eh?”

“I am sure of it.”

John’s smile broadened. “You have not cleaned that dish,” he said, handing back a platter for supplementary douching.

The lordly dishwasher bowed, administered the necessary swabbing and handed back the piece of china. “There.”

(Another pause.)

“Tell me about your father,” the Voyageur again pleaded.

This was the last straw. “Damn me, Mr. Lajoie,” cried the Earl, “I cannot see how my father concerns you.”

It was fully a minute before John replied.

“You do not want to tell me, eh?”

“I don’t like to appear rude, Mr. Lajoie,” the Earl answered desperately, “but I object to discuss my family and its affairs with a stranger.”

Quite a long interval elapsed before the Voyageur spoke again:

“Tell me about your father?”

Waldron realized that there was no use struggling against such indefatigable perseverence. “Well, since you are so persistently inquisitive, I may say that my father was John Robert Langdon, Earl of Waldron. He was born in England more than sixty years ago. He married my mother in 1860 and succeeded an elder brother to the titles and estates ten years later. He was somewhat erratic; knocked about the world in his younger days, and afterwards lived the conventional life of an English peer. He died only a few months ago. Now, unless there should happen to be something else which you deem expedient to know about my family, suppose we change the subject of conversation?”

“Monsieur will please pardon me,” returned the Voyageur. “I ask so many questions because I think much of you, and I want to know about those I like.”

“I am flattered by your good will, sir,” Waldron replied somewhat mollified. “But you take more interest in casual acquaintances than most men, Mr. Lajoie.”

John relapsed into silence and his companion offered no encouragement to break it. Finally the Voyageur asked:

“You are a soldier?”

“Yes,” sighed the Earl. “Cavalry.”

“You fight some time, perhaps?”

“Yes, Egypt.”

“Why do you fight?”

“A soldier, Mr. Lajoie, never asks why.”

“They pay you to fight?”

“Enough to keep a man in clothes perhaps, if he is not extravagant, and a medal and a cross or two.”

“A cross? Why a cross?”

“It is the emblem for valor in the army.”

“The cross is the emblem of religion, and religion is peace.”

“Not always, Mr. Lajoie. More wars have been fought for and in the name of religion than probably for any other cause.”

“You have a cross, perhaps?”

“Yes. I picked one up at Tel-el-Kebir.”

Nothing was said for a long time after this, and the Earl had begun to hope that his inquisitor had reached the end of his string, when he suddenly broke out in another and more startling direction.

“You are going to marry Miss King?”

Waldron let fall a whole handful of spoons. “How do you know, sir?”

“She told me.”

“She told you,” exclaimed the astonished Earl.

“Yes.”

“Then you may be sure, sir. She would not lie.”

John regarded his half-brother earnestly. “You love her very much?”

Waldron turned sharply upon him. “You are an old friend of Miss King, Mr. Lajoie, are you not?”

“I have known her all my life.”

“Then since she has been so confiding, I may as well own that I do intend to marry her.”

The face of the Voyageur became very grave. “I am a friend of Miss King and I would have you also my friend, therefore I tell you to be careful how you act.”

“What do you mean, sir?”

“I mean Miss Burton.”

Waldron flushed scarlet and turned furiously on his companion.

“Mr. Lajoie,” he snapped, “you have gone too far. I have confided to you a stranger, more than I have ever told any other man. There is a limit however to my indiscretion. I must ask you to confine your conversation to matters which concern yourself.”

The Voyageur drew himself to his full height and looked the Earl of Waldron in the eye.

“This matter concerns me,” he answered quietly.

“May I inquire how?”

“Because I, too, love Lucille.”

The hands of the young peer dropped to his sides and the dish cloth fell to the ground.

“You—love—Lucille?” he stammered. “You—”

“Yes, I too, have told you more than I have ever spoken to anyone, even to Lucille.”

“My dear fellow,” cried the Earl in a patronizing tone, “I appreciate your good taste, but for your peace of mind, I advise you not to be deceived by what has merely been intended as courteous consideration on the part of your employer’s daughter. You are a voyageur, are you not, Mr. Lajoie?”

“Yes, in the service of the Hudson’s Bay Company.”

“And she is a Chief Factor’s daughter, a descendant of one of the oldest families of Scotland.” Waldron burst out laughing.

John would have struck him to the ground, but the sound of a woman’s voice restrained him. It was Isobel.

“We have been waiting so long, Lord Waldron, that I have come to see how you have been getting on,” announced the lady.

“Quite nicely, Miss Burton,” replied the Earl. “Thanks to the tutelage of our bushman friend here.”

“You need not wait,” she said, addressing the Voyageur. “Lord Waldron and I will do whatever remains to be done.”

John was only too glad of the chance to break away. “I will go to the waterfall,” he replied.

“Yes do. And tell them we shall be there presently.”

CHAPTER XXII.

Weird Tales—A Mission of Revenge—Adrift in the Rapids—The Rescue.

Voyageurs and guides coming up from the South carried weird tales of what was happening across the Divide. The solitary prospector was followed by the mining engineer, and the mining engineer by gangs of operators who built villages in the bush, who cut down the trees, ripped the ground open with dynamite and ransacked the woods and streams for fresh meat and fish. If luck did not favor them in one spot, they moved to another, until the territory was dotted with their settlements.

There had been constant clashes between the whites and reds with frequent shedding of blood, and the Crees to the north, who had already suffered much from the depredations of the free lance trappers, were now like dogs straining at the leash. The one restraining influence in the district of the Moose was Ottumna, who still patiently waited news from Ottawa; but day by day went by and week succeeded week, without word from Lajoie.

One night the Chief sat smoking in his cabin. It was long after midnight. A storm raged fiercely without and the members of his household sat huddled together in the kitchen, fearing that at any moment the roof might be crushed by a falling tree.

The rain beat fiercely against the windows and trickled down the chimney in a steady stream. The thunder crashed and crackled and rolled away in the distance, but it never ceased. The faint glimmer of the candle was like the darkness of night itself amid the constant flashes of blinding light from the clouds; and at intervals, above the din of the tempest, and scarcely discernible from the thunder, rose the crash of falling timber.

Ottumna drew his stool back from the hearth and Susanne placed a tin dish in the fireplace to catch the water that was beginning to creep out on the cabin floor.

For more than an hour the storm bellowed and shrieked with unabated fury. The women, crouched upon their knees in the center of the room, moaned and prayed alternately. While the tempest was at its height, one of the lurid flashes revealed the profile of a man against the window.

Ottumna got up quickly and threw back the bolt of the door. As he did so it was swung violently open by a gust that almost carried away the hinge and deluged the floor with a sheet of sizzling rain. From the midst of this cloud of spray a man stepped into the room. The candles were instantly blown out, but the lightning showed the dripping form of Francois Têtu.

The Chief knew it was no ordinary business that brought the Frenchman out at such an hour and in such a night, but only a formal word of greeting passed between them, until his unexpected guest had been provided with a much needed change of clothing and a dish of hot tea. Meanwhile the candles had been relighted, and during the constant peals of thunder, the men signed and shouted to make themselves understood.

“A bad night, Francois,” said the Chief.

“Very bad. I never see so rough a time as this.”

“Where you come from, eh?”

“I come from the other side the Divide, and I do not stop until I get me here.”

The men lighted their pipes and, wrapped in serious thought, they puffed in silence for a time, each waiting for the other to speak. Finally, Francois glanced towards Susanne and sent an extra heavy cloud of smoke curling to the rafters.

“Winona has not come back?” he inquired.

Ottumna regarded his friend earnestly for fully a minute.

“Ah, you know then?”

Francois nodded.

“For three weeks she is gone. You have not seen her, Francois, perhaps?”

“I know where she is,” replied the Frenchmen slowly withdrawing his pipe and edging closer to the Chief.

“Huh!” grunted the Indian. “You know, where?”

“Listen Ottumna,” said the visitor, laying his hand upon his friend’s shoulder. “You must hear what I say and you must not get too angry with the girl. She has gone across the height of land and down the river with a white man.”

Susanne screamed, but the Chief heard the news without a word. He got up quietly and sought the corner by the fireplace where his rifle hung. But

Têtu stood before him.

"You can't go out tonight," he said. "Wait till the storm is passed and the sun is once more up. Besides you cannot go alone. Winona is far from here."

The French Canadian had seen many angry Indians in his day, but never a face so black with rage as that of the big Cree Chief. If any man, but Jean Lajoie or Francois Têtu, had told him his daughter had gone with a rascally white man, he would have laughed, but when Francois spoke, he knew he told the truth. Yet it did not seem possible. Could it be that he would wake to find it was a dream? No, the thunder and the lightning and Têtu standing there——No, it was true.

He loaded his firing piece and rushed against his friend, who still faced him, with his back to the door.

Francois beckoned to Susanne and to the little girl Minnette and together they forced the angry father to a chair where they held him till the first paroxysm of wrath had cooled. When they released him he went to the window, looked helplessly out at the storm, and quietly returned the rifle to its place.

Seated on a stool, with the Indian family about him, Francois told his story.

He had come down the Mab du Fond to Mattawa with some American fishermen, the day after the Lajoie party had left for the lower Ottawa. He met the crew of the Rob Roy, and from the only sober man in the outfit, had learned of the tragic death of old Chief Mucquois, that Joe Latour was suspected of the murder and that the mounted police were on his trail. At the same time he heard the news that Lajoie and Hennessy, accompanied by the Chief Factor's daughter, had gone down to the Capital on some sort of mission to the Government.

He had paddled up the river and through the lake, with the Moose Factory Indians, as far as Fort Temiscamingue. The others went on north from there, but he had remained a couple of days for a party he was to guide to Abitibi. As he was leaving for the portage, he met a half-breed that had just come down from the post, who told him he had passed a white man and a young squaw near the mouth of the upper lake, and had spoken to them.

On the way up with his party, he camped one night at a point about one day's paddle from the Abitibi post. He was walking along the shore after supper. Some distance off he saw a thin white smoke curling up from behind a bed of rushes. He jumped into his canoe and paddled in the direction and

was about to break through the reeds, when he heard a woman speak. He thought it was Winona's voice that he knew so well, and then a man spoke; he could not say who he was. They were hidden by the wall of rushes only a few feet away and he stopped to listen. Yes, he was sure now it was Winona. She was urging the man not to wait longer but to push down the lake. He spoke roughly and told her to mind her own business; that they had to travel by night, for if they were seen, and someone was to tell her father, the big Cree chief would kill them both. Then the canoe stole out from behind the reeds and was lost in the darkness down the lake.

"I stay at Abitibi three days," continued Francois, "then I go to Wabinkin and Spirit Lake and down the Kinojivis to Lake Expanse; and then we travel by the Quinze and come back to Temiscamingue. It take me about five weeks. I meet there a fellow, Caspar Laflame. You know Caspar well. He see Lajoie in Ottawa and he give me a letter for you. He tell me you must get it soon; and so I came back here right away." Têtu went to the peg from which his rain-soaked coat was hanging, slit an opening in the lining and extracted a sealed envelope. It was damp and the inscription was blurred, but the writing inside was in a bold round hand and quite legible. The letter was addressed to Ottumna. The Chief tore it open and read the note hurriedly.

> "They ask me to wait; but I do not trust them. Bring your young men together. We will hold what is ours. I bring you the Indian bill, or I give you the rifle. I will join you soon.—JEAN."

"You know what this say?" the Chief asked after he had studied the writing for a time.

"Non. I only know that Laflame say it matters much and ask me to make haste."

"I think we must fight," said the Chief, and handed the letter to Francois. The Frenchman pondered over it for several minutes.

"It does not look good," he said. "They are too slow, those people at Ottawa; but there is still hope. He say, 'I bring you the Indian bill;' perhaps he will. It is some time now that he wrote this. Mabe you get another letter soon. I hope so; for if you fight, you and Lajoie will have little chance and many of your young men must die."

Ottumna gravely nodded to intimate that he was alive to the seriousness of the undertaking and prepared to take the consequences.

The storm had died out by this time. The women had gone to bed, and the two men sat discussing the situation and formulating plans until daylight.

It was arranged that Têtu was to take with him a white friend, a stranger in these parts, ostensibly a prospector who could ask many questions without suspicion, and to whom Francois was to act as a guide; but the man would be merely a decoy, to throw the enemy off the scent. They would call at the various posts and visit the Indian camps to deliver the commands of the Chief and to report to him all that they had seen and heard.

Nothing could have been more to the liking of this adventurous soldier of fortune. He would begin immediately after breakfast, and within a few weeks they would have assembled under cover, a strong force of well-armed men, in the vicinity of the Long Portage on the Moose. When all was ready to strike, they would wait the coming of Jean Lajoie.

So much for the scheme of the rebellion. Now, as to Winona.

While it was certain that the girl had gone with a white man as told by Francois Têtu, neither he nor her father had surmised correctly the purport of her disappearance.

White trappers and traders had been prowling about the territory for years. Winona had shown partiality to none of these strangers. With one exception she had always shown a contempt for the white men, these sly-fox poachers and make-believe lovers. The one exception, which had the approval of the Chief, was Jean Lajoie. That she had distinctly favored him and that his behavior to her had always been like that of a brother, both Indian and white man knew quite well.

But there was no refuting the facts. Winona was away with this strange man, skulking along at night, in his canoe, down the river and through the bush, hundreds of miles from home. It was a mystery too deep for these two clever men. The dull-witted, heavy Susanne, for whose opinion, neither Ottumna nor Francois, gave a snap of the finger, because she was a woman, had a much shrewder and truer suspicion, because she was a woman.

After the departure of the Rob Roy from the Factory, Winona had returned to her father's house on Missinaibi Creek, and delivered John's note, and for a day or two, her mother had remarked that she was unusually quiet, even depressed.

