

Rhoda. The sky was studded with an innumerable multitude of stars which blazed in the translucent atmosphere with the most dazzling lustre, and the young crescent moon hung her bow among their glittering splendors. There was just sufficient frost to give clearness and purity to the air, and to transform the dew on tree and plant into myriads of brilliant gems. It was one of those scenes in which Nature even to the most unreflecting eye shews more gloriously magnificent than all the wonders art ever wrought. At a turn in the path which one or two fallen trees occasioned, they came suddenly in sight of the primitive sugar manufactory of the woodsman. The deep lurid blaze of the fire, fed with branches of dried pine, rose amidst the pure beauty of the night like somewhat of evil omen and demon origin, and the huge figure of Joss, in his shaggy coat and leathern cap, bending over the boiling caldrons, and stirring them with his monstrous ladle, while his assistant, in a Guernsey frock and red woollen cap, brought him the pans into which the syrup was poured to crystallize, strongly reminded the beholders of wizards concocting some potion of deadly malignity, or of the ancient alchemists brewing the all-powerful elixir, while the world was young. But as the visitors came nearer, and the sugar-makers paused in their work to reconnoitre them, these visions quickly fled, for there was nothing of the pale, wasted, and enthusiastic expression proper to the martyrs of science or credulity, or the malign and supernatural character which professors of the black art might be supposed to exhibit, in the hard weather-beaten keen features of Joss, and the lively, quick, and smiling physiognomy of Louis.

"How goes it, squire?" said Joss, addressing Mr. Blachford. "Fine weather for the sap. I guess you've brought these strangers to show 'em the process of sugar-making, which I reckon no man in the Americas understands better than myself." He then nodded coolly to each of his visitors, giving a peculiar smile of welcome to Helen, whose heroism the day of her memorable adventures on the ice had obtained her his good will. While Harald was expatiating to Rhoda with great glee on the delightful art and mystery of sugar-making, Helen, whose feelings were at that moment little in unison with the volatile pair, turned to gaze on the group who had gathered round the red glare of the fire. At a little distance stood Max, with an equally abstracted attitude and look, and the silent sympathy which seemed at that moment to exist between him and Helen seemed suddenly to attract the observation of Harald.

"Perhaps, Helen," he exclaimed abruptly, but speaking in a tone which she only could hear, "I did wrong to separate you from your knight, during your walk here."

"My knight? What do you mean, Harald?"

"Why, Von Werfenstein. I have heard more of his Quixotry in your behalf than you thought proper to tell me, since I came here, and I cannot help suspecting that his devotion was not altogether disinterested?"

"I do not understand you," said Helen.

"You mean you *will* not understand me, for my meaning is very plain. I imagine this new friend of yours hopes to be rewarded with the hand of the lady for whose sake he encountered so romantic a danger. You do not answer me, Helen. It is not very long since you would have looked with any eyes but those of approbation on such presumption."

"I could have never looked on Max except with esteem and admiration. In both worth and genius, I have never seen his equal."

Helen spoke with an enthusiasm and warmth which almost startled her brother, and converted his suspicions into certainty.

"Nay," he said, "I deny not his merit, and since it seems that the arrow has hit the mark more nearly than I fancied when I drew my bow at a venture, I have no more to say."

"Because I admire and esteem him, as all who really know him must do, is that a reason you are to jump to such hasty conclusions?"

"But am I wrong?" enquired Harald, eagerly; "do you not intend to marry this young painter?"

"No, Harald, never."

Harald said no more, but he looked again at Max and his sister. Helen leant against the tall slender boll of a young birch, the glowing light of the huge fire fitfully illumining her graceful figure and attitude, her statue-like features, composed, yet bearing an expression of heightened enthusiasm, her transparent complexion and the soft rich curls of her shining hair; and as Harald turned from her to the heroic and soul-illumined countenance of Max, he could scarcely help believing that two beings so nearly "to old ideal grace allied" must be destined for each other. Having all tasted the new sugar and declared it excellent, our party set out on their return home. Harald's spirits were exuberantly high, and having with some dexterity contrived that his friend Warrender should be Helen's companion home, he challenged Rhoda to join him in his favorite song, "A Life on the Ocean Wave," and the woods rang again to the sweet rich tones of the young and joyous songsters. Other songs succeeded and