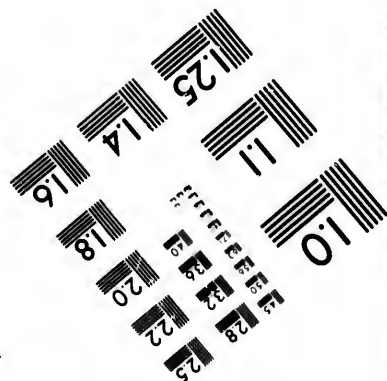
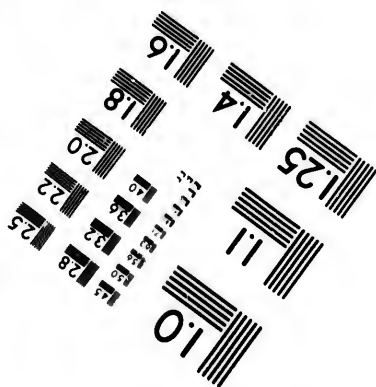
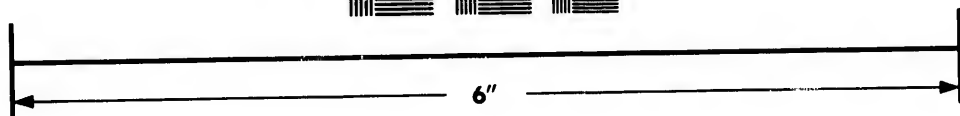
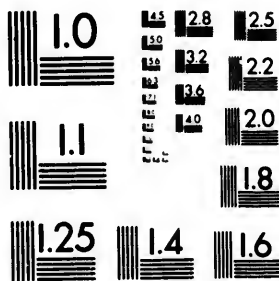


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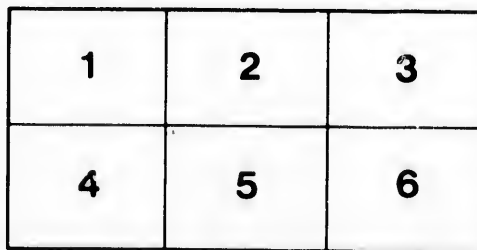
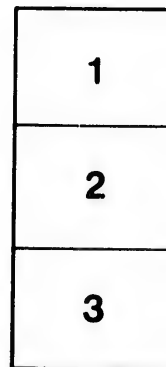
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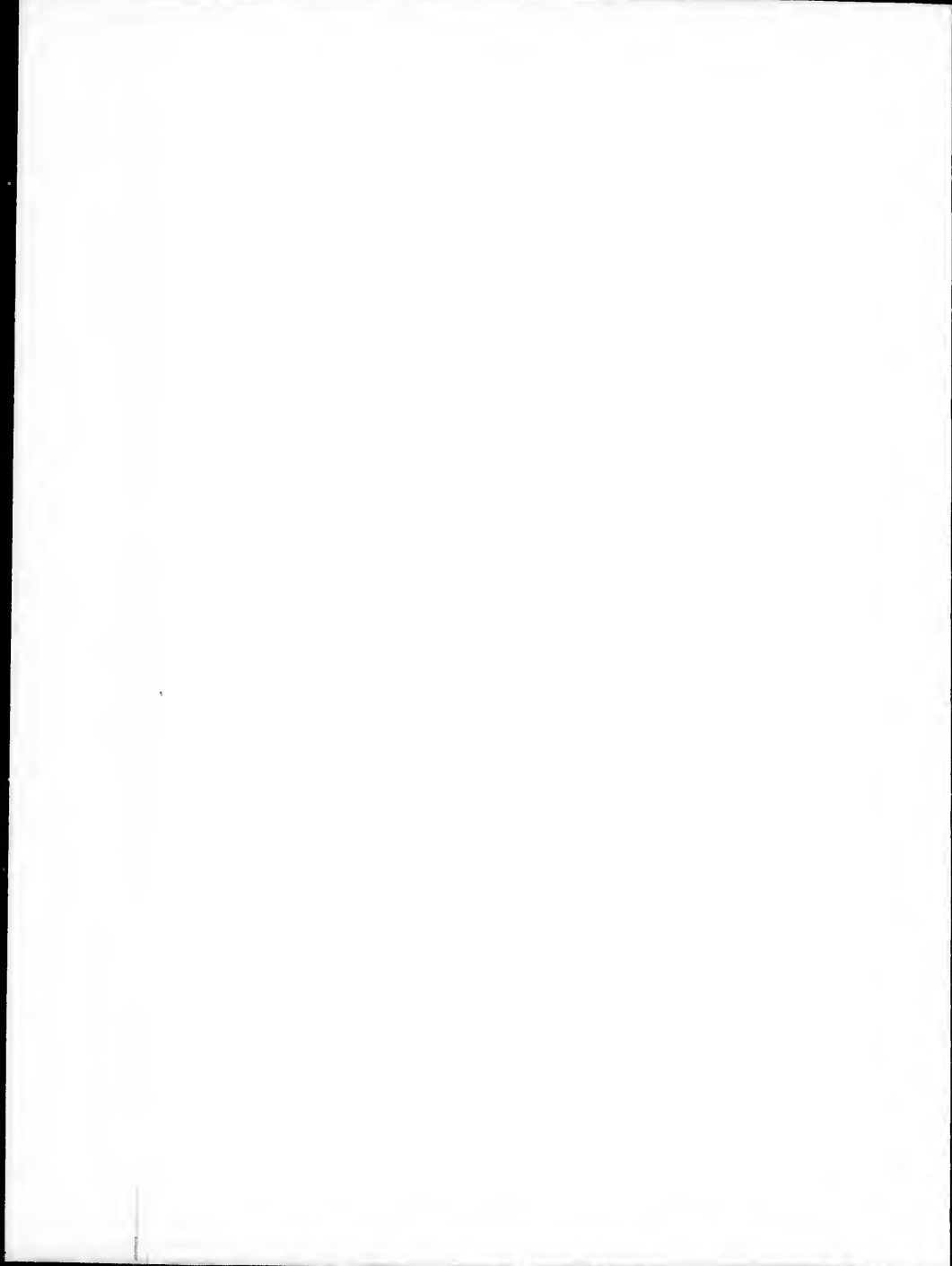
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A ROMANCE OF THE ROCKIES

BY

CAMPBELL SHAW.

TORONTO :

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A

ROMANCE OF THE ROCKIES

CHAPTER I.

THE dawning light of a new day descended with chilling steadiness, dispelling the dreamy darkness of night, and heralding the approach of the King of Light in all the splendor and majesty of his golden sovereignty. Scarcely perceptible, and yet boldly asserting their existence, the sharp mountain peaks stood forth beneath the brightening dome as jagged tops to the mighty walls which encircled the valley. Thinner and thinner became the veil between night and morning. The pines, for a time ghost-like in the struggle between darkness and light, cast aside their shrouds and revealed themselves, tier after tier, in their beauty and strength. The shrubbery, marking the margins of the stream and barely distinguishable, the next moment threw off the blur, and on the soft breeze which rustled its leaves, sent loving whispers to the fast-moving waters as a

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tender recognition for the sustenance of life. The patches of sweet pea-vines and flowers, refreshed with dew, filled the air with delicious fragrance.

All life awaited the kiss of the morning sun!

Along the eastern horizon a glow of yellow light is discernible. The color changes to gold. Dashes of blushing crimson dart up in lovely confusion and spread quickly over the golden radiance. Brilliant shafts of light break through between the mountain tops, dance merrily down the wooded slopes, and form roadways, paved with sparkling diamonds, through the dew-laden pea-vines and flowers. The great Conqueror of Darkness moves swiftly upward over the mighty walls, tops the highest peaks, and a bounding, joyous invincible volume of light and warmth pours into the valley, awakening life refreshed and smiling, strong and happy, content and eager for the labors of another day.

Away up, beyond the last tier of pines, where tufted growth marks the space intervening between the green branches and the cold, dark, barren, rock—tapering into lances upon which oftentimes black, rolling, rain-charged clouds break, drenching the valley with their life-blood as they sweep onward in the impetuosity and power of their charge,—small herds of goats and flocks of sheep form into file and confidently pick their way along the high, narrow paths to the choicest feeding-grounds.

The mountain lion, crafty and bold under cover of darkness, steals to his lair as the sunbeams beat back the shadows, and there indulges in fitful yawns until the effects of the orgies of the night force him to wedge his

nose between his paws and quietly yield himself captive to the Queen of Slumberland.

The grizzly, cinnamon and black bears, their piggish eyes betraying gluttonous appetites, prowl through the pines, their surly growls startling the timid doe and fawn into flashing flight.

The elk, pushing his way through the thick grass, growing straight and tall in the marsh formed by the overflow of the stream, occasionally stops to proudly toss his antlered head and sound a message, clear and musical, to his mate awaiting him in a covert on the opposite shore.

The buzz of insect life floats out from the bushes and up from the ground, varied unpleasantly with the nerve-tingling hum of the mosquito.

And high above the tall pines, above the serrated walls, circling around the great light from the sun as a moth flies round and round a lighted taper, an eagle scans the valley for food for her young safely nestled in a dismantled tree standing alone on a prominence.

And thus did life awaken and turn from rest to labor one morning in the month of June, 1879, in a valley at the base of Castle Mountain, in the Rocky Mountains, not far from where the Canadian Pacific Railway now forms an iron trail up the eastern slope.

CHAPTER II.

"I'm Jack Lester!"

"My name is Angus Macdonald!"

Two young men clasped right hands and regarded each other silently and with a blending of astonishment, pleasure and curiosity expressed on their faces. The situation becoming irksome to Jack, he said:

"Come into my smudge and have a pipe with me," and he turned in the direction of a rising piece of ground on which was planted a square-walled, heavy-duck tent. It stood in the centre of a circle of smouldering fire which formed a thin curtain of smoke—made more dense at evening and morning, when the mosquitoes were inclined to be doubly pugnacious.

Macdonald followed Jack into the circle, and evinced further astonishment at seeing two fine-looking bloodhounds stretched upon the skins of two large grizzlies spread out before the tent.

The dogs eyed the stranger suspiciously, but became friendly when their master smiled reassuringly. They lazily moved into the tent and settled themselves upon a pile of pelts which had every appearance of being occupied as a bed by someone who was not without a taste for luxury.

The two men sat down upon the skins, exchanged tobacco pouches, and in three minutes were puffing contentedly at their pipes and ready for conversation.

"I threw these skins down here to keep me from

catching rheumatism during my lazy fits," Jack remarked, feeling his position as host obliged him to prevent a repetition of the awkward pause in the conversation which followed upon the meeting of his guest and himself.

"A sensible plan," said Macdonald; "and now that you have made me so comfortable, will you pardon my burning curiosity and tell me at once how you came to this valley. You certainly have not had time to cross from British Columbia, for the trails were snow-bound a month ago. You could not have passed over our trail up the Bow river, for we had to chop a road for the pack-train through miles of fallen timber."

"When I left Morleyville," Jack replied, "I forded the Bow, took the trail up the Kananaskis Pass, branched over on the White Man's Trail, again forded the Bow, went as far as Castle Mountain, fell in love with it, wandered into this lovely valley, and here I have been for two weeks and yet cannot tear myself away from sight of that wonderful piece of natural architecture."

Castle Mountain stood forth in full view from the tent. Macdonald gazed for a few moments at the great pile of fantastic rock, gave a sharp glance at Jack, knocked the loose ashes from his pipe and made up his mind that his companion had spoken truthfully.

"Were you without a guide?" Macdonald asked.

"I am not certain," replied Jack, and a flash of tenderness illumined his features: "I imagine,—in fact, I feel certain—that an Indian has preceded me on my

trail from Morleyville. The missionary there insisted upon sending a Stoney Indian along with me; but I was firm in my refusal, because I wished to be alone."

"And you are positive the missionary outwitted you?" Macdonald queried, as he tried to detect the Indian on the watch at some point in the valley.

"Was it not strange," asked Jack, returning question for question, "that I should meet an Indian familiar with my mother-tongue, at the forks of the Kananaskis and White Man's Trails; that he should warn me of deep snows ahead, and advise a detour to the Bow River Pass?"

"Was it not stranger," continued Jack, "that frequently my dogs were prevented from leaving me on a mad rush forward only by my authoritative commands, and that the well-disciplined animals should take the lead on the trail with all the confidence of old-timers?"

"Certainly," replied Macdonald, his eyes twinkling merrily, "the dogs have been on the scent of a leader possessing rare intelligence."

"And the most bewildering occurrences," said Jack, "are, that every day since my arrival in this valley my dogs will leave me for an hour at a time and return gorged with food; and when I hunt the noble brutes lead me, with slight deviations, to the lair of the mountain lion, the haunts of the bear, or the coverts of the deer, giving me a surfeit of maddening sport, and saving the stock of provisions which I brought upon my pack-mule."

"Your experience becomes intensely interesting," Macdonald said, forgetting his first feeling of amusement, and becoming more and more anxious to listen to the remarkable tale which Jack seemed to find pleasure in relating, every sentence evidently relieving him gradually of the burden which mysterious secrets inevitably force upon mankind.

"At first," and Jack's voice sank to an audible whisper, "I was romantic enough to fancy the Good Spirit of the Mountains had welcomed me with the protecting love of a father for his first-born; and, imbued with that exhilarating idea, I plunged boldly and fearlessly into the torrents and successfully landed my outfit at every venture. But during the past few days I have come to believe in my silent and invisible Indian guide, and have become reconciled to his distant companionship."

Macdonald favored Jack with another sharp glance loosened the tobacco in his pipe with his pen-knife, pillowed his head in his hands, and, while emitting the fragrant smoke lazily between his lips, gazed long and earnestly at the Castle.

Jack again broke the silence :

"And now that I have replied to your questions, will you kindly satisfy my curiosity and tell me from whence you come, and your mission?"

"Pardon my reverie; but your tale is one of the strangest and most interesting I have listened to for many a day." And as Macdonald spoke, he surprised himself with the indulgence of a long sigh and a strong

desire to win the friendship of a man so original in his innocence, courage and manliness,

"You have not yet answered my question," said Jack, as he sprang to his feet, entered the tent, and emerged with a pair of field-glasses with which he swept every side of the valley.

"For what do you search?" Macdonald asked, also rising to his feet.

"I fancied I heard the tinkle of a bell," Jack replied.

"My pack-train and party!" ejaculated Macdonald. "I am chief of a section of a large surveying party which is seeking a passage through the mountains for the Canadian Pacific Railway; and the bell you hear is on the neck of the bell-mare that leads my pack-train down the trail into this valley."

CHAPTER III.

"A LETTER, Grace!"

"At last, papa! I am so glad, and mamma will be very happy!"

"And do you not think anyone else feels glad or happy?"

"Oh, papa! I know you love Jack with all your heart! But mamma and I worship the darling boy!"

"And would have spoiled him, too, if his father had not packed him off to college just in time," Mr. Lester, senior, added.

"Do you ever intend to open the letter, papa?"

"In a moment, dear! You see, I had a little amusement at the expense of the postmaster over the letter, and I feel elated yet."

"Papa, will you ever open that letter?"

"The postmaster said it was a parcel from the States, and would require inspection by the nearest customs' officer."

"Yes, yes! but the letter?"

"Then I showed him that one of the address instructions read 'via Fort Macleod,' and I assured him that place was a fort in the Canadian Northwest."

"Papa, papa! I'm getting hysterical!"

"His clerk produced a map, and in a second I had my finger on the spot marking the fort and its name, and then the letter was passed through the wicket to me. If he had a son like Jack, and the boy was wandering within a thousand miles of Fort Macleod, he would wear out a map in a week, running his finger over and over it to locate the whereabouts of so precious a child!"

