

did not relent. "I ain't comin' back," repeated Robin.

Her white lips quivered pitifully. She sank into the chair at her desk, and dropped her face upon her hands. As Robin turned to close the door he heard a little sob which hurt him more than the tingling of his palms. He hastened homeward with a very unhappy heart.

CHAPTER II.

The Letter.

"Hopes what are they? Beads of morning
Strung on slender blades of grass;
Or a spider's web adorning
In a strait and treacherous pass.

"What are fears but voices airy?
Whispering harm where harm is not;
And deluding the unwary
Till the fatal bolt is shot!"

—Wordsworth.

A QUARTER of a mile from the school-house Robin left the main road and turned down a quiet little by-way leading to his island home. The road was narrow and little trod, and the branches of the tall trees interlaced overhead, casting an intricate pattern of shadow embroidery across the brown, moist earth.

A square mile of this forest-clad land belonged to Robin's father. Years ago, when the country was sparsely settled and land cheap, he had bought it, and unlike his neighbours, had left the timber standing. His time was chiefly spent in handling other men's trees, and meanwhile his own were increasing in value year by year. "They don't eat no hay nor need no stable room," he would say to the numerous buyers who would fain have bargained with him for his noble trees, "and they are growing fatter every year."

Robin had grown up with those trees, and he loved them, loved every bush and flower, every rock and stream in the place; but perhaps most of all he loved the Lake. For Dave Christie owned more than the wooded acres. In the very centre of his property, but not included in the square mile of forest land, was Christie's Lake, about fifty acres in extent. In its centre was a wooded island of about three acres, upon which it had pleased Dave Christie to build his little home, and to which he had brought his bride—years ago.

It was commonly reported that pretty Julia Christie had died of loneliness, and little wonder was it if the report were true. It was said, too, that Hilda Sutherland, Julia's sister, had been jilted by a false lover, and so had found a welcome hermitage on the lonely island, and a welcome duty in the care of Julia's motherless child. But the inhabitants of Rose Island were not given to talking much of their own affairs, and there may have been no foundation to the tale. No matter the one essential fact was that Hilda Sutherland had remained.

Robin was free. Like the butterfly, he had burst his prison bars, but he was still a-tremble with the struggle. Perhaps that was the reason that he felt so little exultation as he tried to realize the fact of his emancipation. He knew that no one would seriously withstand his self-willed act. His father might not be home again for months, and besides, he had never shown any particular interest in his son's education. Robin had already learned to read and write and "figure"; that would be enough to satisfy Dad. Aunt Hilda might scold a little, but she wouldn't really care. The awakening woods with their many voices were calling him, and he might have been glad but for the wound his pride had suffered, and the haunting memory of his teacher's tears.

"Well, I'm a donkey," he said to himself as he stepped into his own little canoe at the landing. "Why should I mind if I did make her cry?"

She tried hard enough to make me cry."

The paddle dipped in the sunny water, and lightly as a swallow the birch canoe skimmed over the surface of the lake. In a few minutes it grated on the pebbles. Robin sprang ashore, secured it to the little pier, and then, laden with his books, leisurely climbed the rocky path that led through a white birch grove to the house.

Upon the highest point of the island, guarded by a maple and two lordly elms whose widespread roots gripped the rugged rocks, stood the quaint little red-gabled, many-windowed house. Feeling a little uneasy and ashamed, Robin entered the neat, sunny living room, and without a word put his books upon the table.

"O Robin, what shall I do? I don't know what to do!" cried Aunt Hilda. Her look and tone expressed very evident distress, and she did not so much as notice the boy's unusual burden. She was standing by the bow window with an open letter in her hand.

"What's the matter?" asked Robin with widening eyes.

"Matter" she cried, "There's matter enough, I can tell you. I wonder if I'm ever goin' to be done with other people's children. Here's a letter from your Uncle Barry Sutherland. He hasn't written to me for years and years, and I didn't so much as know he was married. Now he says his wife is dead, and he has had money losses. He's goin' out west to take up a homestead, and he wants me to take care of his children. Oh dear! oh dear! I don't know what to do. I wish your father was home."

Hilda sank down, limp and breathless in her little rocking chair, while Robin for a full minute stood speechless with bewilderment. Then he asked, "Is Uncle Barry goin' to bring them here, Aunt Hilda?"