Soon afterwards the girl was missing, and so was her little fathom-and-a-half canoe and the pack which she carried on the journeys to the post.

Slipping away unnoticed, she had headed up stream along the Moose, taking care to avoid everyone on the river.

For days she paddled and poled and portaged. The trails were new to her, but her Indian instinct, her life-long familiarity with the bush, and a keen sense of direction, saw her out of every difficulty. Not once did she go astray. She fished and snared as she journeyed, so that her progress was necessarily slow, and it was nearly three weeks before she reached the height of land.

She was heading through a strange country now, and did not know the rapids well. When they were very shallow or very rough, she took the portage trail; usually, however, she trusted to fate and her own skill to carry her through. She had some close calls, but good luck was always with her, and she got far up the Abitibi in safety. The only fear she had was of the great lake, now not far away. It was long and very wide and often rough; and had many bays and bends and narrows. Even a seasoned guide sometimes got lost. But she never faltered. If she should lose her way it was easy to find a camp. She was not known along the Abitibi, and could lie so cleverly, that no one would suspect, and they would show her how to go.

One afternoon she came to a long portage. The water swept in a foamy cataract, boiling over hidden rocks and splitting against the jutting boulders along its course. She shouldered her light canoe and went cautiously forward. The way was rough and steep, and the path difficult to follow. By the time she reached the head of the rapid the sun was sinking low. She pushed into the stream, and bent her shoulders to the paddle. The current was strong, the daylight would soon be gone and she was anxious to find a more secluded camping place than the portage trail.

A quarter mile further on, the river bent sharply to the left, and as she made the turn, she came upon a large cedar, torn from its moorings by a recent freshet, floating swiftly upon her. Before there was time to steer aside, the tree had caught the light craft in its branches and bore it speedily away with the current. The roar of the rapids below grew louder. Closer and closer the Indian girl was borne to the head of the great cascade, until suddenly, the spreading roots of the cedar grounded in a stretch of shallow water a few yards above it. As she reached cautiously forward in an effort to free herself from the entanglement, the paddle slipped from her grasp and instantly floated beyond reach. At the same moment the canoe worked clear, but the stern was caught in an eddy that whirled it about and sent it spinning down the smooth but racing current.

In the fading light she could faintly see that ominous white ribbon of broken water stretching from shore to shore. She knew that the rapid was long and treacherous. Many rocks jutted above the waves; others caught the

even surface and whipped it into foam; others again she could not see, but she knew they were there, hidden only by a thin swirl of dark unbroken water that left no rift behind. There was nothing to do now but hold and wait and pray.

Down, down to the mad white curlers, she was swept with the speed of a swallow; over the first great chute in safety; grazing a giant comber on the right by a hair; missing the jagged edge of a sunken stone on the left by the merest fluke—on, on, into the cellar and over the crest of a high sweep she bounded, into the swirl of a powerful eddy. It twirled the canoe like a top and flung it broadside against a flat projecting rock. Smashed to splinters, the wreckage was instantly carried away.

With native presence of mind, when she saw the crash was inevitable, the Indian girl had stood up straight and held her balance with marvelous skill, and when the blow came, and the frail bark and cedar crumpled beneath her feet, she pitched forward and landed, bruised and bleeding, but otherwise safe from immediate danger, upon the broad, rough surface of a rocky ledge that divided the river into two parts, not far from the foot of the cascade.

She lay there for a long time not knowing what to do. It had grown dark and on the nearer shore she saw the flare of a small camp fire. It was probably not more than a hundred yards away. Clambering to her knees and using her hands as a megaphone, she called with all her strength. In the darkness there was no chance that she could be seen. Even if she could have been both seen and heard, how was it possible for human aid to reach her in such water?

Again and again she shouted, but there was no response. The fire on shore gradually burned low and at last died out altogether. Winona was afraid that the campers might move off down the river in the early dawn, as they usually do, and leave her helpless; but the resourcefulness of the Indian seldom fails. She had to think quickly however, because very soon everyone would be snugly coiled in blankets and asleep. She fumbled in the bosom of her dress and drew out a handful of matches; then she removed from her shoulders the bright red kerchief, the gift Lucille had given her a few weeks before, and, holding it aloft, set fire to it. Swaying it back and forth as it burned, she anxiously watched the shore and, before it was quite consumed, the flashes of a lantern, like a will o' wisp, appeared on the river bank. It was a signal that she had been seen. For eight long hours she sat amid the turbulent roar of the water, and waited.

Next morning, just as soon as the light was strong enough to show the way, a canoe shot far out into the river above the rapids. The girl could see it bobbing like a cork in the distance.

Down it came; at one moment to the right of her, at another to the left. Sometimes it would show high upon the crest of a wave, and again it would sink into the trough; or she would lose sight of it behind a boulder. There was but one man in it. She saw him digging his paddle into the water with short, quick jerks. She saw his back bend and his shoulders rise and fall, as he threw the weight of his body into every stroke; and no one knew better than the girl herself how wonderful his strength must be. She saw a great mass of angry foam rise and dash high over the tall semi-circular bow. “He can never live through it,” she thought, and for a second, she covered her face with her hands. When she looked again, he was cleaving through a cloud of spray.

He was on one knee and crouching low; a few more strokes, and he was heading with the speed of an arrow straight for the ledge on which she stood. He must surely be dashed upon the rocks. Then, before she knew how it happened, an empty canoe shot past;—but the man was standing beside her.

It was a daring feat that not one voyageur in a hundred had the skill or would have had the courage to attempt; but it was bravely done and well. One end of a rope was around the man’s waist; from the other swung the canoe, half filled but afloat, upon a strip of swift but quiet water.

The man paused only long enough to recover breath; then he drew the little craft a part way up the slanting ledge, emptied it and launched it again. While he held it the girl climbed over the stern. He sprang in after, and in less than a minute, they had cleared the last big chute and were safe in the lower eddies of the rapid. A quarter of a mile down stream they paddled in to shore and climbed the river bank.

Winona turned to thank the man who had done this thing for her. She knew him. He was Joe Latour.

Winona set fire to the handkerchief and before it was quite consumed, the flash of a lantern appeared on the river bank.

CHAPTER XXIII.
An Alliance for Vengeance—The Spree.

Without speaking, Latour walked beside Winona, along the river bank to his camp. His outfit comprised a pack, a pair of blankets, a rifle and a fire.

He did not feel certain that he could trust this girl, being that the police were after him for the murder of her grandfather. To be sure, the fight had not been of his choosing and he had killed only in self defense; but mitigating circumstances have little influence upon the conduct of an Indian when you have taken the life of one of his kin. For ought he knew, the girl may have been on his trail, and there was no telling how near the police might be. She was safe on shore now and he would do well to run for it down the river. He threw a few sticks on the fire, hung over it a kettle of water and proceeded to roll the blankets and to gather the remainder of his equipment. The girl noticed that not once did he turn his back to her, and guessed what was passing in his mind.

Steam was rising from the kettle before either of them spoke; and then Joe said:

"You ketch me, Winona. De police, I suppose, are not far, eh?"

The girl hung back. Had she come upon him in his camp asleep, she would not have hesitated to kill him; but she owed much to him now, and he had made no allusion to the debt.

"Joe," she answered, "you are strong. You are brave. You save me. Also I can save you." She held out her hand to him and he took it. "The police I have not seen; only I hear they look for you."

Latour felt more assured but he was not yet altogether satisfied. The proffered friendship might, after all, be only a ruse to entrap him.

"Why you come all the way down the river?" he asked.

Winona was at first going to take refuge in a lie but changed her mind. Joe had done her family a great wrong, it was true, and her father would kill him if they ever met; but he had risked his life to save her. She admired his courage and she needed his help. She also had an enemy, and this enemy was no friend of Latour. Besides, she was alone; she had no canoe; the hunting knife buckled to her girdle, and a few matches, were all that had been left to her to live by in the forest. This last fact, thrown into the balance

with the rest, outweighed other considerations. She would take him as a friend. She would make a confidant of him; and he would help her she knew, because she could do as much if not more for him. So she would tell her story, and he would be content to listen. There was no fear of interruption because Joe had chosen this spot to camp remote from the portage trail on the farther shore, and safe from intrusion.

There was no immediate need to hurry now, so Latour prepared a breakfast and waited until they had eaten and he had lighted his pipe, before making further inquiries. She took no notice of what he said, but began in her own way.

"You know Jean Lajoie?"

Joe signified his acquaintance with a nod.

"I hate him!"

"What has he done?" asked the bushman in surprise. "I t'ought he was your very good frien'."

"Yes, my frien' once; now I hate him. I will kill him."

Although Latour was pleased at the news, and grunted his satisfaction, his confidence in womankind was not strengthened by the unexpected announcement.

"He go away wid white woman."

"Le diable!" exclaimed Latour.

"Listen Joe," continued the young squaw. "You leave the Moose when the big canoe come in. I see you go.—You help me kill Jean Lajoie?"

The man thought a minute. He would be glad enough to have the Voyageur out of the way, but he did not relish the idea of making his position worse than it was by another murder charge, against which it might not be so easy to sustain a plea of self defense. However, if he could help the girl without committing himself, all right. In any event, there was no harm in a preliminary promise, and so he agreed.

Winona told of the arrival of Lucille on the Rob Roy and of how John had appeared almost immediately afterwards. According to her story, he had spurned her, Winona, for this fine lady and had gone away with her.

Latour knew that the fine lady was the Chief Factor's daughter, and he even surmised the reason why the Voyageur had left with his party under orders. That there was any intimacy between Lajoie and the young white

woman, he felt was absurd; but it suited him quite well that Winona should revenge herself upon the man if she could.

So the young squaw and Latour came to an understanding and paddled down the river together.

They were careful to be seen as seldom as possible, and, as there was little travel at this season, several days went by without meeting a human being. But one day it chanced upon rounding a bend, that they almost collided with a canoe going north and the stranger, following custom, stopped for a brief chat. It was the half-breed, Felix Toussaud, who was often at Moose Factory. He had never met Latour but he had known Winona quite well.

The meeting was rather embarrassing, and Felix, in his playful childish way, was about to ask some impertinent questions, when Latour tipped him a wink which the fellow had the common sense to understand and return. Translated into words, the signals, if freely interpreted, would have read:

"*This girl has come away with me. Keep your mouth shut.*"

"*All right, old Pard. Bon voyage to you.*"

And this was the very same chap who told the very first man he met a few days afterwards—who chanced to be Francois Têtu—that he had seen the young squaw and a white man together.

They traveled only in the dusk now, and in the very early morning, before the sun had dissipated the dark, confusing shadows off shore, and the seasoned river man who knew the route so well, steered straight from point to point. Only when the wind was hard against them, or the water unusually rough, did they hug the shore.

There were not many shacks along the lake and these were scattered many miles apart. They were mostly the homes of half-breeds, well known to Latour, but strangers to the girl; so he sent her to bargain with them for the rations needed on their long journey.

Joe would hide some distance off and Winona would explain that her man had gone up or down the lake for fish, and that she would wait for him by the shore. When the coast was clear, he would creep along and pick her up, and they would be off before he could be recognized.

They felt their way cautiously by night through Lake Abitibi, and at last Latour made out the lights of the Hudson's Bay Company post. They waited until it was reasonably certain that the people had gone to bed. Then they

pushed quickly by. Two canoes passed them in the dark, but they were not noticed. On the morning of the following day they had reached the place where Francois Têtu came across them, about thirty miles down the river beyond the post.

Winona had begun to grow impatient. It was taking so long and there was yet so far to go that she feared Lajoie might be gone when she reached Ottawa. She pleaded with Latour for more haste. She was not afraid to take chances, but he was, and not only did he insist on traveling by night, but he proposed to take a round-about route, by way of Lake Agolawekemi and Mattawagosik into Larder Lake and then down the Blanche River to the head of Lake Temiscamingue. By going in this direction, they would lose several days, perhaps a week, but would avoid the regular course of traffic.

In vain Winona argued against this course; she even threatened, but Joe was obdurate. He didn't mind risking his life for her in a rapid, but he drew the line at the chance of running foul of some one who might betray him to the police. Once in Pembroke, where there was railroad connection, he intended to desert the girl, bolt for the American border and lose himself in some great city. Even if he were arrested down the river, he felt there was better prospect for him before a local magistrate than he could hope for in the North, where the person of the Indian was held more sacred than that of the white man, and where his poaching proclivities would weigh heavily against him. The girl fretted and he spoke roughly to her.

Through the chain of lakes that led into the Blanche, they worked their way very slowly, for it was a route seldom traveled, and the portages were frequent and long and often very rough. At night it was impossible to find them, so they journeyed by day again; but they had little to fear now because it was too early for the hunters, and no one else ever passed this way.

It was tedious going and the girl was very weary when they reached the dark waters of the "White River" that corkscrewed through a forest of spruce and hemlock and cedar. Even the rugged Latour was tired and welcomed a rest.

The rapids of la Blanche were comparatively easy and there was only one more portage, about twenty-five miles above the head of Temiscamingue. From there on they would have smooth water for fifty miles or more and should make good time unless the wind were strong against them. So many canoes passed up and down the head waters of the Ottawa that it was no novelty to meet a stranger so they were not likely to attract inquisitive attention.

Luck favored them with fair weather and they paddled down the lake and slipped through the narrows past the Company post at night. Two more days and they were at Mattawa.

Someone might be on the watch for the fugitive Latour at this place, and it was even possible that Winona had been followed. Their pursuers could travel much faster by the shorter route and perhaps were awaiting them.

Winona was too inexperienced to scent the danger. She imagined she was far beyond pursuit; but her companion was fully alive to the possibilities.

