

HEADS AND HEARTS

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"Now, Miss Murry," he gasped, "is this straight? Is that man really your husband?" and he pointed a finger of misery and scorn at Neville.

"Why, didn't you know it, Luke?" smiled the girl. "It was a secret, you know, or I would have told you before."

Rage began to push out every other feeling in Luke's anatomy. He was about to fire some bitter retort, that might have been followed by evil consequences, considering the peppery temper of his rival, when Doctor Murry made an opportune arrival.

He was short and broad and had a very red face. His voice bellowed like a bull. "Damn it, girl, come here!" Next instant his daughter was crushed in the hug of a bear.

He pushed her roughly but kindly away from him. "Who pulled my girl out of this mess?" he commanded of her, glaring about the cabin from under shaggy white brows.

"I reckon I did, Doctor," interposed Neville quietly looking straight into the other's eyes. "She wasn't lost. Mrs. Neville just came to join her husband unbeknown to the rest of yer, that's all."

The camp became as still as the wilderness at midnight. The Doctor opened his mouth to speak and forgot to close it again, as his fine old brains strove to solve the riddle. For fully half a minute the two men gazed back without a flicker. Then the suspense was over. The Doctor swung on his heel with an explosive "Quite so—I understand. Let's get back to camp." As usual he had read the man correctly.

But Gould did not care a fig for the appreciative audience. He spluttered into childish rage:

"And you didn't tell me? You let me waste my time coming up here on a false scent? You—you—"

"Nonsense, Luke, you came for the hunting you said," growled the old man.

"Hunting be damned! You know jolly well why I came. You've treated me in a low, mean, dirty manner, and you know it!"

"Tut, tut, Luke, I can't have this sort of talk. If you don't move away quickly, quickly do you hear? I shall be forced to administer a spanking in front of Mrs. Neville," and the Doctor strode smartly in his direction.

Luke did not wait for further abuse but shoved his way through the hugely delighted group at the door.

Neville and the girl shook MacKenzie's hand, nodded to Jim and his comrades, and preceded by the plethoric Doctor stepped out into the glow of the sunset.

As they came down to the edge of the lake, now dyed the colour of blood, they could see the discomfited Luke being paddled back towards the portage trail. The Doctor's own canoe, which he was an expert in the handling of, lay with its nose on the shingle. He held out his hand and it was grasped by Neville.

"Thank you, sir, for rescuing my daughter and for protecting her from scandal. It was well done."

Now the excitement was over Neville began to feel a return of his embarrassment under the quiet gaze of the girl.

"It weren't nothin', sir."

"It was something, decidedly," exploded the Doctor. "Now if you care to accept the position of head guide you're just the man I want. What?"

"No, thanks, I'm more of a trap-

per than a guide," but there was a strong temptation to seize the opportunity of continuing his role of protector.

"If I can be of any use to you don't hesitate to call on me, Mr. Neville. And if you come over our way you might drop in and see us. We expect to stay a couple of weeks on Lake Nipisiquit. Good-day."

As he stooped to launch the canoe, the girl seized Neville's hand palm and smiled in his face. "I'm glad father didn't offer you money for rescuing me. Please come and see us, will you? I want to ask questions about the wilderness. And thanks for driving off that Luke. I guess he has settled himself with father all right. Good-bye."

"I will come. Adieu," returned the man doggedly. The last word sounded strange from the mouth of a woodsman.

Neville circumvented the lumbercamp, to escape notice, and travelled back, his mind intent on far larger game than when he started out. About midnight, in the blaze of the hunter's moon, he won the Mamozekel, rolled in his grey blankets and became full of wonderful dreams.

As the girl lounged amidstships of the canoe, facing her father, she told him of her exploits, dwelling long on the strength and kindness of Neville and the manner of his handling MacPherson. "Father, it's a pity there are not more men like Mister Bob, and that they don't become educated. Only perhaps civilising would make him like Luke. Would it, now?" she ended.

The Doctor grinned amiably. "If he was 'educated,' as you call it, I'd be looking for a nice little romance right away. The knight errant, the prince in disguise, and all that sort of thing, eh?"

"Nonsense, father! He's only a woodsman after all," but she flushed as she said it and became silent.

When they arrived at the temporary encampment at the foot of Nictor Lake they discovered Gould had not abandoned them, as they had hoped. He beckoned the Doctor to one side and began profuse apologies for his loss of temper, as he called it.

"Cut that out," growled the listener. "We've grown tired of your society, young man. You'd better pack up and get."

"Now don't be too hard on a fellow, sir," he whined. "I've been finding out about this fellow Neville from Ben here. Of course I know you are only joking about his being married to Faith—I mean Miss Murry—and you did it to fool those bally bushwhackers. But he's been making fools of all of us, for he isn't a woodsman at all but one of those damned writers in disguise. His name is Robert W. Neville and he comes from New York!" Gould finished his expose with triumphant voice, as if this last card would win him back to favour.

"Ah, son of old Dick Neville," mused the Doctor to himself, but not a flicker of surprise crossed his face. "Fine New England stock that."

Then aloud. "What of it?"

"Why—why, only, I imagined you didn't know. And he's not even engaged to your daughter, is he?"

"No, young man, he is not. But," and he grew quite confidential, "I have every reason to believe he soon will be."

Gould gave one stare of horror and then walked down to the shore where his guide and loaded canoe stolidly awaited his pleasure. Without turning his head he faded away into the glory of the sunset.

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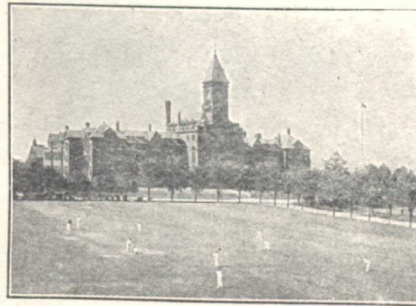
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