

THE YOUNG GORDONS IN CANADA



MARY BOURCHIER
SANFORD

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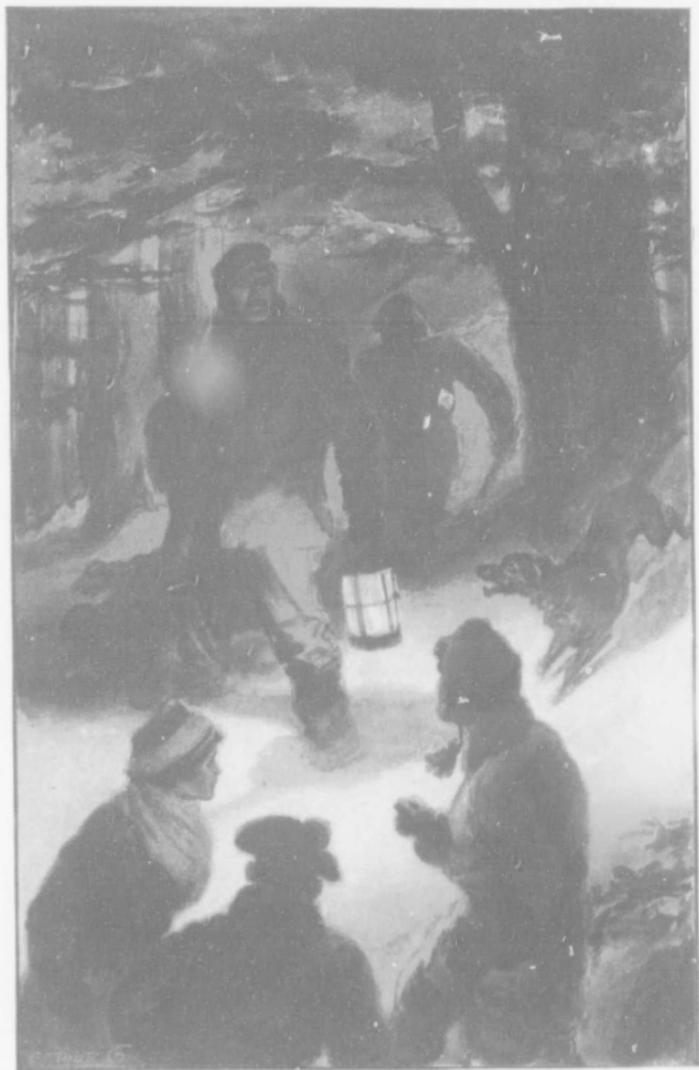
THE YOUNG GORDONS IN
CANADA

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME
EVERY GIRL'S BOOKSHELF

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LONDON: THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.





"WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE?" ASKED THE SPOKESMAN GRUFFLY.

[See page 216.]

THE YOUNG GORDONS IN CANADA

BY
MARY BOURCHIER SANFORD

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The Young Gordons in Canada

CHAPTER I

Hard Tidings

HEEDLESS of the chill of a February noon, Joyce Gordon sat in the notch of an old oak-tree, and peeped down between the leafless branches at the quaint, rambling garden. In summer days there were sheltered spots under oak and elm where periwinkles and flowers of the shade bloomed in their season, and there were wide, sunshiny stretches where vegetables and flowering plants, and here and there a fruit-tree, grew and flourished regardless of order. Joyce was thinking so earnestly that the book she had held in her hand fell unnoticed to the ground ; but presently she started, for a lad, who was making his way over the winding paths, called her name impatiently.

“ Here I am, Keith ! ” she cried. “ Why are you shouting so vigorously ? You sound like a herald of war.”

“ I'm a herald of some kind of trouble ! Ruth

wants you. She was in the library with father, and when she came out her voice was shaking like the ague, and her face was greeny-pale, except where she had red crying-spots. She'd like to see you in her own room."

Joyce hastily descended from her perch and ran toward the house. Her father had been unusually depressed for some weeks, and on the previous night she had seen him pacing back and forth on the lawn. When she knocked at her sister's door Ruth gasped "Come in!" She had been standing by the window, but turned and caught Joyce's hands.

"Joyce, oh, Joyce!" she faltered. Then she stood trembling and silent.

Joyce was the younger; but she was taller and stronger than Ruth, who, in her distress, seemed pathetically frail and slender.

