

get the kindling while I'm at that, then I'll show you!"

She took the hatchet and started off along the shore. And when, fifteen minutes later, she returned with an armful of driftwood, and chips from various stranded pine stumps, he had three good bass ready for the griddle.

"Scrumdiddious, even if they're not minnies!"

He touched off the lightwood, and then, bringing out his big tin can, threw it into the growing blaze. The "Niagara Peaches" wrapper browned blisteringly from it. The solder began to run like mercury. With a little "clink" the ends flew off and the whole thing opened out. He let it purify in the flames for a few minutes longer. Then he forked it swiftly out and across to the water. When it had cooled, he straightened it upon a rock, turned it over, and laid it upon the middle of the stove.

"What do you think of that?"

"Great!"

She dropped a dab of butter on the fryer. They spread the bass side by side, and let them sizzle.

Some clean splinters of pine remained from the kindling. It did not take him long to give them points and edges. "They're a lot better than forks," he explained.

She went down the beach again, and catching one of the lower limbs of the big basswood, proceeded to nip off a hatful of the broad, heart-shaped leaves for plates. And, "Whee!" she cried, a moment afterward, "I've found a table, too!"

It was a two-foot square of bleached-out pine slab. He skipped down and carried it back for her. "Say, you're doin' loolaw to-day! I'll let you smell the fish for that!"

She smelled them. "M-m-m-m!"

The table was soon spread. "It hasn't any legs, you know," she apologized; "so we'll just have to sit down opposite each other, tailor fashion, and each take an end of it on our knees."

He lifted off the frying-pan, laid it on the stones beside them, and they fell to.

It was a feast that went beyond anything ever prepared in Arcadia; and they ate it with the earnestness of a hunger which was in no wise simulated. They desired neither bread, nor spiced meats, nor any dessert. In those bass was the delectable savor of another age. The meal was a rite, too, the consecration of liberty regained.

THEY fenced for the last brown morsels with their forks. And then, having sealed their emancipation by drinking in turn from the old Chianti flask which served Vanderdecken as a water-bottle, they sat back and regarded each other as with new eyes.

In hers there was a mocking gleam. "I know what you'd like to do now, I'll swear I do! And I dare you to own up to it!"

"What?"

"You want to build a playhouse!"

"Well," he chuckled outright, "we never called them playhouses. We called them cronies."

A clump of evergreens formed their back wall and one of the sides. The other was furnished them by the ledgy, overhanging bank. To put the thatch on they climbed to the top. And they had to steady each other a little to lean out, as they knelt there on the edge.

In their nostrils was the balsamy odour of the bruised cedar twigs and the fresh, loamy smell of the woods. Far off in some hidden wild raspberry patch a berry-bird kept sounding the long sweetness of his quavering pipe.

"Lord," the young man murmured, as he rose to his feet again, "what idiots we are to grow up, anyway!"

"Well, we're getting a good deal of it back again, you know."

"Oh, you—I don't believe you've ever lost a bit of it!"

"I'd lost so much of it that if any one had told me when I came up here that in two days I'd be doing this—I!"

"Let's sit down in the crony again for a while."

They dropped to the beach.

"I don't know, though," she said; "I think this cozy corner is a lot too fine to use!"

It was a cozy corner composed of an old log heaped with bracken and a pair of moss-upholstered tamarack stumps. She let herself slowly down into it and gave her soul to pure delight with eyes that shone and a mouth that fairly laughed aloud.

"I guess it's worth while, isn't it?" he asked.

"Worth while—I feel now as if we two people were in a position to settle all the problems that

have ever afflicted men and women!"

"Problems? Why, I see now that there needn't be any problems at all. We had everything straight in the beginning as youngsters—as boy and girl. We never had any difficulty in understanding each other. We knew how mighty little we really differed. And like a lot of batty clams we've simply been tying ourselves up, eyes and all, in five thousand kinds of mummy wrappings ever since!"

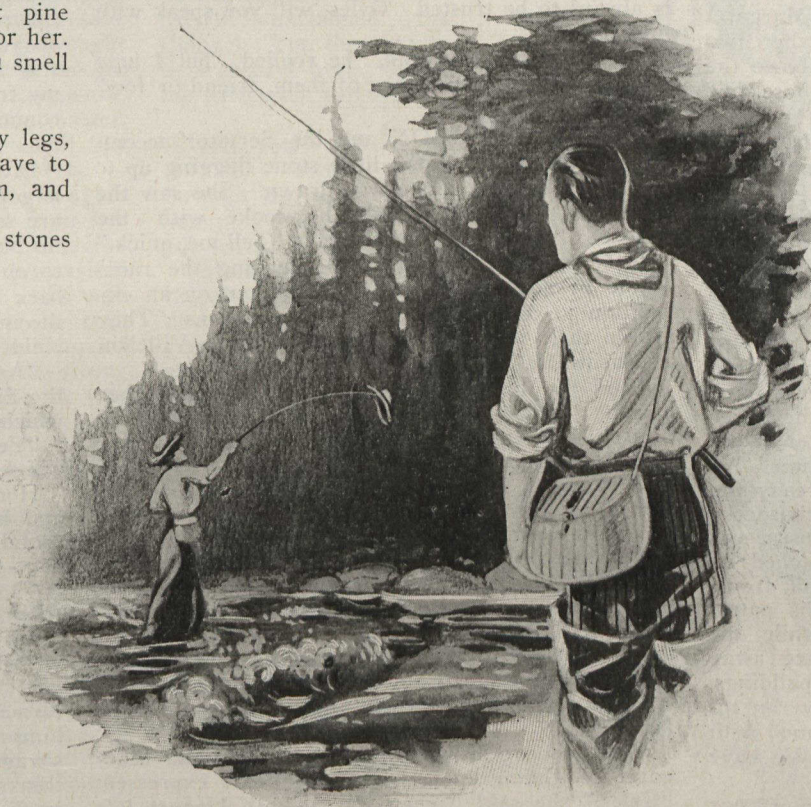
"I know it! I know it! But surely some others have been like us! We can't be the first to conjure it back again. Tell me—are men—the rest of them—all so hopeless? Don't they, somewhere or other, keep a little of the real thing in them?"