"Yes," she answered, "he wants them to come right away as soon as he hears from me. There's a party goin' out to British Columbia next week, and he wants to go with them. That's the worst of it. There's no time to hear from your father first, and I don't know what he'll say. Barry won't be able to pay for their keep, not for awhile anyhow. It will take every cent he can scratch together to make a start. That was always the way with Barry; money slipped through his fingers like quicksilver. He was everlastingly hard up."

While Hilda's story proceeded, her own troubled expression imparted itself to the boy's face, as he began to realize what these amazing changes would mean to him. "How many children are there?" he asked at length.

"There's two," she replied, "a boy and a girl. The boy is five and the girl ten. It was just like Barry not to tell their names. The girl is delicate—they've always lived in the city—and he thinks the country air will be good for her. He don't want her to go to school for a while, but if I know anything, she's goin', and the boy, too. What I'd do with a couple of mischievous kids right under my nose morn, noon and night, is more than I know. You'll have to row them across in the boat instead of that crazy cockleshell of a canoe, 'less you want to be fishin' them out of the water every other day."

Robin's heart gave a sudden little bound as he remembered what had happened at school. For a few minutes the new trouble had put it out of his head. For the first time he almost regretted his rash act. It would be doubly hard now to tell Aunt Hilda, but there was no getting out of it. "Aunt Hilda," he said, flushing uneasily, "I ain't goin' to school no more."

Hilda sat up straight and stiff, and instantly her glance fell upon the pile of books on the table. "Robin," she cried sharply, "What do you mean?"

(To be continued).

Boys and Girls
MORNING PRAYERS

Oh, may I be strong and brave to-day,

And may I be kind and true,
And greet all men in a gracious way,
With frank good cheer in the things I say,

And love in the deeds I do.

May the simple heart of a child be mine,

And the grace of a rose in bloom;
Let me fill the day with a hope divine,
And turn my face to the sky's glad shine,

With never a cloud of gloom.

With the golden leaves of love and light

I would lift the world, and when,
Through a path with kindly deeds made bright

I come to the calm of the starlit night,
Let me rest in peace. Amen.

Davy's Strong Foundation

Davy stood and watched the workmen as they laid the foundation for the new house next door. He had never before seen a pile-driver, and the great hammer driving the piles was very wonderful and new to Davy. Day after day found him watching at the fence that divided their garden from the next lot.

After a while the big pile-driver was moved away, and the workmen began using the lumber that lay waiting to build the house. Davy missed watching the huge hammer work, but he soon grew very much interested in the new house.

The workmen came to know and like Davy, too, and because he was polite and never meddled with anything, they saved the odds and ends of lumber and gave them to him to play with in the garden.

"Davy, dear," called his mother one bright morning, "don't you think that you have learned enough by watching the workmen next door to be a carpenter yourself and build a doll-house for your little sister?"

Davy's face was as bright as the day as he ran into the house for the hammer.

"Come on, Agnes," he called, "and show me where you want it put."

Little Agnes followed him into the garden and chose her lot.

"I'll have to drive piles there first to make it safe," Davy said, as he began hammering things into the ground.

Agnes started to cry, and mother came to the window to see what the trouble was.

"She wants to see the house go right up, mother," called Davy, "but I've got to make the foundation strong before I begin to build."

"You wouldn't like your house to fall when the first hard wind blows, would you, dear?" asked her mother, joining the children in the garden.

And then, while Davy laid his foundation, she explained to her little

Your Food Is Safe
When Old Dutch
Cleans the Refrigerator



daughter something of what Davy had learned all the days he had watched the pile-driver.

Davy took a whole week to build the house, and that seemed a long time to his little sister; but he didn't slight one thing about it, and so when it was finished it was quite a nice little house.

Several of the workmen paused to watch Davy, as they passed the garden fence, and to praise his good work.

One sunshiny morning, when the house was quite complete, Davy and his mother sat under one of the garden trees and watched Agnes move her things in.

"I am glad you are so careful in your building," began his mother. "Did you ever think that people are like houses, my child?"

Davy's face grew puzzled, and he listened eagerly as she continued:—

"You see, it's like this. Even little folks can begin by taking the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and laying a good foundation for their lives, and as they grow older and larger they must not neglect any part of their house, but put all good works into the building."

Davy smiled as her meaning came to him.

"I never thought before of people being like houses!" he exclaimed.

"There are poor, cramped houses of weak material in the world, and there are also strong, beautiful houses carefully built," his mother replied, softly. "Which kind are you going to try and make your life like, Davy?"

"I mean to try and be like the strong one, mother!"

"Then," she whispered softly, "your building shall not fall, but will remain strong and good throughout all the stormy days of life."—American Messenger.

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