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Written for THE QUEEN.

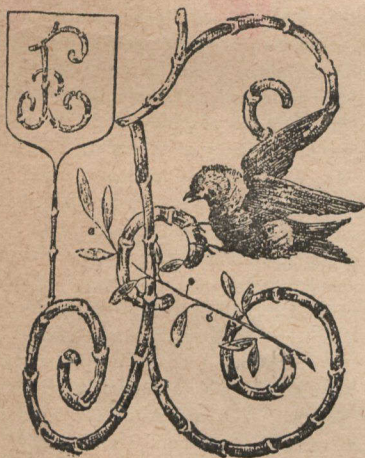
IN LOVE'S DEAR THRALL.

A ROMANCE OF THE MUSKOKA LAKES.

By G. MERCER ADAMS.

CHAPTER III.

"How does Love speak!
By the uneven heart-throbs, and the freak
Of bounding pulses that stand still and ache,
While new emotions, like strange barges, make
Along vein-channels their disturbing course;
Still as the dawn, and with the dawn's swift force—
Thus doth Love speak."



EIGHTON was early abroad the next morning, not only to renew the camp fire, but to look abroad for the deficiencies of his boat's larder, as material for breakfast. After hooking and preparing for the frying-pan a good-sized trout, he set out in the row-boat to explore the cove in which they had found shelter for the night, and to procure, at a settler's farm he espied near by, fresh milk and rolls for breakfast. Securing these and

a few other dainties to tempt the matutinal appetite, he returned to the landing in time to have all prepared ere the ladies were abroad and had completed their camp toilet. When the *al fresco* meal was ready, his interesting charges appeared on the scene, shouting a gay morning accost, and profuse in their assurances that they had enjoyed a most comfortable and undisturbed rest. They commended Leighton for his thoughtfulness in foraging so successfully for their morning meal, and playfully complimented him on his attainments as a maid-in-waiting and cook. Leighton rejoined by telling them that his proficiency in the culinary arts would be best gauged by the extent of the meal the ladies made and their honest enjoyment of it. He had not long to wait for the practical evidences that their appetites were unimpaired and that the breakfast was appreciated.

The day opened auspiciously, though the lake was still rough; and after breakfast they all concluded that they would be in no hurry to return to Maplehurst. The woods were inviting to walk in, and round their side of the cove there was a beautiful shingly beach. Here Leighton took a stroll, first with Lady Mercedes, who was in the gayest of spirits, and later on with the equally bright and vivacious Mrs. Kinglake. The latter spoke gaily of the novel experience they had had over-night, in what she called "the wilds of Canada," and took occasion to say to Leighton how much both she and Lady Mercedes were indebted to him for his more than brotherly solicitude and many acts of kindness. The last night's adventure seemed to create a bond, which had not hitherto existed, between this lady and the artist; and in proof of this she confided to his hungry ear not only some facts about her widowed companion's early life, but gave him some hints in explanation of the Lady Mercedes' ill-disguised interest in himself.

The Lady Mercedes, she told him, was the only daughter of an old and once wealthy member of the British Peerage, who wished to improve his fortunes by his daughter's allying herself in marriage with a wealthy neighbor, who had become possessed of some of the family estates and agreed to surrender them as the price of the Lady Mercedes' hand. The neighboring magnate was an object of loathing to her friend, on account not only of a stain on his moral character, but because he was slightly deformed. Another reason for her antipathy to the proposed suitor lay in the fact that she had already lost her heart to a young Scotch artist named Wilton, whom she had met on the continent, and with whom to escape the hunchback-lover forced upon her by her father, she eloped and married. Unhappily, continued Mrs. Kinglake, her conjugal life, in consequence of a heartrending occurrence, did not extend beyond the brief honeymoon. The loving couple, after the clandestine marriage, had gone from Scotland direct to Switzerland, where they had first met, and where the happy groom wished to make some sketches, to be added to in the Tyrol, and afterwards worked up for the Academy.

The Wiltons soon proceeded to Innsbruck, then, after a brief halt, they set out for a village at the foot of the mountains. Here they wandered over the Alps, sometimes with a guide, and sometimes without, both enjoying the magnificent spectacle daily before their eyes, and the young husband securing a portfolio of sketches