

THE  
STUDENTS' MONTHLY.

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THE KNIGHTS OF MAPLE WOOD.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

When Edith awoke in the room at Maple Wood the morning after her arrival, she was conscious of many bewildering impressions, and of a certain feeling of foreboding evil, or at least, unpleasantness, for which she could scarcely at first account. We have told how Edward Ellis took her into the house to present her to his stepmother. They found that lady lying on a sofa in the drawing-room, a handsome apartment, well furnished, and with a comfortable wood fire blazing in the grate. On hearing Edith's name, the lady rose, took both her hands affectionately, and made her sit down by the fire, as she disencumbered her of her hat and mantle.

"You have had a long lonely journey, my dear girl," she said, "but you are at home now, and we will do all we can to make you happy, won't we, Ned? and now, Ned, go at once and have some tea made—it will do you good, and you are better here with me than if I were to trust you to that boy. Why, he would be walking you without mercy over the country to inspect his log houses and squirrel traps." "I am caught in a trap myself to-day, mamma," said the boy, "I am kept in, and must be off too, or it will be much worse."

"Why, surely you could be excused for this one day, your cousin's arrival and all." The boy hesitated, he was evidently quite willing to stay. "Here, help me with the tea things, and Edith you sit down there; it is such a treat to have some one to talk to who will not bore me with village gossip."

A cheerful group it was, by that warm blazing fire—the pleasant aroma of the tea blending with the fresh pine-wood odour. No wonder that the boy, who had once or twice risen as if to go, hesitated, and finally sat down and listened to the scenes from her early life, which Edith was recounting in answer to Mrs. Ellis' eager questions. Perhaps he would not have been so interested in that simple recital, had not the pleasure been a forbidden one, and the time snatched out of