

thither over it like gorgeously-plumed curlews, their skates flashing in the sun as they swept in eddying circles, meeting and parting as two butterflies dance over a rose, throwing themselves into the thing with a graceful abandon, born of the keen air and perfect mastery of the art, wedded to excellent health, and youth, which is the life of all things.

The ice cracked and groaned under their light weight, but was apparently quite safe, and he of the tinted glasses stood looking at the pretty scene admiringly, despite the keen wind.

"What a lovely creature that graceful child is," he thought as he caught a nearer view of a rosy, radiant face, gleaming from a tossing tempest of billowy golden hair. "I wonder what the other is like!"

He was too well-bred to risk annoying them by a prolonged stare, so he walked on slowly, watching them, however, as he went.

He lingered for an instant looking back as the road swept round a sudden curve; somehow that pure, young face had attracted him strangely.

He turned away slowly, with a shadow on his face that had not been on it a moment previously, and the pool was instantly lost to his sight, though he could hear their laughter ringing clearly on the frosty air.

"Isn't it Jean Jacques Rousseau, who says, *Quand l'homme commence à raisonner il cesse de sentir*," he said, laughing to himself, a little bitterly. "Pshaw! no man can build up a rule to embrace every mind. I have made dame Reason my sole deity, and yet I find there is a touch of nature left. But why should that child's innocent face be the first thing to force the unpleasant fact on me that I have some human sympathies left? I have seen scores of pretty children without one of them suggesting that hackneyed tableau of Lucifer, looking up with longing eyes to the shining dome, closed against him by an eternal sentence. But actually as her eyes met mine I felt uncomfortable suggestions of a cloven-foot and that graceful appendage with which a high-toned superstition graces his Satanic Majesty!"

He laughed at this and so resumed his easy cheerfulness, as the merry wind rushed in his face from the open country, dashing a wreath of smoky drift against him, as though briskly lost elves were abroad and at high revel.

At this point the road diverged into forks and he paused to consider which he should pursue. As he did so, a shrill scream from the direction of the pool, followed by a second and a third, smote his ear, accompanied by the sharp cracking of ice, and before he had formed a thought in connection with the sounds, he was speeding back to the spot.

As he came in sight of the little pool one glance showed him what had occurred. The young girl who had so attracted him had broken through the ice towards the centre of the pond, and though hardly in danger of drowning was very unpleasantly situated. The blinding cold water rose above her shoulders, and wherever she grasped the ice, it broke away in her hands. The screams proceeded from her companion, who was trying in vain to reach her, but was forced to keep back as the ice now began to give way in every direction. The great danger was, that the young girl's strength should give way, and that she should fall and so be drowned. Her long, bright hair floated out on the water, and her pretty face was pallid, but self-possessed.

"Stand back, Olla," she cried, peremptorily, as the other made a futile attempt to reach her, "here is some one coming."

"Don't be alarmed," said the mellow voice of the new comer, "the young lady is in no danger, I assure you."

With a great sigh of relief, Olla sank against the fence, and with anxious eyes watched the efforts of the stranger to relieve Sidney from her predicament. He saw that it would be useless to attempt to draw her on the ice, so he divested himself of his furred great-coat, and with an air of perfect sang-froid leaped into the water, and lifting her in his strong arms, waded towards the shore, breaking the brittle ice before him as he advanced, and in a few moments Sidney was on shore, her teeth chattering like castanets, and her dress rapidly turning to a garment of ice. Olla poured out an incoherent flood of thanks to Sid's rescuer, who with a silent bow, lifted his coat and wrapped it round the shivering girl, who seemed in more danger of freezing to death than she had been of drowning. She seemed quite unable to speak and Olla burst into tears of alarm and distress, as she looked at her.

"I don't know what I shall do!" she said, turning to the detached stranger. "Papa is quite close, but I cannot leave her, while I run for him."

"Certainly not," he answered decisively, "and I can only suggest—" He did not say what, but he lifted Sid's little figure in his arms, and looked at Olla.

"Come," he said, cheerfully, "will you be my guide? We ought not to linger a moment. The frost is very keen."

Strong as he seemed to be, Sidney, her clothes and hair saturated and frozen into a solid mass was a tolerably severe strain on his powers, and despite the numbing cold, he was soon in a glow of heat; but he walked swiftly on, and never paused until he stood in the hall of Captain Frazer's residence, which was, as Olla had said, close at hand. Had it been otherwise Sidney would in all probability have been severely frozen.

The drawing-room door stood open, and as he followed Olla into the hall with his burthen, he saw a pretty group of Dolly and Androsia

Howard, working by the glittering steel grate, while Mrs. Frazer read aloud to them.