Joyce looked down protectingly on her delicate sister.

"What is the trouble, Ruth dear? Tell me. I can bear anything now. Nothing to come can ever be so hard as when mother left us."

"It is not illness nor death, Joyce. It is the property. Father has lost everything. Joyce, he has sold this place!"

"Sold Woldhurst! How could he? It must descend to Neil, as it has descended to the heir for generations."

"Father explained that it is not entailed now. I did not quite understand, but I know that he can sell it or do as he pleases with it."

"How could he lose everything? Grandfather left a large fortune."

"I cannot tell you. I could not hurt father by asking such questions. He is heartbroken because he has brought us to poverty."

"But we ought to know how it happened. We have to take care of the children and to manage everything for them; we need to understand."

"It was several kinds of bad investments—shares and stocks and things that women have nothing to do with. There were mines far away in the west of America and in Africa. The agents assured father that they would be very profitable, but it seems they were mistaken; all the money that has been sunk in those mines is totally lost."

Joyce's lips twitched.

"If I were going to invest money," she remarked coldly, "I'd go over the ground first."

"Oh, Joyce! how can you seem to reproach father? Other people, successful business people, have lost money in mines. Even Mr. Barrows has lost some; but it cannot be a very great deal, for he has bought Woldhurst."

"Mr. Barrows—bought—Woldhurst! Why, Ruth, he can't speak English! He drops his h's."

Ruth sighed.

Hard Tidings

"Yes ; but as we must give it up, it does not make much difference who buys it."

"I think it does make much difference who——" began Joyce ; then she asked suddenly : "Do you really mean that nothing will be left for us—nothing whatever?"

"Father hopes that when every bit of property is sold—furniture, silver, everything he possesses—he will be free from debt ; and there may be a few pounds, possibly enough to pay our travelling expenses to some place where we may have to live."

"How does he think we shall be able to live without money?"

He hopes to make something from his last book, the one he is revising now. He can finish it in two or three months if he gives all his time to it."

Joyce made an impatient movement.

"Ruth, can't you realize that he never will make money from those books? The three he published at his own expense did not sell ; except a few antiquarians like himself, people are not interested in such works."

Ruth sobbed. Any criticism of her beloved father seemed disrespectful, especially from Joyce, who loved books and study, and ought to be able to appreciate his attainments.

Joyce perceived her sister's distress, and tried to make amends,

"Of course, I am very proud of father, Ruth—proud of his learning, and more of his honour, his high character; but I can't help knowing that he is always studying and dreaming, and that he does not see what goes on in the world as other people see it. If he could write in a way that ordinary people could understand the books might be sold; but, as it is, they are stored away, of no use to any one."

Ruth did not answer, and Joyce asked—

"When do these people want to come to the house, Ruth?"

"As soon as we can move. They would like to make some changes in the house and grounds before summer."

Joyce bit her lip. She dearly loved the old home of her race; she had delighted in its beauty. She thought of the wooded dells, of the trees that bent over the winding stream, and she wondered what changes the new owners, whom she regarded as intruders, would dare to make. But presently she lifted her head resolutely.

"As we must go, Ruth, the sooner it is over the better for all of us. We shall be too busy to think much about the giving-up part."

Ruth broke into convulsive weeping.

"What will become of us?" she moaned. "We could not bear to be dependent on relatives or friends. Besides, aunt Warrener is the only rich

Hard Tidings

one who is nearly related, and we do not want to accept anything from her; she has so often reproached father, telling us that he is a dreamer and a visionary. She would not spare him now. I would try to earn my living if I knew how to begin. I might teach music. Herr Heinrich says I understand the theory very well."

"Don't worry about it now, Ruth; you are quite worn out. Lie down and rest. There must be a way, and we will find it. I will go to father and ask him if he wishes me to tell the children and servants. After I have told them, I will come back to you."

With Joyce action followed speedily upon speech, often without time given for reflection. An unpleasant duty was before her now, and she must attack it without delay. Therefore she went immediately to her father's study and knocked sharply.

When Douglas Gordon opened his door in response to the knock, his pale, lined face grew paler. Joyce had been headstrong in her childhood, and had given way to fits of rage, and her father did not realize that she had slowly learned self-control. He dreaded some outbreak now, and felt powerless to cope with it. As he stood wordless, Joyce made her suggestion.