They camped about a half mile from the town and as soon as it was dark he sent the girl across the river to reconnoiter.

The lights and the shop windows would have bewildered and enchanted any young person who looked upon such wonders for the first time; but Winona was a thoroughbred young squaw.

She entered the front room of the hotel, just off the bar, and sat down. Pretty soon the man who ran the tavern came in and spoke to her. She told him she was Marie Dubè; that she had just come up from the Calumet with her husband Maxime, and that they were going up the river to Abitibi, and that her man was mending the canoe and would be along bye and bye. The explanation was quite satisfactory.

Several other men came in, some from the street, others from the bar. They stared at her but made no advances; except one, Pierre Leduc, a river man who happened to be a little drunker than the rest. He sat himself on the bench beside her, called her "Ma P'tite," and tried to take her hand. She slapped his face and moved to a chair near the open door of the bar-room. Here she heard much loud jargon but nothing that she could understand.

Presently the landlord, who had been studying the register and chewing a toothpick for want of something arduous to do, was inspired by an entry in the book and looked up.

"I say, Pierre," he asked, "What's become of the constable, that particular friend of yours?"

"The young fellow that's after Latour?"

"Yes."

"He's gone."

"I know he's gone, but where?"

“Oh I sent him up to Kenogami.”

“*You* sent him up?” sneered the master of the place, with a contemptuous glance at the little Frenchman.

“Of course. I doan like his look. I tink he’s about here for no good; so I say to him dat I see Joe up de lake, an’ dat he’s tol’ me he’s goin’ pass de winter dere.”

“An’ he believed you, of course,” chuckled the proprietor.

“Sure. He’s a young swell English fellow. He’s believe anyting.”

This was better luck than Winona had expected. She slipped away in a few minutes; and about half an hour later, Latour strode into the bar. Pierre recognized him.

“Hello Joe mon brave. Where de hell you come from, eh?”

The bushman looked about him cautiously.

“Sh-h-h! Not so loud, Pierre,” he whispered. “Never mind where I come from. I start me tomorrow for Kenogami.”

The little French Canadian raised his eyebrows and regarded his friend dubiously; but Latour was apparently serious.

“What’ll you have?”

“Whisky blanc,” said Pierre.

“Same,” said Joe.

“Mon Dieu! You not go away into dat place garçon?” exclaimed Leduc as soon as they had gulped down their liquor.

“For sure I go,” replied the bushman. “Your swell young English frien’ de policeman invite me to pass de winter dere wid him.”

Pierre put down his glass and slammed his companion heartily upon the shoulder.

“Who de hell tol’—.” He did not wait to finish the question but ran to the door and peered into the lounging room. Winona was not there.

“Dat’s pretty good squaw you’ve got,” he remarked with a wink, when he had resumed his place at the bar. “Take nodder cou.”

They took several cous.

“How you know I’ve got a squaw?” inquired Latour.

“How do I know, eh? How do I know you come up from de Calumet, eh? How do I know Maxine Dubé, eh mon garçon?”

The bushman grinned. “You’re not a young swell fellow, Pierre, but you believe anything dey tell you, eh?”

The men laughed and when their glasses had been replenished several times and Pierre had got comfortably drunk, they went into the dining-room and ordered a plentiful supper which Latour paid for; and when they could eat no more they retired to the little front parlor for a few parting cous and a final talk, which grew more confidential with each succeeding glass.

Joe knew that his friend had never had much use for the police, and listened with great satisfaction to the story of how he had tricked the constable and sent him to the thick of the bush with a handful of salt to catch a wild canary.

Under the influence of the liquor, Pierre threw prudence to the winds. He bellowed what he had to say and punctuated his remarks by pounding his fist upon the table. He had come from the Capital, where he had met the Voyageur, and with many “Hurrahs” and “Saluts” and a fresh cou whenever the name of Lajoie was mentioned, he swore eternal loyalty to him and his cause. Yes Siree, he would die for Lajoie, the whitest white man in all the North. He had a letter at this moment in his pocket for Ottumna, which he was going to give to Ignace Laforce, the half-breed at Abitibi, and if Ignace were not there, he would take it all the way to Missinaibi Creek himself. Yes, he would, by God!

Then, as if an electric spark had suddenly illuminated his befuddled brain, the French Canadian stopped, stared mutely at his companion out of a pair of glassy eyes, and fell forward in a drunken stupor upon the table.

Latour picked up the unconscious man, threw him over his shoulder and carried him to bed. As he was hauling off his clothes, Lajoie’s letter to the Cree Chief fell out of a pocket and Joe promptly stowed it away safely in his own; then he left him with a newly uncorked bottle and a glass beside him, so that he might be in no hurry to rise next morning.

By the light of the camp fire, Latour read John’s letter to Ottumna. It was a copy of the one that Francois Têtu had already delivered, which the Voyageur had taken the precaution to send in duplicate.

CHAPTER XXIV.
The Plan for Murder—A Common Complaint—A Triumph Over Love.

Winona's resentment had not been cooled by the long and arduous journey and she lost no time in getting her murderous plan under way. Latour, who had done some scouting, brought in the information that the Hudson's Bay Company men were at the country house of the Hon. L. T. Burton, and the girl went there at once.

Upon the false plea that she was the bearer of a letter for the Voyageur the butler informed her that this gentleman and others of the household had gone that morning on an outing to the Gatineau. He kindly offered to take charge of the letter and to see that Mr. Lajoie received it promptly. As the girl however insisted that it must be delivered at once and that she must hand it to him herself, he directed her where to find him.

She arrived upon the scene of the luncheon party shortly after Isobel had led off Waldron to the Great Boulder, and found there the remains of the repast. It was now late in the afternoon, and as she had eaten nothing since the early morning, the opportunity for refreshment was not to be denied by any scrupulous sense of propriety nor undue respect of ownership.

She set to upon some chicken bones which were particularly appetizing, drained a pint of claret with profound satisfaction and attacked a mince pie. The rich color of the contents and the flaring label on a rather large bottle of Tobasco sauce, also appealed to her. She poured a goodly portion into a cup, threw back her head and took it down at a gulp.

The effect was startling and instantaneous. It seemed to her that she had swallowed a charge of liquid gun powder which had exploded, with frightful results to her insides. She bounded up coughing, sneezing and spluttering, flung the offending cup to the ground with a vehemence that smashed it into a hundred pieces, and tore frantically into the woods in search of water.

Three of the picnickers, not far away at the time, were attracted by the noise of coughing and breaking china, and hurried to the spot; but there was no one then in sight.

"Could some stray animal have been here?" inquired Lucille.

"An animal do not cough like that, Mademoiselle," replied the Voyageur.

Hennessy made a hurried survey and remarked that the disturbance had been caused by an animal with a partiality for chicken, mince pie and claret, and a decided aversion to Tobasco sauce.

"We'd better look the silver over," suggested Lucille. "Count the forks, John. I'll take the spoons and Mr. Hennessy the knives."

They gathered up and sorted the several table implements, and found with relief that the number on hand tallied with the original list. "Which goes to prove," said the Irishman again, "that the animal was hungry but honest."

"We'd better pack away everything now," continued Lucille. "Hand me the platters and the teapot, John; now the butter and pickles and what is left of the cake."

While she was stowing away the things, she called upon the Voyageur to fold the cloth.

The science of folding a broad expanse of linen like this, correctly, calls for greater skill than the uninitiated may imagine and when a man is going through the operation for the first time, he is apt to find it a rather difficult feat to perform single-handed.

John was making a sorry mess of it and Lucille interfered.

"No, that's not the way at all. You are not dealing with a blanket. Here, you'll never get it right. I'll have to show you."

She shook out the clumsy and uneven folds for a fresh beginning, and taking hold of a pair of corners, commanded her assistant to do likewise.

He did so.

"Now bring the ends together so; now double once again; now bring your two ends to me; let go now and take up the lower ends; now give me your ends," and so on, until the process was complete and she had swung the neatly folded bolt of linen over one arm. "There now. See how easily it is done?"

John had followed every direction meekly and with careful precision. It was fascinating work, and he wished it had been a much wider and longer cloth, and that there had been several of them.

Never had Lucille appeared so beautiful, so sweet to him. If he had only dared, he would have dropped the cloth and folded her in his arms. The longing grew each time their fingers touched. Once he leaned a little further

forward than was necessary. A stray lock of fragrant hair brushed against his ear and he felt her breath against his cheek.

A second more and the temptation would have done for him; but he checked the impulse, turned smartly about and walked off quickly to the fire, as though, somehow, it had happened to need his immediate attention. A few live coals remained, and he stood there, aimlessly raking the ashes over, scarcely knowing what he did nor why.

Lucille had seen him do many impulsive things before, but this abrupt behavior puzzled her. She was far indeed from guessing the truth.

“What’s the matter, John?” she cried.

The voice brought back the wandering senses of the Voyageur.

“Ah, Mademoiselle,” he replied, turning towards her and picking up an empty bucket as he spoke. “Please do not mind me. Some tam I do not know what I do. I bring now the water for the fire.”

He walked past her and disappeared in the direction of the river. Lucille watched him, wondering could it be possible that she had offended him. She had acted rather too imperiously over the tablecloth perhaps?

“What do you suppose is the matter with him?” she inquired of Hennessy.

This gentleman had been looking on from a discreet distance, an interested and understanding spectator.

“Sure, mam, do you think there is anything the matter with him?” he asked in turn.

Lucille had placed the last of the things in the hamper and closed it. She was now sitting upon it and looking earnestly at the Irishman.

“He has been acting rather strangely of late,” she continued, ignoring the question. “Do you know that at times I think he is actually afraid of me?”

Hennessy, who had been smoking in a contemplative way, withdrew his pipe and seated himself upon a tree stump, directly facing her. Before venturing further, he took a few more puffs for inspiration.

“If you want me to tell, mam,” he began, “John is suffering from a very common complaint. We may some of us escape it for a time, but it’s a disease that, sooner or later, comes to all of us. It turns the strong men weak and the weak men crazy. Some get it lightly and often. Some get it only once and die of it.”

He paused to watch the effect of this explanation upon the lady, but apparently it had failed, or, at all events, if she understood, she pretended not to, for she asked:

"Could you—could you make yourself a little plainer, Mr. Hennessy?"

The Irishman began to puff more vigorously, and as the smoke floated in coils above his head, he followed them with his eye. Deep wrinkles showed upon his forehead and his lips were drawn at the corners. It was quite evident that Thomas Patrick was thinking heavily.

"It is not easy for me to make it plain, mam," he said at last; "and John has not said one word to me about his trouble; but sure it doesn't need a doctor to tell the symptoms; an' maybe you have known them yourself some time. You have felt perhaps that indescribable and mysterious influence a magnet has over a piece of steel?"

Lucille easily caught the drift of the metaphor but she did not wish to appear too quick to understand; so she paused a minute before she spoke.

"I think I know what you mean now," she said at last.

"I thought you would, mam."

"In every plain words, you mean Mr. Hennessy, that John is in love."

"You've a wonderful comprehension, mam," exclaimed the Irishman, and a broad grin overspread his good-natured face.

"You may be quite right," laughed Lucille, "but surely John's ailment, however distressing, does not explain his behavior towards me. Who is the girl?"

"She's not a girl," Hennessy answered after a second's thought.

"Not a girl?"

"No. She's a lady."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Lucille in a tone really meant to be contrite. "But you have not answered my question, Mr. Hennessy."

"I was in hopes, mam, that you would know without my having to tell you," he replied quite solemnly.

"How should I know? He has never spoken to me of her."

"So it would seem, mam."

“The only one I can think of,” ventured Lucille, “is the little Indian girl at the Post.” She paused when she had said this and looked meditatively at the ground. “Dear old John,” she continued, “John of the big heart. Who could help loving him?”

Hennessy had recourse to his pipe again.

“It is not Winona,” he said after a few subconscious puffs.

“Not Winona? I am glad of that. Winona is not of his race. John should marry a white woman.”

“The woman John loves is white,” returned the Irishman, speaking very earnestly. “But—but—well, he’s only a voyageur, you know.”

“And she?” asked Lucille in a voice that betokened no small amount of interest.

Hennessy got up from the tree stump and looked deliberately down into the upturned eyes of the girl.

“She is a Chief Factor’s daughter.”

Lucille’s face turned first crimson, then pale.

“Oh, Mr. Hennessy,” she cried.

If she had not been so mentally disturbed, she would have noticed that the Irishman was almost as greatly affected by her reception of his announcement as she was at the announcement itself.

The embarrassment of both was considerably heightened by the reappearance of the Voyageur at this moment. He was carrying a pail of water and whistling gaily as he walked. Apparently he was quite himself again, and strode over to the smouldering embers of the fire without paying the slightest attention to the two.

“Now we put out that fire,” he said as he emptied the contents of his pail upon the ashes. “And look, Lucille,” he cried, “Look—. I find them by the creek.” He held out to her a bunch of wild flowers, which she took rather hesitatingly, without so much as a glance at the giver.

“Thank you,” she said quietly.

It was unlike Lucille to be so undemonstrative. In accepting little courtesies she had always shown the keenest appreciation. This sudden change dismayed him. He could not account for it.

“You do not like them perhaps?” he asked after a moment. “There are better ones but I do not stop this time to get them. But I will go now. You will come with me, eh?”

Lucille merely shook her head.

“You are tired perhaps?”

The girl again made a negative motion and remained silent.

“Oh Lucille, you are not angry with me about something, eh? I offend you perhaps when I move away that time? I did not mean it so. Tell me, Lucille, you are not angry?”

“I am not angry, John,” she answered.

“Ah, I am glad. But you are strange.” He knelt and took her hand.