"Mamma," cried Olla, running in, while he paused uncertain whether to follow or not, in the hall, looking into the bright, pretty room and holding Sidney still in his arms, "don't be frightened, please, there is nothing serious the matter. Sidney broke through the ice at the swamp pool, and this gentleman got her out."

Dolly let her work fall, and Mrs. Frazer and Androsia sprang up, the former trembling as her eyes rested on Sidney's figure, motionless in the arms of the stranger; but her fears were at once set at rest by the young lady herself.

"Don't be alarmed, mamma," she called out, "I'm a little damp, that's all, and owing to my skates and being frozen into an icicle, I can't stand. Put me down, please."

In obedience to this request the stranger placed her on one of the hall chairs, and stood aside smiling quietly, while Androsia and Mrs. Frazer embraced and questioned her, the former busying herself in removing her drenched wraps, while Dolly and Olla cried heartily in the drawing-room, the latter overcome by excitement and the former from sympathy. Sidney herself with her golden locks dripping like a nald's, laughed at her perils, though a shade of deep feeling stole over her expressive face, as she looked from her mother to the stranger.

"Mamma," she said; but Mrs. Frazer had turned to him, and in her sweet, high-bred way was thanking him with great feeling for the service he had rendered.

"Captain Frazer must see and thank you himself," she said; "but in the meantime let me suggest a change of raiment. I think," she added, turning to Olla who had joined them, "that there is a suit of Archie's clothes in his wardrobe. Tell Mike to lay them out."

The stranger looked at Mrs. Frazer curiously. "Is it possible that it is Miss Frazer to whom I have been fortunate enough to render this trifling service?" he asked in a tone of considerable interest. He spoke with a kind of curious impediment in his speech, very trifling in itself but sufficient to render his voice rather peculiar.

"My youngest daughter," answered Mrs. Frazer, looking more attentively at him than she had hitherto done.

"I am very fortunate!" he remarked in his slow, low voice. "It is a curious coincidence that I should be on my way to wait on Captain Frazer on a trifling matter of business, when I had the happiness of assisting your daughter."

Mrs. Frazer looked at him inquiringly, and he continued:

"I am in a position to give Captain Frazer some trifling information on a certain subject in which he is interested, and which I lighted on by the merest accident; but in the meantime allow me to introduce myself. My name is Harold Macer."

"My husband will be happy to see you as soon as you have changed your clothes," said Mrs. Frazer, glancing in dismay at Mr. Macer's garments, which, thawed by the heat of the hall, gave him the appearance of a dripping river-god.

"How dreadfully tanned he is!" breathed Dolly in a tone of saintly compassion in Androsia's ear, against whom she was leaning, and Androsia turned and looked at him, meeting his eyes through the blue spectacles.

He was studying the beautiful group the two girls made in the tinted sunlight pouring through the stained glass, Dolly's angelic loveliness so well set off by the more vivid coloring of Androsia, whose lovely face and brilliant eyes seemed all the more radiant from the sombre hue of her heavy black dress, which swept with such perfect grace round her lofty, pliant form.

Androsia blushed and turned away, the lucid white of her throat and temples crimsoning under his earnest gaze, and she drew Dolly into the drawing-room and closed the door.

"I do not like him," she said, in her measured way, folding her hands and looking inexpressibly haughty, rearing her head like a young Semiramis.

"Don't you, dear?" said Dolly, resignedly taking up one of the "tokens of affection" slippers which were yet in progress. "Why?"

Dolly's golden hair gleamed like an aureole round her as she sank into her low-chair, and she looked at the slippers as Lady Jane Grey might have glanced at an offer of pardon on recantation of her religion.

"Because," began Androsia frowning, then paused, and added, "I do not know why."

"Perhaps," said Dolly, considering, "it is the spectacles. Blue spectacles are so unbecoming. Or the tan; perhaps it is the tan, dear."

Androsia shook her graceful head impatiently, and her eyes sparkled angrily as she looked at the fire.

"He looked at me," she ejaculated indignantly, "his eyes burned my skin!"

"Of course, he looked at you," assented Dolly. "Mr. Armor looks at me a great deal when we are together, but I don't mind it much. Indeed I forget that he is in the room half the time. Would you put a white or purple pansie here, Androsia?"

But Androsia was not as yet sufficiently civilized to curb her restless mind at a moment's notice to the consideration of worsted work. She sat down and leant her damask cheek on her slender hand.