Mr. Lester turned away his head as he spoke, and unconsciously allowed the bundle of dailies, exchanges and letters he had brought from the post-office to drop on his editorial table.

His daughter, quick to notice any change in her father, had her arms around his neck in a moment, kissing him on each cheek and betraying no knowledge of the tears standing in his eyes. Quietly and swiftly she brought a glass of water, and left him to recover

whilst she inspected the letter or parcel from her brother, for from its appearance it might be either.

Mr. Lester drank the water slowly. With hands still trembling from the excitement of receiving a letter from his son, and being forced to almost wrench it from the postmaster, he drew open the drawer at the side of the table, wherein lay a large meerschaum pipe and a plentiful supply of tobacco.

Grace divided her attention between a scrutiny of the odd-looking missive from Jack and her father's actions. Well she knew that when the fire burned brightly in that dark, old pipe, and the smoke commenced to curl upwards and hang in fancy clouds from the ceiling, her father would have shaken off his weakness and once more be his jolly, good-natured, loving self.

"Oh, papa, I'm sure this is not from Jack!" she cried, forgetting in the dismay of her thoughts that the pipe was but fairly started.

Her father faced her with a celerity that killed the effects of his weakness.

"What do you mean, girl?" he almost shouted.

"Why, papa, it has a United States stamp, and the stamp is not inverted!"

"Grace, show me that letter! Do you not see 'J. L.' plainly written in this corner? and does not that stand for Jack Lester?"

"Yes, papa! but why is the stamp not inverted? You know Jack always inverts the stamps on the letters and parcels he sends!"

"My dear, why this lack of perception? It is true my boy made the quixotic vow that he would stand the Queen on her head every chance he would have until Canadians had the national spirit to print the features of their Premier on their postage stamps. I am certain the lad intends no disrespect to the Queen, and forgets any indignity he offers her in his disgust at the inane worship of royalty in Canada. But I cannot understand why he should vent his anger upon the postage stamps of a Republic."

Grace softly whistled over her blunder, and acknowledged her father's superior cleverness by an affectionate kiss.

"And now that we have devoted full fifteen minutes to an expression of our surprise and delight at receiving the letter, suppose we open the wonderful package," said Mr. Lester, and he reached for the scissors.

Grace caught his arm and uttered a faint shriek.

"Oh, papa, it is tied with a funny sort of ribbon. Let me untie it," she expostulated.

Her father handed her the letter, and tenderly watched her vain endeavors to open the knot. With the charming inconsistency of woman, she impatiently picked up the scissors and cut through the tough fibre which she at first supposed to be silk. Then she attacked the wrapper.

"Why, papa, it is birch bark!" she exclaimed, exchanging the clumsy scissors for her dainty pen-knife, that the fracture might be more neatly accomplished.

Carefully she emptied the envelope of its contents,

and laid upon the table three letters, all written on birch bark, one for her mother, one for her father, and one for herself.

Mr. Lester selected his letter from amongst the others, placed it in his pocket and walked into his editorial sanctum, leaving Grace to wonder at her father's unusual exhibition of excitement and lack of gallantry towards her.

"Good-bye, papa; I'm going home to read the letters to mamma," Grace cried through the partly closed doorway.

But there was no response. Grace stowed the letters in her reticule, slipped out quietly and walked up the main street to the postoffice. Her pretty face at the wicket brought the susceptible clerk away from the telegraph instrument, although he was then sending an urgent message. With a careful look around him, the youth drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to the fair young girl, for whom he felt a sentimental affection, and for whom he would rifle the mail bags, not to speak of her father's mail box.

Grace's expressive eyes dilated with pleasure as she received the letter. Bestowing a sunny smile upon the clerk, and nodding her thanks, she turned away quickly and sped homewards.

"Wonder who her correspondent is," the clerk soliloquized; "I fancy her father don't like him or she would not coax me into holding her letters for her. I'm not breaking rules; but I wish she would not blind me

with her beauty and force me into helping to deceive Mr. Lester."

In a rustic arbor, surrounded by a tall hedge, and in a corner of the grounds hidden from view of her home by a clump of maples, Grace found the privacy she so ardently desired. Tenderly she regarded the handwriting upon the envelope, stealing additional joy by surmising the loving messages awaiting her perusal.

"My noble lover," she softly breathed; and then for the second time that day, she applied her dainty pen-knife.

For a few minutes she allowed the knife and letter to lie unnoticed in her lap, her thoughts busy with the remembrance of the two short, happy months she had spent at the home of her aunt and uncle in Ottawa during the past winter. There she had met and learned to love a young surveyor, who gave her in return a devotion that made him fear, strong man though he was, for his future happiness, should aught come between them. On the toboggan-slide, in the skating rink, on snow-shoe tramps, at sleighing parties, in the ball room, he had been one of her most constant admirers and companions. His merry, open nature had won her friendship; his freedom from jealousy, amid so many rivals, had taught her to respect him; his low, impassioned tones when in conversation with her had reached her heart; and his wealth of vigorous, unaffected manhood had captured her fondest affections, and bound her to him in the golden fetters so lightly borne in the sweet-fevered dreamland over which that artful rogue,

Cupid, has merrily roamed since the entry of mankind into the world, and, with untiring energy in the chase, and merciless in his sport, has emptied his quiver as often as the stars number in the heavens.

The reverie into which Grace had fallen was broken by a cold touch on her hand, and she looked down to see her brother's pet spaniel had discovered her hiding-place, and was supplicating for a caress by pushing his nose into her lap. Fondly she caressed the beautiful animal, and then ordered him to lie at her feet while she read her letter. It was brief:

IN CAMP, June 2, 1879.

MY DARLING,—An Indian has just brought our mail bag from Morleyville, and he has to return at once. You will then forgive my short reply to your loving letter, which I read while the contents of the bag were being distributed. You can imagine my surprise and delight at meeting your brother yesterday where we are now camped. He is in good health; and will, I hope accompany me to the summit. Already we are boon-companions, and I find him the most interesting mortal I have ever known. He does not know of the loving relationship which you and I have formed. Shall I tell him? The usual address. With fondest love,

ANGUS MACDONALD.

"Grace! Grace! where are you?"

"Here, mamma!" cried Grace, hastily concealing her lover's letter, and almost tripping over the spaniel in her swift flight from the arbor.

"Oh, Grace!" Mrs. Lester exclaimed, when she had wound her arm around her daughter's waist, and together they were walking along the path leading to the house, "Franklin has just returned from the office, looking pale and ill, and has given me a letter he received by the noon mail from Jack."

Grace felt uncomfortably guilty over her forgetfulness of the letters in her reticule. An inviting seat stood near, and on it she forced her mother to sit with her while she drew forth the neglected messages from Jack and read them.

Mrs. Lester was a silent listener. Her sweet, motherly face brightened with glad smiles as Grace repeated words strong in tender affection for mother and sister.

"Have you read papa's letter?" Grace asked, as she concluded reading.

"Yes dear," Mrs. Lester replied. And Grace knew by the tone of her mother's voice, that her father was distressed at something Jack had written him, and that she would not be allowed to read the letter.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE faint tinkle of the bell which had brought Jack and Macdonald to their feet on that glorious morning in the valley, sounded clearer and clearer as the pack-train moved down the winding trail. Now and again the packers could be heard vociferating at the more timid animals where the path became narrow and dangerous. Louder and louder grew the clamor of the approaching party. The tinkle of the bell changed to a most unmusical clangor. The hoof-beats of the laden horses came with a muffled deadness. A merry laugh rang through the air, and rippled overhead in circling wave-sounds. Snatches of popular airs from a comic opera proclaimed a tenor fresh from civilized haunts. The bloodhounds, who had vacated the tent when Jack brought forth his field-glasses, stood beside their master, growling ominously, notwithstanding repeated commands for silence. Jack's saddle pony and pack mule left the rich pasture near the marsh and came up to the tent on a galop. The pony neighed again and again, betraying a curious mixture of fear and delight upon receiving a chorus of replies. Then, as though aware that an appreciative audience awaited his entry, a horseman dashed from the shrubbery to the open, flung himself from his horse, loosened the two broad cinches, and was just in time to catch the bell-mare by her forelock, and lead her to where Macdonald had

taken up a position to mark the camp-ground. The other horses, a dozen in all, rushed into the patch of pea-vines, and greedily cropped the luscious greens. Another horseman followed slowly and remained in his saddle, ready to round-up the stock when the necessary arrangements were made for forming camp. At short intervals fourteen young men, clad in all manner and style of garments, emerged from the copse and looked curiously at Jack and his outfit as they strode onward to their chief. And, finally, the cook, bearing two sheet-iron pots on a long-handled shovel balanced on his shoulder, shuffled across the sward, ending a parade that afforded great amusement and entertainment to the once lone traveller.

In an hour the pack-horses were relieved of their burdens and were crushing the pea-vines as they rolled and grunted in ecstasy at their freedom from labor. The packs and saddles were carefully stacked close to the camp, that they might be readily covered should the treacherous climate send a shower of rain. The fire beneath the pots burned brightly, and the cook gazed stolidly upon the biscuit browning in the reflector. A couple of young men gathered wood and chopped it into suitable lengths. The leveller took the delicate instruments from the boxes, examined them carefully to see that no damage had been done them during their rude transportation from the last camp, polished them a little with a silk handkerchief, and replaced them with a satisfied smile. Other members of the

party busied themselves repairing rents in their clothing, washing their underwear and bathing in the stream.

"Grub-pile!" shouted the cook, and a hungry crowd swarmed around the steaming kettles, filling their tin plates with pieces of fried bacon, dipping out coffee into tin cups and stowing hot biscuits in their pockets.

The unlooked-for occurrences of the day had driven all thoughts of hunger from Jack; but when he gazed upon the noisy crowd a short distance away he felt solitary and hungry and wished he was one of the company. Presently he observed Macdonald coming to his camp, preceded by a tow-headed youth bearing a large piece of bark on which were a number of dishes emitting a most appetizing odor. The porter set down the rustic server before Jack's tent and rejoined his companions. Jack welcomed Macdonald with a grip of his hand that made the young engineer wince.

"You are thrice welcome," he said, "for I felt lonely even within speaking distance of so many people. Your thoughtfulness and kindness banishes every atom of reserve remaining in me."

"I, also, was lonely among my boys, and resolved to tempt a welcome by bribing you through your stomach," said Macdonald.

"A very effective means for tickling me into good humor on all occasions," Jack remarked with a smile.

Before attacking the dinner, Jack produced a leather portmanteau filled with a variety of delicacies, a cold roast of venison and a tin box containing small cakes

which resembled compressed yeast. Macdonald noted the additions with sparkling eyes and itching palate.

"You have once more aroused my curiosity," he said. "What do you intend to do with the cakes in that small box?"

"Those cakes," Jack replied, "are compressed grapes, the juice retained by a process kept secret in Italy. I have only to dilute a small piece in a cup filled with cold water and I have a deliciously cool, light wine."

The two men seated themselves on the bear skins, placed the bark between them, and while they satisfied their keen appetites on the venison and biscuit, finishing up with currant jam and wine, they discussed their separate tastes for the different kinds of food which comprise the bill of fare in camp life, and agreed that they were enjoying very fair luck at the meal of which they were partaking.

When they had filled and lighted their pipes, and had twisted themselves into comfortable positions, Macdonald interested Jack with a description of the work which was before him during the short summer months in the mountains.

"My orders," he said, "are to follow the Bow River to its source, cross the Divide, and winter between the Rockies and Selkirks at some point on the Columbia River."

Jack whistled to his dogs, threw them the remains of the dinner, cleaned his hunting-knife by burying it to the hilt in the ground and working it up and down, and

exhibited every symptom of having conceived a new idea which was at variance with his former plans.

Macdonald exultingly watched the effect of the tempting bait which he had cast with much skill and forethought, and felt certain he had captured an intelligent and entertaining companion for his leisure hours during the campaign upon which he had entered.

"I have resolved to accompany you," said Jack, turning to give Macdonald a questioning look, "if you have no objections. My intentions were to return East in the autumn; but I can arrange the change by letter, and no serious trouble will ensue."

Macdonald jumped to his feet, gave his thigh a vigorous slap, and extended his right hand with a cordiality irresistible, and which caused Jack to clutch it with one of his crushing grips.

"We will now be able," said Macdonald, "to cement a friendship so strangely and pleasantly begun, and link our lives with a chain heated in a never-dying flame of affection, and forged with the honest strength of respect and esteem."

Jack regarded Macdonald with surprise, but without any disturbing thoughts on the wisdom of acquiescing in so sweeping a contract with a comparative stranger. He felt that he was in the presence of a true man and a noble character. A longing surged within him to possess a friendship so elevated in its conception. He subjected his companion to a searching gaze as though he would penetrate to the inmost recesses of his heart. Then he caught him by the arm and dragged him to

where the two dogs were lying. Bidding one of them to rise, he asked the intelligent animal if it were willing to accept the stranger as its new master. The hound snuffed at Macdonald's limbs, looked thoughtfully into his face, and quietly lay down at his feet.

"You will accept the gift of one of my dogs," said Jack. "She trusts you and will never desert you, even at the forfeit of her life. Your offer of friendship comes most pleasantly to me. We will be as brothers to each other while we live."



CHAPTER V.

ERE the sun had journeyed far from the meridian towards his bed in the west, a second party appeared in the valley, evidently entering by a more northerly pass, for their route followed down the stream. An odd-looking outfit they were. Two Indians, either Chinook or Stoney by the shortness of their stature, walked in file before a cayouse. Upon the diminutive pony was built a wide-spreading pack, forming an easy riding seat for a squaw and four papooses. Following close in the rear were three evil-countenanced, bow-legged, yellow-haired dogs, their ugly noses pointing towards the

ground, a deformity acquired through being forced to drag heavy bundles of wood from the moment their strength could be utilized.

The Indians left the squaw to dismount and remove the pack at a spot not far from the surveyor's camp, and walked directly to Jack's tent.

Macdonald and Jack were busy oiling their Winchesters, but were none the less cognizant of the new arrivals.

After the usual "How!" had been interchanged, the younger Indian surprised his rather indifferent audience into lively listeners by waving his hand in the direction from which he had come, and coolly announcing.

"Heap big grizzly! white man hunt him! me go too and show!"

Jack fixed an intent gaze on the speaker, who bore it without flinching,—and with a reassuring nod at Macdonald, he whistled for the hounds. The dogs were disdainfully sniffing around the three ill-favored curs, but answered on a run. They looked at their masters and then at the Indians. The next moment they were jumping around the young buck, licking his hands as he tried to suppress the rough welcome, and evincing unmistakeable signs of friendly acquaintance-ship.

"It is as I fancied," Jack remarked to Macdonald. "My phantom guide has presented himself in the flesh and no longer desires invisibility. He has met some friends who are on a hunting expedition, and has resolved to take advantage of his reinforcements to cater

most liberally and with less restraint to my passion for hunting big game."

"What a fortunate fellow you are," said Macdonald. "I cannot envy you, for hereafter I am certain to share in your favors. But we are wasting precious time. I will leave you to make your arrangements while I hasten to my camp to order a halt until to-morrow, and secure a few necessaries for the hunt."

The Indians manifested little or no concern over the manner of their reception; but when Macdonald departed, the younger spoke hurriedly to the elder, and despatched him up the valley on the cayouse.

Jack drew a small silver whistle from an inside pocket, blew a long staccatoed call, and then entered his tent, quickly emerging with a couple of gingersnaps in his hand.