Hennessy stood silently by wondering how it was possible to end the scene and afterwards to break the news that he knew would be a terrible shock to his friend.

“You are not well perhaps? I get you some water,” pleaded the Voyageur.

“I am not thirsty, John.”

“But you are ill. I will go for your aunt.”

“No, please don’t. I will go myself.”

Lucille got up suddenly and walked away in the direction of the waterfall. John was about to follow but Hennessy detained him.

“Don’t go, John. Leave her to the women folk.”

“But she is ill.”

“You can’t help her, John. They will take care of her.”

The Voyageur turned helplessly to his friend. “Tell me what has happened Tom. She was well when I went for the water only a few minutes ago.”

“Oh, I don’t know. Women often act that way.”

Lajoie sought consolation in his pipe, while Hennessy racked his brain for an excuse to get him back to the city at once. He had thought to do his friend a great kindness; to bring matters to a head; to do for him in fact, something which he feared he would never have the courage to do for himself. But he had succeeded in uncovering the skeleton of John’s hopes. He had brought a house of cards tumbling about their heads. True, the said

house, having no sound under-pining, would have fallen anyway, but he would not have been lodging in it when it fell.

Hennessy cursed himself for a fool; but the damage had been done. His only hope now lay in staving off the result of his folly by getting John out of the way before Lucille returned.

"I say, John, it's Sunday, isn't it?" he asked after long thought.

"Yes."

"The train that leaves Ottawa tonight for Pembroke, connects with the steamboat for Mattawa?"

"Yes."

"There's no other boat for a week?"

"No."

"Then we had better take that train."

John glanced up in surprise. What did Hennessy mean by springing this advice at a very inopportune moment? He'd never been so keen to get away before. In fact he had been continually urging him to hold off and wait.

"Why you want to go so soon, Hennessy, eh?"

"John, we've been a pair of damn fools," said the Irishman. "I've been thinking the thing over since we came down here, and it only just occurred to me, that if we don't want to lose a whole week, we've got to leave right now. Not a second to spare."

"But the Indian bill may—"

"The Indian bill, you told me was dead."

"But Lucille—"

The mention of the name "Lucille" cut the string that tied the bag and the cat was out. John was here on her account and no other. Learning this, Hennessy shifted his course several points.

"Oh, I see now how it is," he broke in. "Well, if you want to hang around here for a whole week or a month all on account of a petticoat, well and good; that's your look out. But you know as well as I do that there is quick work to be done in the North and Ottumna is ready; so I'll go and tell him you'll be along some time in the fall maybe. I'll ask him to wait, eh?"

The sneering tone in which this was said aroused the ire of the Voyageur. He would brook no talk of this kind from Tom Hennessy.

"What do you mean?" he demanded sharply.

"Just what I said. Would you like me to repeat it?"

"You mind your own damn business."

The Irishman wished devoutly that he had done so, but the game he had started was working to his satisfaction.

"All right then; I'm off right away."

John's temper had been strained to the breaking point.

"You go then," he cried, "an' to hell with you."

Hennessy was beginning to fear that he had overdone things but he felt a little bit hurt.

"See here, John," he answered, "you just say those words again, and count ten while you're saying them."

The Voyageur was taken aback. "You know very well that I can't go now," he stammered.

"Look'a here, you auld pig-headed mule," retorted Hennessy; "do you think I am going to stand for this? Why can't you come? Only yesterday you made me swear I would stick till we both swung from the same tree. Now you're beginning to get cold feet, are you? Don't be a coward, John."

Lajoie's face turned livid with rage.

"I let no man talk like that to me," he shouted, at the same time aiming a blow at his friend's jaw, which, had it landed, would have brought all argument to an abrupt and effective conclusion; but the Irishman neatly side-stepped and the two men grappled. After ten minutes' wrestling, the superior strength of the Voyageur began to tell, and Hennessy was forced to his knees.

"I guess that'll do, John," he gasped. "I'm—I'm—licked."

John accepted the surrender and allowed him to rise, though he stood ready to renew hostilities should the terms of the armistice not be to his liking.

"You call me coward, Hennessy, eh?"

“I take it back, John. Sure it’s myself that’s the coward, and you said it. But just the same, the coward is off for the North with the rifle for Ottumna; and if anyone lays it to you that you are a coward, it won’t be me. It’ll be the Cree Chief who says it. Now good-bye and good luck to you.”

Hennessy stood off some distance and held out his hand. John looked at him wistfully but hesitated. He thought of Lucille and could not bring himself to make the sacrifice. While he was standing there dum-founded and confused, the Irishman turned upon his heel. He wavered no longer. He could not let him go.

“Hold on, Tom,” he called.

Hennessy halted.

“You go tonight sure, eh?”

“Unless I fall dead before I reach the city, I take the 8:30 train for Pembroke. Good-bye. I’ve no time to lose.” Again the Irishman turned. It was the last feather in the scale and it tipped the balance.

“I go too,” the Voyageur shouted, and Hennessy once more turned about.

“Well spoken, old pard; I knew you’d come.”

John pleaded for a moment’s grace; he would say farewell to Lucille; but his friend was deaf to entreaty and placed himself directly in his path.

“No you don’t,” he said. “You might have done it if you had not stopped to fight; but it’s too late now.” He glanced at his watch. “It’s 4:30. The Gatineau ferry leaves in an hour and it’s six miles away. Are you coming?”

John looked longingly in the direction of the waterfall, hesitated a moment, and went.

CHAPTER XXV.
Winona's Revenge—"The Little Traitoress Devil."

Not long after the bushmen had gone, Isobel, leading along the inwardly reluctant but outwardly complacent Earl, came back from the Great Boulder.

She conducted him to a spot sheltered by some low shrubbery and invited him to a seat beside her on the trunk of a fallen tree. Conversation had begun to flag and to liven it he brought up the subject of the Voyageur.

"You were speaking to me, Miss Isobel," he began, "of this friend of your cousin, this Mr. Lajoie. Somewhat original type, isn't he?"

"Yes, rather curious sort of person. We cannot account for the influence he seems to exert over Lucille."

"She knew him when he was quite a lad in the North, did she not?"

"They happened to be the only two white children up there; but this is hardly sufficient reason why the acquaintance should be continued here," Isobel exclaimed with a show of irritation.

"And yet, you know," the Earl answered, "many persons cling all their lives to old friends as to old clothes."

"Very well, then, if she likes him, let her cling, but why foist him upon us?"

"Somewhat unthoughtful perhaps; and yet, Miss Isobel, there is something about this fellow that is rather taking, don't you know. Rough and unsophisticated though he is, he possesses a charm of originality and a polish finer than that of the average man of his class. In fact he rather interests me."

Isobel sighed. "I suppose his originality and his ignorance, to some extent, excuse his bad manners."

"He certainly has a habit of asking impertinent questions, but he is not so ignorant as you may imagine," returned the Earl. "And, Oh, let me tell you something confidentially, that may amuse you. Do you know that the chap has serious intentions in respect to your cousin?"

"To Lucille?"

"Yes."

“Absurd. He amuses her and she patronizes him. Probably he mistakes this for some sort of encouragement. But do tell me, how did you come to learn this interesting piece of news?”

“He told me.”

“You surely don’t mean to say that he actually told you?”

“Yes, indeed. Rather confiding, wasn’t he?”

“Oh, I must tell Lucille about this,” exclaimed Isobel, giving way to a boisterous peal of laughter.

Her merriment was not shared by the Earl, in whom it served to arouse an uncomfortable suspicion that in the future he had better be careful in whom he confided. If this were the young lady’s idea of preserving confidences, it did not speak well for her sense of honor. At the same time it occurred to him that he had not himself acted quite fairly in saying what he did.

“Please don’t do that,” he pleaded.

“Why not?” asked the easy-minded Isobel, as if it were much too good a joke to be wasted.

“Because I had no right to tell you. I am really sorry that I did. When things go too far it will be time enough to apply the brakes. Promise me, Miss Isobel you will not mention what I have told you.”

“It will be a terrible temptation,” she replied, as though she did not feel altogether sure of her ability to hold the secret.

Waldron did not appreciate this half-hearted, unstable promise, and again urged, as a personal favor, that she keep silence in the matter. Finally she pledged herself to secrecy.

“He will have his awakening in due course,” the Earl continued. “Meanwhile, however, it will be interesting to watch developments.”

As this little scene was in progress, another and more startling one, was in process of evolution and drawing very near.

In her precipitous flight, Winona had not stopped until she reached the river bank, where throwing herself upon her stomach, she buried her face in the stream and drank greedily. But it takes time as well as water to mollify the effects of a stiff draught of Tobasco, and nearly an hour had elapsed before she felt physically able to steal back.

She arrived at the scene of her former discomforture in time to catch a glimpse, at a distance, of Waldron and Isobel, just as they were seating themselves behind the shrubbery. Their heads showed above the low bushes and she could hear the sound of conversation, but she was too far away to comprehend what was being said; in fact, she could not even distinguish the voices. To her excited imagination, the Earl was the man she sought and she had found him with the other woman.

The young squaw drew her keen hunting knife from its sheath and tried the edge. After a few moments careful survey of the immediate neighborhood, she crept forward upon hands and knees. As she drew closer to her intended victims, she should have realized that the voices were strange, but she was too excited to reason. Jealousy and rage had turned her brain. To her distorted vision, her faithless lover was before her; he was sitting beside that other woman; he was whispering to her, making love to her. She would kill them both.

Stealthily she crawled close to the low clump of brush and rose to her full height. As the knife in her hand was raised to strike, a twig snapped beneath her feet. Isobel heard it and turned to see the glint of steel. She screamed, and simultaneously, Winona, bounding forward, aimed a thrust directly between the shoulder blades of the man. It was quickly done but not quick enough, for at Isobel's warning, Waldron had turned and caught the descending arm.

For a second the girl stood bewildered and powerless before a man who certainly bore a strong resemblance to Lajoie, but who just as surely was not the Jean whom she sought. The crazed expression of her face gave way to one of blank astonishment.

Keeping a firm hold upon her wrist, the Earl dragged Winona through the brush and forced her to a seat upon the log.

"Well, my little lady," he cried, after the knife had fallen from her hand and there was nothing more to fear. "Why this sudden and murderous visitation, eh? Don't be alarmed, Miss Burton," he added in an effort to quiet the almost hysterical Isobel.

Winona was now too frightened to speak. Burying her face in her hands, she burst into a passionate flood of tears and he waited for her to recover.

"Come now, what have you to say?"

Between sobs the girl blurted an almost incoherent reply.

"Jean——I—— I tink you are Jean."

“Oh, Jean is the villain then, for whom you planned this sharp little coup, eh?”

Winona cried bitterly. “Jean——I want——to find me——Jean.”

“It is really too bad to disappoint you,” replied the Earl. “I am sorry, but Jean is not here.”

“Jean——he leave me.——I love him much.——He go away wid white woman.”

“Villainous heart-breaker,” exclaimed the Earl. “Evidently a man of neither principle nor good taste, to forsake such a pretty maid. However, don’t you think you have been a bit hasty; eh——eh——What’s your name?”

“I am call Winona, Monsieur.”

“Winona?——Quite a nice name. Where have you come from Winona?”

“I have com from——from de Moose, Monsieur.”

Waldron at once became very much interested. “Do you mean to tell me that you came all the way from Moose Factory to kill this——Jean, as you call him?”

Winona nodded.

“Quite a long journey. You must have been angry indeed, and you certainly have a sharp-pointed way of wreaking vengeance.”

The Earl picked up the knife and tried the blade. “This is a keen instrument, Winona, and you came near making a sad mess of things. Now before I let you go you must tell me all about yourself. How did you come to find your way here? Did anyone come with you?”

Winona hesitated. She was afraid to confess too much and was particularly anxious to conceal her association with Latour. So she tried to improvise a lie; but she was tripped up so many times, and altogether made such a dismal failure that she gave up the attempt, and in a long and disconnected story, confessed the whole truth.

She told of her determination to follow the Voyageur; of meeting with the free lance trapper on the river; of how he had rescued her from the rapid, and of their journey together to the Capital. She even narrated the scene at Mattawa which implicated Latour in the theft of the letter from Pierre Leduc.

The wandering narrative was interrupted by many questions, and at times Winona thought she could detect in her questioner, a certain animous against the man she had come to murder. It encouraged her to talk more freely of him. “I love him no more. I will kill him,” she concluded.

“I don’t think you will, Winona,” the Earl answered. “But tell me about this Jean in whom you manifest so keen an interest.”

“He is voyageur for de Hudson Bay Company. He say he is friend of de Indian, but he go away wit de white woman. He say to my fadder dat he come to fight, but he go away wit de white woman. I wait long tam but he do not come back. Joe Latour, he’s giv’ me dis letter he’s write my fadder. Read Monsieur.”

Winona drew the stolen letter from her bosom and handed it to Waldron. It was in its broken envelope and blurred from much rough handling. The Earl feared that the young squaw might make off if he did not keep a close watch upon her, so he passed it to Isobel who read it aloud.

> “They ask me to wait, but I do not trust them. Bring your young men together. We will hold what is ours. I give you the Indian bill, or I give you the rifle. I will join you soon.—Jean.”

“What does this mean?” she asked.

“It means, Miss Burton, that our French Canadian friend is engaged in a conspiracy against the Government.”

The Indian girl listened eagerly. “He fight de white man an’ you will kill him, huh?”

“We have a way of dealing with rebels that may satisfy you, Winona.”

“He leave dat white woman or I will kill him.”

“You are a wicked little devil, aren’t you? No, he has not run away with a white woman, so you won’t have to commit murder.” The Earl felt that he had gained the confidence of the girl, at least to some extent, and proceeded to question her more freely.

“I understand, Winona, that Ottumna, the Cree Chief is your father.”

