

ROSE ISLAND

By Lilian Leveridge

CHAPTER XXII.

The Song of the Wood Thrush.

"High in the hills the solitary thrush
Tunes magically his music of fine dreams,
In briary dells, by boulder-broken streams."
Archibald Lampman.

"It ain't no use us lookin' any farther, not a bit o' use."
"No, I guess not. If the poor little soul ever got across the lake I miss my guess."

It was Mr. Burt and Mr. Thompson who were talking. Robin paused in the hazel tangle and listened as their voices came to him from the lake shore.

"I knowed that from the start," Mr. Burt went on, "and I'll tell ye why." A peculiar hint of meaning in the man's tone made Robin stand perfectly still and listen intently.

"I knowed she'd never be found, the very minute I heard the little lass was missin'. I jest been pretendin' to hunt the woods, so's they'd be satisfied we done our best, but—ye needn't ever tell them what I'm telling you."

"All right. Go on."
"That very night I had a warnin' that somethin' was goin' to happen—somebody goin' to die; and when I heard about the little girl bein' lost, says I, 'It's her, and they won't find her alive.' You remember I had a sick horse Saturday night, and had to walk out to Hillsdale after dark to get some medicine for it. Well, it was late when I got back, jest afore the storm; and as true as you're standin' there, when I come past the church I heard that organ goin', all by itself in the dark."

"Whist, man! You must ha' been dreamin'."

"No, I wasn't, neither. I'm not in the habit o' walkin' in my sleep. Ye can believe it or not, jest as ye please, but I'd take my Bible oath on it any day. I heard it jest as plain as ever I heard the school bell ring, and it was the sweetest, prettiest music! I stopped still right in the road for about five minutes, and listened, and the music kept right on playin' after I got past. The door was shut, and there wasn't the sign of a light, and it must ha' been somewheres around midnight. Boys! It was the spookiest thing I ever heard. Says I, 'Somebody's goin' to die, sure.' But everybody was well at my house, and so they be yet. So now I know what the organ was playin' for. I guess we've done our duty, and we may as well go home."

Robin stood motionless as the men passed on. Was that strange story true? And what could it mean? He had a wholesome disregard of ghosts and presentiments, and was half inclined to disbelieve it all. And yet, if it were true, was there not some beautiful meaning in that music? He could not have explained how or why it was, but the thought of the organ so strangely playing of its own accord brought to him a strange prophetic

whisper of life and hope. Why should a warning of June's death come to Mr. Burt? What was she to him? Let them whose hearts were not in the search give it up! He would still keep on.

He was starting out aimlessly when from across the valley there floated the sweet, flute-like notes of a wood-thrush. He thought how June had always loved the song of the thrush, and almost unconsciously turned his steps in that direction. The way was far, and many an obstruction hindered his progress; but the notes rang clear and sweet, and pondering that strange midnight music in the church, yet scarcely aware of any definite purpose, he drew nearer and nearer to the secret haunt of the woodland minstrel.

At last the bird ceased singing, and Robin paused to listen for the song again. Hark! Surely that was not a bird! A strange, sweet thrill of wonder and of joy quivered through Robin's tense frame. Faint and low, but wonderfully sweet, like the music of a dream, there stole on Robin's high-strung senses a strain of song. Was it fancy? Was it a dream? Or was it June's own voice singing? Hark!

"Anywhere with Jesus I can go to sleep,

While the quiet shadows round about me creep."

This much was clear and distinct. Then the voice grew fainter and fainter, till it died away into silence.

"It's June, it's June!" cried Robin ecstatically, and plunged breathlessly on.

The thrush began to sing again, and with trembling limbs Robin hastened forward to the spot. By and by he emerged into a little fairyland of flowers; and there, beneath the very pine tree in which the thrush was singing, and between two tall pink orchids that, like sentinels, kept guard on either hand, lay June herself. Her clothes were torn to shreds, her eyes were closed, and her face white and still.

"June, June!" cried Robin, and his heart bounded wildly as he knelt beside her on the moss. But June did not hear. He bent down then and touched her damp forehead with his lips. "She isn't dead!" he whispered joyously. "She isn't dead!"

The sun was getting low and he had no time to spare, so, with mingled joy and dread he lifted the limp form in his arms and started back again across the valley. During those long, toilsome days the child had wasted to a shadow, and at first he experienced no difficulty in carrying her, but his arms soon began to ache, and his trembling feet demanded frequent rests. Thus it was already dark when at last he reached the lake.

The canoe was still where he had left it on the shore. Very tenderly he placed his precious burden within it and launched forth upon the glimmering tide. If those waters had taken June into their treacherous embrace he felt that he could never have loved the lake again; but now the shining ripples that circled from the dip of his paddle seemed like happy laughter

which his own heart echoed. The beautiful woods had not betrayed the simple heart that loved them, but had sheltered her in their protecting arms. The flowers had beautified her resting place and kept watch above her sleep. The wild birds had sung to her, and the sweetest of all the woodland voices had led him to her side at last. Now he felt his heart swelling with a deep and abiding love of the wild, a love which would grow with the years and purify and sweeten his whole existence. That June would awaken out of this long, deep sleep Robin felt certain. The alternative was not to be contemplated for a moment.