"Ruth has told me of your loss, father, and if you think it best, I will tell old Hannah and the

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children. Hannah might tell the other servants. If we have to go away very soon they must know."

"Yes, tell Hannah," said Mr. Gordon brokenly. "But be careful of her feelings; she was with——"

He stopped, and his lip quivered. Joyce understood and pitied him. Old Hannah had nursed his wife in her childhood, and in turn had nursed all of her children; but she felt hurt by her father's doubt that she could deal tenderly with the old servant.

"Yes, I will be careful, father," she replied, with a note of pain in her voice; "I will break it to her gently. I will make her understand that we love her and long to keep her with us, but that the parting-time has come."

"And the children—I hope they will take it quietly. Christobel is only three—too young to understand; but the others——"

"They will take it quietly. Even Neil, though he is fifteen, and will realize that it is very serious, will not be so much troubled as if he were a few years older. Keith and Winifred will enjoy the thought of a change."

"Is that possible? It would seem to imply a lack of proper feeling—of intelligence."

"Oh, not at all, father. They are affectionate children and very clever; but they are only seven and eight years old."

"Yes, yes ; they are young ; but Ruth, at their age, was so thoughtful and considerate. It is strange that in one family the temperaments should vary so widely. You were sixteen last August—only two years younger than Ruth ; yet she has always appeared so much more mature. I hope you will try to help her. She is very unselfish, and she is not strong."

A sob rose in Joyce's throat. Why could not her father understand that she was no longer a wilful child? But she remembered a promise that she had made to her dying mother, and answered gently—

"Yes, I know Ruth is delicate, and I will help her in every way that I can. It is not so hard for the rest of us, and I am thankful that it did not come while mother was with us—that she did not know."

Douglas Gordon, too, had been thankful for that ; but to his reserved nature the utterance of the thought implied a lack of refinement, and his face hardened while his eyes rested critically on Joyce. As he remained silent, Joyce said abruptly—

"I will go now and tell Hannah."

Old Hannah received Joyce's announcement with unexpected composure.

"It's not news to me, dearie. I've heard snatches of talk for a long time back, and I've

made plans. I've money enough saved for all the years that I'll live, an' clothin' laid by as will last as long as my old body. I'll work for your dear mother's children without wages, and it's little my keep will cost."

"But, Hannah dear," argued Joyce, "it would be wrong for us to accept that sacrifice from you. You need rest and comfort, and you could have no quiet or comfort huddled up in a small house with a lot of children."

Hannah nodded her head—a proof that she did not mean to change her mind.

"Leave the arranging to me. I'd never meet your sainted mother in the next world with a clear conscience if I'd forsook her little ones in this."

Joyce did not argue the question further, but suggested that Hannah, as the oldest and most valued servant, should inform the others.

"I'll do it, Miss Joyce," replied the old woman sadly; "but there's little need to tell them. Bad news travels fast, and this has been talked over in the servants' hall these many days. They all know too well that their angel mistress's children is goin' to be turned out o' their own home as was their ancestry's and posterity's before them."

Joyce put her arm about the old nurse's shoulder.

"Don't feel it so bitterly, Hannah. Perhaps

Hard Tidings

it will not be so bad as it seems now. I am going to tell the children. I will call them to the summer-house, so we may not disturb father."

With smiling faces, thrilled with excited anticipation, Keith and Winifred obeyed the summons to meet Joyce in the arbour; Keith had already informed Winifred that he knew by Ruth's eyes that something most "awf'ly awful" had happened. Neil, very sad and grave, followed slowly, and Christobel toddled beside him.

Keith had said the family was divided into triplets of blue and gold and brown and black. He could not understand why he had been made blue-eyed and fair-haired like Ruth and Christobel, because he felt much more like Joyce and Winnie. Winifred, a vivacious, *petite* brunette, resembled her mother, after whom she had been named; and, next to Ruth, the first-born, she was her father's favourite. Neil was unusually reserved and serious for his years, and his aunt Warrener prophesied that he would grow absent-minded and unpractical like his father.

When Joyce had explained the situation to the little group, Keith jumped from the rustic bench on which he had sat beside Winnie.

"So that is what all the fuss is about! If we have no money, we must go to work and earn some. I should like to join a circus, and be a rope-dancer like that boy we saw last summer,

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the 'Sprightly Spriggins.' I barked my nose yesterday trying to walk a tight-rope, but Harkins says I can do the trick with a little practice."