Macdonald looked up in alarm at the sound of the whistle, and was rewarded by seeing a pony raise its head from the pea-vines, answer the call with a neigh, start off at a trot changing to a galop as it caught sight of Jack's arms swinging like a windmill, and whinnying and neighing, dash up to its master to receive the tempting morsels which always awaited it after a summons to the saddle.

The Indian threw the saddle and bridle on the pony, left the bridle reins hanging to the ground, snatched up a lariat which was lying beside the tent, and sped over to where the horses were grazing. In a few minutes he returned on the back of one animal and leading another, using both ends of the hair-rope most scientific-

cally in guiding his astonished captives. The head-packer brought over his saddle and bridle and had a mount ready for Macdonald in good time.

"All ready?" shouted Jack, as he swung himself astride his pony, lifted the reins over its head and stowed his rifle beneath the left flap of his saddle.

"All ready!" Macdonald answered, hurrying across, rifle in hand and armed with a Colt's navy and a wicked looking hunting-knife.

The packer tied the rifle in place and then helped Macdonald to mount.

In the meantime the Indian had bitted the third horse with a simply formed noose on the lariat, and, with a coil of the rope swinging from his right hand, his left free to guide the horse by the single line, his limbs awkwardly angled over the ribs and shoulders of the beast, he moved slowly up the trail made by the cayeuse.

Jack and Macdonald, whistling for the hounds, followed with every confidence in the success of their mission. Not a word escaped the lips of the hunters during their ride through the valley and to the edge of the first tier of pines.

Then the guide motioned for a halt, and in pantomimic language instructed his followers to tie their horses in a way that would admit of no escape, and to also hobble the front feet to make doubly sure, explaining his reasons in the whispered remark,

"Horse heap scared of bear; run like the debbil!"

The safety of the three horses well looked after, the

guide climbed a pine to its top and gave a very clever imitation of the hooting of the owl. Faintly came an answer in a similar strain, and the Indian slipped to the ground, bringing with him his rifle which he had left concealed in the branches during his short visit to Jack's tent. Beckoning to the young men to follow, he commenced the ascent of the slope by a scarcely distinguishable trail which, although apparently leading to any of the four points of the compass as the hunters advanced, kept them ever in hearing distance of the increasing roar of the torrent that fed the stream sweeping through the valley.

For an hour they toiled up the broken path, stopping only to await an answering hoot. As they entered an opening of about an acre in extent, the call sounded from the opposite side, and the guide hustled them back under cover.

The hounds, obedient to the slightest motion in command when at work, seemed to realize they were soon to face their first grizzly and showed signs of distress.

Macdonald, who had never hunted large game, felt a strong sympathy for the hounds.

Jack coolly examined his rifle and posed as a veteran.

The guide devoted himself to pacifying the dogs and replying to the signals of the other Indian.

And in this position and condition the hunting party awaited the arrival of the most ferocious and deadliest antagonist in the mountains.

The depressing silence was suddenly broken by the

bleating of a mountain sheep. It sprang out of a small bunch of shrubbery in the open space and tugged frantically at a lariat which bound it to a stake. The hounds pressed closely to the guide, the hair on their backs strengthening to bristles and standing upright, A succession of quick, short, hoarse growls sounded from the rocks in proximity to the water. The hounds stiffened their legs and no longer seemed to shrink from the conflict. Macdonald nervously fumbled at the hammer of his rifle and wiped large beads of perspiration from his forehead, but became cooler when Jack gripped him tightly on the shoulder. The sheep jumped and tore around the stake, crying most piteously. The guide gave a warning "Hist!" and at the same second a monster grizzly shuffled into full view of the party, and only a short distance away.

Jack struck the hounds sharply with a stick and forced them to crouch down at his side. He whispered to Macdonald to take the first shot and to aim low. Macdonald was still trembling a little; but, naturally obeying a stronger mind, he dropped on one knee, levelled his rifle at the bear, closed his eyes and pulled the trigger.

Jack sprang to his feet as the bullet sped over the grizzly and flattened on a rock. Impatiently he watched the ugly brute stop short, give vent to its surprise in an angry growl, and raise on its hind legs, snuffing the air as it turned its head from side to side in search of its mysterious foe. Taking a quick sight, he fired at its throat, and had the satisfaction to see a stream of blood spurt forth and drench its shoulders and breast.

With a weak roar, the bear rushed forward towards its assailants. The guide pumped six shots in rapid succession and succeeded in crippling one front paw. Macdonald drew his long hunting-knife and stood his gun against a tree.

The bear was now within twenty-five yards of the party; and coming at them with a ferocity and rapidity that made Macdonald's breath come in hot gasps. Jack had his rifle at his shoulder, waiting a chance shot. The hounds whined impatiently for permission to fly at the throat of the huge brute.

The sharp crack of a rifle sounded from across the opening, and the grizzly pitched forward on its head and mowed the grass in swaths with his great claws as it struggled through its pain to regain its feet.

Then Jack let loose the hounds with a wild yell that told of the hot blood dancing in his veins. Macdonald caught the fevered greed for blood and had to be held back from following the dogs. The elder Indian flew over the open space to be in at the death. The guide uttered several unearthly shrieks and swung his rifle over his head.

The hounds sprung at the blinded, maddened animal with furious fierceness, but one blow from the uninjured paw stretched them almost lifeless a few yards away. The bear was once more upon his hind feet, but was too badly wounded to make any forward movement. This was the chance for which Jack had kept his magazine full. Scarcely taking time to sight, he pumped bullet after bullet into its breast, until he

saw the brute fall backwards, and with one convulsive shudder, lie motionless in a heap.

After an examination of the monster, conducted at a careful distance, the guide procured a long pole and poked again and again at the carcase. Satisfied that all danger was over, he borrowed Macdonald's hunting-knife and was not long in removing the magnificent skin.

The elder Indian killed the decoy sheep, swung it on his back and started down the trail as though a heavy burden was not unfamiliar to him.

The guide declared the meat of the grizzly useless, and with the green hide dangling over his back, took the lead on the return to camp.

The dogs had recovered their breath, and followed their masters with a stiffness that showed the effects of the nasty slap they had received.

Late that night, when leaving Jack's tent after a long discussion over the afternoon's sport, Macdonald asked.

"What kept you so cool through that terrible fight, Jack?"

"Did I look cool? Yet, I trembled from head to foot; and if you had not shown fear, the guide would have been the only courageous man in the party," was the reply.

Macdonald pondered over Jack's reply as he walked to his camp.

"Yes," he thought; "if Jack had shown fear I would have been braver."

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CHAPTER VI.

In a quiet aristocratic street in Ottawa, a large and handsome residence stood well back from a low, iron paling which guarded a trim, hedge-flanked lawn, divided by a gravelled walk leading from the gate to the house. Two Jersey cows, as graceful and as beautiful and not unlike the deer in autumn, timidly grazed on one side of the velvety sward, and felt none of the enjoyment of their owner in the rural simplicity of their attractiveness. On the other side a lawn-tennis court evidenced frequent battles across the net; and a tent formed of gaily-striped cotton and fashioned after a Turkish pattern, promised rest and refreshment after the fascinating exercise within the courts.

On either side of the broad, low steps leading to the pillared portico which fronted the house, a tall statue, representing the Queen of Darkness holding at arm's length a gas jet, protected by a colored glass cover of fancy design, bid the first welcome to guests after night-fall.

It was the home of James Macdonald, a wealthy exporter of timber and lumber, and uncle of Angus Macdonald, the young surveyor. Proud of his wealth, satisfied with his high social position, and charitable when he knew his friends would be made acquainted with the amounts he bestowed, he was still unhappy with his own thoughts, and fretful to his family, because his am-

bitious attempts to secure political power had been frustrated at every election for which he had received the nomination from his Party.

Another slight source of displeasure to the rich lumberman was the presence in his home of his ward, the orphan daughter of his only brother. She was beautiful, and deprived his three daughters of the best prizes in the matrimonial market. She was wilful, and frequently caused him increased fretfulness. She was haughty, and had the power to silence him with a severe glance. She was an heiress, and he was without power to subdue her proud spirit. She was affectionate, and made him love her despite his anger.

Yet, he was proud of his guardianship, when he beheld his ward the belle of every public gathering at Rideau Hall, and at the homes of the wealthiest and most honored citizens of Ottawa. But he felt that she read his inmost thoughts, and he disliked to have his weakness and vanity laid bare to one so near to him.

Did he wish her to leave his home? No, decidedly not! He would miss her lively conversation at the breakfast table, for his wife and daughters were silent under the baneful influence of his bad temper. Her passionate, refined, cultivated taste for music filled his home with song and melody, and made him forget for the time his disquieting moods; his daughters were not burdened with a taste for music. Cabinet ministers and their friends, celebrities from abroad, even visiting royalty, invariably accepted invitations to his dinners and receptions.

The names of himself and household were always among the list of invited guests at every reception given by the leaders of society in the city.

The private carriage from Rideau Hall was before his gate repeatedly, carrying off his niece to informal dinners at the gubernatorial residence, and sometimes returning to acquaint him with Miss Macdonald's intended absence for a few days.

Well he knew that his gifted ward was the centre of attraction to his home, and that his wife and daughters had not the power to give him the social position he enjoyed through his niece.

"Uncle," said Elsie, one morning at the breakfast table, "I was up at sunrise to finish a letter to brother Angus, and had time to glance over the daily. The vacant portfolio, which has been creating so much dissension among the members of the Government, has been given to Mr. Thurston. He is a lawyer, has been made a widower lately, and his home is in Toronto."

Mrs. Macdonald, waiting in vain for her husband to offer a remark upon the gossip detailed by her niece, expressed a wish that the new minister be sent an invitation to dine with them as soon as he became settled in the city. The Misses Macdonald looked conscious and chorused an eager assent.

Elsie watched her uncle narrowly, and saw he was buried in deep thought. The aromatic steam died away from his coffee cup, leaving the once enticing beverage undrinkable. The thin, dry toast in the silver holder before his plate remained unbuttered. He toyed with

a quickly cooling roll, but did not take it from its bed in the snowy napkin. Finally, muttering an excuse, he left the table, and his surprised family heard the library door close and the lock answer to the turn of the key.

"My news must have upset uncle," said Elsie, her tone conveying little sympathy.

"Another display of papa's unruly temper," remarked the eldest daughter.

"I think James is brooding over some business trouble," Mrs. Macdonald suggested, her voice betraying a remnant of affection yet remaining for her disagreeable husband.

The meal was ended in quietude. Mrs. Macdonald went off to the kitchen to hold her daily interview with the cook. Her daughters strayed out to the tennis court and practised swiping the balls over the net. Elsie slipped upstairs to her room to add a lengthy postscript to her letter to her brother before donning a Tam O'Shanter and taking a walk to the nearest letter-box.

Mr. Macdonald sat musing in an easy chair in his library. His thoughts had evidently become collected, for he was smiling to himself and making preparations to light a cigar which he held between his fingers.

"The new minister," he unconsciously said aloud, "shall marry Elsie, and I shall stipulate for being elected a representative of a constituency supporting the Government with a large majority,"

For a few days the Macdonald household enjoyed freedom from a restraint which had rested upon them

unpleasantly for many years. The master had developed another character in one hour after his hasty exit from the breakfast room. It changed him from a querulous, domineering husband and father to a man apparently anxious to make the lives of those around him contented and happy.

His wife tried to appear joyful at the transfiguration and placed a freshly-plucked flower in her hair every morning before breakfast. But her spirit was crushed. Already she had surreptitiously made her will, and had a brave welcome ready for the message of everlasting peace.

His daughters remembered their wardrobes demanded replenishment, and the nursery again became a scene of busy life. A couple of dressmakers covered the long table and chairs with a variety of dress goods; and, while one made the sewing-machine hum from morning until night, the other wielded a shining pair of scissors and kept the Misses Macdonald prisoners to the stool upon which they were obliged to stand while she exercised her trained artistic taste in draping the elegant silks and other costly material.

Elsie viewed with surprise the complete transformation in her uncle's home. Strangely so, it caused her to seek the society of her aunt more than ever and brighten the careworn face of the too-long-neglected wife with loving smiles of appreciation for the tender caresses lavished by the beautiful girl.

Nor did Elsie believe that the altered disposition displayed by her uncle would continue for a lengthy

period. Her keen insight detected his forced demeanor and delved through the thin surface to the superabundance of natural meanness and vanity which filled his heart. She determined to keep a strict watch on his actions and discover, if possible, why the lion masqueraded in a lamb's fleece, and why a foreboding of trouble refused to be shaken off.

CHAPTER VII.

Not many days after the introduction of the new and more peaceful *regime* in her uncle's home, and tired of the ceaseless chatter of her cousins about their dresses, Elsie wandered out upon the lawn, calling to the Jerseys in a voice musical enough to coax a sulky Texas steer from the corner of a corral. The graceful animals shyly awaited her coming. They permitted her to place herself between them, throw a lovely arm over each neck and take them for a promenade up and down the plot.

Elsie was unconscious of the entrancing picture she presented on that summer's afternoon. Her highly sensitive ingenuous nature freed her from desire for attraction or flattery. She knew she was endowed with beauty and cleverness, and that she had a great number

of admirers and friends; but she did not attribute her good fortune altogether to her physical and intellectual charms. Out of the goodness of her heart she was ever gracious and courteous to those who sought her companionship, and she believed that friendship alone surrounded her with society so agreeable.

As she turned with her pets, coming back towards the gate at a quiet, leisurely pace she was irresistible in her simplicity and loveliness. At least, so thought Mr. Thurston, as he stopped his well-appointed tandem and dog-cart at the gate, handed the reins to his servant, and walked up the path to the house. He raised his hat as he passed her, and received a graceful and friendly recognition of his gallantry.

"That must be Mr. Thurston," Elsie remarked, intuitively, to her companions, "and I must say good-bye, for he is to dine with us this evening, and I have to dress."

And she left them standing, looking after her as she crossed the tennis court and gained her apartments by a side entrance.

When Elsie entered the drawing-room, she found the family assembled, and entertaining their guest over a collection of photographs. Her uncle met her and led her to the group around the table.

"My niece, Mr. Thurston," he said, in his courtliest manner; and, as Thurston turned with a smile to acknowledge the introduction, he continued, "The Hon. Mr. Thurston, Miss Macdonald."

"The dinner is served," announced a tastefully-

dressed, rosy-cheeked maid respectfully from the doorway.

Thurston gave his arm to his hostess, Macdonald followed with Elsie, the Misses Macdonald formed into file, and the procession moved to the dining-room.

The conversation was lively enough at first, for Elsie and her uncle were in the best of spirits, and the honored guest discovered himself as a clever wit and able tactician in discussion. When dessert had replaced the meats, Thurston, looking directly at Elsie, asked for permission to have his curiosity gratified.

"Certainly," Mrs. Macdonald assented. "It will please me to give you freedom from formality at any time you bestow upon us the pleasure of your company."

"I feel a grateful appreciation of your kindness, madam," said Thurston, "and sincerely hope that our friendship, commenced so agreeably, will be everlasting."

Mrs. Macdonald and her daughters smiled graciously. The lumberman looked supremely happy. And Elsie experienced a thrill which provoked a sensation of distrust. She disliked the suave guest now; she would dislike him forever. She determined in her own mind that he was a politician, not a statesman, and at once relegated him to the position of an inconsequent acquaintance. She knew how premature was her decision, but she had confidence in her distrust as well as in her ability to read character.

"My curiosity," said Thurston, again allowing his eyes to wander in quest of Elsie's face, "impels me to

ask if the delicious cream in which these strawberries are served comes from the Jerseys which feed on the lawn?"

"You have opened a free channel for conversation," replied Macdonald, indulging in a hearty laugh at the temerity of his guest in broaching the subject; "My Jerseys not only fill me with a proud delight, but they keep my table supplied with the cream which you justly pronounce delicious, and also with most palatable butter from January to December."