Hilda was sitting by the open window, gazing with unseeing eyes out beyond the water to the misty, folded hills, her hands dropped listlessly in her lap, and her mind busy with painful reflections, when into the circle of lamplight stepped Robin with his precious burden.

"Aunt Hilda," he said.

Instantly Hilda sprang to her feet, and with a cry of joy, took the long-lost child into her arms. "You have found her—my darling!" she cried. "She isn't dead! O Robin, tell me she isn't dead!"

"She's alive, Aunt Hilda," Robin hastened to assure her. "Look, you can see her breathing."

"Thank God! Thank God!"

Hilda pressed the limp, slender form close to her own bounding heart, and kissed the unresponsive lips again and again, while Robin stood apart and looked wistfully on.

For days June's life trembled in the balance. In pain and fever she moaned and tossed through the sultry July heat, never recognizing the loving faces that bent above her nor the tender hands that ministered to her need. The doctor came and went, and there was grave foreboding in his face. Neighbours from all the countryside came with offers of assistance; but never, except for a few brief hours of necessary sleep, would Hilda relinquish her post as nurse.

Brownie made heroic efforts to be good and useful those days, and when he erred, his failings, like those of the good pastor of "Sweet Auburn," "leaned to virtue's side." It was his pride and joy to be allowed for a little while every day to sit beside his sister's pillow and fan her gently. Robin carefully tended all June's flowers, and was always on the spot when there was anything for a pair of strong, willing hands to do.

At last one morning, after a long, quiet sleep, June awoke; and in a low, trembling tone called Hilda's name.

In an instant Hilda was by the bedside. "You are better, dear," she said, raising June's head and holding a cool draught to her lips. June drank it. Then Hilda with a tender smile and tears of thankfulness in her eyes, bent and kissed her damp forehead.

"Dear Aunt Hilda!" whispered June, reaching up her thin arms and weakly clasping them around Hilda's neck. In that silent embrace, heart to heart, lip to lip, the two entered into a sweeter, dearer relationship than they had known before.

From that time June's recovery was sure and steady, and ere long, voices of mirth and of music began to ring again through Christie Castle. It was a glad day for everyone when she was able once again to sit before her beloved organ, so long silent, and play the sweet and simple pieces that she knew. The next step was a slow ramble over the Island, under the proud escort of Robin and Brownie, who took a keen pleasure in exhibiting the new flowers that had opened, and the luxuriant growth of many others.

And so little by little, with the advance of summer June recovered more than her former strength; and life began to open out, like one of her own fragrant roses, with new possibilities of sweetness.

(To be continued).

Boys and Girls

Dear Cousins,—Exciting days, these, aren't they? How do you like a gale blowing, I don't know how many miles an hour, and cold at that? I nearly had my ears frozen last night, and I didn't like it at all. Why, the wind simply spun me round one time when I got off the car at a corner, and I really began to think it was going to blow me down altogether; it didn't though; it got behind and pushed, which was ever so much more comfortable. But later on in the day, it blew and it blew, and it huffed and it puffed—just like the wolf when he tried to blow the little pig's house down; you know that tale?—until it covered the sidewalks and hid the car tracks so you couldn't tell where you were. When I went out in the afternoon, I had a thrilling time breaking a trail through about a foot of snow, and when I came home, I just measured the drifts to see how high they were, and they actually came up to my waist in places—and if you ask anybody who knows me, they'll tell you Cousin Mike isn't exactly a small person. It certainly was hard to get about, but things were very beautiful; you can't stand and watch a sunset in winter as you can in the summer, but I did stand and watch for a few minutes to-night as the sun shone in the west, going down behind a little wood of silver birches; the trees were so tall, so white and graceful, standing out beautifully against a sky of clear, pale gold. I wish then that I could paint, but I never could, and never can, so I just hoped extra hard that somebody who knew how to paint would see that sky, and try to make a picture out of it.

Till next week, goodbye. I still have some work waiting for me, before I go to bed. You're all there by now, and have been for ages.

Your affectionate Cousin,
Mike.

Harmless as Dew

A woman who values her looks takes care of her complexion, knowing that the disastrous results of sun and wind on delicate skin are painful and unsightly. Sagacious women are using CAMPANA'S ITALIAN BALM, which quickly removes tan, allays roughness and irritation of the skin; 35c. at all drug stores.—E. G. WEST & CO., Wholesale Druggists, 80 George St., Toronto.

"Morale"

When the fighting armies face a supreme crisis, concern is often felt regarding the "morale," or fighting spirit, of both armies and people.

The soldier fights best when his spirits are fired by enthusiasm. Likewise, in the battle of life, the confidence resulting from knowledge that his loved ones are provided for by means of Life Insurance, has inspired many a man to win success out of defeat.

The Mutual Life of Canada issues policies on every approved plan of life insurance—life, limited payment, endowment, monthly income, etc.—There is a Mutual policy to meet your particular requirements.

Write for booklet entitled, "Ideal Policies."

Mutual Life of Canada
Waterloo-Ontario



VICKERMAN'S Cock of the North

A Blue Serge that will not fade

Best Value on the Market

Color Guaranteed

Canadian Selling Agents
Nisbet & Auld, Limited
TORONTO

ON EVERY 3 YARDS