"Must I sell all of my dolls?" inquired Winifred. "Thankful Nancy, the black one, is only made of rag, and I think no other little girl would want her. I'll ask father what I may keep."

"No, no!" said Joyce hurriedly. "Don't trouble father about anything. Don't speak to him of going away unless he mentions it."

"If we have to be very busy, we might save time by giving up brushing our teeth," suggested Keith. "And tooth-powder and brushes cost a lot."

Neil, who had received the news in silence, looked up suddenly, and Joyce saw that he was very pale.

"Where are we going?" he asked. "We can't live in Brankshire among the people we know."

"I'm not proud," declared Keith. "I don't care if every one in the county sees me going barefoot."

"I do not think it is because I am proud," answered Neil slowly; "but we do not understand how to manage here without plenty of money. We should go to a new place and learn new ways."

"Let's go to South Africa or Canada," said

Keith, "where we can live in wigwams and wear blankets."

Joyce laughed.

"Do you think you could live in a wigwam in Montreal or Toronto?"

"Father and Ruth would rather be out of England, in some far-away place where no one knows us," remarked Neil. "It would not be so hard."

He turned his head and gazed over the fair lawn and garden to the wooded park beyond.

"Joyce," he said presently, "this is a grand old place. I never knew till now how much I loved it."

Joyce caught his hand in a firm clasp.

"I won't let myself think of it, Neil. It is best for us that there is so much to do; we shall not have time for thinking."

"Yes," agreed Winifred, who had overheard; "and we must begin to do things now. I will pack some clothes this very day; but first I am going to say my prayers."

"Say prayers in the middle of the afternoon!" exclaimed Keith. "What for?"

"Prayers are good for any time of day, Keith, when you have troubles. I am going to pray about my dolls, that I may keep the youngest ones. It is not for greediness, or because I do not want any other little girl to have them; but they would

be so lonely without me, and a stranger person could not have the feelings of a mother."

"Girls are very, very queer," remarked Keith, as Winifred moved away. "I don't mean you, Joyce; you are all right, if you do get into tempers sometimes. Colonel Berrian says you are the oddest combination of tomboy and ph'losopher that he ever saw. I don't know exactly what he means, but I would not change you for any one else in the world!"

CHAPTER II

Old Home, Good-bye !

THE day after the young Gordons had learned that they must leave their home, Mrs. Barrows and her daughter came to inspect their new possession.

"Ruth," declared Joyce, "I won't see them ! I can't make myself behave civilly to them."

Ruth's lip trembled.

"Then I must receive them alone."

Joyce hesitated. Only a year ago, kneeling by her dying mother's side, she had promised that she would try to be very helpful to Ruth, and presently she said—

"I will go with you, Ruth, and I will do my best."

Mrs. Barrows tried to be sympathetic and kind, but her daughter Sarah did not conceal her elation in the possession of Woldhurst. As she went through the house she suggested changes and improvements, without consideration for the feelings of the occupants.

"Papa has made up his mind to drain the

moat," she announced. "He says a moat may be very stylish, but it is not sanitary. Of course, we will make the house and grounds as up-to-date as can be. So this is your room, Miss Joyce. I'll take this for myself. It is so nice and separate off here in the wing. As papa has bought the furniture, I will leave it very nearly as it is now; but I must put in a few handsome paintings and some bric-à-brac."

Joyce contracted her lips. In her opinion, the proposed additions would not improve her room.

"I dare say it comes hard on you to give it up," continued Sarah; "but if it's true you are all going away off somewhere you won't mind so much."

Joyce did not answer, and Ruth led the way down the hall. At a closed door she hesitated.

"We must see that room," said Sarah. "I have heard that it is an octagon, and it would be nice for an upstairs reception place, with cosy corners and that sort of thing; or we might have an Oriental room with divans and draperies. Please open it, Miss Gordon."

"Not now," said Joyce, with decision. "It was mother's sitting-room, and we want to keep it as she left it as long as we can."

"Joyce dear," remonstrated Ruth, "this house is not ours. Mrs. Barrows must see everything that she wishes."

Old Home, Good-bye!

Mrs. Barrows laid her hand kindly on Ruth's arm.

"No, dear; I understand. It's sacred to you. No one shall disturb it now."

