

LOPES.

Continued from No 2.

"THE old boy seemed deuced strong in Lares and Penates," said Jack, at the door; "you're done fooling there, you can say so, and we'll tote the grub down to the dug-out, and make tracks."

"Let's," chimed in a chorus of young braves.

Construing this *lingua franca* to mean, that if we were ready they were, we all rushed, pell-mell, over and through a fence, flew precipitately down to the shore, and found a square pig-trough, half-full of dirty water.

This was a boat.

It was the old problem of the fox and the bag of corn. The boat would only hold so many. The fox must not be left alone with the goose, nor the goose with the bag of corn. Arithmetic was brought to bear, ending in a solution. Jack to cross, with *Bonne mère* and the baskets. Jack to return, and ferry *Bon père*, and the young braves. Young braves to return, and ferry Charon. Charon to return, and ferry young ladies. Thus age neutralized youth, and abstemiousness appetite.

The last cargo landed, Charon ran on in front of us, up a little hill, to another fence.

A fence is a horrible thing. Not to a man, of course, who struts up to it, puts his hand on the top rail, and vaults over with no qualms of drapery. But a woman sees in that top rail the source of a thousand embarrassments. Possible rips are in it. Probable rents are in it. Likely scratches are in it; certain blushes are in it. It is hard work to climb up to it on one side, and abominable work to get down on the other.

Our toprail we achieved with as much grace as toprails admit of, and abandoned ourselves to Charon. That amiable old fellow, in his blue breeches, now metamorphosed into a sumpter horse, with powers of guidance, trotted on gaily, with a basket slung in either arm. Trotted on until, abruptly, without warning, he plunged into a thick wood on the left. A wood, trackless to the unaccustomed eye, but whose branches seemed to part, and make way for him, as his steps cracked upwards. A wood, umbrageous, dense, rocky, tricky and deceptive, whither we followed gingerly. The balsams, the fir-trees, and the maples, opened their arms in kindly hospitality, as we stumbled passed them, trying in vain to keep up with our forlorn hope, whose voice halloed us cheerily from indefinite heights above, and to whom we ever shouted, panting as we went, "Arrête! Arrête! Arrête!" He heard, halted, turned and launched into a harangue on the subject of *souliers de bœuf*.

"Nothing like the Moccasin of Beef," he said, in effect; "one is not altogether shod, otherwise. A boot of morocco, kid, or *gum robbers*, may be well on urban side walk, or macadamized highway. *Tel ben je n'dis pas non*. But when you go a pleasuring, through mountain bosage, it needs superb, commodious shoon, *comme ceux-là*," indicating modestly his own. "If the ladies of Monsieur had informed themselves once of the convenience of moccasins, they would without doubt have shaped themselves a pair for example. *Quiens! Je va-t-y vous ramasser des belots?*"

To whom I, in polished accents of old France, "Most simple vaunter of half dressed cowhide, I know well that thou seest little beyond thine honest nose, and canst scarce tell whether it is pulled for thee, or then followest at random its natural bent. But let me tell thee that these same beef moccasins are the certain Shibboleth of thy unlettered caste, at that I conceive it a duty I owe my country, at them to turn up, most decidedly, my own independent nose. Although conscious of no charm which, for thee, the moccasin may have, I decline exchanging my Bal-moral-boots with their fifty-two eyelet holes, for those ancient, unsavory, and significant *chaus-sures* of thine. *Oui ramasse nous-en s'il te-plait?*"

Thus by burst of oratory was the ascent interrupted. We were, indeed, for the most part, out of breath, and by no means loth for an episode of

repose. To sink, recumbent, therefore, on a soft bed of punk, anticipatory of blueberries in tins was the work of a moment. But blueberries do not grow in tins. No doubt, if nature had chosen, she might, according to such economy, have ordered the development of that fruit, with the addition while she was about it of a little white sugar, and a silver spoon, but no doubt she didn't do any thing of the kind. I got, for my share, one bush, roots and all, upon which were a great many leaves, two green berries and three ripe ones. But, upon the whole, it was scarcely remunerative to dally at the foot of the mountain, with the summit still unattained, and the day growing. And, as some one pointedly remarked, if we were going up at all, we had better go; so, accordingly we went.

The path was full of the most delightful uncertainties. You were liable, at any moment, to rasp all the skin off yourself; or to tumble backwards, off rocks and break your neck; or to get your eyes put out by branches, which those in front of you were forever letting go with a jerk; or to have an avalanche come tearing down and stone you to death. As for having all the plaits ripped out of your dress, and losing the heels of your boots, and getting your coat tails wrenched off, and leaving your waterfall on every tree you came to, and seeing your hat flying away into gullies beyond reach; these were circumstances which habit duly tempered into trifles to be laughed at. Sometimes the path was perpendicular, to be wriggled up; sometimes a cranway, to be wedged into; sometimes a network of roots and branches, to be tripped upon; sometimes a mere question of breadth; as given a fingerlength of space, and a hundred and forty pounds of compact flesh, to squeeze through it.

Through the wood, and through the wood, and again through the wood, yet we never seemed to gain on destiny. Rock, and wood, and caltross overcome, still ahead were rock, and wood, and caltross. We scrambled, leaped, and tore, one moment, but to scramble, leap, and tear the next. Here might be a rock, which, in the nature of human anatomy, seemed insurmountable; yet, being surmounted, yonder stood another, half as terrible. To break down, by force of muscle, one gummy tamarack from the impassible way, was to display muscular strength on a thousand more.