The girl confirmed the “understanding” with a nod.

“You followed this young man Jean, all the way from Moose Factory?”

Another nod.

“You intended to kill him, eh?”

“Yes. He go away wit de white woman.”

“No, he didn’t. At least not in the sense that you mean, Winona; and I could have you sent to prison for attacking me. But, unwittingly, you have done the Government a great service, and I shall see that no harm comes to you. Tell me now, have you ever heard Jean Lajoie speak to your father about fighting?”

“Many tam he say he will go wit de Indian an’ dey will fight de white man.”

“Be careful what you say, Winona; be sure you tell only the truth. If I catch you in a lie again, I shall have you severely punished.” He looked hard at her but she returned the gaze without flinching.

“I say to you de truth, Monsieur.”

“You heard what she said, Miss Burton?”

“I have been listening.”

“It will be well to note the words carefully,” said the Earl. “They may be needed in evidence later on. Where are you staying, Winona?”

“I camp wit my canoe on de Chaudiere, Monsieur.”

Time had been passing, and to detain the girl longer, would incur the risk of having her confronted with Lajoie and his associate. This was something to be avoided at all hazards.

“If I let you go, Winona,” asked the Earl, “will you solemnly promise me that you will do as I tell you?”

The girl considered a moment, as if formulating in her mind the terms of an agreement. “You will kill Jean Lajoie?” she asked again.

“Trying to strike a bargain, eh? Not a very nice kind of a bargain, either. Listen now, Winona. If you will not pledge yourself to do as I say, I shall have to hand you over to the police and leave you to make your terms with them. This much, however, I may tell you; if you are seeking revenge upon Lajoie, you will probably be very well satisfied. Now, will you promise me or must I take you away with me?” The Earl moved as if to take her by the arm again.

“I will do as Monsieur say.”

“Can you read?”

Winona intimated that she could.

“Very well, then.”

Waldron took an envelope from his pocket, ripped it open, scribbled something on the back, pinned to it a visiting card and handed it to the girl.

“Here is my card and a note I want you to deliver to the Minister of Indian Affairs at Ottawa. He will relieve you of further responsibility in respect to the fate of your late friend, Jean Lajoie. Show the note to the first policeman you meet in the city and he will direct you where to go.”

Winona started to move off.

“Wait a minute,” called the Earl. “You may need a little money, perhaps. Here——.” He handed her a five-dollar bill. “When you have kept your word I will see that you are well taken care of and that you have everything you need. Remember you have nothing to fear. But if you try to trick me, or play false in any way, you will surely go to prison. You understand now?”

“Monsieur can trust me.”

“Very good. Be off, and quickly now.”

Waldron watched her until she had disappeared in the direction of the river where she had left a boat, borrowed that morning, without the asking, to carry her to the Ottawa shore.

“Come, Miss Isobel,” he said, when the young squaw was safely out of sight, “let us find our friends—The little traitoress devil.”

CHAPTER XXVI.
Metis Buys a Shirt—The War About to Break.

Metis wanted new clothes. That he had no money with which to pay for them, or that his credit at the Company store was exhausted, troubled him no more than it would have worried a certain type of fashionable lady with an overdrawn bank account and a check book that had still several vacant leaves to turn.

The deposit which would have left him with a comfortable balance, he had squandered for the joy of being drunk for a few hours. His score showed a debit of something like $14.27, and there was no prospect of wiping it out before the close of the next hunting season. Nevertheless, he walked up to the counter and asked for a shirt.

Now Hennessy, who happened to be in charge that day, knew as well as the Indian himself, that there was less than nothing on the books of the Company to the credit of Metis; but he also knew that the man had been swindled out of his property by the unscrupulous free lances; at the same time it would never do to grant favors with too free a hand.

"It's a shirt you want, eh, Metis?" he inquired, scrutinizing the faded, tattered and very dirty garment, which for many moons had endured continuously the stress of all kinds of weather upon the back of its owner. "Ye're gettin' to be mighty dressy in ye'er old age I'm thinkin'. Mebbe it's after a new squaw ye are, ye gay Beau Brummel?"

He drew an article of the blue flannel variety from a shelf and spread it out before his customer. "There ye are now. Here's something any vain old peacock would be proud of."

Metis examined first one sleeve and then the other, held the garment up to the light with both hands, turned it round a couple of times and threw it back with a deprecating shake of the head.

"Ah, what do ye expect?" said the Company clerk, well used to the pernickity whims of the Indian but feigning a sort of disgusted surprise.

"Just take another glimpse at the pockets and the pure ivory buttons—An' all for three beaver. Non, eh? Well then, what do you say to this? Here's one now that will save ye the bother of carrying a lantern 'o nights." He pulled out a piece of flaming material of anarchistic color from a nearby pile

and waved it like a toreador at a bull. “Get on to the collar and cuffs an’ the elegant silver buttons——, all thrown in for the same price.”

Metis shook his head without even deigning to look the garment over.

“No?” exclaimed Hennessy. “Dern me if ye ain’t the fussiest old weasel that ever went after a rabbit. I’ve got one more now, and you’ll travel all the way to Mattawa and back again before you’ll match the likes of it. Cast those little black beads of yours on this will ye.”

The Irishman then set out to view something that at first glance, might have passed, with the uninitiated, as a patch-work quilt in black and white, but which a close inspection would have shown to be a garment built to the measure of a seven-and-a-half foot, two hundred and fifty-pound giant.

Metis was impressed. He took up the copious folds and fondled them approvingly.

“How much?” he asked.

“A shirt like that would be costin’ ye more than five beaver at any post in the country; but we don’t want to be hard on ye. We’ll make it four for just this once.”

“Too much,” muttered the Indian.

“Too much? Too much is it? Ye auld skin-flint. Too much, indeed? Just look at the length of it and the breadth of it; and the genuine pearl buttons. An’ did ye ever see a shirt with a finer tail to it than that? Where would ye be findin’ the likes of it for twice the money. Too much, eh? Here now, slip it on once and ye’ll never be for takin’ it off again.”

Before Metis had time to offer further remonstrance, Hennessy had drawn the garment over his head. It drooped from his shoulders like a closed parachute; it dangled half way down his shoepacks, and the cuffs hid the tips of his bony fingers from sight with a couple of inches or more to spare.

Hennessy leaping over the counter, rolled them well back over the wrists.

“Just look at him, boys,” he said, turning to Achille, Trudeau and Réne Labelle, who were playing dominoes in the center of the room. “Did you ever see anything half so elegant? Now then, ye squint-eyed auld rooster, are ye satisfied?”

The men roared a generous laugh of approval which tickled the Indian immensely, and the sale was made.

“Hat, huh?” pleaded the emboldened Metis.

“A hat?” retorted Hennessy. “A hat, eh? It’s a whole trousseau ye’ll be wantin’ next. A hat will be costin’ ye three beaver more, makin’ it fourteen beaver you’ll be owin’ the Company, an’ not a skin to ye’er credit. Where have ye been takin’ all ye’re fur ye auld walrus?”

The reproachful glance the Irishman shot at Trudeau caused that gentleman some uneasiness.

“Monsieur Hennessy, you giv’ Metis de hat, eh?” he interceded, as though he had not grasped the significance of the look, and was actuated by innocent and philanthropic motives only.

“Ah! What’s it to you if he gets it or no, eh?”

“It’s good t’ing for Company to treat Indian fair,” suggested the Frenchman.

“Oh, is it? Well I’m thinkin’ that it’s not for the likes of you to be talkin’ about treatin’ the Indian fair. Mebbe now, ye wouldn’t mind if I was to mark it up agin you, eh?”

“Monsieur, I owe not’ing to Metis.”

“Dat’s so, Metis?” inquired the Irishman.

“Heem get all ma fur,” the Indian confessed dolefully.

“It’s a lie, Monsieur,” exclaimed Trudeau, turning very red and glancing savagely at the poor old red-skin.

“Well, mebbe it is an’ mebbe it ain’t,” Hennessy retorted, laying more stress upon the word “ain’t” than might have been considered altogether necessary in passing upon a mooted question.

“I’ll tell ye what, Metis,” he continued, “I’ll mark it agen ye this last time. But listen, now; if ye don’t bring in all the fur ye get next time, ye’ll be goin’ away without so much as a pair of pants to cover ye’er scrawney auld legs. Do ye mind?”

Having delivered himself of this expressive and terrible warning, Hennessy jammed a soft felt hat on the Indian’s head that fell well down below his ears.

“Here’s one now that was just made for ye.”

Metis grinned a hearty appreciation and started to walk away.

“Hauld on, ye prickly auld porcupine,” cried the Irishman. “Here’s an’ extra quill for ye, with the compliments of the Company.”

The Indian halted and Hennessy stuck a big red feather in the hat band.

With joy glinting from every wrinkle of his leathery face, Metis strode majestically to the door and almost ran into Lajoie.

“Hello, Metis, mon brave, all fix up, eh?” exclaimed the Voyageur. “You’re gettin’ big swell now.”

The Indian returned the salute with his customary grunt and passed out of the fort.

“The Factor is here, Tom?” inquired John anxiously.

“No. He’s gone up the river to meet the Abitibi canoe. We expect him in today. And great news for you, John,” said Hennessy, lowering his voice to a whisper. “Miss King and Miss Burton are coming down.”

Lajoie had just returned after a week at the Cree camp, near the Long Portage, where everything was in readiness for the first blow of the war. Ottumna now only waited the signal from him to fall upon the pioneers and free lances and to lay siege to the forts.

The arrival of the ladies was certainly great news but was most inopportune, and the Voyageur was plainly worried.

“You’re sure, Hennessy?” he asked earnestly.

“Have it from the Big Chief himself. It’s what took him up the river.”

“They should not come just now. You know that,” said John apprehensively.

“Of course, I know; but how was I to stop them? It seems that Miss King was bound to come, an’ the old man hasn’t an idea of what is happening. Some of the Crees were in here only a few days ago and held a friendly pow-wow with him. He’s as blind as a bat, John; and you may be sure I didn’t do a thing to open his eyes. And what is more, our great mutual friend, his Lordship of Waldron has been here already and has gone.”

The Voyageur looked up at the rafters and whistled softly.

“Waldron, eh? He went up the river with the Factor too, perhaps?”

“No, he got here after the Big Chief left and told me that while waiting for him to come back, he would go fishing up at Missinaibi Creek. He said he’d return in a couple of days.”

“If he don’t come back soon, he may never come back,” said the Voyageur.

“Softly, John, softly,” warned Hennessy, with a wag of the head in the direction of the two French Canadians, who to all appearances were intent upon their game but whose ears were always primed for any stray piece of gossip. John had been so eager for news himself that he had failed to notice them before. He turned now and greeted them.

“Bon jour, garçons.”

“Comment ça va Jean?” they cried in unison.

“Bien. Where you come from Trudeau, eh?”

“I come from Moosonee Lak an’ camp las’ night at Maidman Creek.”

“What news you bring, eh?”

“Not much. De water’s very low an’ de traders stay mostly up de river. Only Labelle here, I meet on de trail down. He’s come from Missinaibi.”

“You see any white men up dere, Labelle?” inquired the Voyageur, with a brave effort to smother any sign of anxiety.

“Joost two police an’ one English fellow,” the Frenchman replied indifferently. “Dey come up when I start me down.”

“You hear something about Winona when you’re dere, perhaps?”

“Bien oui. She’s come back wid de Englishman an’ de police. Dey find her somewhere I hear.”

“You sure, Labelle, eh?”

“I speak wid her myself.”

“Where she say she come from, eh?”

“She will not talk much, Monsieur. She’s tol’ me she’s get loss somewhere up de river.”

The Voyageur laughed heartily. “Winona lost on de river, and de police find her? I don’t think so, Labelle.”

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say: “I don’t believe so myself. You may take the story for what it is worth.”

News travels mysteriously and with extraordinary rapidity in the bush. Without newspapers; without telegraphs; without post offices; where there are no villages or centers of communication, and where shacks are twenty-

five miles apart, it spreads in some unknown way, as if the river had swept up the information along its winding course and distributed it at the mouth of every tributary and creek, to be carried inland to all the camps and cabins of the territory.

John and Hennessy had not proceeded far on their journey above Pembroke when they learned that a white man and a squaw had gone down the Ottawa to the Capital. At Mattawa they met Pierre Leduc, just sufficiently recovered from a prolonged debauch, to tell them that the man was Joe Latour.

Pierre was very sick and very contrite and confessed with tears in his eyes, that the letter confided to him by the Voyageur had been lost; he knew not how nor where.

At Temiscamingue they had fallen in with Felix Toussaud, the half-breed who had met Latour on his way down the river, and who confirmed their suspicion that the squaw he had with him was Winona.

The loss of the letter by Pierre Leduc was a source of great uneasiness, though Caspar Laflamme, who was camped on the Abitibi, had informed him that his first note had been duly handed to Francois Têtu. He was assured then that his message had been received by the Cree Chief, for Francois had never been known to fail.

Ottumna had followed instructions and all was ready when John met him at the camp, some distance inland from the Long Portage. There was no time to be lost. They must strike before the enemy was ready, and the Voyageur was paying a last and hurried visit to the Moose Factory post before lighting the torch which would set the rebellion in flame. The arrival of the women from Ottawa added a new and heavy responsibility, but it was too late to hesitate.

Hardly had John turned from Labelle in the store, when the signal shots from an approaching canoe were heard.

“That’s the packet. They’re getting in sooner than I expected. What had we better do, John?” Hennessy whispered.

“We’ll meet her and say nothing,” replied the Voyageur.

The Irishman took a gun from the rack and they went out to return the salute.

