

LOST AND WON:

A STORY OF CANADIAN LIFE.

*By the author of "For King and Country."*

CHAPTER XII.

A DEPARTURE.

"And, young or old, on land or sea,  
One guiding memory I will take,  
Of what she prayed that I might be,  
And what I will be, for her sake!"

IT was long before daylight one morning, a few days after that, when Dan quietly rose, dressed, lighted his candle, and crept down stairs, careful not to rouse any one but Ben, whom he quietly asked to dress and follow him, as he wanted his assistance. There was nothing remarkable in Dan's getting up before daylight. He often did so when he went out shooting, or to some distant fishing-ground. But there was something unusual in his manner—in the grave determined look on the boy's usually bright face, in the lingering glances he cast around him at all the familiar objects about him. As he passed his mother's half-open door, too—strange that she did not wake and hear the stealthy footfall,—he lingered and hesitated, as if he would fain have gone in. But with a gesture as if of determination to some decisive and important step, he seemed to collect his resolution, and passed out of the house, carrying with him the saddle and bridle, and went to the field where Beauty was still quietly dozing on the grass, already whitened by a slight hoar frost. She rose instantly at her master's step, shook her head, and neighed; while he, going quickly up to her, had her saddled and bridled in a few moments. Then he led her towards the front of the house, and tying her to the fence, went in to summon Ben very quietly and cautiously, and to take a small bundle which he had left in the porch. Everything

was still dark and indistinct in the dim grey half light, but Dan knew well how to trace out each familiar outline, and as he went out he half turned back, and leaning his head against the side of the porch, sobbed audibly. With the sob, did there not rise an incoherent, unuttered prayer, that God would bless and keep the dear ones who lay unsuspectingly asleep?

Then, followed by Ben, whose swift feet trotted along by Beauty's side, accompanying Dan in silent unquestioning compliance, he mounted his mare, and quietly rode down the avenue. At the turning into the woods, Dan took one more long look at the dear old house—dim and shadowy among dim and shadowy trees, against the sombre grey sky—and then dashing onward, galloped for a mile without drawing rein, till he thought himself of waiting for Ben. When the latter came up with him the two went at a more moderate pace, along the road to Dunn's Corners.

When the family rose to their usual morning's occupations, the absence of neither Dan nor Ben caused for some time any uneasiness. It was so common a thing for them both to be missing on some sudden expedition that no one regarded it as anything remarkable. But when the day passed away, and evening came, and still no trace of the missing ones appeared, even when tea-time arrived, Mrs. Campbell and Jeanie, as well as Alan, became anxious and uneasy.

"I can't think where he could have gone," his mother said; "he said nothing about it, and I can't see that he can have taken anything with him to eat."