

the time when the elder Le Croix, his motherless boy by his side, had climbed this slope and chosen the site for his shanty. The shanty had been built over since, and more modern additions added, but the site was the same and the Heights loomed up dark and grim as of old. That was one reason perhaps why the second Mrs. Le Croix never took kindly to her lonely home. She had a horror of the mountain.

Jack was already a boy of fifteen, and Dick but three, when their mother died. Shortly after the elder son, Labaire, married, and brought to his father's house, Lizette, a sharp-tongued, ill-tempered creature, who set to work at once to correct what she called the children's idle ways. A sudden and harsh change it was for them though their father stood somewhat between them and their new sister's anger. But he died in the following spring and then indeed the children's bright days were over. Jack, a high-spirited lad rebelled, but lingered a little for Feronia's sake.

"Look after Dickey boy"—the mother's pet name for him—he had said to Feronia, herself a child of twelve, "and when I make my fortune I'll come back for you both. Oh yes! I'll come back, never fear." So he left them, and the children had always sustained themselves with the thought, "When Jack comes home!"

And now Jack is here Feronia thinks, as she creeps softly out in the shadows along by the garden wall. She reaches the lane at length and looks back. No sign of anyone, while coming up the road saunteringly is a young man, tall and well-formed, his cigar still between his lips. Not a doubt of his identity comes to the girl. The hour is late, the place lonely. A stranger would not come in that leisurely way, to visit the Heights. And so the astonished young man put out his arm involuntarily to receive the girl who almost threw herself on him, clinging to him with sobs.

"Oh Jack, dear Jack! at last you have come back! I am so glad for Dickey's sake. They are cruel to him, poor little Dickey boy. Dear, dear Jack, you will take me away with you? At last! at last!"

The young man has thrown away his cigar.

"Well!" he says, as soon as he recovers breath, "I certainly am Jack—dear Jack if you like—but I fear you mistake me for some one else."

What a blanched face he sees in the moonlight. The hands fall away from his arm, and go up slowly to her throat. "Not Jack!" she said hoarsely, "Not our Jack," and she stands as one turned to stone.

The stranger is heartily concerned. "I am very sorry," he said, "to be the unwitting cause of your disappointment. Who is this Jack that I resemble? Is he your lover? he would have said, but she looked too childish and sorrowful, so he substituted brother,—is he your brother, child?"

"Yes," she said, still holding her throat as if she were choking, "my brother, and Dickey's." She turned to go, but he stopped her.

"You are in trouble. Can not I do something for you?—help you in some way?" She only shook her head. "Unless," she says, hesitatingly, over her shoulder and, coming back a step, "unless you could bring Jack to us."

It is the next day in the hot lull of noon that she has a chance to talk to him again. The horses are tethered lower down; the wagon and various pails and pans for holding berries drawn carefully under shade from the scorching sun. Since early morning they have been heaping the plentiful fruit in their pails, and now the purple heaps look cool and inviting, as having eaten their dinner, the men lie about and smoke in the shade, or sleep when the persistent gnats will let them.

Jack Redmond had briefly explained his errand the night before. A party of campers wished to spend a few weeks picnicking and sketching on the Heights. He had come ahead to learn the lay of the land and find the best spot on which to pitch their tents. Could Le Croix direct him? A breath from the outer world was to sweep over the lonely Heights.

So Jack Redmond joins the berrying-party next morning, and is now resting out of reach of the noon-day sun. He is idly watching Feronia, who is stretched on the grass by Dick's side, fanning herself with a huge fan of leaves he had fastened together.

"Do you know yours is a very odd name," he says. "Who chose it for you?"

"Mother did," the girl answers softly. "I s'pose 'tis an odd name, for when she took me to be baptized the priest said it was no saint's name, and a Christian child must have a Christian name, so they added Mary to it—Feronia Mary."

"Then you know about your namesake, Feronia of old?" Redmond asks.

"No, indeed. Tell me of her," and the dark eyes are opened widely enough now, gazing with a new interest on the young man.

"Long ago in Italy, when the people worshipped gods and goddesses, the great god Pan, the god of Nature, had many followers. Some were Dryads, nymphs of the woods, some were Fauni, some Satyrs, some Naiads, but one of the best loved and most helpful was Feronia, the goddess of orchards and woods. Her temple was built in a grove near Mount Soracte. It was in this temple that slaves received the cap of liberty, and it was said that her votaries could walk barefoot over burning coals uninjured."

Feronia laughed shortly. "I guess I haven't much in common with my namesake," she said. "No one is likely

to build temples to me, or worship me, unless 'tis Dickey," with a fond smile in his direction.