"It would not hurt any one to open the door," said Sarah, in an irritable aside, as her mother moved on. "We'll put it in order the very first thing after we move in."

When the visitors had disappeared beyond the gates, Joyce gave a sigh of relief.

"I am thankful that is over, and I hope we shall go far, far away, so we need never see this place after these people come to it."

"Mrs. Barrows tried to be kind—she was kind," said Ruth.

"Yes, she meant well. But to think of that daughter of hers misusing these rooms that we have loved—it is too much!"

"I do try to love my neighbour as myself," murmured Ruth.

"I don't believe that loving one's neighbour means tolerating vulgarity and pretentiousness. Don't be discouraged about me, Ruth. I would try to do her a kindness if she were in need; but I cannot possibly feel cordial toward her."

Late in the afternoon Captain Ferris, from Barford, in the neighbouring county, was closeted for more than an hour with Mr. Gordon, and the children impatiently awaited developments. As

soon as the door had closed upon the departing visitor, Winifred, who was never deterred by her father's reserve, rushed upon him as he passed through the hall and caught his arm. Keith followed, while Neil lingered discreetly in the rear.

"Father, I'm sure you were talking about where we are going," began Winifred, "because when Captain Ferris was coming out of your study I heard him say, 'It will be an idol place for your young family, Gordon.' Tell us about it now—please do."

"Why are you not in the nursery?" asked her father impatiently. "What is Hannah doing? You seem to have been allowed to do as you please, without any discipline or order."

"Oh, Hannah is packing and counting things. Everybody is too busy to think about us."

Mr. Gordon looked at her helplessly, and said, as if driven to extremity—

"Well, well! Call your sisters and come to the study."

Neil followed his father, while Keith and Winifred raced up the stairs. Keith passed his sister, but Winifred shouted the message from the landing before the panting boy could recover his breath. Winnie, too, was the first to speak when the little party reached the study. She seated herself opposite her father, and leaned forward with sparkling eyes.

"Do tell it as fast as you can, father, because if it is something very awf'ly nice we shall be so overjoyed to hear it."

Mr. Gordon gazed at her in dismay, and the lines in his face deepened as he wondered if she were devoid of feeling. His little daughter's attitude toward life had often perplexed him; but as she was very sweet-natured, and unacquainted with shyness or timidity, she was on easier terms with him than any other member of his household.

"We are going to live in Canada," he said hurriedly, as if he desired to free himself of a distressing announcement.

"In Canada! How jolly!" shouted Keith.

"Shall we be in a tent, like the pictures of Indians?" asked Winifred. "Ruth says we can't afford to keep any servants, but we can easily manage a tent. We need not sweep a grass floor, and we can wash our clothes in a river and hang them on trees. Will it be a tent?"

"No; we shall live in a large house with many acres of ground. Captain Ferris intended to live in Canada, and built the house more than twenty years ago. He returned to England very soon, as Mrs. Ferris found the life rather lonely. The place has remained unoccupied. It may require some repairs; but as Captain Ferris has kindly offered it to me for two years free of rent, I will make all necessary repairs and cultivate the land."

"What sort of land?" asked Neil. "Is it garden, or farm, or all wild?"

"I think there may be a garden, but the greater part is forest. We can clear and cultivate it as we wish, and use the timber for building or firewood."

"We will make it into a farm," said Keith, "and grow everything we need to eat, except the wild beasts we shoot. Is there any water near? Can we fish?"

"There is a lake or bay in front of the house. Yes, we can supply ourselves with provisions from the property, and for clothing and other necessities we can rely on the proceeds of my books. It is a quiet, retired spot, where I shall not be interrupted in my work. This offer from Captain Ferris is a great relief. I did not know where we should go."

"Is it far from other houses?" asked Ruth anxiously. "Is there any school in the neighbourhood?"

"The boys can walk to school in the little village of Ferndale, about two miles away. As Winifred must be taught at home, I will undertake her education."

Winifred rolled up her eyes at this announcement, and said aside to Keith—

"I think father will put me on the top of a heap of books and forget that I am there."

"Don't trouble about lessons yet, father,"

advised Keith. "When we are settled in Canada it will be nearly time for summer holidays, and we need not go to any school till next fall. I did hope it would be a place without schools. We don't need them. I am sure we could pick up learning beautifully by ourselves."