The two free lance traders played on in silence until they had finished a particularly exciting game. As Trudeau placed the winning domino, he

remarked to his companion that he had not said much to Lajoie.

“I do not tell him everything for sure,” Labelle replied with a knowing wink.

“What you know?” the other questioned eagerly.

“I hear dere’s going to be big trouble soon. Ottumna’s get his young men together.”

“Lajoie’s know dat I t’ink,” replied Trudeau.

“For sure he know. He’s come now from de Cree camp. Dat man’s joost sam’ as Indian.”

“Den de white man’s have poor chance.”

“Yes, dey start to kill perhaps right away. We make well to get out of here.”

“De police stop dem all right I t’ink; but we go quick you bet. De canoe she’s all fix, eh?”

“Yes, an’ de pack an’ de trap an’ everyting. I leave dem down by de point.”

The men did not even wait to gather up the dominoes but pushed back their chairs and started for the door. As they passed through the gate of the stockade they met the Chief Factor coming in with Lucille and Isobel, followed by John and Hennessy.

As the little party entered the trading room, Isobel stared curiously at the canoes and skins hanging from the rafters, at the shelves stocked with their motley collection of merchandise, the packs of raw pelts on the counters and the crude furniture and fittings. It was easy to see that she was not greatly impressed and Lucille felt rather hurt.

“So here we are at last,” she exclaimed, “at the far-famed post of Moose Factory.”

It was not what she said but how she said it that roused the inward resentment of her cousin.

“Yes,” she answered, “one of the oldest, if not the oldest settlement in all America. I hope you are not disappointed. It is not London nor is this a house at the Capital, but it is my dear old home. I love the Moose for its woods and its rivers. To me the roar of the rapids is music and the scent of the pines is perfume.”

“Now young ladies,” said the Factor, interrupting, “follow me and I will show you to your quarters.” He led the way to the living apartments. “You may find things a bit rough, Isobel?” he added, “but they are the best we have and you are welcome my dear.”

He disappeared through the entrance and Isobel followed; Lucille, however, stopped short on the threshold, and closing the door softly, turned about and faced John and Hennessy.

CHAPTER XXVII.
At the Fork Upon the Trail—What a Woman Who Loves Will Dare.

Lucille stood for a second, her back to the door, her hand clinging to the knob. A thick coating of tan hid the pallor of her cheeks, but it was plain that she was greatly agitated.

"John," she cried, "I must speak to you at once."

The Voyageur started towards her and she met him half way. Hennessy turned as if to go, but she called him back.

"You may stay, Mr. Hennessy. Indeed I may need your help."

"Sure you can count on all that I can give you, mam," the Irishman answered, standing at a respectful distance.

"It is something I want John to do. He is hard to persuade."

"I will do everything possible, Lucille," said the Voyageur tenderly. "Le Bon Dieu, he knows that."

"Can you guess why I am here?" she asked quickly.

"Non, Mademoiselle, only I wish you do not come now."

"That is just as you greeted me once before, John. Now tell me why."

"Because there is danger, Lucille, great danger. You know what I tell you down the river?"

"Oh yes, I remember only too well; and we must not waste words when time is so precious. Tell me I am not too late. You can stop this rebellion?"

The face of the Voyageur clouded and the two hands he had held out to the girl fell to his side. For a moment he looked like a man who had been suddenly turned into a statue.

"It is too late, Lucille," he answered deliberately. "No longer can I hold Ottumna. We wait already too long time."

The Scottish fighting spirit was aroused in the girl and the natural color flashed back to her cheeks. She was out to conquer the apparently indomitable will of the man, and in her eyes shone the determination to win.

"It cannot be too late to prevent what has not yet begun," she retorted. "You can stop it and you must."

The Voyageur stared at her. He had never before known how beautiful she could be, but he did not waver; neither did he speak.

“You are the only man who can prevent this thing,” she continued. “Why, why will you fly in the face of certain destruction? You cannot win. The Indians will murder every other white man in the district; and then—— then it will be your turn.”

“You tell me this, Lucille,” he replied after a moment’s pause, “and yet you come and you bring your cousin here?”

Lucille saw now that she could not frighten this man into submission.

“I came only because I want to save you from yourself,” she pleaded. “I am going to save you. Isobel is here because Lord Waldron offered to take her hunting. I tried to dissuade her but she insisted, and of course I could not tell her the truth. I am here to warn you, it may be for the last time, and to tell you, John, that you have been betrayed.”

The Voyageur started, and for a instant there came to his face an expression so strange that it terrified the girl. It was like that of a man gone mad. It faded, however, as quickly as it came.

“Betrayed, Lucille?——Betrayed?” he gasped. “You did not——? Non, non, you cannot make me believe that——And yet,” he added, so softly that she scarcely heard him, “there is no one else who know.”

“I kept your secret, John; of that you may be sure,” she answered reproachfully. “But it is out. Where is the Indian girl?”

“Ah, Winona!——I forget me,” exclaimed the Voyageur, as if dazed. “For two months she has been lost; but she come back with the Englishman and the police.”

“Waldron and the police. I feared as much. You do not know then that Winona followed you all the way to Ottawa, and mistaking Lord Waldron for you, almost succeeded in knifing him? She told your secret and she gave him a letter written by you to her father the Cree Chief.”

The Voyageur smiled grimly. “Now I know why the police are here,” he said. “And Lord Waldron, what did he do?”

“He is an English officer and he did what I suppose he considered to be his duty. He notified the Government. You would have been arrested at the Capital but that you and Mr. Hennessy had disappeared. Why did you go off in that unceremonious way, without a word, even to me? It was not like you, John.”

“Don’t blame John, mam,” the Irishman interjected. “Sure it was I that took him away. He was so crazy to go to you that he came near killin’ me before I could stop him.”

“Then what have you to say for this extraordinary conduct, Mr. Hennessy?”

“Plaze, mam, an’ if you’ll be wantin’ to do me a favor, you won’t be askin’ me now, for it would take a long time to tell. There’ll be time again and to spare; and by the grace o’ God, it will all come out for the best. And maybe now mam, you would be havin’ more to tell us about his lordship?”

“I argued with Waldron,” she answered, “but it was to no purpose. He is just as stubborn as you, John. I besought——I pleaded, but he would not listen. At last I threatened him and we quarreled. He is in the district now.”

Lucille glanced anxiously from John to the door, as though she expected and feared that the Earl might suddenly come upon them.

“He told you, perhaps, something I say to him about you?” the Voyageur asked apprehensively.

“No, John. He mentioned nothing of what passed between you.”

“Then he is not such a bad fellow as I thought, Lucille.”

“He is an honorable gentleman, John, but like all men of character—just like yourself, John——he has an overwhelming sense of duty——. Oh that terrible, terrible duty, which robs a man of his finer impulses and turns him traitor to those he loves the best. I hate the very word.”

She struggled hard to hold them back, but a few tears trickled down her cheek, the sight of which cut deep into the heart of the Voyageur. He took the unresisting hands of the girl and pressed them to his lips.

“I thank you, Lucille,” he said. “You are indeed my friend. I owe you much. Mon Dieu, if I could only do as you ask, I would indeed be glad. But it is too late——It is too late. I cannot desert now those poor people. Your father, he does not know, perhaps?”

“Not yet but very soon he must. Letters for him were in the mails that came in our canoe.——I——I got them John——You must not ask me how ——but I got them.”

She drew two crumpled official envelopes from the bosom of her dress and handed them to him. He studied the hand writing and inscriptions and

glanced inquiringly at Lucille. She signified that he might do with them as he would, and he broke the seals.

The first letter was dated “Ottawa, August 20th.” It read:

> *Dear Mr. King*:
>
> You sent the wrong man to Ottawa. We have full information that the Indians are rising and that your emissary Lajoie is in league with the Cree chief, Ottumma. The proof is in his own writing.
>
> I have notified the Government, which is sending a force of police and militia to the district. In the meantime, I leave to join Inspector Galwey at Mattice, and hope to meet you in due course at Moose Factory.
>
> WALDRON.

Lajoie refolded the paper and returned it to its broken envelope.

The second letter bore the date of August 23rd, and had been sent from Winnipeg, via wire and courier, to Abitibi. It ran as follows:

> Colin King Esq.
> Chief Factor,
> Moose Factory.
>
> *Sir*:—News has reached us that the Indians in your district threaten an uprising, and that at least one of your men at the Post is implicated.
>
> Take Jean Lajoie into custody and provide every precaution against a surprise.
>
> T. R. BAGOT,
> Commissioner, H.B.C.

“But Waldron is already here,” exclaimed the Voyageur, as soon as he had finished reading.

“Yes. You see his letter was written ten days before he left Ottawa. I knew about it, and I——well——I need not say more——You have it now. The letter to Commissioner Bagot was delivered by special messenger at the Abitibi post, and——well——You have that, too.”

John’s whole bearing changed and he turned abruptly to Hennessy.

“You hear what I read, Tom. Now take these letters and go to Ottumna on the Missinaibi trail. Tell him what you know. Say to him also that I go tonight to the Long Portage and will join him at the camp. There is a canoe at the point.”

“I’m off, John,” replied the Irishman, as he took the papers. “The music and the dance are about to begin. Good-bye, Miss King.” Hennessy wheeled about and passed out through the open door.

The Voyageur turned again to Lucille.

"I am glad, very glad to see you," he said. "You are brave and I thank you with all my heart."

"Tell me, John, what is really going to happen?" she asked tearfully.

"We are going to fight to drive the white man from the bush which he would destroy. But you need not fear, Lucille, I will save the Post."

The courage which so far had sustained the girl began to ebb all at once as she realized the hopelessness of trying to persuade this resolute man.

"They will kill you, John," she sobbed. "Oh, they will kill you."

"Perhaps; but the people will live after me, and there will be peace. Some of us must die, Lucille, that the others may live. It will soon be over, and our people will be happy on their land that we save for them. Why you cry, Lucille? I promise we will not harm you, and your father also will be safe. If all men were like him and if the Company were free to make the law, there would be no cause to fight. But those rich men who already have so much, they tell the Government what they must do, and they do not trouble about the poor red man in the bush. Yes, they will kill me, perhaps, but I have a soul that will not die, and so I care not me."

"You do not understand, John," the girl pleaded. "You do not understand. When you are dead even your soul cannot help your people; but if you live you can do much for them. I want you to live, John—— Oh, I want you to live. For their sake, for your own sake, even for my sake, will you not go to Ottumna and make him wait? It cannot be for long."

"I have told you, Lucille, that no longer can I hold Ottumna."

"Then if he will not listen to you, leave him. Let him fight his own battles. You are a white man, John."

"You forget, Lucille, that Ottumna and his people have always been my friends. I never leave my friends."

"I, too, am your friend, but you would leave me?"

Great beads of perspiration appeared on the forehead of the Voyageur. The struggle was a much harder one than he had even thought to fight.

"Non, non, Lucille," he answered. "I would not leave you always. If they let me live, I come back to you again."

“They will not let you come back,” she cried. “I shall lose you, John. Oh, I shall lose you.”

To the mind of Lucille came a vision of dreadful things that threatened. The Voyageur drew her close to him, until her head rested upon his shoulder and she moistened it with her tears.

“I did not know you care so much,” he faltered. “I am not like your people. I am rough man—a man of the woods.”

“The woods to me have always been my home. I was born here. I love the woods.”

“You would like that it be always your home?” he asked tenderly.

There was no answer; only a gentle sobbing, and the man felt the woman’s heart throb against his own.

“And the man of the woods——? You——you——”

Lucille did not wait for him to complete the broken sentence.

“The man of the woods——?” she cried. “The man of the woods——? Yes, *I love him too*.”

The Voyageur enfolded the girl in his arms.

“Oh, Lucille, Lucille, I cannot speak. The words they will not come. How can I tell you what is in my heart? It is so full, I fear me it will break. You are an angel, le Bon Dieu, send to make for me a heaven in this wilderness. Oh God! I hope that if I dream, you never let me wake.”

“And yet it may be but a dream, John,” she answered, “and the awakening may come but all too soon. You would not kill my happiness ——my life, even as you would destroy your own? You stand now at the fork upon the trail, and you must choose between the Indian and me.” She raised her head and looked up into his eyes. “I am pleading for your life, John,” she cried, “and for my own.”

“And you would have me break my faith, Lucille? Ah, if I could lie to those poor people, I could be false to you. You know, that I could never be.”

While they had stood, forgetful of the time that passed and all about them, the door to the living quarters had opened and the Factor had been standing, a mute spectator to much of this scene. A man quick to anger, his face had grown livid. Had the Voyageur struck him he could not have been more astonished nor more infuriated.

“Lucille!” he called, as soon as he could trust himself to speak coherently.

The girl broke from the arms of her lover and met his furious gaze unflinchingly.

“Father,” she answered quietly.

“May I——May I inquire the meaning of this?” The voice of the Factor began with a choke and then ran to a pitch so high that it broke upon the final word.

“Why ask me, Father? You have seen and heard.”

“I have, eh? Then, by God! I refuse to believe my senses. Go to your room.”

Lucille did not move.

“You heard me, I think. Go to your room,” he commanded, taking her roughly by the arm.

John would have interfered but Lucille stopped him with a motion of her hand and moved towards the door. There she turned and watched the two men sullenly facing each other.

“And what have *you* to say?” the Factor yelled. “You damned offcast; you foundling offspring of an unknown vagabond. I took you to my home; I treated you as a son; and you would put a knife into my back, eh? You dare to make love to my daughter, you mongrel upstart?”

The hands of the Voyageur doubled into a pair of fists, like the gnarled knots of an oak tree. Red hot blood rushed to his cheeks and the purple veins at his temples threatened to burst. Yet he heard the Factor through without a move; nor did he attempt to answer him.