"Why are you so attached to the child?" Redmond asks. "Is he your brother? It is not usual for sisters to be so motherly."

"My mother died when he was only a baby, and I promised her to look after him always. Then father left him to me, too, and so did Jack. He said to care for Dick till he made his fortune, then he would care for us both. Then"—excitedly—"is he not lame, and weak, and abused? They think him only a bother at the house, and Lizette beats him sometimes."

"Beats a little cripple like that?" Redmond cries. "What a hard-hearted wretch!"

"I told her one day I'd kill her if she ever struck him again," Feronia says, her great dark eyes ablaze. Redmond likes to watch the sudden changes of the girl's mobile face. Only an instant ago it was full of deepest love for the little cripple, now it is the dark face of a fury.

One of the berry-pickers has joined the group—a short, dark-featured Frenchman, but Redmond goes on unheeding. "If Jack never comes back," he says, "what then?"

"Oh, he will, he must, he promised," she almost pants. "Dick and I pray every night. The good God would not refuse."

"But it may be years," Redmond persisted. "In the meantime you will marry and not care if Jack comes or not."

"Dat wat I tell her," the Frenchman interposes. "Jack he stay way long, long temps. F'rony she grow, she don't care. Dick he get big, big; he don't care. Baire he gruff man. Lizette she one she-devil. F'rony she be sensible, she marry some one to look after her. She"—with an anxious burst—"she marry me!"

"You!" Feronia gives way to a shrill burst of laughter. "You, Baptiste! You talk of marrying! Better wait till you grow up. You are three inches shorter than me. I never could abide a squatty man," and the girl tosses her head in cool insolence, not troubling to note the little Frenchman's rage. "Marry you!" she repeats scornfully, "MAR-RY YOU!"

The Frenchman springs to his feet threateningly. "Yes, you marry me!" he shrieked. "Baire he say you one torment in his house. He give you to me. He say he make you marry me!"

"O, he does!" the girl coolly retorts. "He wants you to starve me to death like you did your old mother."

In blind fury the Frenchman springs towards her, intent on speedy vengeance, but Redmond interposes his burly frame.

"For shame!" he cries. "Would you strike a woman? A pretty husband you'd make! Better learn to control yourself before you think of controlling a wife." He turns to Feronia. "Will you come higher up and show me some of the fine views?" he asks, anxious to get her away from the crowd that was gathering around, attracted by the angry voices.

The girl springs up readily, all the anger vanishing. But Baptiste sees the sudden brightening of that changeable face and cannot let her depart in peace. Hesitating some moments till Redmond's swinging steps have carried him some distance away, he lifts his shrill little voice and calls out an insulting name, so insulting that Redmond rushes back in a white heat, and seizes him by the throat.

"Unsay that!" he shouts. "Down on your knees, dastard, and beg her pardon." The astonished and half-strangled man made a desperate effort to release himself. But feeling that powerful hand only tighten on his throat, he dropped sulkily to his knees. "Unsay it!" Redmond repeats, and the other stammeringly obeys. "Now go," Redmond commands, "and remember I'll pound your miserable little carcass to a jelly, if ever I hear of your annoying her again."

The Frenchman slunk away, muttering threats of vengeance, while Redmond strode on to Feronia, who stood with clasped hands awaiting him, admiration and fear struggling for mastery on her speaking countenance. All her life the girl had been used to threats and rough words, even blows. But now she had a champion, a defender. Redmond appeared in a new light to her. He had actually arrayed himself on her side, and resented the foul name thrown at her. How handsome and strong he looked in his rage, towering there beside the cowering Baptiste. Then she sees the malignant look of the chastised man, and a sudden fear strikes her.

"Oh!" she cries to Redmond, "thank you for defending me, but it was bad to humble him before all those people. He'll never forgive you. He'll work you some injury, mark my words."

"I have no fear of him," Redmond answers lightly. "He knows the grip of my hand too well to venture within reach of it again. And now, where is the famous rock from which we can see the foaming Ottawa?"

They soon reached a large table-like rock that lifted itself a good fifty feet sheer above its fellows, and projected sharply over the edge of the hill. Far below them the encampment lay, a mere speck on the hillside, and the dark clumps of forest all about showed patches of cleared fields between. Below, like a silver thread winding in and out, flashed the river, and just opposite to where they stood it suddenly widened into a broad sheet of glittering water, with an island, a dark speck on its bosom.

"Look," she cried, pointing, "no one lives there, so me and Dick christened it Loon's Island, 'cause we nearly got swamped there once gettin' loons' eggs."