"I envy your good fortune," said Thurston; and, as though desirous of thawing the coldness which he discerned in Elsie's demeanor, he continued, "and I also envy the beautiful animals the privilege they were granted this afternoon in their promenade with so charming a companion."

An expression of questioning surprise overspread the countenances of the family. Thurston looked amused and furtively regarded Elsie's face. Elsie, restraining a sarcastic speech, quietly told of her meeting with Thurston in the afternoon and thus silenced further conjecture.

When the ladies had retired to the drawing-room, Thurston pleased his host by showing indifference to any other topic than that which would introduce Elsie. Macdonald, while apparently averse to the discussion of matters pertaining to the privacy of his home, permitted Thurston to draw from him the fullest particulars of Elsie's life, character and position, but was unprepared and startled to hear his guest formally request permis-

sion to win his niece in marriage. He raised such objections as he felt certain Thurston could not meet with immediate explanations. Then he cautiously selected his words as he stipulated for a seat in the House of Commons.

Thurston listened with well-concealed disdain to the demand made by the ambitious lumberman. He left his chair at the table and paced the room for a few minutes. Then he again took his seat, filled up his glass with wine, neatly drained it at one gulp, and answered.

"I am prepared to use or abuse my power in order that your covenant may be carried out. In the autumn there will be a vacancy which you shall fill, provided my marriage with your niece takes place before that time."

Macdonald was somewhat abashed now that his weakness for power was made known to a man who was little better than a stranger, and he emptied the decanter. Invigorated with the liberal potions of wine, his selfish determination returned with increased strength and he acquiesced in the nefarious contract.

Thurston excused an early departure from the drawing-room that evening, claiming indulgence on account of neglected official business in the long vacated office which so recently came under his control.

The next morning, as Elsie was descending the stairway with the intention of taking a constitutional walk, her uncle called to her from the library. She obeyed the summons with hastened steps, for her heart

was light, and the bounding strength of healthy youth was eager for training. As she entered, she noticed her uncle's eyes were nervously shifting from one object to another on the walls, and her thoughts told her that the secret of the agreeable change in his temper was to be divulged.

"Elsie," he began, attempting in vain to fasten his gaze upon his niece, thus leaving himself at a serious disadvantage, "the Hon. Mr. Thurston has asked my consent to woo you for his wife, and I have promised that you shall marry him next month."

"Are you crazy?" demanded Elsie in a tone partly curious, but decidedly ominous of a storm.

"Your question is irrelevant!" Macdonald exclaimed sharply. "You are not yet of age, and I have the authority to give you in marriage to the man of my choice."

Elsie, with a swift movement, lessened the distance between herself and her uncle, and brought her angered face so close to his purpled visage that he was almost mesmerized. Coldly and threateningly she spoke her next question.

"And what is the price you have demanded from the miserable coward whom you would force me to wed?"

Macdonald was thunderstruck at the boldness and perception in her denunciation of his action, but he nerved himself to equivocations which sank him deeper and deeper into the filth that oozed from his heart. Finally, with a glare of cunning and devilry in his

treacherous eyes, his hot breath tingling her cheeks, his voice husky with excitement, he caught her by the wrist and hissed :

“You hussy! you will marry Thurston or I will break every bone in your body! Your brother is not here to protect you now, and I can crush your damnably high spirit!”

Elsie sent forth a piercing shriek and became hysterical. With curses pouring from his lips, Macdonald forced her into a chair, snatched his hat and gloves and left the house.

When Mrs. Macdonald rushed into the room, Elsie was struggling hard to repress her sobs; but the sight of her aunt caused the tears to start afresh, and it was an hour before her nervousness subsided. Mrs. Macdonald had wisely turned the key in the door, and refused entrance to her daughters and servants, who gathered at the alarm. They retreated only after a promise of explanations as soon as possible.

The promise was never kept, for Elsie was stubborn in her refusal to answer her aunt's tender inquiries. When Macdonald came home to dinner, his wife informed him that Elsie had left the house before lunch hour without intimating the time of her return. He offered no remark, ate his dinner in silence, and was not seen by his family again for two days.

CHAPTER VIII.

JACK's sleep was fitful after the excitement of the bear-hunt. In his dreams he again faced the maddened monster, and his friends deserted him in his peril. Vainly he strove to pump a cartridge into the barrel of his rifle. The magazine was empty. He felt the savage brute encircle him with its powerful forelegs and crush him against its blood-stained breast, wherein he had planted the first bullet. He shuddered as he thought of his father and mother and sister hearing of his horrible death, and he vainly tried to call aloud in his agony. And then he awoke, to find his body bathed in perspiration, and his hound, wet and shivering, lying across his breast.

Bounding to his feet to free himself from his terrible delirium, and rolling the dog over the foot of his couch with the rude momentum, he heard the rain beating against his tent and found the mosquito-bar, which had been stretched across the opening, was pushed aside to give entrance to his storm-driven and awkward bed-mate.

He replaced the netted guard, lighted a match and saw by his watch that it yet wanted a few hours to day-break. Taking a pull at his flask, he dragged the com-fortless hound under the blankets with him, and ended the night with more refreshing sleep.

"Are you awake yet, Jack?" queried Angus, as he peered through the netting.

"Hello! what's up? Is that you, Angus?" came drowsily from the interior.

"Yes, it's me, and I'm up," Angus replied, laughing "I have come to invite you to breakfast with me and to tell you we will not leave the valley to-day. It is raining steadily, and I have a good excuse for catching up on my topography."

"Wait a moment and I'll be with you," said Jack, as he tumbled out of the tent, sponge and towel in hand and ran to the stream.

After a hearty breakfast, Angus set up his drawing-board for a table and busied himself extending the notes he had taken since entering the mountains. Jack smoked in silence for awhile, watching his comrade at work. Then he slipped out and went in quest of his guide, but could not find him or his odd outfit. Then he went to his tent, but there was no one with whom to converse. With a shake of his head he thought of the death of his desire to be alone. Back he wandered to Angus, forced him to make room at one end of the board, and then demanded pen, ink and paper.

Angus laughed at Jack for having the blues and handed him a neat, leather case packed with the necessaries for letter-writing.

Jack filled sheet after sheet rapidly, and finally threw down the pen with the remark:

"There; if that does not tickle Grace, I am no judge."

"What have you been scribbling about?" asked Angus, pricking up his ears at the mention of the name so dear to him.

"Telling my sister all about you," replied Jack, with a laugh. "After reading this letter, if she ever sees you she will know you."

"Read it to me," Angus suggested.

"Catch me," said Jack; "you would want to murder me."

"Honestly, Jack, have you written anything about me which is not true?" Angus pleaded with a tremor in his voice.

"Why, Angus, old fellow, what would it matter to you if I have?" returned Jack in surprise.

"Only this, Jack," and Angus' face turned pale as he spoke; "your sister Grace and I are promised to each other in marriage."

"What!" cried Jack, "are you the Angus Macdonald whom my sister met in Ottawa?"

"I am that fortunate and happy man," Angus replied, in a tender tone.

"Oh, Angus!" Jack exclaimed, deeply moved, "why did you not tell me this before?"

"You must not forget, Jack, that I was a stranger to you only yesterday," Angus replied, "and you might have doubted my word."

Jack started up from his seat, stretched his hand across the table, and while he held Angus's hand in a firm clasp, said to him.

"I am proud of Gracie's choice; we shall be more than brothers now."

Angus tried to speak, but his voice was choked with emotion at the friendly words uttered by his companion. Noticing his distress, Jack kindly placed the letter before him, and then flung himself on the bed to indulge in a reverie over the strange news he had heard.

As Angus read each succeeding page, filled with eulogies upon himself, and winding up with a description of the party and outfit under his chieftainship, he thought of Grace, as she would seem when reading the letter; and the two men remained buried in their thoughts until the call for dinner rang through the camp. Then Angus hustled his notes into a box, Jack got up and pocketed his letter, and, arm in arm, they sauntered down to the fire to secure their share of the "grub-pile."

The rain ceased falling late in the afternoon. The sun peeped through the breaking clouds, flashing the rain-drops on the leaves, and dispelling the gloom which enveloped the valley since morning. As if a curtain was being rolled up to the heavens, the mists lifted and disclosed the face of lovely nature smiling through her tear-stains. The bright light gave the gigantic castle a new glory, the turreted walls and lofty domes standing forth clean and clear after the vigorous cleansing they had received. And the noise of the axe and the whistling of the men announced the renewal of activity in the camp.

Angus joined Jack at supper. They discussed their

plans for the morrow, and concluded to make an early start to offset the delay occasioned by the bear-hunt and wet weather.

"Can you tell me, Jack?" questioned Angus, as they stretched themselves on the skins before the tent to enjoy a smoke, "why Grace wishes our engagement to remain secret for awhile?"

"Bless her loving heart!" exclaimed Jack in reply, "she fears father and mother will grieve over the idea of losing her from the old homestead."

"Then your father does not dislike me?" Angus queried, his mind evidently relieved of an uncomfortable doubt.

"How could he, Angus," Jack rejoined, "when he has neither seen nor heard of you?"

Angus mused for a few minutes and then remarked,

"I have a presentiment, Jack, that you and I will spend next Christmas in your home, and that my sister Elsie will be there also."

Jack laughed long and heartily.

"What, old fellow," he said, teasingly, "are you going to bolt your job and hasten back to your sweetheart? Do not get excited. I will give you her photograph and you can worship her image. You can lend me your compass and instrument and I will take charge of your party and lead them to the wall of China. Come, brace up, and do not look so foolishly happy!"

"I have no intention to bolt my job, as you inelegantly term it," retorted Angus; "but I have the option

of returning east in the autumn, and I am going then if I have to make the trip on the hurricane deck of a cayeuse."

"Pardon my flippancy, Angus," said Jack, in a sudden fit of tenderness. "I am rejoiced at your resolution, and will guarantee you a royal welcome at my home; and," his spirit for mischief reviving, "you shall have Gracie all to yourself heaps of times, or my bump of management will have completely flattened out."

"I'll flatten out every bump in your head, in search of a little sense, if you do not cease tormenting me," threatened Angus, the joyous cadence of his tones robbing the pugnacious speech of every vestige of ill humor.

The conversation became languid as the shadows gathered. On the western sky were kaleidoscoped the warm, soft, many-hued tints from the sinking sun. Over the ethereal blue were crimsoned splashes of electric fire in fantastic shapes. Slowly the brilliancy died away, and gradually the golden splendor faded into tarnished yellow. Waving a last good-bye with a few flaming darts above the irregular line of the horizon, Old Sol ended his daily task and left but a glow on the trail over which he had rolled in the dazzling majesty of his power as King of Light.

With silent swiftness the heralds of darkness travelled from the east, dragging with them a thick mantle and looping it to the mountain peaks as they spread it over the valley.

A peaceful hush whispered over the ground and sleep wooed thought to rest. Nigh nestled to earth, sighed her content, and passed into slumberland.

CHAPTER IX.

'Oho! oho!'

The night-herder rode up in response to the call that echoed over the valley, and was agreeably surprised to find Angus marching through the camp, awakening his men to prepare for resumption of the daily journey up the trail.

"What is the time?" he called.

"Four o'clock; and day will break 'r an hour," came a hurried reply from the chief.

The herder spurred his horse into a galop back through the imperfect light to the herd and rounded-up the strays with wild yells and imprecations. With vigorous cracks of his black-snake and lusty whoops, he drove the animals close to camp, caught the bell-mare with a scientific cast of his lariat and tied her to a stake. Tearing off his saddle and bridle, he bore them to his tent, flung them on the ground, routed out his bed-mate, and in a moment was sound asleep between the well-warmed blankets.

The cook, unwashed and clad in greasy garments, shuffled down to the fire-place, fanned the coals on the back log into fresh life, piled on some lightwood and started a blaze, bustled down to the stream to fill the kettles, and yelled for some one to come and chop wood. While the flames played about the kettles, he set the reflector before the fire, threw a quantity of baking-powder and salt into a pan of flour, added water again and again, rolled out the dough on the bottom of the pan with the handle of the shovel, cut cakes with the lid of the baking-powder tin, yanked the pan out of the reflector, greased it, filled it with cakes, put it back, and then sat down to watch the biscuit bake and brown and to wait until the water for the coffee boiled.

One by one the tents were struck and spread out, filled with blankets and spare clothing, and then rolled into neat bundles. The camp equipment, excepting the cook's outfit, was piled close to the saddles, in readiness for being loaded. The breakfast was despatched in scalding haste, and then the two packers commenced their interesting operations.

A herder led the bell-mare up to the packs and placed her between the two packers. While one spread a folded blanket on her back, the other selected a saddle, resembling a wooden saw-horse, and planted it on the pad. Two broad, hair cinches, or surcingles, were passed under her belly and fastened to the saddle with a pressure that caused her many grunts. [The second cinche grips around the loins, its necessity being noticeable at the steep descents.] The head packer

then fastened the end of a long rope to a ring well-forward at the base of the saddle and left it hanging while he lifted a suitable bundle and held it against the saddle, binding it at one end as he threw the rope over. The assistant, elevating another bundle of equal weight and placing it in a similar position, caught the rope, passed it through a ring at the back corner of the base of the saddle, carried it through a ring at the front corner, and cast it over again, where it was fastened to the back-ring. This was the foundation of the load. Then side walls of easy-fitting bundles were built, the centre was filled with less pliant materials, and over all thick canvas was spread. The rope was again thrown over and back several times, being drawn tightly before each cast, and finally tied securely by the head packer to a strong hook in the top of the cinche. The mare was then given her freedom, and the herder drove in another subject.

When all but one of the pack-horses had been loaded, the cook had his outfit ready to be dumped into the centre of the last pack. And shortly after day-break the entire party were moving across the valley.

Jack had turned his mule over to the care of the packers, loaned his pony to one of the chainmen who was unwell, and walked ahead with the night-herder. He wished to draw some information from the youth, who willingly accepted the invitation to accompany him.

"When I heard you rounding-up the stock this morning," began Jack, "I fancied a demon of despair,

all lungs and mouth, had broken loose in the valley and was after my scalp."

The herder looked pleased and amused at the remark, and retorted:

"And when I heard our chief rousing the camp, I thought that he and you had got on a jamboree with the hospital comforts."

"What do you mean by hospital comforts?" Jack enquired.

"Wine or whiskey," replied the herder, with a conscious grin.

Jack assured his companion of his innocence, and vouched for the sobriety of Angus.

"What were your reasons for raising such a horrible row over the herd?" he asked.

"You would have been worse than me, pard," replied the herder, "if you had been in my place. It takes a powerful lot of yelling to scare stock out of a patch of pea-vines. I never yet saw a broncho, pinto, cayeuse or mule but would kick like all creation at leaving pea-vines. They would stay, if they had their own way, until they had eaten every vine to the root, and then go in search of more."

"But my pony left the patch when I whistled for her," said Jack.

"Yes, I know that," the herder retorted; "but stock in this country are not fed on sweet cakes, and every man don't carry a whistle."

Jack acknowledged the force of the argument with a laugh, and changed the subject by asking,

"Why did you tie the bell-mare and not the other horses?"

"That is something worth knowing," answered the herder. "I have seen a woman, ugly as a scare-crow, pard, treated like a queen by a hundred men just because she was the only white female in the mining camp. Each man of the lot wanted to be her sole protector, and was ready to follow her anywhere. And I calculate it is for the same reason the horses will not leave the bell-mare when grazing, and are content to follow her on the trail forever. That is why we always have a bell-mare in our pack-train, anyway."