His silence only aggravated the fury of the man, now beside himself with rage.

“Why don’t you speak, you stray dog? You expect me to stand for his?”

His hand sought the holster at his belt and whipped out a six chambered old-fashioned Colt; but Lucille saw the motion and screaming, reached his side in time to clutch the leveled arm, and the shot, aimed straight at the Voyageur’s heart, went wild.

John stood quite still, and the silence that followed the report, seemed to have lasted a full sixty seconds, before the Factor spoke again.

“I didn’t kill ye,” he blurted. “I’m glad I didn’t, damn ye. But get ye out of here quick and never come back. By God! if ye do I won’t be answerable for the consequences. Ye hear me now——. Get out.”

“I will not go, Monsier King,” Lajoie answered calmly.

“By God! Ye would defy me, eh?”

Again the Factor made as if to level the pistol, but before he could raise his arm, the Voyageur had wrenched it from his hand.

“You do not think what you do, Monsieur,” he said. “You are an old man. You have been good to me. I will not harm you. I love your daughter. She will marry me.”

“You hear what he says, Lucille,” roared the Factor. “Tell him to be gone before I am again tempted to commit murder.”

“I have nothing to say,” the girl replied. “John has spoken for me.” She had moved to his side and stood there as she spoke.

“He has, eh? Then, by God! ye’ll both get out, bag and baggage.”

“We will not go, Monsieur. You do not know to whom you speak,” replied the Voyageur.

He broke the Factor’s gun across his knee, and when its five cartridges and one empty shell had spilled upon the floor, he handed it back to him. The man, still crazed with anger, took it mechanically from his hand.

“I think I recognize Jean Lajoie *the voyageur*,” he sneered.

“I may be a voyageur, Monsieur King, but I am not *Jean Lajoie*.”

“Not Lajoie? I suppose ye’ll be telling me next that my name isn’t King, that I am not the Factor, and that I cannot send you from the country, eh?”

“You are the Factor. You can send me from the country if you like, Monsieur; but I am not *Jean Lajoie*.”

“Then who the devil are you?”

“I am John——” He got no further with the name, for at that instant the form of Waldron appeared in the doorway, followed by Inspector Galwey of the Mounted Police, and two constables. Between them walked Hennessy, a prisoner.

“We’ve got him, Inspector,” cried the Earl, indicating Lajoie. “This is the man.”

"Very good, sir," replied the officer; and, turning to the constables, he commanded: "Take him in charge."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Trial—An Astounding Confession—"My God! You Too, Lucille."

The Factor was still panting with the excitement of his altercation with the Voyageur, and the sudden entrance of the police with Hennessy and a seemingly very officious stranger, followed immediately by the arrest of Lajoie, did not tend to abate it; but just as he was wont to give way to violent bursts of temper, when he felt no need of restraint, he could command marvelous self-control when he considered the circumstances justified the effort.

The formalities of the arrest had taken but a second, and the Earl turned to make himself known.

"You are Mr. Colin King of the Hudson's Bay Company, I believe," he began, and the Factor acknowledged the identification.

"We ought to know each other, Mr. King. My name is Waldron, Lord Waldron of Devon."

The Factor bowed and shook the hand of the Earl cordially.

"Indeed, my daughter has made me quite familiar with you. I had not the pleasure of meeting your father, when in England some years ago, but I have the honor of knowing your uncle, Sir James Langdon, our Governor quite well."

He turned to find Lucille, but the girl, who was in no mood to meet the Earl, had retired precipitately on his entrance. She was at this moment standing behind the partly closed door of the living quarters, where she could at least hear what was going on. Her father called to her, and as she realized that a meeting was inevitable, she decided to face the scene at once and be done with it.

"And you too here, Lucille?" exclaimed Waldron with affected surprise, as she opened the door and came forward slowly.

The meeting was fully as awkward for him as for her, and he had hoped that she would have avoided it. There was nothing to do now however, but to carry on as politely as circumstances would permit.

They had had a serious quarrel before the Earl left Ottawa, on account of Lajoie, and she had broken her engagement; but he still had hope that, when the storm had blown over, she would reconsider. That her interest in the Voyageur was anything more than she might have shown for old Mucquois, had he been living, he did not for a moment imagine.

He held out both hands and went forward to meet her, with all his old-time effusiveness; nor was the impulse less sincere because of the fear back of it, that it might not be well received.

Lucille stood quite still, her arms by her side, while Lajoie looked on wondering, yet confident in his great triumph. To what was to happen afterwards, he did not give a thought. He was oblivious to all but the immediate present.

"I do not wish to renew our acquaintance, Lord Waldron," Lucille said quietly.

The Earl had not expected a very cordial greeting, but the icy coldness of this reception cut him to the quick.

"Forgive me, Lucille," he pleaded, "I hoped that you would have had time to forget, or at least to overlook to some extent, that little unpleasantness in Ottawa. I am very sorry."

"The mischief you have done, my lord, makes forgiveness impossible," answered the girl.

She turned as she spoke and seated herself in a far corner of the room to wait developments.

The Earl was stunned for the moment but he was a good soldier.

"Have it as you will then," he replied, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "I cannot help it. I had expected, sir," he added, addressing the Factor, "that this, my first and long expected visit to Moose Factory would have been quite of a different nature. I had thought to have been welcomed as a friend, but I fear now that it must be taken merely as an official call. I presume you received my letter from Ottawa and the notification from the headquarters of the Company?"

Waldron knew very well that these papers had miscarried, because they had been found on the person of Hennessy, and he asked the question merely that he might whet the edge of the surprise to be sprung upon the unsuspecting Factor.

“I have received no such letters,” the latter replied, “but there is a packet due today via Missinaibi.” King was very much mystified and somewhat alarmed at the extraordinary turn of events, but he was careful to keep his feelings to himself.

“My letter should have been delivered to you before this,” continued the Earl. “I mailed it from the Capital a month or six weeks ago.”

“It has not reached me, Lord Waldron. But may I ask now, how we come to be honored by the presence of the police?”

“It is quite evident, sir, that you speak the truth about the letters,” returned the Earl. “I am sorry to say there is trouble ahead of you, Mr. King.”

“We usually couple it with visits of the police.”

“Is it possible, Mr. King, that you do not know that the Indians of your district are about to run amuck?”

The Factor showed just a trace of agitation. “It is news to me, my lord. There was some fear of an uprising last spring, but we caught the trouble in time and I had come to believe that it had blown over. I know of no immediate danger.”

“Then you must have been kept in the dark by your trusted lieutenants here. It may surprise you, sir, to learn that you have been harboring a couple of rebels at the post.”

The purpose of the police now began to dawn upon the mind of the Factor and he looked in astonishment from one to the other of the prisoners.

“Not Lajoie and Hennessy? You have made a mistake. I——I——I——cannot believe it.”

“Then I fear sir, we must proceed to convince you.” The Earl glanced significantly at the Inspector.

“What have you to say, John?” demanded the Factor.

“You see, Monsieur, I am a prisoner,” the Voyageur answered. “Let these gentlemen explain.”

“Don’t you belave them, sir,” exclaimed Hennessy. “I’ve told them the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and if any man every makes me say anything else, it’s a lie, Mr. King.”

“I have been instructed by the Department to apprehend these men, sir,” said the Inspector, speaking for the first time.

“I think I can assure you, sir, that a serious mistake has been made,” replied the Factor. “These men have been with me since they were lads, and I know them too well to credit any such charge. I can give you my word, sir.”

“Very good,” returned the police officer curtly. “Then we’ll throw some light upon the facts and you may possibly alter your opinion of them. I am here, sir, to hold an inquiry. It will be merely a preliminary hearing, you understand. Lord Waldron will prefer certain charges and the men may tell their story. If I am convinced that the charges are not sufficiently sustained, I will turn the prisoners over to you; otherwise I will take them with me.”

It required no little effort on the part of the Factor to hide his emotion, but he succeeded fairly well.

“I need not tell you, Mr. Galwey, that I am more than astonished. But of course you have the authority and are quite free to make the investigation as thorough as you deem necessary. If I can be of assistance, I am at your service, sir.”

“Very good, Mr. King, and thank you, sir. Unfortunately we have some rather disagreeable disclosures to make. Since the letters to you have miscarried, you may be still further surprised to learn that the Government has taken so serious a view of the situation, that a force of militia has been ordered to co-operate with the police in this district. Now if you will permit me, sir, we will proceed with the investigation.”

The officer seated himself at the table, raked the dominoes left by the trappers into a drawer, and drew a memorandum book and pencil from his pocket.

“You are ready, Lord Waldron?” he began, without further ado.

“Ready, sir,” responded the Earl.

Galwey entered and read aloud the preamble to the proceedings.

Moose Factory, August 20.

Investigation held by me, Inspector Galwey, Northwest Mounted Police, this day, of charges preferred by Henry Rothwell Langdon, Earl of Waldron—

When Lord Waldron had confirmed his name and title, the Inspector turned to the prisoners.

“Your name in full,” he asked of the Voyageur.

“Jean Lajoie.”

“No middle name?”

“No, Monsieur.”

“Very good. And yours?” he inquired of the Irishman.

“Thomas Patrick Hennessy.”

“Very good.”

The officer made a further entry, repeating the words as he wrote.

> “——against Jean Lajoie and Thomas Patrick Hennessy, employees, Hudson’s Bay Company, Moose Factory, charging conspiracy to rebel against the Crown.”

“You may now proceed, Lord Waldron,” he added, nodding to the Earl.

“I charge that this man Lajoie has conspired with Ottumna, chief of the Cree Indians, to rebel against Her Majesty the Queen.”

“——against Her Majesty the Queen,” repeated the Inspector, as he entered the charge.

“That he is inciting the said Ottumna and his tribe to take up arms against the Crown. I have in my possession, certain documents which prove ——”

“Very good, Lord Waldron, we will take up the evidence later.—— Now as to Hennessy?”

“I also charge that Thomas Patrick Hennessy is conspiring with Lajoie to the same intent.”

“—— to the same intent,” repeated the officer, completing the entry. “Very good. How did you come to learn of this conspiracy?”

“An Indian girl attacked me with a knife—”

“Very good. Where were you at the time?”

“I was at a spot on the Gatineau River, near Ottawa.”

“Very good. You might please relate the circumstances.”

“I was seated upon a log. The girl approached me from the rear.”

“Very good. Were you alone?”

“No, sir, a lady, Miss Isobel Burton was with me.”

“I understand,” said the Inspector, addressing the Factor, “that Miss Burton is now at the Post.”

“Yes sir.”

“Very good. Will you kindly ask her to appear, Mr. King?”

The Factor went in search of his niece, and as soon as he returned with her, the investigation proceeded.

“State now what happened, Lord Waldron.”

“The girl crept up behind me and raised a knife to strike. Miss Burton saw her in time to warn me, and I caught her by the wrist.”

“Very good. What then?”

“I questioned her and she admitted that she had mistaken me for Lajoie, with whom she was infatuated, and whom she had come to kill.”

“Very good. And then?”

“She informed me that she was the daughter of Ottumna, the Cree chief, and that Lajoie had agreed to join her father in an uprising against the Government. She gave me a letter addressed by Lajoie to her father, substantiating what she had said.”

“Very good. Have you that letter?”

“Yes sir.” The Earl made a hurried search of his coat pocket but had some difficulty in finding the paper. “——At least I think I have it here,” he added, “though it may be in my bag.”

“Very good,” replied the officer, anxious to proceed with as little delay as possible. “You may present it later. Now, Miss Burton,” he continued, addressing that young lady who was plainly very nervous, “You are Miss Isobel Burton, I believe?”

“Yes sir.”

“Very good. You have heard Lord Waldron testify that he was attacked by an Indian girl, who claimed to be the daughter of the Cree chief; that you witnessed the attack; that she implicated this man Lajoie in a conspiracy, with her father to rebel against the Government. Do you confirm his statement?”

“Yes sir.”

“Very good.”

The Inspector stopped his questioning to make further notations in his book. When he had completed the entries, he again addressed the Earl.

“Now, Lord Waldron, what do you charge, specifically, against Hennessy?”

“That he was closely associated with Lajoie; that they disappeared together suddenly upon the arrival of the Indian girl, and that my suspicions of his connection with the affair were confirmed when I met him on the way to the Cree camp, less than an hour ago.”

“Very good. I made the arrest, and two letters, addressed to Colin King, Chief Factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company, were found upon his person.”

The Inspector produced the documents and handed them to the Factor.

“Here are your missing letters, Mr. King.”

The Factor rubbed his eyes to assure himself that he was not dreaming, and proceeded to read them hurriedly.

“Step forward, Hennessy,” the Inspector commanded, and the Irishman and his guard advanced a few feet from the line-up.

“How did you come into possession of these letters?”

Thomas Patrick, finding himself in a tight place, struggled valiantly to effect a breach and began a series of manoeuvres to gain time.

“What letters do you mean, sir,” he asked vacantly and with unblushing innocence.

“What letters do you suppose I mean?” snapped the Inspector.

“Aw now, it might be perhaps the letters from my brother Terrance, and from Nora O’Flynn, me first cousin, the prettiest girl in all Ireland, that were in me pocket the time you found it convenient to search me without the askin’—— Or maybe, you’d like me to tell——”

“You know very well what letters I have reference to,” interrupted the Inspector. “I mean the letters addressed to Mr. King, the Chief Factor, Answer me now. Where did you get them and how?”

Hennessy was making a desperate effort to keep his end of the investigation alive long enough to think up some story that would fit the awkward hole the officer was digging for him.

“Sure you might give me a little time, Mr. Galwey. And I hate to trouble you with such a long story. It’s something I’ll have to explain——”

“Then explain and be quick about it.”