Redmond had taken out a field-glass and was looking intently in the direction she indicated. "But there is some one on it now," he said. "See," handing her the glass.

"Sure enough," she answered after a few minutes' survey. "Somebody is camping there. Never knew anyone to camp there before. Why 'tis not safe with the water so high. Any night a sudden storm might sweep the water right over that place and drown them all out."

"'Tis a small island," Redmond declared, "but I dare say a capital place for duck shooting. By the way"—a sudden idea striking him—"I shouldn't wonder if that is Brown's camp. Yes, he was coming up the Ottawa with a camping-party this month, but I thought he would be later. Yes, that is his party I'm almost certain. How can I join them?"

"Oh, anyone along the shore would set you over," she said. "'Tis not much of a pull in calm weather, but there's an awful current when the wind blows."

"Well, there is no hurry," he decides. "Brown will stay a couple of weeks, at least, and I must see our campers settled here before I go."

The hills were very quiet about them, hushed in the great noon-day heat. Even the trees were motionless, and not a bird's note broke the calm.

"How odd the call would sound now," she said.

"The call?" he asks.

"Yes. Would you like to learn it? You can hear it ever so far." The girl threw her head back, and sent her clear, shrill voice suddenly far over forest and hill, in a strange wild yodel. It awoke the slumbering echoes from the numerous peaks about, and brought back a similar cry from the encampment beneath. Again and again she sent her fresh high voice out over the distance, and as often the cry came back mellowed and spent. Redmond tried it much to her amusement, and his own discomfiture at first, but under her careful directions he soon improved.

"See," standing jauntily before him, "put your hands on your hips, so; throw out your chest, more, more. Draw in a good long breath—not too long—now!" and Redmond found it easier work than at first.

What a deliciously clear voice she has, Redmond thinks, as she amuses herself with various beautifully modulated changes of the yodel. Then he fell to watching the girl, and wondering about her. "How lithe and graceful all the curves of her body are. How haughtily the little head is set on the slender neck. What unconscious grace. If only I were an artist now! And to think she lives among such people. Feronia. What a romantic name! If Helen would only take her in hand." Then his musings took another turn, and he began to whistle softly to himself.

"I must go back now," Feronia says. "I'll get a fine scolding, as it is, for losing so much time."

"Bless me! I'd forgotten all about berry picking," Redmond says contritely; then adds, "Send them to me if they find fault. I'll pay them for your time."

But the girl turns with a great rush of anger over her brow. "Pay for my time!" she cries. "I am not your servant, nor their servant, that you should pay for me."

She walks angrily away, but Redmond hastens to make peace. "How could you think I meant that!" he says. "It is only that I could not bear to have you blamed for my fault."

But she has turned to him already in smiles. "Wretch that I am. To think I could forget even for a moment how you silenced black Bat!"

"Then we are allies again," he says smiling too. "See here is my peace-offering," and he gathers for her a bunch of fully-opened golden-rod, growing in a sunny nook on the hill side.

It was not till the third day after this that his party arrived, and meanwhile Redmond and Feronia had become fast friends. She had shown him the chief points of interest on the Heights—where a great hurricane had uprooted a massive oak; where a rare kind of mountain-bell grew; where a great clump of maiden-hair fern found coolness from a tiny stream that trickled down the hill-side; where a lordly eagle nested; where a curious cave was that Jack had once crept into and found littered with bones—the lair of a wolf, perhaps! And here Feronia the brave had shivered in sympathy with the mere remembrance of that long-gone terror, when Jack had called out "wolves!" to her, in awe-struck tones.

And he grew strangely attached to this girl of many moods, learning to understand her better as he learned more of her hard history.

What perfect days these were for Dick. Redmond made him wonderful whistles out of tender willow boughs and hollow reeds that grew lower down on the flat. Even a rude flute had been constructed that gave forth beautifully clear notes. Then, too, some strange birds' nests had found their way to Dick's collection, and odd shells, and coloured stones. Some beautiful moss flecked with tiny scarlet spots had a place there, too, and Dick was happy.

Feronia saw the strangers arrive with a vague heart-pang. He had been so much her own during these few days, and now others would claim him. She stood apart while the new comers greeted him in hearty, ringing voices. "Redmond, old fellow, how are you? We thought we'd never find you. And the ladies!—Oh!—There is a comical, backward glance, and a chorus of feminine voices. "Of course we missed him! Everybody missed him!" and Feronia sees Redmond helping carefully down from her cushioned seat, a tall, slender girl, in a cool gingham gown, with a wreath of wild