"Of what use is the bell?" Jack asked, understanding the not inapt if crude application.

"It saves a heap of trouble to the herder," was the reply. "On a dark night he can follow the stock by the sound of the bell, and in daylight he can rely as much on his ears as his eyes and get out of his saddle oftener."

"But why do you leave the bell on the mare when on the trail?" Jack asked, eager to know every detail.

"It's an easy way to carry it," answered the herder; "and in case of a stampede in a storm we can keep right after the clang of the bell and know the train is not scattered."

As soon as Angus saw the pack-train on the move, and had made an examination of the camp-ground to feel assured that no article would be found missing when the next camp was pitched, he put an axe over his

shoulder and hastened to join Jack. As he came up, the herder dropped back to the train.

Only stopping at every high-lying log across the trail to mark a large cross with red chalk, thus ensuring the removal of the obstruction by the axemen who preceded the horses, Angus and Jack pushed forward until they reached a wide and apparently deep torrent, and one of the largest feeders of the Bow River. The current ran very swiftly, almost precluding the idea of making a ford. The thunder of the rushing waters raised a deafening din as they stood on the low bank, and they were obliged to retreat a few yards to hear themselves speak in an ordinary tone.

Jack gazed on the foaming flood, and thought of the glittering snow, high up at the mountain peaks, which fed the trickling streamlets that formed the beautiful cascades ere they swelled into the turbulent river barring his way.

Angus also regarded the stream in silence of deep thought, but his mind was quickened with the sense of responsibility and necessity for prompt contrivance.

"What causes you to look so glum?" Jack asked, wandering out of his poetical fancies and observing the knitted brow of his companion.

"I am wondering by what means my party will cross that torrent," replied Angus.

"Why, Angus," laughed Jack, "you are showing yourself no novice at borrowing trouble. Wait until my pony comes along and see how quickly it will be over."

"Here it comes, now!" Angus exclaimed, "and we will soon test the truth of your prophecy."

Half-a-dozen members of the party came into view, among whom was the sick chainman. Jack went to meet them, and assisted the rider to dismount. Then he untied the lariat from the saddle, unwound a few yards of it, fastened the end to the bit-ring and led the pony to the bank. His hound, ever at his heels, wagged its tail as though conscious of the part it was expected to play in the drama. Taking the coil in its mouth, it waded into the water, followed closely by the horse. It had not gone two yards from the bank before its breast was turned up the stream, its powerful claws clinging tenaciously to the rough bottom. Slowly it worked its way towards the opposite side. Suddenly it got into deep water, and in another second was swept back to another foothold by retaining its grip on the taut lariat. Three times it worked up to the pony and again tried to breast the current. Then it admitted defeat and crawled out on the bank, panting and worn out with the uneven struggle.

Jack kneeled down and patted his noble dog, coaxing it into fresh courage and strength by his kind voice,

"Boys," said Jack, addressing the assembly, "my hound lacks courage because it has not the company of its sister and my mule. It will yet swim that stream. But I shall go first and teach it that it was not cowardice instigated me to send it before its master would dare."

Angus tried to dissuade Jack from the venture, and found him inexorable.

On the shore lay a long, pine tree, shorn of its branches and bark, its big root partly imbedded in the loose gravel. Obeying Jack's instructions, the men rolled the tree into an eddy and held it while he sprang on the root. Telling three of the men to hold firmly to the top of the tree, he allowed the others to push the root into the current.

Like the angry sweep of an alligator's tail, the tree bridged the stream for a quarter second, and then went flying down on the rapid waters, leaving the intrepid and agile navigator to wave his cap as he jumped on the opposite shore.

Angus and his men cheered until they were hoarse. The hound snapped up the coil of rope, led the docile horse into the water and, without repeating its former cautious movements, plunged into the current. Dog and horse reached the other side about five hundred yards below where Jack had landed. The barrier was broken down, and Angus no longer bothered over the crossing of his party.

That night, during the gossip in which they regularly indulged before retiring, Angus asked Jack, "What possessed you to perform that brilliant but headstrong and exceedingly dangerous feat at the torrent?"

"The cowardice of the dog disgusted me," Jack replied, "I had at first determined upon swimming across, but the sight of the tree brought back the memory of one of my exploits in boyhood days, and I was again ready to take all chances without the least feeling of fear."

"Tell me about your youthful exploit," Angus demanded, setting himself to listen to a long tale.

"There is not much to relate," said Jack, a smile dawning on his countenance as his thoughts wandered back to his earlier life. "There were four of us, all about the same age, somewhere near fifteen years, formed a fishing party for Saturday. We met at sunrise and walked a couple of miles down the river which flowed past my home. What a happy crowd we were! And a hungry one, too! Before we dropped a hook, we had emptied our school bags of the lunch prepared by our mothers the previous night. When noon hour came we felt an aching in our stomachs that made us fairly howl. Across the river was the farm house of a man whom I had met frequently in my father's office. I knew we would be welcome to a big feast on bread and milk could we get over there. I had only to mention my acquaintanceship at the farm, when my companions stripped to the skin and tied their clothing in compressed bundles. I contented myself with removing my trousers and tying them around my waist. We found the water shallow enough until within a dozen feet of the other bank, and then we were confronted with a deep channel and swift current. We drew lots with a floating twig which we captured and broke into four unequal lengths. The longest piece came to me, and I realized that I had to make the first attempt to reach the bank before us. Without saying a word of my intention, I rolled a stranded stump into the channel,

sprang on the roots and, with careful balancing, floated over high and dry."

"How did you get back?" Angus interposed, quizzically.

"I did not go back," Jack replied; "the boys funked and went home the way they came. I eat a hearty dinner at the farm house and was driven home."

"Jack," said Angus, his thoughts returning to the wonderful occurrence of the morning, "tell me how you became the owner of the hounds."

"About five years ago," Jack related, "an Uncle Tom's Cabin troupe became bankrupt in my village and could not pay father's printing bill. The manager gave me the dogs, and father receipted the account and handed him sufficient money to take him to New York. The poor animals were in a starving condition; and because I fed them freely and treated them well, they have paid me doubly by their affection and obedience."

Angus yawned, and with a parting "Good night!" went off to his tent.

CHAPTER X.

"COMING on the noon train. Meet me. ELSIE."

Grace read the telegram in delight, and went in search of her mother to acquaint her with the glad news.

"Elsie is coming on the noon train," she cried, as she spied Mrs. Lester at the top of the hall stairway.

"And who is Elsie?" enquired Mrs. Lester, descending to meet her daughter.

Grace flew up the steps, put her arm lovingly around her mother's waist, and told her, as they slowly ended the descent, that Elsie Macdonald was one of her dearest friends in Ottawa, and had promised to visit her at the first favorable opportunity.

"We will try and make her happy, dear," Mrs. Lester said; and then she kissed her daughter, and bade her make a few of the necessary preparations for the reception of her guest.

As the clock chimed twelve, the chore-boy drove the span of ponies and basket phaeton around to the front door and waited until his young mistress drew on her tiny gauntlets and relieved him from duty. He lingered to watch her arch her wrists, brace her feet against the toe-iron, emit a curiously shrill whistle between her teeth, and depart with a dash that soon hid her from view on the winding, tree-shaded driveway to the gates. Darting across a stretch of lawn, he was again before

her, opening the gates and waving his hat to her as she skilfully guided the spirited little team through the opening and pulled them down to a more sober gait ere reaching the main avenue of the village.

Nearly every person on the street sought and kindly received recognition from the fair young driver as she sped on her way to the depôt, for Grace was a universal favorite. A constant companion for her father, her face was familiar at public gatherings, at his editorial table, and frequently she accompanied the charitable editor on quiet expeditions among the deserving poor, assisting to dispense the donations from the Relief Club, an institution which he had established and over which he presided for many years,—and brightening the homes of the unfortunate with her presence.

When Grace came in sight of the station, the train was thundering around the curve; but she whipped the ponies into a sharp trot and pulled them up at the platform before the engineer was ready to whistle the brakesman to duty.

“Can I be of any service to you, Miss Lester?” eagerly exclaimed the handsome young doctor of the village as he left the bustling crowd and gained the phaeton.

“If you would please hold my ponies for a few minutes I would feel very grateful,” Grace replied, handing him the dainty reins with a merry nod of her head and stepping on to the platform.

As she mingled in the confusion of expectant travellers and loiterers, the doctor took a recently purchased

ticket from his pocket, gazed on it with a sigh, and reflected on the power of a pretty woman over mankind. But two minutes previous, and he felt certain he would board the incoming train to travel to a neighboring village, where he was to assist in conducting a dangerous operation. Now he was positive he would have to invent an excuse for his absence. He tore the ticket into small particles and threw them beneath the phaeton.

"Doctor Hilton, let me introduce you to my friend, Miss Macdonald," said Grace, smiling and happy in the possession of her guest.

"A friend of Miss Lester is a most pleasant addition to my circle of acquaintances," said the young physician, as he raised his hat and then extended his hand to Elsie.

"And Grace's friends shall always find me pleasant," Elsie returned, gracefully accepting the salutation.

"Take tea with us this evening, doctor," Grace commanded, as he tucked the duster about them.

"I will, provided you promise not to tempt me with your delicious pastry," assented the doctor, laughing over the qualified portion of his speech.

"I will not promise anything so rash," retorted Grace. "You shall come early and remain for the evening. Elsie will fascinate you with a few of her favorite songs, and send you home miserable with defeat at cribbage."

"You may expect me at five o'clock," said the doctor, "and cakes and cribbage shall be oblivioned until my arrival."

Then the restive ponies were turned homewards, and the doctor was left to again reflect on the surprise his absence at the operation would occasion.

When the phaeton stopped before Grace's home, Mr. and Mrs. Lester were on the steps, smiling a welcome to their guest. With her hands clasped firmly by Mr. Lester, Elsie alighted and was at once seized by Mrs. Lester, who kissed her and led her into the house. Grace gave the boy the reins, jumped into her father's arms, and together they followed through the doorway.

"Do not allow Grace to keep you chatting, for dinner is ready to be served," Mrs. Lester cried, as Elsie and her daughter went up the stairway.

"Never fear, mamma," Grace called back; "we will be down in ten minutes."

When Elsie entered the bedroom prepared for her, she flung herself into Grace's arms and cried hysterically. Finally, as every quiver of her body produced a jerky attempt at a laugh, she allowed herself to be placed on the bed until she conquered her nervous emotion. Grace bathed the tear-stained face with a wetted sponge and wisely refrained from questioning. The cooling water and tender nursing reduced the fever which had been burning in Elsie's veins since the exciting interview with her uncle, and her old spirit of self-control reasserted itself without further struggle.

"You will tell me all about your troubles this afternoon, dear," said Grace; "and now you must hasten your toilet or mamma will be seeking admission."

"If you all had not showed so much kindness upon

me at once," Elsie exclaimed, "I would not have shown any weakness. I think it was your mother's loving kiss that broke through the hardness that has formed over my heart since yesterday."

"Mother will be kissing you again in a moment if you do not hurry," admonished Grace, in a tone so tender in its impatience it caused Elsie to drop the hair-brush, catch her monitress around the waist and dance her around the room until both were breathless.

"That's the second bell," Grace cried, springing from the chair into which she had tumbled after her wild saltation.

Elsie took another look in the mirror, saw that all traces of tears had been removed by the mad ebullition which had succeeded her grief, and declared herself ready for dinner and ravenously hungry. When they entered the dining-room, Mr. Lester was industriously carving the roast. His wife was seated at the opposite end of the table, patiently awaiting their coming.

"You will have the honor of filling the vacant chair," Mr. Lester said, as he laid down the carving-knife and courteously led Elsie to a chair. "Our son, who is off on his travels, always sits near his mother's right hand, leaving Grace to occupy a similar position with me."

"I appreciate the honor, but not the vacancy," said Elsie, unconscious of the cleverness of her remark.

"Your acknowledgment comes with a charming brilliancy," exclaimed Mr. Lester, gazing in rapture at the lovely, self-possessed woman whom his daughter claimed

for her dearest friend; "were my boy here I should fear for the safety of his heart."

"And if your son is as affectionate as his mother, as courteous as his father, and as loving as his sister, I should have no fear for the safety of his heart. I should steal it from him and defy the world to cause me further unhappiness."

"If this flattery continues," laughed Grace, "we will all learn to carry hand-mirrors, as they once did in olden times."

"If what Elsie has spoken is to be termed flattery," Mrs. Lester observed with a bright smile, "then I will no longer agree with Webster in the meaning of the word."

"You force a vindication, mamma," cried Grace, "and I will prepare it in sackcloth and ashes."

"One's devotion to a guest should not permit time for questionable literary work," Elsie remarked, with a twinkle of mischief in her eyes.

"Will you not except love letters, Miss Macdonald?" asked Mr. Lester, gravely.

Elsie treated him to a piercing look, felt satisfied he was trying her rare gift for repartee, and replied, "If addressed to yourself, certainly, Mr. Lester; but under no other pretext should an exception be tolerated."

Mr. Lester's next remark was addressed to his daughter.

"Gracie, the conflict has become too warm for us. I entered the lists as your doughty champion. My lance is broken, my head is dazed by that last slash on my helmet, and I long for peace at any price."

"If we can persuade our opponents," Grace suggested, "to allow a treaty of peace to be substituted for my vindication, we will await until reinforced by Jack. Then the tide of battle will change."

"We will accept the treaty of peace," said Elsie; "and while we withdraw from the tournament I would like to introduce a subject which I feel in honor bound to refer to before I can conscientiously continue to receive the gracious hospitalities of this home."

Then she told of the treatment accorded her in the library by her uncle, of her immediate flight, and of her determination to never return to his home.

Without waiting to telegraph across the table to his wife for unqualified liberty of speech, Mr. Lester said, slowly and distinctly, "As Grace's friend, you have been made heartily welcome to my house, Miss MacDonald. As an orphan, and in trouble, you are welcomed with ten-fold heartiness to my home; my purse, my fire-side, my protection are yours to command from now and forever."

"Franklin has ever proved himself a loving husband and careful guardian of his home and family, Elsie," Mrs. Lester urged, with endearing sweetness in her voice. "I will try and fill your mother's place, if you will let me."

"Elsie will at least stay with us until Angus returns," said Grace with conviction in her tones, and naively exercising an authority born of her engagement with the young surveyor.

The tears gathered in Elsie's eyes as she listened to

Mr. Lester's noble and generous offer, and became blinding as each heart-warmed word fell from his wife's lips. But when her brother's name unintentionally escaped from Grace, she forced back the rising flood and her lips were tightly compressed as she tried to conceive the manner of punishment he would inflict upon his uncle for the cowardly assault upon his sister.

Then Elsie remembered she was expected to accept or reject the kindly proposals of her friends, and thoughts of vengeance died away with the return of the feeling of thankfulness for the happy haven of rest and protection so warmly tendered to her.

"I scarcely know how to thank you all for your kind and loving invitation," she uttered, her voice trembling and tears again starting to her eyes.

"Your acceptance will be sufficient for our satisfaction," Mr. Lester pleaded.

"We will give you until to-morrow, dear, to think over it," and Elsie knew a mother's heart prompted the tender counsel.

Grace completely broke down the barrier to mirth by quaintly adding, "And as you are not responsible until you are of age, Elsie, we will think over your resolution until we can communicate with Angus."

Mr. Lester forgot his dignity and laughed uproariously. His wife vainly struggled against her smiles. And Elsie caught the infection with a joyfulness that irradiated her countenance for the rest of the day. Grace alone preserved her gravity, for she was intensely in earnest in what she had said, and was without per-

ception of the irresistibly comic twist she had given to the supplicatory conversation. But she was delighted at the healthy change in the social atmosphere, and sought no explanation.

