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WATFORD.

(Continued from page 6.)



"We Nigh Bumped Into Each Other After the Dunraven Sunk."

after the Dunraven sunk. So, then, we pulled off aways from each other. Then the fog rolled up from the African shore—a heap o' fog, mate. It sponged out the lamp in the purser's boat. We never seen no more of 'em—nor heard no more."

"And were Hannah—were my sister and her husband in that boat?" queried Mr. Stag thoughtfully.

"I am sure, by the details Benjamin has given me," said Miss Amanda softly, "that your sister and Mr. Cameron were two of its passengers."

"Well, it's a long time ago, now," said the hardware dealer. "Surely, if they had been picked up or had reached the coast of Africa, we would have heard about it."

"It would seem so," the woman agreed gently.

"You never know what may happen at sea, mister, till it happens," Benjamin Hardy declared. "What became of that boat—"

He seemed to stick to that idea. But the possibility of the small boat's having escaped seemed utterly preposterous to Mr. Stag. He arose to depart.

Miss Amanda followed the hardware dealer to the outer door.

"I'm sorry," she said simply.

"Thank—thank you," murmured Joseph Stag before she closed the door.

He went on to town, his mind strangely disturbed. It was not his sister's fate that filled his heart and brain, but thoughts of Miss Amanda.

She had deliberately broken the silence of years! Of course, it might be attributed to her interest in Carolyn May only, yet the hardware dealer wondered.

CHAPTER XII.

Something Carolyn May Wishes to Know.

Carolyn May's heart was filled with trouble.

This was the result of her first talk with the old sailor. Not from him, nor from anybody else, did Carolyn May get any direct information that the sailor had been aboard the Dunraven on her fatal voyage. But his story awoke in the child's breast doubts and longings, uncertainties and desires that had lain dormant for many weeks.

Uncle Joe and Aunt Rose loved her and were kind to her. But that feeling of "emptiness" that had at first so troubled Carolyn May was returning.

She began to droop. Keen-eyed Aunt Rose discovered this physical change very quickly.

"She's just like a droopy chicken," declared the good woman, "and, goodness knows, I have seen enough of them."

So, as a stimulant and a preventive of "droopiness," Aunt Rose prescribed boneset tea, "plenty of it."

Three times a day Carolyn May was dosed with boneset tea. How long the child's stomach would have endured under this treatment will never be known. Carolyn May got no better, that was sure; but one day something happened.

Winter had moved on in its usual frosty and snowy way. Carolyn May had kept up all her interests—after a fashion.

Benjamin Hardy had gone to Adams' camp to work. It seemed he could use a peevy, or canthook, pretty well, having done something besides sailing in his day. Tim, the hackman, worked at logging in the winter months, too. He usually went past the Stag place with a team four times each day.

There was something Carolyn May wished to ask Benjamin Hardy, but she did not want anybody else to know what it was—not even Uncle Joe or Aunt Rose. Once in the fall and before the snow came she had ridden as far as Adams' camp with Mr. Parlow. He had gone there for some hickory wood.

But, now, to ride on the empty sled going in and on top of the load of logs coming out of the forest, Carolyn May felt sure, would be much more exciting.

She mentioned her desire to Uncle Joe on a Friday evening.

"Well, now, if it's pleasant, I don't see anything to forbid. Do you, Aunt Rose?" Mr. Stag returned.

"I presume Tim will take the best of care of her," the woman said. "Maybe, getting out more in the air will make her look less peaked, Joseph Stag."

The excitement of preparing to go to the camp the next morning brought the roses into Carolyn May's cheeks and made her eyes sparkle. When Tim, the hackman, went into town with his first load he was forewarned by Aunt Rose that he would have company going back.

"Pitcher of George Washington!" exclaimed Tim. "The boys will near 'bout take a holiday."

There was but one woman in the camp, Judy Mason. She lived in one of the log huts with her husband. He was a sawyer, and Judy did the men's washing.

Benjamin Hardy was pleased, indeed, to see his little friend again.

"You come with me, please," she whispered to the old seaman after dinner. "You can smoke. You haven't got to go back to work yet, and Tim is only just loading his sled. So we can talk."

"Aye, aye, little miss. What'll we talk about?" queried Benjamin cautiously, for he remembered that he was to be very circumspect in his conversation with her.

"I want you to tell me something, Benjamin," she said.

