

IV.

I sat that night, at my solitary window, in the inn, thinking of the events of the day and watching the torment of the sky. I could not see clearly into myself as long as the storm brooded, but when that cleared off, my mind also became serene. After a drenching rain, lasting a quarter of an hour, and which, if it had caught us on the hill, might have led to disaster, the clouds began to scamper off like a flight of horses, and the full moon came sailing up, with the fair star of evening in her train. Then it was that I felt quite at home. I took off my boots, slipped off my necktie, undid my collar button, threw my hat, coat and waistcoat on the lounge, dropped my braces, rolled up my shirt sleeves and stretched myself out in a big cane-bottom rocking chair, and sat there at the window in the enjoyment of what I must call untainted human bliss—if such there be. What that was I fain would tell, but cannot. Words of speech and pen fail. Even the remembrance is dim, but the feeling is as keen to-day as it was that evening. I sat in that chair the whole blessed night, and in the morning my head lay on the window sill, with the broad stretch of Missisquoi Bay full before me, and its glad waters dancing in the sunrise. I got up, rubbed my face with my hands, brushed back my hair, and felt as fresh as if I had slept in a bed of feathers, with silken pillows and sheets of whitest cambric.

This was my third day at Philipsburg, and I had my fortnight of holiday still before me. Should I stay and see it out? You smile, gentle reader; so did I, and I do still, whenever I think of it. Remain? Why, the hundred steeds of fable, all pulling in different ways from a common pivot, could not have dragged me thence. So I stopped and set at work forthwith to make myself comfortable. I asked for a luke bath and got one, clean, with abundant water and plenty of home-made soap, smelling of lavender, and lathering like cream. I called for a barber and he shaved me till I glowed, adding a cool and refreshing shampoo such as the handiest darkey of them all could not have beaten in Southern booths. Then I ordered breakfast, and sat down thereto with the hunger of an Indian—ham and eggs, the ham rosy as a boy's cheek, and the yolks trembling like mirrors; the whites spread out like *blanc mange*; butter golden as dandelion and the smell of violets; hot rolls; family bread; cream-cheese; maple sugar and syrup; piping milk and coffee, or the choice of new milk. On crystal platters, carpeted with snow-white napkins, shone the fruit grown in the landlord's garden and orchard—Fameuse apples, ruddy as blood; out-door grapes, for which Philipsburg is famous, through the intelligence and zeal of such men as the late W. W. Smith and others, and blue berries of an azure that vied with Mary's—the pretty waitress'—eyes.

I was just saying that very thing to the maid herself, holding up the fruit to the light, in a heaped spoon, whereat she blushed, as was meet, when there came a rap at the door of the breakfast room and she was summoned. She came back at once, handing me a letter, with a curtsy. The note was from Mr. Greene, referring in feeling words to the happenings of the last evening, and pressing me to make his home my home during my stay at Philipsburg, which he learned, with pleasure, I had meant to carry over two weeks. I could go and come as I liked, and the door would always be open to receive me, with a handshaking from himself and a welcome from Mrs. Greene and their daughter. If that arrangement would not chime in with my plans, I should come, as often as might be, to meals and at evenings, and make a beginning by calling toward the close of that afternoon to dinner. They generally dined, in the old country fashion, on the stroke of noon, but this was a special occasion—Miss Ellen distinctly said so—and they would make it a dinner of honour. I must look upon it as a family party, however, without ceremony, the only outsiders invited being my friend, Mr. Sharpe, and Miss Greene's friend, Miss Suzor. As I finished reading this flattering missive,

Sharpe himself was announced, and, after a few words about yesterday's adventure, of which he seemed to know all, I told him the contents of the letter.

"You accept, of course," he said, eagerly.

"I will accept this and other invitations, but I rather think I had better keep bachelor's hall in this snug hostelry."

"Perhaps so, but at all events you are going to stop with us for all your holidays?"

When I assured him of this, he spoke up quickly and heartily.

"Then that settles it. I will take my holidays, too, starting from to-day."

And he did. Sending a despatch to the department at Ottawa, then and there, he got a reply while he was still with me, within the half hour, granting his request and generously adding on a third week. We then set forth together to see the village, and my friend showed me through his office, where he informed the clerks of his holiday. We then paid a morning call on Miss Greene and her family, and on Miss Suzor and her family also. In the evening we all met at the dwelling of the first, where again I experienced far more genuine pleasure than I had looked for. The conversation of the old people was really entertaining, while the young ladies displayed accomplishments for which I was not prepared, entertaining, as I did, the false notion of town and city folk in respect of country society. After the dinner and the music, we sketched out a plan of campaign for the ensuing fortnight—boating, fishing, shooting—both the young ladies could handle the rifle, if you please—rowing, sporting at the several fashionable games, and driving around to the chief places of interest. The Greens had a carriage and pair; so had the Suzors. Sharpe was the proud owner of a dog cart and two swift roadsters, who went tandem nicely, and my landlord had a good buggy and a fast team which I bespoke for the term of my stay. The time sped away all too soon. There was not a single point of our plan that we did not carry out and enjoy; we drove everywhere that we could think of. The old folk seemed to think well of Sharpe and myself, and the young ladies—well now! I shall say naught about them except that the fortnight passed away for me like a golden dream, on pinions too swiftly winnowing the blessed air which I was breathing with full lungs. The reader will see for himself the advantage which two youths, like Sharpe and Hooker, would take—if they had but the wit—of the opportunity that might never come to them a second time.