Elsie again expressed her sense of the obligation so lovingly forced upon her, and stated her resolve to remain until she had given a more serious contemplation to her future.

That night, after assisting in the entertainment of her new home-mates and the young doctor, charming them with her brilliancy, Elsie dropped into sleep with a long sigh of blissful content. Mrs. Lester had entered her room and kissed her with maternal tenderness ere her head had warmed the snowy pillows.

CHAPTER XI.

THE summer sun shone brightly on the grounds surrounding the home of the editor of the *M—— Advertiser*; the twittering robins hopped from bough to bough and flew from tree to tree, in a merry game of hide and seek; the faint breeze played with the maple leaves, putting them in a flutter of delight; and the musical notes of the waterfall floated up from the ravine, a joyous orchestral accompaniment to the movements of the actors in Nature's beautiful theatre. The warm June

blood was dancing high in the tree-tops to the song of the birds on the pulsing branches.

Mrs. Lester and Elsie were seated in the rustic arbor, Grace's favorite retreat. Two weeks had elapsed since Elsie's arrival, and it was only on the preceding evening that she had announced the result of her cogitation upon the situation of her affairs.

"And are you really determined to go in search of your brother, Elsie?" Mrs. Lester asked, dissuasively.

"I have no other alternative," Elsie replied; "at Christmas I will be freed from the guardianship of my uncle, and Angus must be in Ottawa at that time to look after my portion of father's estate."

"It would be possible to bring your brother in time by a letter, or by sending some gentleman friend for him," Mrs. Lester urged.

"A letter or friend would be disinterested couriers," Elsie argued, "and if I go, there will be less fear of failure."

"But do you not fear to go unattended, dear?" Mrs. Lester asked.

"I have plenty of money; that will buy me friends. My robust constitution will supply me with courage. The desire to find Angus will take me over every barrier that may retard my journey." Elsie made the reply with a confidence in her resources that silenced the elderly lady into a quiet acceptance of the inevitable.

"Since I cannot persuade you from attempting so hazardous an undertaking, Elsie," Mrs. Lester said, hesitatingly, "I can at least offer you a companion.

Franklin and I discussed your resolution last night, and agreed to send Grace with you."

Elsie stared at Mrs. Lester in surprise. "You would give me Gracie," she exclaimed, "to help me face the lonely road and perilous mountain paths?"

"No harm will come to Gracie," Mrs. Lester replied, with a smile. "We will write my son to meet you midway on your journey, and he will guard his sister and her friend from all danger."

Elsie's head was buried in the lap of the loving mother who so generously cared for her in the hour of trouble, and her tears flowed unrestrainedly as the gentle hands stroked her hair.

"I will not take Gracie away from you," she sobbed, again and again.

Mrs. Lester vouchsafed no reply. Her heart pleaded against sacrificing her daughter to the ordeal of the trip; but the thought of Elsie, alone and battling her way among strangers in a rude land, held her firm to her promise.

When Elsie raised a pale face to receive a tender caress, she had yielded to Mrs. Lester's proposal, and was all eagerness to discuss the additional preparations now rendered necessary.

Grace assented most willingly when informed of the part apportioned her in the search for her lover, and for two weeks the household were busy completing all arrangements.

On the eve of the departure of Elsie and Grace, the rector of St. Mark's, Rev. Charles Rosser, joined the

family at the tea table. Mr. Lester had felt increasing depression of spirits over losing his daughter, if only for a few weeks, and he sought elation by inviting the jolly pastor to assist him in keeping up the standard for vivacity he had maintained notwithstanding his sadness.

The rector fired volley after volley of cautionary counsels at Grace and Elsie. He intended to be amusing, but found he was only arousing more serious thoughts in all his listeners. When almost nonplussed, he remembered a letter lying in his pocket, and knew he had now the power to start a topic that would command discussion for a year, if necessary. Addressing his host, he said: "I would like your permission to read the letter, which you enclosed to me a few days ago."

"If you deem it wise that Elsie and Grace should hear it, my previous objection is removed," Mr. Lester replied.

"The young ladies will be none the worse for the disclosure," said the rector, bringing forth the letter at once and reading it.

"NEAR CASTLE MOUNTAIN,

"June 7, 1879.

"DEAR FATHER,—A most remarkable change has been effected in my physical and mental power since my introduction to these mighty monuments of God's strength and architecture. I refer to the Rocky Mountains. For two weeks I have remained in this valley, imprisoned by my thoughts. To-day I have awakened to the result of my reasonings. My mind has conceived

the glory of the great Creator with a vividness that has blinded me to the memory of the teachings which were so industriously implanted in my impressionable heart since first I knelt at my darling mother's knee in prayer. Were you at my side, you would grasp my hand, awe-stricken at the magnificently-proportioned, gigantic structure which takes the shape of an impregnable castle set high in the clouds. But I will await my return home before attempting explanations which, when you have heard, will most assuredly quicken your curiosity and tempt you into a visit to this lovely spot.

"Your affectionate son,

"JACK LESTER."

"The dear boy has been studying under a Teacher whose knowledge is immeasurable; and my puny efforts at instruction have faded before the great light which has dawned upon him," the rector commented, immediately after reading the letter.

"You take a decidedly charitable view of the matter," Mr. Lester said, with a sigh of relief. "I am not free from doubts on the correctness of the doctrine which I support, probably with too much heedlessness; but Jack's sweeping change staggers me."

"My darling son has a noble mind," Mrs. Lester interposed, with a ring of pride in her voice. "He has, doubtless, grasped a truth which has been shrouded with unnecessary mystery since the worship of God through Christ has been inaugurated."

"Bravo, mamma," exclaimed Grace. "Jack shall

hear your loyally-expressed opinion, word for word, when I meet him."

"And what has Miss Macdonald to say on the subject?" the rector questioned, anxious to raise discussion.

"I have an idea, after listening to the intelligent comments upon the equally intelligent letter, that Grace's brother has not fired a bombshell into an enemy's camp," Elsie replied, with a soberness which she did not feel.

"And I have an idea," exclaimed the rector, "that my fair friend has supplied the deficiency with right good will."

"I should have warned you against crossing swords with Elsie," laughed Mr. Lester. "My charming guest has ousted me ignominiously in argument and repartee on several occasions."

"But my colors yet float in the breeze," retorted the rector, "and the bursting of a shell is not considered a cause for defeat."

"My husband intended you a kindness, Mr. Rosser, when he assures you of defeat," Mrs. Lester remarked, quietly enjoying a thrust at the rector's well-known conceit in his ability for flooring any antagonist in argument upon religion.

"My dear madam," returned the rector, with a bland smile, "your husband's assurance is not always as convincing as your own."

"A beleaguered fortress seldom fails to promptly return the fire from deadly mortars," Grace suggested, anxious for a renewal of the fight.

"Your suggestion has struck home, Miss Grace," said the rector; "and if Miss Macdonald adjudges my question pertinent, may I ask her if her religious belief is unqualifiedly in accord with that of the writer of the letter."

"I should be very impolitic, Mr. Rosser, did I disturb the conviviality of this assembly with a negative," equivocated Elsie, with unobtruded glee.

"Another bombshell!" exclaimed the editor, tickled at Elsie's cleverness.

"Not mortally wounded, but somewhat breathless," reported the rector, with well-preserved urbanity.

A general laugh ensued at the expense of the clergyman, who returned to the charge with undaunted courage, supported with an interrogation which he delivered as a forlorn hope.

"Would your generosity, Miss Macdonald, impel you to acquiesce in the belief of the Jews concerning the divinity of the man they crucified were we all, excepting yourself, descendants of the supposed-to-be down-trodden race?" the rector asked.

"You have erected imaginary confessional bars between us, Mr. Rosser," laughed Elsie, "and forget others of your flock are present to destroy the secrecy of my confession."

"But if I take on the character of a Jew, you cannot suppose me to be a priest," the rector argued.

"Then you can turn to any portion of Bacon for my answer," said Elsie, the fun dancing in her eyes.

Peals of laughter went up from around the happy

circle, and the rector confessed defeat with a glance of admiration at his fair opponent.

Then Mrs. Lester led the way into the drawing-room, and the evening was devoted to music and cribbage.

When the rector had returned to his home that night, and was safe in the privacy of his chamber, he wondered if he had committed himself to agnosticism; but he could not remember exactly what he had said, for his thoughts were yet tangled with the brilliancy of a pair of eyes and the magic of a sweet voice speaking to him in modulated tones.

CHAPTER XII.

THE surveyors reached the summit of the main range of the Rockies about the middle of July. The pack train had abandoned them a week ago to return for another supply of provisions, and they had been forced since then to carry the camp equipment on their backs.

[The manner in which articles are transported on the backs of men through the mountains is by an ingenious device invented by the Indians. A bundle is built long and as narrow as possible, and weighty in proportion to the bearer's strength and endurance. The tump-line—a strap about twelve feet in length, three inches

in breadth at the centre, and tapering to fine points—is then brought into requisition. Its ends are made to twice encircle the middle of the bundle, and are then tied in a way to prevent the strap moving from its position. The bundle is stood on end, the bearer sits down, shoves his back against the burden, draws the tump-line over his shoulders, and plants his forehead against the broad portion of the band. When he regains his feet he finds the pack is comfortably balanced, and permits unlimited freedom in his arduous climbing up and down the steep mountain sides. A novice will suffer from stiffness and pain at the back of his neck for a few days, but the discomfort passes off without any serious results.]

The party gathered on the shore of a small lake, regarding its two outlets with great interest, one channel starting the waters on their long journey to the Arctic Ocean, the other to the Pacific.

The next day Jack and Angus went on a tour of inspection and discovered a beautiful body of water (Kicking Horse Lake) a few miles down the western slope. Two white swans sailed together gracefully upon the rippling surface.

"We will make our headquarters for the present where we stand," Angus said, "and when the pack-train arrives I will have my work sufficiently advanced to move farther down the slope."

"It is a romantic site for our camp," Jack remarked; "and your resolution promises me time for hunting the borders of this lovely lake most thoroughly."

In two days a little canvas village was established on the shores of Kicking Horse Lake and its inhabitants engaged in a daily routine of labor. The ring of the axe and the crashing fall of the great Douglas fir trees announced the surveyors at work on a compass line.

The crack of Jack's rifle and the baying of the hounds awoke the echoes and drove them mocking in all directions. The quietude of the valley was disturbed, the monarchs of the forest were being laid low, and the big game was startled into greater caution in their movements.

Wandering into a grassy opening one morning, Jack was surprised to see an Indian seated on a log at the opposite side. His first thought was that his strange guide had reappeared, probably bringing him a budget of letters and newspapers; but he was quickly deceived when he faced the little native.

"Halo muck-a-muck!" (no food) exclaimed the Indian, rubbing his stomach and gazing at Jack with a look of entreaty.

"You are in a muck, sure!" Angus retorted, treating him to an astonished stare.

"Sick tum-tum! Halo muck-a-muck!" (sick; no food) again exclaimed the Indian, drawing out his words to enforce their meaning.

The signs of hunger were so apparent in the hollow cheeks and slim waist of the suppliant, that it was not difficult for Jack to understand the language in which he was addressed. He emptied his pocket of two biscuits,

placed there for an emergency, and sat down while the food was being rapidly forced into the aching vacancy.

The Indian appeared to be a comical character. His eyes quizzed Jack's face and clothing and rifle as he chewed greedily at the biscuit, and a merry twinkle gathered as his gaze was returned with a sympathetic smile. His dark hair showed through a crownless, battered straw hat. His suit of store clothes were torn in many places and repaired by bunching the cloth around the rents and tying with string. His boots were badly broken and only held together with pieces of cord. He was a picture of desolation, and yet his frequent smiles betrayed little sadness. When he had finished the cakes he pointed his finger at Jack and said, "King George's man! Hi-u muck a muck!" (Englishman; lots of food.) Then he pressed his hand to his breast and faltered, "Shuswap! Hi-as cock-shit!" (the name of his tribe; all broke up.)

Jack interpreted the signs rather than the words, and made up his mind to take the forlorn man to his tent and feed him for a few days. By showing his empty pocket and then pointing towards the camp, he persuaded the Indian to accompany him.

Angus saw them as they approached the tents, and called, "Found your old guide, Jack?"

"No; a tramp on his way to your wood pile," Jack yelled in reply.

The Indian darted to the fire, as though bent upon justifying the character given him by Jack, and danced around the pan of hot biscuits, screaming out his delight

at the sight of so much food. "Hi-u muck-amuck ! Hi-u muck-a-muck !" burst from him repeatedly.

Jack brought him a chunk of cold bacon and a few biscuits, and the famished man settled down to gorge himself until he killed the ache in his stomach.

"What do you intend to do with the latest addition to your outfit?" Angus asked Jack at dinner.

"Keep him, if he will stay and behave himself," Jack replied, musingly. "He can follow me when I hunt; and in camp he can clean my rifle, grease my boots, and teach me his language."

"He will find a pair of my boots every night in your tent," laughed Angus, "and you can leave out a double supply of grease."

A couple of uneventful weeks slipped by after the entry of the tramp into the diminutive town. Jack had devoted his spare time to a patient study of the Indian's language; and had in return given his teacher an inkling of his mother-tongue. So far had they progressed, Jack had learned that he was being taught a gibberish invented by the Hudson Bay Company traders to simplify their business relations with the natives; that the language was called Chinook; that it was generally spoken on the Pacific coast by the Indians and white men; and that his teacher's name was Mose. He also discovered that Mose was on his way to Morleyville to marry a Stony maiden whom he had met the preceding summer while on a hunting trip in the mountains.

"Like hi-u laugh?" Mose asked Jack one afternoon when both were indolent over their lessons.

"How you give me big laugh?" returned Jack, with a yawn.

"Me show you by-'m-bye," replied Mose, as he got up from his seat and went off into the woods.

Presently he returned, carrying two long, thin poles like fishing rods.

Jack lazily watched him as he peeled off the bark and whittled the knots out of prominence. Then he fished a couple of pieces of stout twine, each about a yard in length, from one of the pockets in his coat and fastened them to the points of the pole. His next task was to fashion slip knots on the dangling ends of the twine. Finally he slipped the nooses over the tops of the rods and run them down until he had the strings neatly stowed away.

"Go fishing?" queried Jack.

"Halo fish," Mose replied with a shake of his head,

"What then, Mose? Go hunting?" anticipated Jack.

Mose answered with a nod.

"What we hunt?" Jack asked, rising from the bear skin.

"King George's man call'um foolhen; me call'um Squaw-bird," Mose replied, starting in the direction of the summit, followed by Jack.

"How far we go?" asked Jack, totally in the dark as to their objective point.

"Stop by-'m-bye, then hi-ulaugh," Mose replied.

"Lead on, Macduff!" exclaimed Jack; "lots of men have walked farther for a laugh."

Suddenly Mose came to a halt beside a clump of low, green trees and peered anxiously into the interior. Moving slowly around the outside, and craning his neck through every small opening, his actions made Jack feel excited over the mystery.

"Come, look," Mose whispered, pointing his finger between the branches.

Jack sighted the digit and saw a fowl roosting on a limb. Had he been in Ontario he would have pronounced it a partridge. Its plumage was not unlike that of a prairie chicken's, but in size it compared more favourably with the eastern bird.

Mose quietly dropped one of the rods and slipped the string of the other over the top. Carefully spreading the noose to a proper width, he inserted the pole in the branches until the end was above the head of the hen. Easily he lowered the point upon the feathers and then he worked it back and forth with a gentle pressure. The bird squatted lower on the perch, spread her wings a little, ruffled her feathers, and looked more foolish than Jack thought it possible for a fowl to accomplish in a line of comedy. The time had come to kill. The hen was blind to everything but her feeling of rapture. Mose elevated the rod, dropped the noose over the head of the foolish hen, and yanked it out amid a flapping of wings and a big fuss among the dead twigs.

