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VI

"We're safe here," said Jim returning through the water and gazing out through the fringe of bushes. "No one's in sight. We've thrown them off our track."

"If we walk up the stream," said the indomitable Zelia with a struggle, "when they put bloodhounds on our trail they cannot find us. In that way Imogene Isabelle and Lord Algernon eluded the bandits in 'The Stolen Bride.'"

"A council of war is what we need now," said Jim as he seated himself on a stone and looked at me across the rivulet. "Where are we?"

"In Henderson's woods," announced Zelia promptly. "Seth knows."

"Yes," that strong character answered. "By the fish sheds," Zelia continued.

"Is the lake near?" Jim demanded.

"We're right by it—"

Jim crossed back over the brook and looked across the trees in that direction.

"So we are," he exclaimed.

"They're coming! They're coming!" cried Zelia springing up.

"There's a boat," Jim hurried on.

"With oars in it. By Jove! having taken to the woods the only thing left to do is to take to the water."

Again we toiled onward. We advanced this time with dragging step—at least I did. We were weary and spent, and the bedraggled feeling I had seemed to render any progress even more difficult. Indeed the amount of clay which clung to my feet made them heavy to lift. I knew I was a sight, but I did not seem to mind, for I saw that Jim did not.

A final effort brought us to the boat. Jim sprang in and held out his hand. I jumped over the side.

"I shan't forget what you've done for us," Jim remarked looking at our companions.

"Oh," Zelia answered as she clambered in and sat down, "we're coming, too."

Seth Pringle cast into the bottom of the boat two bundles which I had not noticed that he was carrying.

"We're eloping, too," Zelia declared calmly. "Seth has made up his mind to it—haven't you, Seth?"

"Yes," Seth replied doubtfully.

"And your example sort of started us right off. We put some things together and we come."

"But have you reflected," I exclaimed in affright. "Such an important step—"

"Look—look!" screamed Zelia. "There they come."

That was all there was of it. There was no more questioning. Jim leaped into the water and ran the boat away from the shore. Then he sprang back on board and grasped the oars.

"Can you row!" he asked Seth.

"Yes," that worthy answered.

Seth Pringle sank into the place assigned to him. Jim bent forward and they gave way together. Not in vain had Jim stroked the University crew for two years. I could not help noticing and admiring the play of his enormous shoulders. The boat gathered headway and began to churn through the water.

Well, when I started to prevent one elopement, I never thought I should bring about another. There I was aiding and abetting the flight of the couple before me. Much that was astonishing had happened to me, but I do not think anything surprised me more than to find myself chaperoning, as it were, in this way a perfectly strange young girl and her young man.

I gazed back and saw our pursuers pausing on the edge of the land. Then after a few hurried words they ran back. They entered the sheds. Quickly, I discovered that they were launching a large craft.

"They're going to follow us," I exclaimed.

"Pa's there," cried Zelia. "Row!"

Jim and Seth Pringle pulled until the waves at the bow and the wake behind told me how we were going. I watched the steady, rhythmical swing of Jim's arms with fascinated wonder.

"What's that," he said suddenly.

I hearkened and heard a queer throbbing noise.

"They've got a gasoline launch?" Jim exclaimed. "They can walk up on us."

I gazed back blankly at our pursuers. The delay in getting started had enabled us to go a considerable distance and the following vessel was hardly more than a dark spot. I could see though how quickly it was coming on.

I looked hopelessly over the water. In the hurried course of events I had not observed that the day had changed. The

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