"And is there furnishur in the house—?" began Winifred. Then through the study window she saw a familiar face, and shouted eagerly: "It's Basil! Basil Ingram! Race me to the hall door, Keith, and see who'll shake hands with him first. We'll ask the other Canada questions afterwards."

Mr. Gordon began a hesitating protest against boisterous deportment, but Winifred had darted away.

"Welcome home, Mr. Basil Ingram!" she cried delightedly. "It's good that you came before we went. Are you going to stay long? Did your college give you a holiday?"

"No, Winnie; I have come for only one day. I must go back to-morrow."

"Is that because your mother and Helen are in Italy, and there is no one but the housekeeper to take care of you? Do come and stay here with us. But no, I forgot; we shall be packing up, because we are going to live in Canada."

"In Canada! So far away! Not soon, I hope?"

"Yes, very soon—in a few days, I think. Did

you hear that we have no money, and that Mr. Barrows has bought this house?"

"Yes, Winnie dear, I heard," he answered gravely.

"Is that why you came? Did you want to see us before we moved?"

He made no answer, and she continued—

"Of course, we are very awf'ly sorry to leave our friends. We'll be crying sorry to leave *you*, speshly Ruth."

Winifred had led the visitor to the drawing-room, and at that moment Ruth entered with her father. The colour that rushed to her face brought a responsive tint to the young man's cheek. Mr. Gordon glanced at his daughter with troubled questioning in his eyes. Basil was twenty-one; but though he was more than four years older than Joyce, he had been her friend and companion with a frank, boyish comradeship. What was the meaning, then, of his embarrassment on meeting Ruth? Did it merely signify distress at the sad change in the family circumstances?

Winifred and Keith relieved the situation by hurling questions at the visitor, and Mr. Gordon regarded them anxiously. Discipline had been sadly lacking since their mother's death. A succession of governesses had tried to keep them in order, and had been dismissed in turn as incompetent on the advice of aunt Warrener. For the

past three months poor Ruth had been nominally in charge. Would they continue to deteriorate in a new country where there would be less restraint?

While her father was lost in apprehensive wonderings, Winifred had slipped out of the room, and presently returned with a plate heaped with cheese-cakes.

"See, Mr. Basil Ingram," she said gaily, "I did not forget that you were a hungry boy and always partic'larly liked these. Cook has kind feelings for you, so she gave me a lot. She said to Eliza, 'Poor souls! it's trashy stuff they'll get where they are going, so I'll feed them up while I can.' But we are going to learn to cook for ourselves, and it won't be trashy stuff. I have packed two cook-books with lots of pictures of puddings and things. Do come to Canada and stay with us. It's a big house with spare rooms, and Ruth would be so glad to have you."

"Perhaps I shall come some day, Winikens," he answered, with a break in his voice. "I am sure I shall want to."

"Oh, yes, do come! But you'd better eat as many cheese-cakes now as you possibly can, for it will be a long, long time before we are all together again."

"Thank you; I will take one, for it was thoughtful of you to bring them. But I am not hungry now, Winnie—for cheese-cakes."

To her great surprise Winifred saw something in his eyes that looked suspiciously like tears. The distress that this usually cheerful friend could not conceal sobered the volatile little maiden, and she sat almost in silence till Basil went away.

The days that followed gave little leisure for regret or foreboding. The elder girls went through the house, making inventories of books and furniture, and marking the few sacred treasures with which they would not part. Keith and Winifred darted about, asking questions and getting in every one's way. The house was dismantled, meals were irregular, and the younger ones delighted in the picnic life. Mrs. Gordon's aunts, Ruth and Jean Dering, came to spend a day and gave counsel and sympathy. They offered to adopt Winifred or Christobel, but the father would not consent to part with either.

After a conference in the library, the aunts arranged to buy the furniture that had been most tenderly associated with their beloved niece, so it should not pass into the hands of strangers. Their income was very small, but they would willingly deny themselves some comforts so they might do this service. They looked grave when Mr. Gordon said he must take with him nearly all his books, though he had been offered a large price for some rare editions, and the transporta-

tion of the heavy volumes might be expensive. He argued that the books were his capital, and that without them he could not do the work that would be necessary for the support of his family.