Jack enjoyed a good laugh over the manner in which the silly bird allowed herself to be captured; and he was not contented until he had tried his skill in the

amusing hunt, and had succeeded in hanging up three of the plump fowl.

"You have been giggling like a school-girl, all evening, Jack. What's the fun?" Angus asked over their last pipe for the night.

Jack related his afternoon's experience with Mose. Angus laughed heartily, and when he had retired to his tent he found that he, too, was giggling over the foolishness of the fool-hen.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sunday morning !

The cloudless sky is mirrored in the clear waters of the lake ;

The joy-song of labour at rest floats in and around the camp ;

The peace-spirit rides on the warm, sweet air ;

The love-messenger wings from the blue heavens to mingle with
mortals, and

The heart-cry of gladness sounds a welcome.

The earth-fragrance gives forth its power of smiling life ;

The pulsing sap races joyously beneath the bark ;

The mother-care wins the young into forgetfulness and play ;

The fern-moss woos the moisture to its velvety bed ;

The night-damp yields to the filling warmth ;

The sun-beams chase the shadows beneath the underwood ;

The mountain-tops serenely gaze over the horizon ;

The sigh-sob of delight comes from the forest ;

The dew-spangles drop from earth's green mantle ;

The rippling waterlets lap the moss-clad shores ;
 The fire-flame of day burns fiercely on high ;
 The gift-beauty of the morn creeps through the pine trees ;
 The sun-shine offers incense to the fragrant flowers ;
 The sweet-fragrance of the flowers pays loving tribute to the bright
 light ;
 The snow-glisten dazzles the mountain peaks ;
 The life-food of being bids welcome to the feast ;
 The blood fever of action wrenches idleness from slumber ;
 The thought-sense awakes the brain to share the gladness ;
 The joy-bells peal forth an ecstatic melody ;
 The earth is crowned with light, and the heart of life rejoices !

WITHIN a note-book, tabled on his knee, Jack wrote the above chant to the beauty of the morning he was enjoying with a "heart-cry of gladness." He had risen early, thrown wide the canvas door of his dwelling, and was inhaling the fragrance of the balmy air. A thrill of delight followed upon his atmospheric bath, and he was tempted into seating himself at the entrance to his tent, and transferring his thoughts to paper. He heard the melody of a song of worship float over the lake to him, and his pencil followed each cadence from beginning to end. His admiration for Nature went forth in idolatrous freedom, and she attuned his ear to her music. He craved for wisdom from her bountiful store, and she taught him her songs. He gave her the love of his youthful heart, and she enriched him with a feeling of content. He was her slave, and she was his tender mistress.

"Why this expression of radiant solemnity?" Angus queried as he stood before Jack, gazing curiously at him.

"You shall know, my friend, at a later hour in the day," replied Jack, with a smile. "I smell breakfast in

your appearance, and my stomach claims prompt attention."

"Come along, then," commanded Angus, "and we will tempt our appetites with crisp bacon, hot biscuit golden syrup and coffee."

"That bill of fare promises to last forever if you do not stop tumbling those big trees over," Jack remarked, as he made ready to accompany his comrade.

"And what have the trees to do with our *menu*?" Angus asked.

"The noise of their fall has scared the big game into more rural districts," laughed Jack; "and even the fool-hens are becoming wiser."

"You have evidently not lost your good humour over it," was Angus' rejoinder.

"No," said Jack, "Mose's tuition in Chinook supplies every deficiency, and the hounds are entitled to a good rest." Over the breakfast they discussed their plans for the day. Angus complained of weariness from the labours of the past week. Jack suggested a stroll to a favoured spot he had discovered in his rambles, and the enjoyment of a quiet chat.

"A strange coincidence," Angus remarked, "I have been longing for an undisturbed conversation with you on a subject that has been bothering my mind for sometime."

"Something about Gracie?" questioned Jack.

"Not this time," Angus replied; "it pertains to yourself."

"Then it promises doubtful interest," sighed Jack, in mock modesty.

"On the contrary, I anticipate a most enlivening gossip," Angus assured him.

"You shall be as a pump, then, and I shall take the part of the well," said Jack, "and you can work the handle to your heart's content."

It was a lovely spot, indeed, to which Jack led his companion. It commanded a full view of the lake and the wooded slopes which reached the fern-fringed shores in graceful curves. Directly across from where they stood, a wide, straight avenue led through the pines from above the highest tier down to the water, ending there at a great mass of tangled trees. A snow-slide had cut the long, great swath, snapping off giant firs close to the roots, hurling them down the descent with terrific crashing, and sweeping the immense *debris* into the lake. Their feet pressed a thick carpet of white moss which extended for a few yards on all sides. The rays of the sun broke on a network of branches above their heads. And high in the blue heavens the mountain peaks kept watch and ward over the graceful slopes and the beautiful lakes.

The young men contemplated the grandeur of the magnificent panorama for awhile, and then threw themselves down on the moss and lighted their pipes.

"Jack," commenced Angus, "what detained you for two weeks in Castle Mountain valley?"

"I had thought to keep the reason buried deep in my heart forever," Jack replied, "but in an unguarded moment I took the liberty to write my father, acquainting him with the secret. It relieved me of the pressure

which weighed upon me; and taking you also into my confidence will probably remove the burden altogether."

"If my question is impertinent, I shall withdraw it." Angus said, astonished that his curiosity should lay bare a secret.

"Not at all, old fellow!" exclaimed Jack. "You have not transgressed even a little."

"Well, then, I am all attention. Proceed!" Angus demanded.

"First of all," began Jack, "I should like you to tell me if you conform to the rules of any church, or if you believe implicitly in the teachings of any doctrine from the pulpits of the present age, or if you have a settled conviction of the truth of the histories contained in the Bible?"

"My replies to your questions require a little study," Angus answered, feeling decidedly stupid.

"Take time, then!" Jack rejoined, getting up and walking along the edge of the lake to leave Angus to reflect.

"All ready!" shouted Angus, after unconsciously keeping Jack away from him for a full hour.

Jack came back and took his old position, awaiting the answers in silence.

"For the first time in my life," said Angus, "I have faced my deepest thoughts on my belief in spiritual matters. Up to the present time I have accepted what has been taught me, and have felt too indifferent to offer any objection. A church-goer has cast-iron doctrines submitted to him at every service he attends, not

with the idea of these doctrines being dissected and their consistency established or rejected, but with the intention of belief in them being inculcated in the minds of youthful listeners and held in the memories of others more advanced in age. I have been an irregular attendant at church since my boyhood, yet my knowledge of its teachings is exceedingly imperfect. The idea of being enrolled a member of a church has never occurred to me. The prayers I offered unthinkingly every evening were forgotten when I went to college and are a dead letter to me now. Therefore, the only reply I can give to your leading interrogations is an unequivocal negative."

"Your straightforward and simplified answer destroys further obstruction to my gratifying your curiosity," said Jack. "I will at once tell you my secret."

"A streak of white along the western horizon was the first glimpse of these great mountains given me. I was one hundred and twenty miles from the foothills and travelling in their direction. Every day, as I drew nearer, the white line became broader and more irregular in shape. Then the mountain peaks became discernible above the snows. Another day, and the billowy contour of the mounds were marked. Another day, and the great chain stood forth as an immense fringe-work to the globe, the white snows glittering in the sunlight like an adornment of millions of precious stones. Another day, and the snows were hidden from sight, the mountains taking on a different form, as a giant fortress built from earth to the heavens, and from

which the eagle in its flight would turn. Another day, and the foothills appeared as steps against a mighty wall of towers. Another day, and imperfect conception ended. Plainly before me I could see the rocks, the trees, the indentures, yet my mind was bewildered. My sense of reason could not grasp the vastness of the structure. I could see a mass of rocks piled against the sky, but my thoughts remained inactive while my eyes endured the great strain. I could feel the immensity of the pile upon pile, but no emotion crept into my bosom. I knew that I was in the presence of majestic magnificence, but my heart was unmoved. I could not cry out my rapture, for my voice was hushed. My senses obeyed but one exaction at a time.

"I stood before the Rocky Mountains! In time, as familiarity increased my admiration but lessened my incomprehensibility, my thoughts were cultivated to an understanding of the power of the architect and builder of the wonderful work. It was while I was on my way to that lovely valley that the cultivation was in progress; and when I encamped there, my reason burst its narrow bonds and developed with a strength and rapidity that caused my heart to throb rapturously, and my eyes to forfeit the heaviness of sleep.

"I awoke as from a dream! For hours I watched a tiny thread of white on a rock high up near the snow-line. The next day I climbed to the spot and found a wide cascade. For days I gazed at the marvellously-built castle, but I was content to see it from afar, for I knew I could never explore it. The loveliness of the

valley and its gracefully curving basement fed my mind with a light refreshment and won my heart to beauty.

"I was entranced! When my thoughts and reason were surfeited with surprises, they demanded a wider field of knowledge. My thoughts sought for the Designer of so great magnificence and beauty, and my reason brought forth the Great Creator. My thoughts questioned the necessity for the mighty work, and my reason was dumb. My thoughts asked for conception of the Architect, and my reason covered its head. My thoughts clamored for gifts to offer in return for the wealth of gladness given my eye and my heart, and my reason produced only innocent worship. My thoughts desired a form of worship, and reason exclaimed, 'No! worship the Creator by your love for the beautiful and magnificent designs of His handiwork!'

"Then my sleeplessness vanished!

"And that is my secret, if such you can term it, Angus."

"Will you teach me to worship as you do, Jack?" Angus pleaded, with a sigh.

"I will give you a first lesson now," Jack replied, producing his notebook. "My worship of the Creator led me into writing my thoughts in this book this morning. Read them, and if you can understand them, I will teach you more."

Angus took the note-book and slowly read the morning chant of worship. For a second and third time he perused the words. Then he looked over the lake and up at the grim peaks. At last he said, "I see beautiful

language in the chant, but I feel neither joy nor understanding in reading it."

"Your enjoyment of heavenly happiness, then, can never be in community with the Creator," Jack said, mournfully.

Angus asked and received permission to copy the chant into his notebook, and the young men returned to camp.

CHAPTER XIV.

"You crazy fools, come here!" Jack shouted, catching up his lariat and running over to the camp.

The hounds were racing through the tents as if possessed with a mad desire to demolish the village. They tumbled the dirty cook among his kettles and scared him up a tree. They sent two or three of the surveyors sprawling on the ground and chased them into their tents. They knocked Jack and Angus over the tent ropes and danced around the prostrate forms with joyful yelps. Out from the camp and back again they rushed, scattering the blankets from the bushes, jerking up tent pegs, and filling the air with their deep-toned music.

"For heaven's sake, what's the matter with the dogs?" yelled Angus, as he struggled up from the ropes.

"Get your rifle at once, and arm your men!" exclaimed Jack. "The brutes are going mad!"

But the rifles were left in their cases, and Jack and Angus tore through the camp almost as rudely as the crazy animals. They saw Elsie and Grace ride into the opening, looking anxiously at the encampment, and followed by the strange guide and a small party of Indians and squaws. The hounds were jumping at Grace's skirts and sounding a joyous welcome.

"Grace!" "Elsie!" ejaculated the bewildered brothers as they swung their sisters from the ponies and covered them with kisses.

"Introduce me to your friend, Angus," Elsie coolly commanded, and making the first intelligent speech since the greeting.

"Jack, this is Elsie!" Angus exclaimed, releasing Grace from her brother's arms and joining the hands of his sister and comrade.

And while Elsie and Jack walked together to Jack's tent, Grace and Angus wandered up the trail, their hearts filled with happiness, and their only wish to be alone with their undivided joy.

The cook scrambled down the tree and rearranged his kettles. The men left their tents and expressed their astonishment to each other as they repaired the damage to the pegs and ropes. The hounds were no longer boisterous, and lay watching Elsie and Jack.

The party of Indians unpacked their ponies and pitched their tepee.

Suddenly a piercing war-whoop startled the camp into fresh excitement. Mose had dropped an armful of green branches he had been gathering to form a couch for himself, uttered his wild cry, and was bounding over to the Indians. He caught a young maiden by the waist, kissed her repeatedly, and then led her by the hand to where Elsie and Jack were seated, laughing and enjoying the scene.

"My squaw come meet me," he laughed, and with one of the merry twinkles in his eyes.

The coy maid hung her head, and glanced from side to side as though anxious to escape.

"My congratulations, Mose," said Jack, with a smile. "You can have a holiday in honour of the event."

As Mose and his sweetheart moved away, Grace and Angus strolled up and seated themselves on the vacant bear-skin.

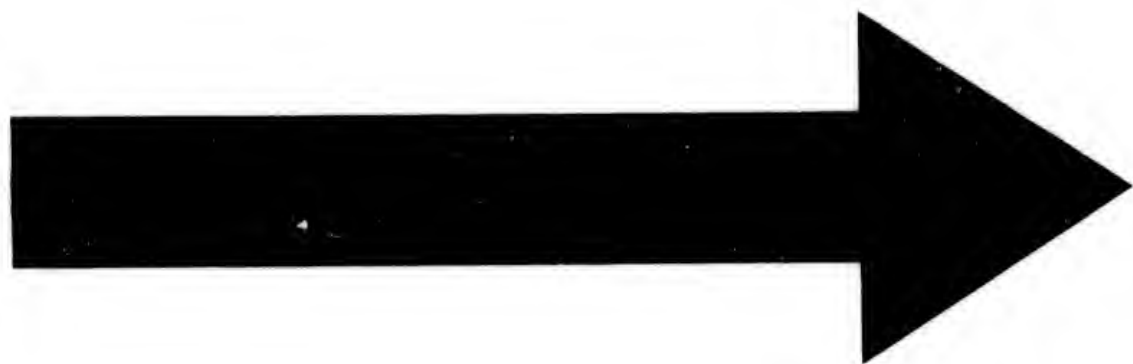
"Has Elsie been telling you the reason for the very unexpected visit, Jack?" Angus queried.

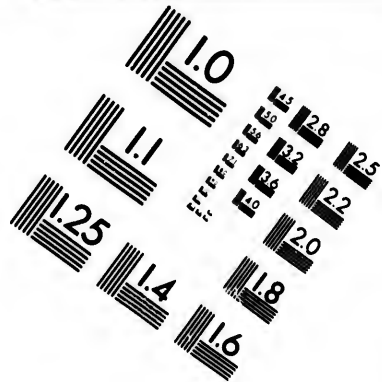
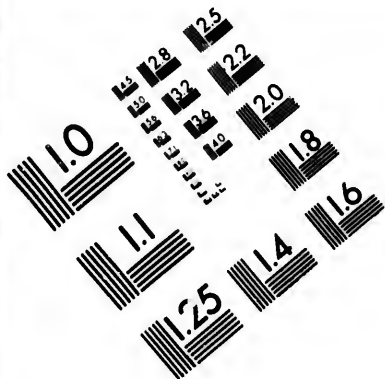
"I never thought of asking," replied Jack.

"And you shall never hear it until you have introduced Gracie and me to your commissary department!" exclaimed Elsie, with playful vehemence.