“Ain’t I tryin’ to explain; but I’m fearin’ ye’re that distrustful you won’t understand. Maybe now, ye have no faith in dreams, Mr. Galwey? And perhaps ye don’t belave in fairies; an’ ye’ll think I’m only lying to ye when I tell ye the truth, that it was a tiny little elf that laid them on my pillow one night when I was fast asleep.”

“See here, Hennessy,” exclaimed the Inspector, “we’ve had quite enough of that. No more trifling now. Where did you find those letters?”

“I didn’t find them Mr. Galwey.”

“Very good. You didn’t find them. Then who gave them to you?”

“ ‘Very good,’ did you say, sir? Faith if ye were askin’ me, I should say it was *damn bad*, Mr. Galwey.”

“Don’t be insolent, Hennessy. You’ll gain nothing by it, so you might just as well make up your mind to answer my questions. I won’t stand for any more nonsense. Who gave you those letters?”

“*I did.*” It was the Voyageur who spoke.

“Very good. Now, Lajoie, who gave them to you?”

“They came in the mail, Monsieur, and I took them,” he replied unhesitatingly.

“Very good. Then you confess to robbing the mail?”

The Inspector tilted his chair back, and gently tapping the table with his pencil, smiled complacently at the Voyageur while waiting an answer but when John was about to speak, he stopped him.

“I must warn you,” he said, “that anything you say now may be used against you later. I will not press the question. Your silence will be quite sufficient for the purpose of this investigation.”

The Voyageur paused as though weighing carefully the consequences of what he might say.

“I stole them,” he answered quietly, and the Inspector called upon the people present to note the reply. He was about to enter the confession in his minutes, when Lucille interrupted.

“He is not telling the truth, sir,” she said.

“I am not surprised, Miss King, but how do you happen to know?”

“I know, because *I gave them to him*.”

“My God!” cried the Factor. “You too, Lucille?”

CHAPTER XXIX.
A Lame Defense—The Sacrifice—The End.

Lucille's astonishing confession came like an explosion of shrapnel.

It was several minutes before the excitement had cooled sufficiently to allow the proceedings to continue.

"You place me in a most embarrassing position, Miss King," said the Inspector. "Why did you do this thing?"

"Because I thought I could prevent the rebellion, and to save Jean Lajoie."

"You resorted to a most extraordinary method to do so," retorted the officer.

"There are circumstances when extraordinary methods are necessary," she answered.

"Possibly; yet in this instance it would seem that you considered the man of more consequence than the country."

"I take the blame, Monsieur," cried the Voyageur. "Miss King do all she can to stop me. She only show me those papers. I keep them."

"Very good. Now we will hear what the lady has to say."

Lucille saw that John was already convicted, but she continued to defend him as well as she could. She told of his mission to the Capital; of the efforts he had made to secure the passage of the Indian bill, which would have put an end to all the trouble; of how he had warned the Government of the necessity for haste, which it did not heed; of how he had held the Indians off till it was impossible to hold them longer. She confessed that she had known of the Voyageur's intentions before he had left Ottawa, and how, when she saw that there was no hope of further delay, she had purloined the papers and shown them to him, in the vain hope that he might see the folly of proceeding, and influence the Cree chief to wait, or failing in this, to withdraw from further connection with the whole affair.

It was a lame defense, and it did not require a man as shrewd as Inspector Galwey, to perceive that the girl had been prompted solely by tender regard for the man. He sympathized with her and he sincerely envied the prisoner such a champion; but he was a police officer and duty was duty.

“I am more than sorry, Miss King,” he said, “but I fear I must also include you in these charges.”

At a signal from him, one of the constables stepped forward and would have made an arrest on the spot, had not the Factor walked between him and the girl.

It was not the domineering, autocratic Chief Factor who spoke, but a man crushed and humbled by sudden and overwhelming misfortune. In all the Northern and Northwestern territory, no man had ever borne a sturdier reputation for courage, for honest dealing and loyalty. His command over his people had always been so thorough, and his justice so swift and impartial, that it was only at rare intervals indeed the police had been called upon to help. He was pleading now for his honor—for everything that was sacred to him; and he begged that he might be held responsible for his daughter.

“You give me your word, sir,” inquired the Inspector, “that you will produce the young lady when wanted?”

“I do, sir.”

“Very good, Mr. King; you may then consider her under arrest and in your charge. And, by the way, sir, do you know of any other letters in the last mail, that might possibly have a bearing upon this investigation?”

The Factor had been too preoccupied, since its arrival, to give a thought to the mail, and at the Inspector’s suggestion, retired to look over his letters.

When he had gone Waldron intimated that it might be wise to search the prisoner for further incriminating evidence, and the officer acquiesced. One of the constables, detailed to go through his pockets, found a long envelope, much the worse of wear, and without troubling to ask for authority, handed it over to the Earl, who, prompted by curiosity, glanced hurriedly at the contents and requested permission to look the papers over. The Inspector, who was busy with his entries, nodded and there was complete silence for a time.

Finally the Factor returned with a letter, the only one which could possibly have been of interest to the police, and laid it upon the table. It was addressed to Jean Lajoie and bore the Ottawa post mark. The officer was still busy and did not trouble at the moment to open it.

When he had finished writing he looked up inquiringly at the Earl, who by this time had read through the documents taken from John’s pocket, and was standing very straight and very white, looking hard at the Voyageur. The

latter stood the searching gaze as long as he could, and then suddenly became interested in a spot upon the floor.

It was evident to all the others that some more damaging evidence had been discovered, and the Inspector stretched himself back in his chair to wait what he expected was coming. It must have been something of more than ordinary importance, because the Earl was very slow in beginning to speak.

"Inspector Galwey," he said at last. "I withdraw my charges against these men."

Everyone stared in amazement at the speaker, except the Voyageur, who kept his eyes upon the floor.

"Withdraw your charges, Lord Waldron?" exclaimed the officer. "It is too late. You can't withdraw——. And by the way, sir, where is the letter to the Cree Chief, which you promised to produce in evidence?"

Before answering, the Earl felt in his pocket again and drew forth a scrap of paper. From his vest he produced a match, which he lighted upon the sole of his boot, and deliberately set fire to the letter.

"This is all I have, sir," he remarked quietly, laying some particles of blackened ashes on the table. "You may make the best of it."

The Inspector sprang to his feet.

"I don't understand you, sir," he shouted.

"Possibly," replied the Earl. "Then let me explain."

The officer and the audience stirred uneasily, and with suppressed excitement, waited to hear what he had to say.

"I have just learned," said the Earl of Waldron, speaking very slowly and holding the documents in his hand before him, "that several years ago, a young Englishman, a remittance man, you might have called him, came to this district. He married a French Canadian woman. Then he left her, and the woman died after bearing him a son. The man returned to England, married again, and by jugglery of fortune, became an English peer. Several years later he also died. That man was my father. I am his second son.

"The proof of what I say lies in these papers in my hand. One of them confirms the first marriage of my father.——And now, will you allow me to introduce to you, *John Robert Langdon, Earl of Waldron*?"

He had walked over to Lajoie and laid a hand upon his shoulder. The Voyageur, who during this dramatic scene, had not raised his eyes from the floor, now looked into his brother's face and smiled.

"*Lord Waldron!*" gasped everyone, almost simultaneously.

"Yes, Waldron of Devon," replied the young man, advancing to Lucille. "The fairest sportsman who ever played a game and won."

The Factor had difficulty in bringing himself to realize what had happened.

"Is this true, John?" he asked faintly.

"It is true," replied the Voyageur. "This man is my brother."

"How long have you known this? Why have you not told us before?"

"I have known now many months, Monsieur, but I would not tell you, because I am glad to stay here and work for the Company and for the red man who is my friend. Only once I came near to speak, when you call me 'upstart'; when you say I have no right to love your daughter. I do not want the name. It has always been yours, my brother, you can keep it now."

"God knows I would like to oblige you, John," replied the erstwhile Earl. "But I cannot keep what was never rightfully mine, nor accept from you what is not in your power to give.

"You taught me a lesson, John, that day upon the Gatineau; when I was rude and you were kind. You could have ruined me. But you did not speak. And now, you would let them take you to prison upon my accusation, with the word unsaid, if I had not ransacked it from your pocket.

"And you have won a wife, John, from me; but all the while you have played fair against great odds. I am a Langdon, just as you are, and we Langdons can fight and play, and win and lose, like gentlemen."

Isobel, who had been greatly disturbed by the extraordinary turn of events, had heard as much as she could bear. She broke down completely and cried bitterly.

The Honorable Henry Langdon, as he must hereafter be called, felt in a measure responsible for her discomforture and approaching, spoke as kindly as he could.

"Forgive me, Miss Burton," he said "Fate, as you can see, has been against me, nor has it been altogether kind to you. I hope you will not think hardly of me, nor blame me for what you must also see was all an

unfortunate mistake. Distressing things will happen, despite the best intentions, you know. Believe me, I am very sorry."

But the girl turned from him without a word, buried her face in her handkerchief and abruptly left the room.

While all this was going on, Inspector Galwey sat patiently, immovable in his chair. The situation, apart from its exciting climax, had changed, so far as he was concerned, only in that it made his duty the more painful for even police officers and public executioners have hearts that often beat behind a very thin veneering of steel.

After the door had closed upon the bent and sobbing figure of Isobel, Langdon faced about and glanced inquiringly at the representative of the law.

"Very good," replied the Inspector to the question implied by the look. "But how about these charges?"

"By George, that's so. How about them?"

"Yes, that was my question. How about them?"

"You have entered them in the name of Waldron, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Well, you can say that the Waldron who made them turned out to be an imposter. It would cloud the issue rather effectively, I think."

"Very good, but the trouble is, sir, that the Department objects to reports shrouded in mystery."

"But what else can you do? Even if the Earl of Waldron brought the charges, he can hardly be made to incriminate himself by substantiating them, can he? It's a mix-up, which I think you will agree, should be disentangled in some other way."

"Very good, Lord Waldron——."

"Langdon, sir, is my name."

"Very good, Mr. Langdon. Suppose we make a fresh beginning, and start another investigation?"

"All right, if you can find anyone willing and able to make fresh charges."

“Oh, the old charges will stand, I think. I have merely to substitute the name ‘Langdon’ for ‘Waldron’.”

“And ‘Waldron’ for ‘Lajoie,’ I presume, eh? You will then report that the Earl of Waldron, of Devonshire, England, has been charged with inciting the natives of Northern Canada to rebel against the Crown. I think you had better reconsider, Inspector. You have wide discretionary powers.”

“All every clever, sir, but you must come down to common sense. I am not called upon to recognize any change in these proceedings, until the courts have passed upon the identity of Lajoie. Names may be altered without changing the individuality of the parties.”

“In that case, I retract every word I have spoken. If you can make anything out of the spoonful of ashes upon the table there, why of course go ahead.”

“Very good, but there remains that other charge of robbing the mails.”

“I only, am concerned in that, sir,” replied Lucille. “Those men knew absolutely nothing of the papers until I gave them to them.”

“Hold your tongue, Lucille,” roared the Factor. “The letters were addressed to me. They were my property as soon as they received the stamp of the Post Office. I deny that they were stolen. What have you to say now, sir?”

“Only this, Mr. King. I respect you as does every man in the district. I sympathize with you, and I feel that to make an arrest of the party who openly confessed to the theft, would not compensate for the loss of your valuable services, which I presume would follow. I will exercise my discretionary powers in this instance, and let the matter rest as it is, upon the word that you have pledged to produce your daughter when wanted. I wish that I could be as lenient in respect to these two men. But you see, sir, I shall be held accountable for them, and I cannot leave them without a guarantee. I must have some surety.”

“I will make myself personally responsible, Inspector.”

“Very good, Mr. King. I will turn them over to you for further custody provided they will sign a bond to keep the peace for one year.”

“You’ll do it John. Oh say that you will do it,” cried Lucille, but the Voyageur remained silent and immovable.

“Here is a letter for you, Lajoie, or I suppose I should say Lord Waldron,” said the Inspector, taking up the envelope that had escaped his

attention for some time. “I will give you the privilege of opening it.”

John took the paper without speaking. His jaws were tight set and he avoided the anxious gaze of Lucille. It was evident that he was not going to be swerved from his purpose.

“For God’s sake, John, listen to reason,” pleaded his brother. “You owe a duty to Lucille and to all of us.”

The Voyageur paid no attention but tore open the envelope and ran his eye over the contents. When he raised his head, the grim tightness of his lips had relaxed into a smile and his eyes twinkled. The sun had broken through the clouds at last.

“Yes,” he cried, “I keep the peace forever. *The Indian bill has passed.*”

“Hurrah!” shouted Hennessy.

“Very good,” said the Inspector, closing the notebook with a snap and stowing the pencil in his pocket. “Let me have pen and ink and a sheet of paper, Mr. King, if you please.”

No sooner had the peace compact been signed, than there came the faint sound of two shots in the distance, and the pent-up feelings of the little party burst into a shout. It was the Missinaibi packet.

Hennessy seized his gun and ran out of the fort. The others followed in more leisurely fashion; all, except Langdon, the Voyageur and Lucille.

For a time the three could only stare at each other. It was impossible to speak. Then the girl held out her hand to her old friend from England and wept quietly. He pressed it to his lips.

“God bless you, Lucille; and you too, old man,” he said.——“Good luck.”

He turned smartly to the right about and left them.

The Voyageur held out his arms and the girl entwined her own about his neck.

“And so my lord,” she cried, “you are my own John, Earl of Waldron.”

“No, Lucille,” he answered. “To you let me always be Jean Lajoie, Canadian voyageur.”

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Trail of Destiny--A Romance of the Canadian Bush* by John McLean French]