It will be enough for the purposes of this little story to describe briefly what took place on almost the last day of the fifteen. We had gone out on the bay, during a hot afternoon, in two boats—Thomas and Annie in the one, Ellen and myself in the other. At first, the water was very smooth, and we glided along nicely, rowing hand over hand, or drifting, as we talked together of the thousand trifles which idlers love; but toward sunset a stiff wind arose and the bay began to roll. Foreseeing no danger, and having plenty of time before us, we determined to double a little cape, about a quarter of a mile ahead, land there and eat our fruit, until the sun had gone down and the squall had spent its force. I was leading, and the other boat not far behind. Suddenly, and without warning, a fearful gust of wind broke over our head, and I was just about turning the point, when Ellen grasped me by the shoulder, with a calm look of fear, and put out her hand behind us. Then also two cries of terror struck my ear. I looked. The boat in our rear was overturned, and the two occupants thrown into the water, although, fortunately, within a short distance of a tongue of land. I arose at a bound, flung myself into the bay and, almost quicker than I can say it, grasped the struggling Annie by the middle and swam with her to the shore, with some hardship, as she was very faint. While swimming, I had cried out to Sharpe to hold on tightly to his boat, which was bottom upward. He was a cool fellow, and, although no swimmer, had managed to keep his head out of the water. He laid both hands on my shoulder, while I

righted the boat, and then I swam shoreward with him. In the hurry and excitement I had forgotten Ellen, and did not notice that the gale had increased in fury. One glance showed that my companion was attempting to stem the eddy of the point and make for us, but her wrists were not strong enough, and the boat was tossing wildly. There was nothing for it but to plunge once more—a mere pastime for one who had been a swimmer from his early childhood—and in two minutes I was at the head of Ellen's boat. She was as calm as a statue; there was the faintest smile on her lip, and she held out her hand.

"Hurry to shore, for Annie's sake," she said, in a low voice, and, without loss of time, swimming, I paddled her in. There we were pitched on a cape, forming the other side of the bay. We found brush wood enough for a fire, when Ellen attended to Annie, and Sharpe and myself did the best we could. Luckily the wind fell as suddenly as it had risen, and the evening was very warm. We got back to Philipsburg safely at last, but it was quite late. As we parted at Mr. Greene's door, Ellen said, with a peculiar ring in her voice:

"Good night, Owen Hooker. You have saved both our lives."

And the two lovely girls hung each on one of my hands, and I could say naught, for my throat was full.

Thus ended my holiday.

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"Did your holiday end just there?" I hear a gentle voice saying. "Come, be honest, and tell us all the rest of it."

Well, if I must, you will understand everything when I tell you that there is, under my roof, a little Ellen number 2, a second edition of the other Ellen, "revised, corrected and improved," if that were likely—*matre pulcra, filia pulcior*. Our bank opened a branch at St. Johns, the beautiful town of the Richelieu, and I was promoted to the cashiership. We thus live nigh unto Philipsburg, where our two Ellens come from, and among our most frequent visitors are Thomas Sharpe and his wife, that was Annie Suzor.

And every year, reader, week for week, I go back and celebrate my Missisquoi Holiday.

THE END.

LIVE IN LIGHT.

Instead of excluding sunlight from our houses lest it fade the carpet and curtains, draw flies and bring freckles, we should open every door and window, and bid it enter. It brings life and health and joy; there is healing in its beams; it drives away disease, dampness, mould, megrims. Instead of doing this, however, many careful housewives close the blinds, draw down the shades, lock the doors, shut out the glorifying rays, and rejoice in the dim and musty coolness and twilight of their apartments. It is pleasant and not unwholesome during the glare of the noontide to subdue the light and exclude the air quivering with heat; but in the evening we may freely indulge the sun-bath, and let it flood all our rooms, and if at its very fiercest and brightest it has full entrance to our sleeping-rooms, so much the better for us. Wire net in doors and windows excludes not flies and mosquitoes only, but all other insects; and those who have used it once will continue to do so.

With this as a protection from intrusive winged creatures, one may almost dispense with shades and shutters, and enjoy the benefits of an open house without any annoyances so frequent in warm weather. But better the annoyances with sunshine than freedom from them without it. Statistics of epidemics have shown that if they rage in any part of the city they will prevail in houses which are exposed the least to sunshine, while those most exposed to it will not be at all or very slightly affected. Even in the same house, persons occupying rooms exposed to sunlight will be healthier and repulse epidemic influences better than those occupying rooms where no sunlight enters.