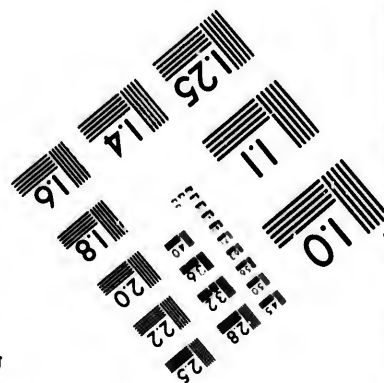
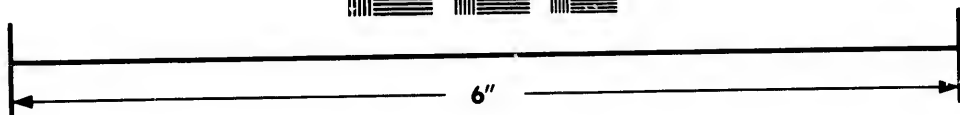
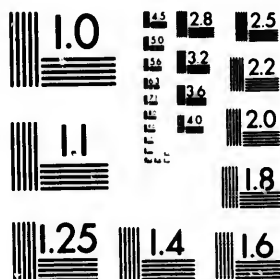
"You make me remember my hunger," laughed Grace.

"Angus is chief of the camp," said Jack. "Give your orders to him."





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Angus was up in a second and was bursting off to the fire, when he turned abruptly to answer Gracie's call.

"Go over to our packs, Angus," she commanded, "and you will find a few dainties."

"The Indians may refuse to give them to me." Angus suggested, with a look of entreaty.

"They will not refuse me!" Grace exclaimed, rising and joining Angus on the errand.

"Did you ever see two greater spoons?" Elsie heard Jack remark under his breath; but she made no reply.

It was a happy quartet that sat before Jack's tent, partaking heartily of the noon-day meal. Grace and Elsie exchanged their table knives for their brothers' hunting dirks, and were making clumsy attempts to handle them with ease. Angus purloined a few of Grace's dainties and was caught surreptitiously sandwiching them between his bacon and biscuit. Jack mischievously pulled one of the hounds by the ear and pointed to the bacon on Elsie's plate. The crisp meat disappeared like a flash, and the dog flew to the back of the tent with it. Amidst the merry jest and childish amusement, Angus put on an expression of solemnity and enquired:

"Do our guests know what day of the week this is?"

"Happy day!" exclaimed Grace, with a fond look at her lover.

"It is the Seventh day, Angus, or you would not be wasting so much time over your dinner," replied Jack.

"You deserve to be punished for intruding your knowledge of the almanac on this occasion," Elsie cried.

"He wants to break us up into duets for his own selfish gain," Jack suggested.

"I wish to regain my dignity as chief of this camp before I dare go over to my tent for my field-glasses; and I had to do something to shake off my idiotical feeling of foolishness," Angus explained.

"What do you intend doing with the glasses?" asked Jack.

"Take them with us to your beautiful retreat at the lake," Angus replied. "We will spend the afternoon there, listening to Grace and Elsie relate an account of their travels."

"Happy thought!" exclaimed Jack. "Hurry up with those dainties, and we will away to the bower."

The dinner was finished with more attention to eating than conversation, and the young people were quickly on their way to the mossy banks. When they arrived there, Elsie and Grace deserted their escorts and stood together in silent devotion to the exquisite scenery. Grace was the first to turn away from the enchanting picture, and Elsie soon followed her to a seat on the soft, white carpet.

"Begin at the beginning and end at the ending," Jack said to Elsie.

"And I shall act as prompter," laughed Grace.

Elsie repeated an account of her interview with her uncle, and Angus savagely plucked the moss during the recital. Then she told of her reception at Grace's home, and Jack choked back a lump in his throat.

"Tell about the rector's defeat," Grace interposed.

"That is the duty of the prompter," replied Elsie.

Grace fought the battle between the rector and Elsie over again, to the intense amusement of Angus and her brother, and adding that the clergyman was at the depôt the next morning to present them each with a bouquet from his garden, and to wish them a safe journey.

"When we left M——," said Elsie, continuing her narrative, "we went by train to Bismarck. Then we took passage on the *Rosebud*, and for fifteen days we stemmed the current of the Missouri River ere reaching Fort Benton. The accommodations of the boat were very satisfactory and comfortable, but we travelled slowly, and the ride became wearisome long before it ended."

"Notwithstanding the vigorous love the captain made to you," Grace slyly commented.

"Where was the purser most of his time?" Elsie retorted with a smile.

Grace looked confusedly at Angus, and Jack urged Elsie to continue the tale.

"The first event of interest occurred after passing Fort Buford," Elsie continued. "The buffalo were on the banks in thousands. Many of them were wading and swimming in the river, and they would not permit a passage for the boat. The male passengers fired at them with rifles and revolvers and wounded a big brute. It charged at the front part of the boat until it broke one of its horns. The mate, a tall, lank Easterner, who was always cursing at the deck hands, threw a

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noose over the head of the wounded animal and hauled it on deck by putting the rope around the windlass. It was choked to death when the rope was removed. We had buffalo meat several times after that, but it was too tough to eat. When we did push a road through, three of the herd had passed under the boat and received a final kick from the great paddle-wheel behind as they floated to the surface with broken necks."

"Will I tell about the buffalo calf, Grace?" Elsie stopped to ask.

Grace assented with a nod and a slight glance at Angus; and Elsie continued:

"When the buffalo barred our way the boat was tied up to the bank. The purser went ashore with his rifle and shot a young calf as it followed its mother out of the water. The deck hands brought the carcass on board, and in a week Grace was presented with a small, silky buffalo robe. It is now in our pack."

"It was very kind of him, indeed," Grace remarked, to kill the silence which Elsie mischievously allowed to follow the anecdote.

"What did the captain shoot?" asked Jack, dryly.

"He was too busy shooting love glances at Elsie to care for other sport," cried Grace, in delight.

"Keep on with the narrative, Elsie," Angus said, grinning; "it grows exceedingly interesting."

"Every day we stopped two or three times to take on wood," Elsie continued. "It was enlivening to watch the deck hands form as an endless chain and trot down

the plank with several sticks on their shoulders. And the way in which the mate would swear at them was shocking. I remember one jolly-looking, coloured deck hand who insisted on walking while the others trotted. The mate cursed him again and again but without effect. Finally the mate calmed down and cried to him as he came round in the circle, 'Come a-runnin', now! Come a-runnin'!' The white eyes shone bright against the dark skin as the negro replied, 'Can't run, boss; but I'll give you a good, squar' walk.' We all laughed and enjoyed the amiable answer."

"Don't forget the hare hunt," Grace cautioned, with a laugh.

"I suppose the captain and his rifle will now be introduced," Jack interrogated, quizzically.

"You will hear about a more foolish man than the captain," Elsie soberly replied. "It was necessary to tie up the boat for the night when the river became shallow. The channels in mud rivers are ever changing, and the experienced wheelman can follow the deep water from the colour of the current. But on a dark night it is impossible to keep off the bars continually forming. One evening at the tea table the captain told us of a simple method of catching hares, in vogue in that part of the country. The hunter arms himself with a lantern and a grain bag, and enters the under-wood on the bank of the river at night. He has only to hold the bag open near the ground and place the lighted lantern before him, and in five minutes the bag will be filled with hares attracted by the light. The

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captain covered the absurdity of the information by keeping a sober visage. He was fishing for a fool, and he caught an insufferable snob who was detested by all the passengers. That night was dark, and we gathered on the deck to see the snob get his deserts. He had no trouble in borrowing a bag and lantern from the purser. He walked up the gang-plank, carrying his trap, and went but a short distance in the bushes before preparing for action. We were engaged at a game of cards when we heard a terrible uproar and cheering. The captain told us the deck hands were welcoming the hunter's return, and our turn would come soon. The purser ran to the cabin door, let down a large bag from the ceiling, so that its opening commanded the entrance, and tied a stout cord across the bottom of the doorway. He had just time to retreat when we heard hurrying footsteps up the stairway. The next moment the door was jerked open, and the crestfallen snob pitched headlong into the bag. The captain and purser dragged him in his shroud into his stateroom, closed the door as they came out, and again took up their cards as though well accustomed to interruptions of that kind. The captain afterwards assured me that they only applied the cabin bag to subjects who were excessively disagreeable."

"What became of the snob?" asked Jack.

"He transferred himself and luggage next day to a boat we met on the way down stream," was the reply.

"Did you have any more fun?" Jack again interrogated.

"Not of that sort," Elsie answered; "but I will now try to tell you about a weird scene that kept us on deck until nearly morning one night. We saw it first from the distance, and the captain said it was white clay formations. Through the dusk of the evening it was scarcely distinguishable, but when the moon burst forth in her full beauty she flooded with her silvery light an almost illimitable picture, all fantastical and wonderful. Castles, sentries, groups of sculpture, churches, pillars, were portrayed with a reality that shortened our breathing. Through all ran lines of dark, iron croppings, forming walls around the varied objects. I have not the words to give fuller description; but the scene will never fade from my memory."

"It was perfectly magnificent," said Grace, excitedly.

"Nothing further worth relating happened until we arrived at Fort Benton," Elsie continued. "There we engaged a four horse team, a light, spring wagon, and a driver who promised to leave us as close to the mountains as a wagon could be taken. The long ride was tedious, but we rested at Fort Macleod and Fort Calgary on the way. At Morleyville the missionary took charge of us and told us where to find you. He sent the wagon back and arranged our transport to your camp. We came on horseback from Morleyville, and here we are, safe and sound."

"But how did you manage to cross the torrents?" Angus asked, curiously.

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pony, and we had no fear while he was with us," Elsie replied.

"You are a couple of clever, courageous women!" Jack ejaculated, in admiration.

"We expected you to meet us on the way, Jack," remarked Grace, remembering the death of their expectations at every stopping point after leaving Bismarck. "Father wrote you a long time before we started."

"I have the letter in my pocket now," laughed Jack; "it came in the mail bag your guide brought us." When they returned to camp they learned that the party of Indians had gone on the back trail early in the afternoon, and that Mose accompanied them.

After tea, Jack gave up his tent to Elsie and Grace and spread his blankets where Angus had kept his drawing board.

And the night closed down on the encampment, and only the stars and the faithful hounds kept watch.

CHAPTER XV.

THE month of September was well advanced, and Angus was considering the advisability of breaking camp and leaving the mountains. The snow-falls were becoming more numerous, and he had no desire to be imprisoned all winter in some valley. In a conversation with Jack, the day of departure was settled for a week hence. The pack train had come shortly after

the arrival of Elsie and Grace and had been gone three weeks. The supply of provisions was not sufficient to meet the demand for another month. And he hurried his men to extend the survey as far down the slope as possible.

Elsie and Grace had entered into the enjoyment of camp life in the mountains with all the ardour of happy youth. Under the protection of Jack, they had gathered the pink-bloomed heather, the exquisite fern-moss, and flowers of rare beauty and fragrance. At noon hours they preceded the cook to where the men were at work, and chatted with Angus while he eat the lunch they brought him. They had even fished fool-hens out of the bushes.

On the evening before the lake was to bid adieu to the visitors to its shores, Jack's favourite retreat was again offering welcome to its discoverer. And he was not alone. On his arm hung fair Elsie Macdonald, happy and silent in helping Jack to take a farewell look at the charming spot.

"Elsie," Jack said, with a new tenderness in his voice, "here in this lovely retreat I want to release the cry that has been sounding from my heart, it seems, forever."

Elsie hung more heavily on his arm, and drooped her head.

"When your hands have been clasped in mine as I helped you over the rugged paths, I could not see you, for my eyes were blinded with joy."

He turned and faced her, encircling her with his

arms and looking down at her head hidden on his breast.

"When your arm nestled confidently within mine, I felt the power for protection steal sweetly over my being, and I longed to fold you in my arms."

Elsie quivered as a sigh escaped from her.

"When your voice spoke to me in tender tones, and I thought you were learning to love me, the cry rang through my heart strings and sounded a chord of melody that flew to my thoughts and gave me delightful confusion."

Elsie's face was upturned. She was gazing into his eyes, and her ears were drinking in his loving words.

"When your warm breath fell on my cheek, as you tried to make me hear you speak at the waterfall, the spring-time of love was in my veins, and a fountain of radiant bliss played over my heart."

Elsie's arms crept around his neck and her fingers fastened in a love knot.

"When I thought of you leaving me forever, my anguish deadened my heart, the cry bounded to my lips and escapes now to tell you that I love you with all the passion of a chaste mind, with all the power of my manhood, with all the wealth of my affection."

As he ceased speaking he bent his head and kissed the lips of the lovely woman who he knew had given him her heart when she drooped her head at his first words.

For awhile they remained locked in each other's arms, their hearts feasting in communion on the love

that filled them. Then they strolled slowly back to the encampment.

Angus and Grace were seated before a fire, for the nights were chilly. They had been discussing the probability of Elsie and Jack soon declaring their love for each other, and were quite prepared to hear the confession made by the happy couple as they joined them.

Two weeks later, Mr. and Miss Macdonald and Mr. and Miss Lester were the guests of the hospitable missionary at Morleyville. One morning at breakfast the clergyman announced that he would perform the marriage ceremony between two natives on the following day, and invited his guests to accompany him. They immediately accepted the invitation.

"Come for a walk, Angus; I have a proposal to make," Jack said, after breakfast.

The young men strolled down to the river and along the beautiful banks.

"Angus," said Jack, "suppose we increase the number of marriages to-morrow."

"You would propose that Elsie and you and Grace and I get married at once?" asked Angus, receiving the idea favourably.

"That is my desire," Jack replied.

"But your father and mother? How will they take it?" demanded Angus, becoming alarmed.

"I will vouch for their willingness," urged Jack.

"If the girls offer no objection, it shall be as you wish, Jack," said Angus.

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"We will go to them at once," exclaimed Jack,

Elsie and Grace at first gave a most decisive negative to the proposal; but before noon they had yielded to the entreaties of their lovers and the missionary had agreed to tie three knots instead of one.

The next morning the white chapel was filled with the inhabitants of the settlement. The missionary entered, followed by his young guests. The other pair were before the altar.

"Mose, as sure as I'm alive!" Jack ejaculated, as he caught sight of the third bridegroom.

Mose looked over when he heard his name uttered, and the merry twinkle was again in his eyes.

The ceremony was brief, the one service uniting the three couples.

As they left the neat church, Elsie looked fondly into her husband's face and asked:

"Jack, do you know when I first learned to love you?"

"Tell me, Elsie," answered Jack.

"It was when Angus gave me his copy of your beautiful chant to read," said Elsie. "I understood your thoughts, and I wanted to be with you forever."

Jack gave his bride one proud, fond look and pressed her arm more tightly to his side.

Home again!

Mr. and Mrs. Lester were again on the steps welcoming the wanderers.

"A nice way to treat the old folks," laughed Mr. Lester, as they all stood in the hallway removing wraps.

"You should not have trusted two young girls with two handsome young men," cried Elsie, as Jack helped her off with her cloak.

"I shall not do so again," Mr. Lester retorted, laughing over his speech as much as the others.

"If I have lost Gracie," Mrs. Lester observed, "I have found another daughter to fill her place."

"And one who will try to love you as much as Gracie does," Elsie added, as she kissed the loving mother.

Christmas Eve.

Angus and Grace are visitors at the Lester home. The household are seated in a circle before the fire-place.

"Jack," Angus asks, "do you remember my presentiment about this Christmas?"

"That I do," Jack replies; "but I never dreamt our union would be so complete in its happiness."

"If I had felt the courage to tell you my presentiment in full," laughs Angus, "you would have commenced dreaming long before we reached the summit."

"What is all this about dreaming?" Elsie asks.

"A hint to tumble into slumberland," Mr. Lester replies, rising and moving to the door.

He is followed up the stairway by his children. Mrs. Lester waits in the hallway to attend to her last duties for the evening, and smiles as she hears from over the balustrade the chorused

"Good night!"

[THE END.]

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