

THE MAN AT LONE LAKE

By VIRNA SHEARD

CHAPTER VII.

WYNN drew the canoe into the clump of black spruce and turned it. In the gloom of the trees his face showed lined and white. Stepping out to where Nance waited he smiled in his quick radiant way.

"I have kept my word to the old man," he said, "and have brought you home."

The girl glanced up. "You have been very kind; I thank you a thousand times. I know my grandfather is dreadfully ill," she said tremulously, "I feel sure of it. But you have tried to save me for this one day from the grief of it—I will not forget. And I have not forgotten the story. Your story that is not ended, you know; you promised to tell it to me some time."

She held out her hand to him.

Wynn took it a moment and looked across the gathering darkness to the rim of the far-off hills.

"Did I really promise?" he asked lightly. "Yes? Then I must make good; but," with a short laugh, "it was the devil led me into that promise. It isn't much of a story, not one that will make you like me, and—well—sufficient unto the night is the evil. Come"—lifting her bundle—"I will take you up to the shack."

"And you will come in?" Nance insisted.

"Not to-night," the man replied. "I must go back to Lone Lake."

"Is it at Lone Lake you live then?" she exclaimed,

the irrepressible questions rising to her lips.

"Yes," he nodded, "near shore, a mile up, in a deserted shack perhaps you have noticed. God knows who built it."

"I remember it," said Nance. "I've heard Francois say that a white man built it."

"A white man," assented Wynn, "and he built well. The ancient place still keeps out the wind. A chipmunk thereabouts will be getting worried over my absence for he counts me his goods and chattels. Quite often I am his table, and he takes his meals on my shoulder. The pocket of this old duck coat is sometimes his bed. He has the gift of oratory, and frequently lectures me, using the toe of my boot for his pulpit. Candidly I like his way of living better than he does mine."

Nance laughed uncertainly, and they pushed their way out through the young alders into the clearing. A stormy afterglow was fading in the west, and an ominous low wind sang the prelude of a coming storm. The howling of a dog broke the stillness.

"Hark!" said Nance, "that is Joris, Grand-dad's little Eskimo dog, 'baying the new moon; he always bays the new moon and finds it before I do.'"

"It is Joris," said the man, "but look ahead, little lady!"

Nance leaned forward, her eyes wide with wonder. Beyond a thin line of young trees she saw the old man's new log house. The tiny windows glittered where shafts of light caught them.

"Oh!" she cried, clasping her hands. "Is it fairy? What a dear house! Did we land at the right place, Mr. Wynn? It all looks familiar."

The sound of his name caught Dick Wynn like a soft blow. It was so long since any woman had spoken it.

"Absolutely all right," he assured her. "The log palace was built for you. Built by the grace of patience, without nails, like the Queen's house of long ago on old London Bridge. It rose silently as King Solomon's temple. There are pegs cunningly fastened through auger holes in the wood, where nails might have been used. When I look at his achievement, I figuratively take my hat off to the old man."

"It is the 'grand teepee' Wanota told me of!" she cried hurrying on. "Oh dear grand-dad!"

"It may be," Wynn acknowledged. Nance reached the verandah first.

"Come in with me," she coaxed. "Won't you?"

He lifted his cap standing bare-headed. "Not to-night. The old man will want to see you alone."

"To-morrow—will you come?" she questioned.

"It may be, to-morrow," he answered. "You will not be alone. I see Wanota at the window."

So he left her.

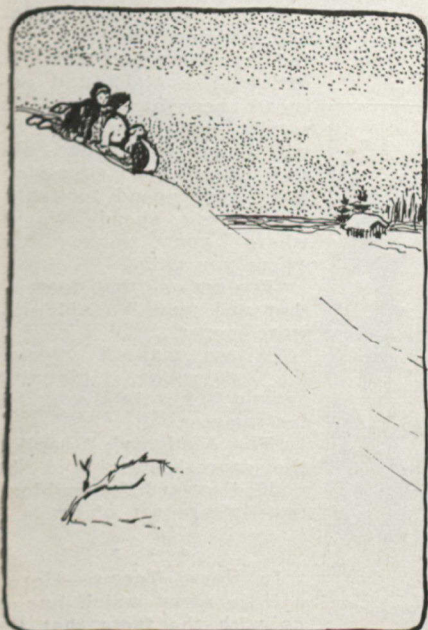
Nance opened the door and entered the house. She held out her two hands to the little Indian woman, and listened breathlessly to what she told her; listened and feared. Then she went softly into the room beyond, where the old man lay on the bed of balsam boughs covered with the Company's red blankets. His sharpened face was turned to the door, his eyes were hungry with long watching.

Wynn took the canoe down to the water again.

"I'll tow it back to-morrow," he said half-aloud.

(Continued on page 26.)

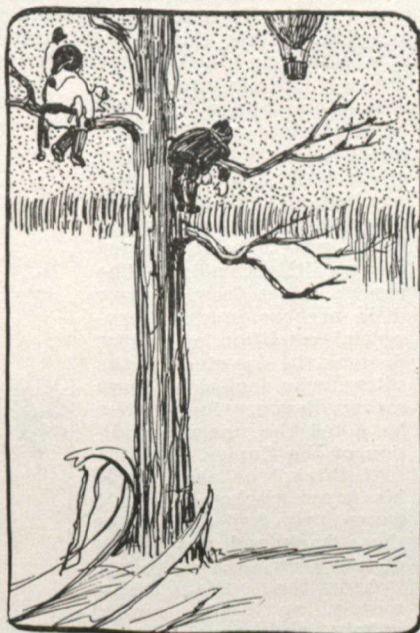
WHY WILLIE AND LILLIE WERE LATE: By ESTELLE M. KERR



On Will and Lillie's way to school
There was a splendid hill;
"Let's take our best toboggan out
And slide to school," said Will.



They went so swift, they went so far,
They hit so hard—Oh, my!
They ran into a hateful tree
And they were tossed sky-high.



As they went flying through the air
The branches caught them fast,
And there they called in vain for help
Till a balloon came past.



The kind balloonist took a rope
And lowered it to Will;
He scrambled up as quick as thought
And passed it on to Lill.



Then off they flew. The ice and snow
Soon vanished from their sight;
They landed in the Sunny South,
Mid fields of daisies bright.



While they were busy picking flowers,
Away flew their balloon,
"Oh, dear," cried Lill, "I never dreamt
That it would leave so soon!"



But Willie spied a telephone
And cried, North, 2 1 3
Please send a motor right away.
Yes. Charge it up to me."



And soon the motor landed them
Before the schoolhouse gate.
The children, I regret to say,
Were twenty minutes late.