Our courage was fast being bruised and flayed out of recognition, when a shout of triumph reached us from an aspirant after fame, who had outcrawled the unambitious, and now, from highest height, proclaimed the victory his. A possibility of chorus-shouting reanimated us. Hope renewed vigour. To conceive was at last to achieve. One by one we emerged into daylight, and the upper air, and sank, gasping, at the foot of the cross that marks the loftiest summit of the mountain.

Past flagellation was forgotten in present reward.

The coveted conjunction of island, river, streamlet, field, forest, valley, and mountain, was, at last, ours. Around and beneath us stretched the very pleasantest picture that one would wish to see. Many another, perhaps grander landscapes, made up of just such materials, but, as they there stood, they fell in with our mood, and suited us, that summer afternoon. If the sky had been bluer, the champaign smoother, the mountains higher, the rivers broader, we might not have been so happy as we were. Scenery may be too ravishing, and thus presuppose too much for full enjoyment. I cannot fancy myself altogether at my ease in the valley of Chamouni, or the roar of Niagara. Valley and cataract seem to levy no end of black mail, payable at daybreak, in rhymes, on every honest traveller who chances their way. Niagara would embarrass me. I cannot rhyme. But here where no eye of poet ever rolled, I was quite at home and enjoyed myself. I could have done the honours, if need be, like a serene and tranquil hostess. But there was no need. Each was his own host, and partook of the scenery as suited his nature.

One gazed dreamily across the wide sweep of intervening country, towards the farthest and dimmest mountain, that shadow and cloudlike,

blended with the sky, and seemed itself a dream. One looked downwards upon the little village in the valley, where in the midst of poplars stood a slender steeped church, and beside it, a graveyard, with black crosses. One looked longingly at a bright and beautiful green island, past which the strong river seemed to journey gently with love-whisperings. One turned to the west, where was neither mountain nor river, but a long stretch of square fields, barley, wheat, and corn, that smiled cheerfully in the sun like a picture of home.

Over hill, and stream, and ripening field, hung such a generous wealth of shine, such a lavish outpouring of sweet summer air, so fair a sky, so light a wind, such an utter glory everywhere, that we became as if bidden to a feast of the gods, to drink at will of their nectar divine.

The tap was excellent. It filled us with the very spirit of gaiety. We all seemed to bubble out simultaneously into jollity. We fairly ran over. We laughed, shouted, skipped, danced over the blueberries, leaped upon the rocks, and executed a thousand caprices, from a mere mad impulse of exuberance. If this was not Olympus, at least, hereabouts, was old Orcaady; and Pan, after all, was haunting the mountain. There were weird whisperings in the air, which were, no doubt, the music of his reed. The woods and the streamlets began to rouse, and stretch and bestir themselves. Pan piped a merrier measure, and dropping from the trees, hurrying from the valleys, scampering through the groves, and trailing up from rivers, came trooping forth a whole bevy of nymphs, fairies, and satyrs, and joined our revelry. How merrily we tripped it in the full blaze of day! How the music sent our feet flying to all manner of wild rhythms! How those bright creatures dazzled us with the beauty of their motions.

My partner was a handsome young faun, who came bounding to me from a little cluster of vigorous elms. We floated together through an old fashioned dance, which the world has forgotten these thousands of years. A maddening dance, full of the most exquisite poetry, the subtlest harmonies, the most witching mazes that wrapped our senses in a dream of ecstasy, and floated us out upon ether. In return for teaching me this lost measure, I ventured some instructions in our own more modern *valse à deux temps*, as developed in Montreal drawing-rooms. He looked slightly bewildered as I took the positions, but when I showed him how the jerk was done, and how the twisting round was done, and requested him to jerk and twist alternately, as fast as he could, his embarrassment increased, and he began hastily to whisper poems of the long ago, when gods came down to woo the daughters of men, and to dance, to dance, to dance, was Life's gravest work, and the whole earth was gay.

As he spoke I saw a regular beauty of a dryad descend from a young maple tree, and go sweeping off to *Bon père*, while a big satyr of a fellow went chattering up to *Bonne mère*, and whirled her round in a *jig-d-deux*. Everywhere were orcaads skipping, fawns leaping, satyrs springing, and, among them, our sober folk had gone mad. We were artless children of nature, who had mistaken our country and clime. Instead of a mere modern New World, we thought ourselves back in the golden age of old romance. It was the sun, that afternoon, who, in the full glory of his immortal youth, had pelted us so merrily with gold, that our senses were fairly dazed.

He began, slowly, to move down the western hills, and, as slowly, we came out of our enchantment. It was hard to think of the beautiful nymphs hiding back in tree and fountain. Hard to part with my pleasant young faun, who had no eye-glass, and wore no paper collar. Hard to make our mountain descent. But bustle was re-organized. We all looked at one another a little bashfully, as if each would like to know what his neighbour thought of him. We put a hardy face on matters, though, made a great ado about picking up the remains of our luncheon, and strapping the baskets on Charon's back. Dear old Charon! He swore by simple frogs, after all, and knew nothing of the Styx.

The trees nodded, like companions, as we raced, rolled, tumbled, tore, bumped, pitched,