"Well," he said, blushing needlessly, "we're an awfully dignified bunch of four-flushers, you know, and I can't speak for past thirty; but I guess till then most of us keep a whole lot of it, always carefully concealed, of course. Now I want to know, how is it with women?"

She reddened in her turn, but came courageously to the confessional. "I'll tell you how it is with them. I believe there's hardly a woman alive but would fling away everything else on earth—at least everything but the kiddies—for just this!"

They fell into a relishing little silence, meeting each other's eyes every few moments as if in a hand-clasp.

"I—I've a good mind," he said, "to say something childish."



"Her skirt went in to the hem, but she recovered the battered felt."

Drawn by H. W. McCrea.

"Well, I guess you may, all right."

"I'm happy."

She laughed again.

"I am, though. And I herewith jolt one to that cheap philosopher who says man never is, but always to be blest. I'm happy right here and now. Do you remember when you used to imagine yourself a candy house, with candy walls and candy furniture, and everything candy; and whenever you wanted any, you just turned and chewed it off? Well, that's where I've got to at the present moment! Think I want to go to heaven? Shucks! you couldn't get me away from earth with a logging-chain!"

"Nor me, either, I'm afraid. And I could own up to more than happiness, too." Her colour deepened. "It's the luniest thing, ever, to say, but do you know, the last few hours have given me the feeling that in spite of this old world I'm good!"

"WELL," he beamed, "that is pretty lunny, all right! But, to tell you a secret, I'd really guessed that you were, myself. And now I'm going to be rash, and say something that is a great deal lunier."

More jarring than the fatal horn in "Hernani," from the portage road came that cheerfully knelling yodel.

They started back to their "pound." "Look here," he suddenly broke out, "I don't know that I want to run away this time. I'd like to stay and meet your husband."

"My husband? Good gracious! Did I—have you

been—? Why, Mr. Davidson's my brother-in-law. He's married to my sister Evelina!"

In the gulping precipitation with which he gathered his fish together, threw his gear into the dunnage-bag, and charged for his canoe, there was a striking imitation of good farce-comedy.

ABOUT eleven next day an ancient kingfisher, who also made the "Bowl" his favourite fishing-place, beheld something which greatly astonished him. For some time the pair had left their rods leaning against the big basswood; one might have said that they had forgotten them. From the spring above their camp a little stream ran down to the river. Without appearing to have any reasonable idea of what they were doing, or why they were doing it, they were digging at its channel with pieces of stick, and clearing the stones out of the way. To move a particularly big one, he had to take one side and she the other. Their heads bowed more and more together. Her hair blew into his eyes. And on the instant, as if those random wisps had grasped out at him, he leaned breathlessly forward and kissed her!

If he knew why he did that, he did not show it by his actions. Having done it he got to his feet, and stood gasping and quivering. One might have imagined that some one had just kissed him. "I—I—I love you," he said at last. "That's why I did it. I nearly did it twenty times before!"

As for the lady—since we have set out to tell the truth—she said, "Great Caesar!" Then she began to tremble. "Oh, you mustn't—not now, anyway!"

"Why not now?" He seemed to be becoming braver. "It can't be any truer in a thousand years!"

"But it's only three days! The thing is perfectly frantic! And you're acting on the merest impulse——!"

"Then it's the strongest impulse I've ever had in my life! And I don't want to bind you, now. I wouldn't let you even if you were willing yourself. I only want you to know how it is with me. And I've felt it, too, since yesterday!"

EVEN in the wildness of her agitation she had to laugh, though the laugh itself was wild enough. "But let us try to come to our senses. Can't you—can't you see that people will say that we couldn't possibly know the first thing about each other?"

He challenged her to say so herself. "You know me better after these two or three days down here than any other woman ever has or can! You must know you do, too! And tell me now, at the bottom of your heart, don't you feel the same way about my understanding you?"

She nodded. "But, but g-granting that I do, that wouldn't make it any the less perfectly frightful to Evelina!"

"Then we shan't discuss it with Evelina."

"I guess we shouldn't, if there was anything else we could do! You don't know her yet! But I'm not sure myself whether I'm not just dreaming—or crazy!"

"Look here"—he caught at her hands—"don't you feel as if some mysterious chance or accident had given us two people the gift of the Golden Touch?"

"Yes, I—I can say that, anyway."

"And don't you feel, too, that we have the power to keep it, to keep it till the very end of time—if only we—we don't let ourselves get parted again?"

This time she could only nod.

"Then if you feel—if you believe that, don't you see that that's all there can be to it?"

She wavered, then let herself go. "We're utterly mad, both of us—and we'll have to keep it from Evelina, some way or other—but I do believe it!"

After what occurred next, they walked over to the "crony," their arms still about each other. And the cozy corner took them both into its embrace together. . . . Out in the river the white-green waters of the Raggeds bellowed and flung themselves tumultuously; the four winds circled in impish tumult round and round that pearly, drifting bridal veil; and the rainbow fays leaped and danced like all Titania's train.

And then, as in all truthful endings—alien, unwished-for, ridiculous, and unromantic—there broke in upon them the harbinger of the world outside. To speak more humanly and directly, with a sliding of gravel from the top of the bank, his boots ahead of him, arrived Mr. William Davidson. He had

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