"Androsia does not wish to speak more," she said, decisively, and Dolly whose great talent was for silence, sat idly looking at her, a brooding pensiveness in her violet eyes that was inexpressibly lovely, and the gorgeous mass of colors heaped on her lap, what time she vaguely wondered about Mr. Macer, his blue spectacles and his bronzed skin.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEWS OF WINONA.

"Comfortable," thought Mr. Macer glancing round the pretty library, where he was waiting, pending his interview with Captain Frazer, "and ornamental! One can almost fancy oneself gifted with a sudden virtuousness of domesticity in such a room. Nothing of the conventional library about it, but that walnut escritoire in the corner, and even that is cheerful and graceful. I wonder if it is really as massive and secure as it looks. Modern furniture is seldom anything but a sham."

He looked at it with the air of a connoisseur, admiring the fanciful carvings of wreaths of maple leaves, squirrels and beavers that decorated it, and the exquisite polish and grain of the wood. He saw that though of modern make it was massive and solid, and the unusual peculiarity distinguished it, that no lock or keyhole was visible.

He was by nature observant even of trifles, and he wiled away a few minutes pleasantly, speculating as to how and where the elaborate front opened, and then he sauntered about the room looking at the photographs and engravings on the wall. Good all of them, and two or three even valuable. Where all the sunlight fell broadly upon it there hung an old portrait in oils of Marie Antoinette, in the days of her beauty and power. It had been a gift from herself to the grandfather of Mrs. Frazer, and was an heir-loom of price to the family. It was at this Macer was looking when the door opened and Mike wheeled Captain Frazer into the room.

He turned with a smile on his face and nodded good-humoredly to Mr. Murphy, whose face expressed no little astonishment as he recognized him.

"It's himself," ejaculated Mike, pausing and surveying him without much favor. "Humph! so it's yerself, Mr. Macer, is it?"

He remembered with a slight twinge his loquacity at their meeting in Toronto, and he was not too well pleased to be reminded of it by the appearance of Mr. Macer.

"In proper person, my friend," laughed the other, and then he turned and introduced himself to Captain Frazer, in an easy, dignified way that showed him well acquainted with the manners of society.

"I shall not make any stereotyped excuses for intruding on you, Captain Frazer," he said, smiling. "I might have done so, indeed, and considered that perhaps my business was scarcely sufficient warrant for such a course, had not fate willed that I should in any case introduce myself to you. My name is Harold Macer."

Captain Frazer extended his hand and clasped Mr. Macer's warmly, while he surveyed him with kindly interest.

"I can't express to you," he said, earnestly, "how grateful I am to you for your service of this morning. It might have proved a dark day, indeed, to us, only for you."

Captain Frazer's rugged countenance expressed far more than his words, and Mr. Macer felt really gratified.

"It was nearly altogether riskless on my part," he said; "but there is no doubt that a prolonged immersion would have been fatal to Miss Frazer; but pray, don't make me fancy myself a hero!" He laughed pleasantly, and drew a chair opposite that occupied by his host, and looked at Mike, who was lingering under pretence of replenishing the fire, eyeing Mr. Macer curiously.

"You did not expect to meet me again so soon when we parted so abruptly in Toronto?" he said.

"Faix no," answered Mike, concisely, and was silent.

"You may go, Mike," said Captain Frazer, and Mike went, leaving the two men alone.

Captain Frazer waited curiously for Mr. Macer to unfold his errand and the nature of his business. He swept his glance back and forth over his memory, but could not recall any recollections connected with his guest. The name even he had never heard before, the face was unfamiliar. The low, melodious voice separated from the peculiarity of articulation struck him as one he had heard in some far-off time that he could not recall, but that was only an idea. He faced the window and Mr. Macer, and though the handsome dark head was sharply defined against the light, the features were indistinct, indeed almost indistinguishable.

He did not seem in haste to unfold his errand, but he seemed to do everything slowly and deliberately as he spoke, and so Captain Frazer waited courteously the pleasure of his guest.

"I am afraid," said the latter at last, leaning his arm on the table beside him, and tapping the dark green cloth slowly with his finger-tips as he looked at Captain Frazer, "that you will hardly exonerate me from the charge of a seeming want of delicacy in intruding myself into an affair that apparently it was your desire not to appear in; I allude to an advertisement which met my eye, concerning the disappearance of an Indian girl, named, I think, Winona."

"What of her?" exclaimed Captain Frazer, regarding the speaker with unconcealed astonishment. "Have you any information to give me concerning her?"

"Or I had not been here," replied the other. "Of course," he added hastily and with the air of one wishing not to raise too secure a hope by his words, "I may be mistaken in her identity, but the description was so accurate that I could hardly have been misled in my recognition of her."