On the last evening at Woldhurst, Joyce went alone to the attic which had been a favourite retreat of her childhood. From a dormer window she could look beyond the grounds of Woldhurst to the garden of the Priory, the home of the Ingrams. Basil had returned to Oxford on the evening after his hurried visit. He had tried to speak cheerfully when he said good-bye to the clamouring children; he had told Joyce that he knew she would be brave as she had always been. Then he had walked in the garden with Ruth. Ruth had returned from that parting looking very pale and sad, and had gone at once to her room.

In early days Joyce had called Basil her eldest brother, and in the past year she had hoped that he might indeed some day be her brother. Ruth had not spoken his name since she had parted from him in the garden; and though Joyce longed to offer interest and sympathy, she felt she could not intrude upon her sister's reserve. She stood for a long time by the attic window, looking down at the Priory garden, where she had spent so many happy hours with Basil and his sister, Helen. Then she turned away, and went downstairs to her mother's room.

The furniture had been removed and the floor was bare, but Joyce knelt again on the spot where her mother's bed had stood, and where she had made a sacred promise. She renewed that promise now, in other words.

"Mother," she said, as if that tender mother were listening to the solemn vow—"Mother, I *will* try to be good; I will try to be strong, and to be very kind to Ruth; I will try to control my temper, and—to grow—to be—what you prayed for me—what you believed—I could grow to be. But—oh, mother, mother, I want you—I want you—more than any one can know!"

Ruth had shed many tears while she had made ready for the leave-taking; but Joyce's eyes had been dry. She had worked beyond her strength, had slept little, and was very weary. When she stood up in the desolated room that she had loved, where her mother's arms had often been her refuge, the light seemed to burn dim and far away; she felt suddenly dizzy and faint, and fell heavily to the floor.

Her father, sitting in the study below with Ruth, started up in alarm.

"What was that?" he asked anxiously.

Ruth had run to the door.

"Something fell. I thought the children were with Hannah. We must go up and see."

When she entered the room with her father,

Hannah, who had come in by an opposite door, was stooping over Joyce.

"Lift her and lay her on the sofa in the room across the hall," commanded the old woman.

"Send some one for a doctor," directed Mr. Gordon, when he had staggered, with his tall daughter in his arms, and placed her as Hannah advised.

"Doctor—no!" replied Hannah decidedly. "Leave her with me. It is but a faint; she'll be herself again presently."

When Joyce had revived, Hannah sought her master's study to relieve her feelings by uttering her mind. She found him trying to read, but evidently much disturbed. It had never occurred to him that Joyce, with her fine physique and appearance of abounding health, could suffer from any bodily weakness.

"What caused it?" he asked. "Did she hurt herself? Did she try to move any heavy furniture?"

"Hurt herself wi' moving!" exclaimed Hannah indignantly. "It's the girl's lovin' heart that's hurt. Wasn't it wrapped up in her mother, more than the hearts of all your other offsprings? Miss Ruth is lovin' too, but since she was a wee babe she turned to you, and you made much of her. Miss Joyce was her mother's bosom child; and,

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with all her faults—there's no denyjng she has some—she was her mother's pride and joy. She's better now, and she'll give way no more, for she's my brave mistress's own daughter."

"She has a violent temper," said Mr. Gordon, with an uneasy recollection of Joyce's childish outbursts.

"She did have when she was a wee thing, I'm bound to admit; but she is not the likes now of the little one that kicked and screamed to have her own way. And, temper or no temper, she is the finest of all the fine children my dear mistress left you!"

The old woman's tone was bitter. She realized that, through mistakes in judgment, Mr. Gordon had brought the children of her beloved mistress to poverty; and when she had left the study, she expressed in her own dismantled room the resentment that long years of deferential service had withheld her from uttering in the presence of the master—

"If you had ever given as much thought to your own flesh and blood as you have given to them dead, dried, dusty, no-accountable books that you have packed up to carry acrost the ocean, in place of things that's needed, you wouldn't want explanations for understandin' your offsprings. And may you some day get grace to turn your attentions from browned and corruptible old

mummies to do your duties by livin' human beings."

When Ruth came downstairs and reported that Joyce was sitting up, and had declared that she was perfectly well, her father asked with hesitation—

"Was she unhappy at being poor and giving up everything—or—was it—the thought of her mother?"

"It was for mother," said Ruth softly. "Joyce is very brave, and she will never let herself fret about the money and poverty; but she loved mother more than she has ever loved any one else in the world."