"Sail ahead, matey," he responded with apparent heartiness, filling his pipe meanwhile.

"Why, Benjamin—you must know, you know, for you've been to sea so much—Benjamin, I want to know if it hurts much to be drowned—"

"Hurts much?" gasped the old seaman.

"Yes, sir. Do people that get drowned feel much pain? Is it a sufferin' way to die? I want to know, Benjamin, 'cause my papa and mamma died that way," continued the child, choking a little. "It does seem as though I'd just got to know."

"Aye, aye," muttered the man. "I see. An' I kin tell ye, Car'lyn May, as

close as anybody kin. I've been so near drownin' myself that they thought I was dead when I was hauled inboard.

"Comin' back from drownin' is a whole lot worse than bein' drowned. You take it from me."

"Well," sighed Carolyn May, "I'm glad to know that. It's bothered me a good deal. If my mamma and papa had to be dead, maybe that was the nicest way for them to go."

Since Joseph Stag had listened to the rambling tale of the sailor regarding the sinking of the Dunraven, he had borne the fate of his sister and her husband much in mind.

He had come no nearer to deciding what to do with the apartment in New York and its furnishings.

After listening to Benjamin Hardy's story, the hardware dealer felt less inclined than before to close up the affairs of Carolyn May's small "estate."

Not that he for a moment believed that there was a possibility of Hannah and her husband being alive. Five months had passed. In these days of wireless telegraph and fast sea traffic such a thing could not be possible. The imagination of the practical hardware merchant could not visualize it.

One day when Carolyn May was visiting Mrs. Gormley Chet burst in quite unexpectedly, for it was not yet mid-afternoon.

"Mr. Stag has let me off to take Carolyn May slidin'. The ice ain't goin' to be safe in the cove for long now. Spring's in the air o'ready. Both brooks are runnin' full."

Carolyn May was delighted. Although the sky was overcast and a storm threatening when they got down on the ice, neither the boy nor the little girl gave the weather a second thought. Nor had Mr. Stag consid-

ered the weather when he saw snowed Chet to leave the store that afternoon.

Chet strapped on his skates, and then settled the little girl firmly on her sled, with Prince riding behind.

The boy harnessed himself with the long towrope and skated away from the shore, dragging the sled after him at a brisk pace.

"Oh, my!" squealed Carolyn May, "there isn't anybody else on the ice."

"We won't run into nobody, then," laughed the boy.

It was too misty outside the cove to see the open water; but it was there, and Chet knew it as well as anybody. He had no intention of taking any risks—especially with Carolyn May in his charge.

The wind blew out of the cove, too. As they drew away from the shelter of the land they felt its strength.

Naturally, neither the boy nor the little girl—and surely not the dog—looked back toward the land. Otherwise, they would have seen the snow flurry that swept down over the town and quickly hid it from the cove.

Chet was skating his very swiftest. Carolyn May was screaming with delight. Prince barked joyfully. And, suddenly, in a startling fashion, they came to a fissure in the ice!

The boy darted to one side, heeled on his right skate, and stopped. He had jerked the sled aside, too, yelling to Carolyn May to "hold fast!" But Prince was flung from it, and scrambled over the ice, barking loudly.

"Oh, dear me!" cried Carolyn May. "You stopped too quick, Chet Gormley. Goodness! There's a hole in the ice!"

"And I didn't see it till we was almost in it," acknowledged Chet. "It's more'n a hole. Why! there's a great field of ice broke off and sailin' out into the lake."

"Oh, my!" gasped the little girl. The boy knew at once that he must be careful in making his way home with the little girl. Having seen one great fissure in the ice, he might come upon another. It seemed to him as though the ice under his feet was in motion. In the distance was the sound of a reverberating crash that could mean but one thing. The ice in the cove was breaking up!

The waters of the two brooks were pouring down into the cove. Spring had really come, and the annual freshet was likely now to force the ice entirely out of the cove and open the way for traffic in a few hours.

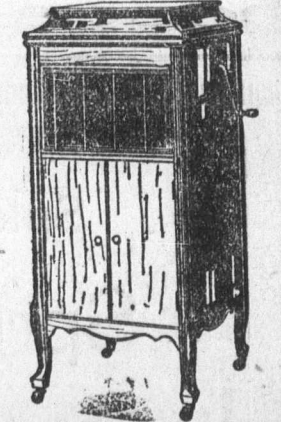
(To be continued next week.)



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