Captain Frazer's face expressed great agita-

tion. It was evidently with a strong effort that he succeeded in steadying his voice to ask:

"Have the kindness to explain yourself; the disappearance of this girl has been a source of great uneasiness to a member of my family and to myself," he added slowly.

Mr. Macer looked at him curiously through the blue glasses, and his fingers ceased tapping the cloth.

"It is a trifling clue, I fear," he answered; "but if followed up may lead to her discovery. I met a girl answering her description in every particular on a crowded platform half-way between Brampton and Toronto, and attracted by her singular beauty, I watched her. She bought a ticket for Toronto and vanished. It was night, and something about her, an air as though she wished to avoid observation, fastened her in my memory. When I got out at Brampton I saw the advertisement, which a boy was just posting up, and then it suddenly struck me that I had seen her before." Mr. Macer paused for a second and then went on. "After some thought I recalled the time and place, and remembered that I had caught a passing glimpse of her in Toronto in company with your son and a young lady."

"But," said Captain Frazer, with an accent and manner of keen disappointment, "this must be nearly a fortnight ago now."

"It is, indeed," replied Mr. Macer, in a tone of grave concern, "but had I only thought of you as interested in the girl it should not have so happened. As it was, the whole affair slipped from my mind, and I proceeded down to Montreal, where I had important business to transact, and it was only when I found myself passing this neighborhood on my way back and saw the advertisements still up, that the idea flashed on me that the girl had likely fled from your protection. So much time had been lost that I came directly to you rather than lose any more in writing to the offices named, at the risk, I am afraid, of being justly considered intrusive."

"If I had but known this at once," said the Captain hoarsely, and in a tone of such keen pain that for the moment Mr. Macer's well-bred calm gave place to an air of considerable astonishment. "You cannot guess," continued the old gentleman, "how much depends on securing the girl before she —" He closed his lips and his brown face turned grey as ashes.

"Inane, I presume," said Mr. Macer sympathizingly, "a terrible affliction. I sincerely hope you may secure her."

"She is not mad," said the Captain quietly, but passing his handkerchief across his brow, damp with agitation. "Oh, anything but mad. But I fear all will be of no avail."

"If I could be of any assistance," suggested Macer, with an air of courtly deference, "I am going Toronto to-day, and if —"

"I can't see what to do," said the Captain. "I've had detectives employed, but with no avail, and your news confirms my worst fears. I must write to my son at once."

"I would take my leave," said Macer, with a half smile, as he glanced at his dress, "but I am indebted to your son for a portion of his wardrobe while my own clothes are drying."

"Don't think of such a thing," said Captain Frazer, hurriedly, "you must not think of leaving us to-night."

Macer hesitated. "I should not intrude on your hospitality," he said; "but the fact is, I am not altogether recovered from a sharp attack of rheumatic fever, and I dread the consequences of further exposure to-day. I shall rest your guest gratefully for to-night."

Mr. Macer spent a quiet day, that never left his memory, in Captain Frazer's drawing-room, gloomed on by Androsia from a shadowy corner, where she ensconced herself with a book, which she knitted her straight brows over without gaining much knowledge from its pages. She was rapidly acquiring the to her, hidden art of reading; and Captain Frazer, who was her delighted tutor, spoke of her as one rarely gifted in mind as well as person. She sat cuddled by the chimneys and lace curtains in the window, behind a flower-stand, her lovely head rising above the blossoms, like that of some regal spirit rising from an ocean of bloom, and perused Mr. Macer, as he chatted with the others, with a more fixed attention than she did her book. On his part, he politely ignored her scrutiny, and lolled beside Dolly's chair, talking in his pleasant, half-serious way, while Sidney lingered listening eagerly to his every word, with a pleasure that would have charmed Macer, had he been a vain man, which he was not, or Sidney a little older.

He was by no means brilliant, but all he said, told, and he talked about things that girls like, operas, paintings, travels, prima donnas, music, touching every subject brightly, and with a kindly hand, evidently enjoying himself, and drawing Sidney into animated descriptions of Canadian life, of which he said he knew very little, having been only a few months out from Scotland. He seemed much attracted by Sidney, and studied her rosy face with a thoughtful and sometimes puzzled look. Of Olla he saw little, for, like Desdemona —

"Still the house affairs would draw her thence"

but he felt the charm of her exquisite gentleness and sweet graciousness to the full.

He was introduced to Sidney's father, "Mon," and advised Dolly in her worsted work, and watched all their graceful ways and dainty belongings, as men do to whom the home-life has hitherto been but a name, and at that, in frequent in their ears. Despite his apparent carelessness of her, he cast many a glance at the dark-robed beauty behind her fortress of now.