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CHAPTER III

Wilderfell—the New Home

ON a day in April a travel-worn group left the train at the little station of Ferndale.

During the voyage across the Atlantic interested passengers had helped Ruth and Joyce in the care of the young family ; but on the long railroad journey Christobel had been very fretful, and Keith and Winifred had chattered incessantly, to the great annoyance of their father.

" I am more than thankful that the journey is ended," said Ruth aside to Joyce ; " and I shall be glad, oh, so glad ! when we reach—home."

Keith looked from the station platform and shrugged his shoulders.

" There is not anything here that I should call a village ; only a few scattered houses and no regular street. I don't see a school, and I jolly well hope there is none ! "

" Yon's the school," said a man, who had been making notes on the new arrivals. He pointed to a small frame building. " 'Tain't much to look at, but there's good learnin' in it. The

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school-teachers in Canada has to pass stiff exams, and know a lot."

"Will you kindly tell me how we can get to Wilderfell—Captain Ferris's place?" asked Mr. Gordon. "I thought we should find an omnibus or some conveyance here."

"Oh dear no; there ain't no call for buses. But farmer Brown'll be along presently, and he might give you a lift in his wagon. Folks call him farmer Brown because there's so many other Browns. He was in to Braybrook with a load, and he's comin' back with nothin' but a few groceries. But why should you go to Wilderfell at this time of year? It's too early and cold for picnics and campin'."

"We are going to live there," announced Keith. "We have taken it from Captain Ferris for two years."

"Live there! Live at Wilderfell!" exclaimed the stranger incredulously. "Why, it ain't no sort of place for civilized folks to live in."

"What is the matter with it?" asked Ruth anxiously. "Is it not in good order?"

The stranger chuckled.

"Good order! I ruther guess not. There hasn't been no caretaker in it for years. Lawyer Crane, that used to be the agent, couldn't get one to stay there rent free; they'd got an idee that it was ha'n'ted, and it is so awful lonesome. There's

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an Injun oshwary in sight of the house—a big, queer-lookin' mound, risin' right out of a flat land. None of the folks round here would pass it alone after dark."

"What's an oshwary?" inquired Winifred with interest.

"An Injun burying-place. But you need not be scart. I don't take no stock in such tales, and sensible brought-up children isn't frightened of ghosts. The sounds they've heard was just made by chipmunks and squirrels scamperin' through the house."

"My children have no foolish fears of apparitions," said Mr. Gordon. "The correct term, Winifred, is 'ossuary.' Captain Ferris did not tell me of this mound. I shall find the investigation of it most interesting."

"But has not any one taken care of the house?" asked Ruth. "Has it been damaged and left without repair?"

"I should say it has. It has jest gone to rack and ruin, and if Captain Ferris has took you in and got you to pay rent for that old ramshackle, I've a poorer opinion of him than I had before."

"Captain Ferris is a most honourable man!" replied Mr. Gordon with dignity. "He may have been misinformed about the condition of his property, but he certainly believed that we should find it a desirable residence."

"Tell us exactly what it is like," requested Keith. "Is the furniture spoiled too?"

"There was only a few odds and ends of old furniture left in it, and that's all battered up now. The doors and windows was boarded once, but the boards has been tore down, the window-panes is smashed, and the doors stands open summer and winter. Schoolboys from Braybrook acrost the bay makes trips over, and they've drawed pictures on the walls with pencils or charcoals. There's mud on the floors, and Injuns has often camped there."

"Indians camping!" exclaimed Mr. Gordon. "I understood that it was a retired spot, where we should be free from intruders."

"It's retired enough, sure. Folks calls the place 'Ferris's Folly,' because it was a mighty foolish thing for a gentleman that did not need to work the land to build a big house away off in the woods. Some rich Toronto families has fine places along the bay shore, to spend a few weeks in summer; but this man Ferris expected his wife, used to lots of company, to live there the year round, and she kicked and wouldn't. English folks isn't foresighted enough. Canajuns or Americans going to new parts would find out about the lay of the land, and not jump onto it promiscuous like."

"Aren't Canadians called Americans?" inquired Keith.

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"Well, I s'pose, strictly speaking, they'd ought to be, as this is the North American continent; but we always do call the folks of the United States 'Americans,' and don't give that name to nobody else."

"Are they very wild Indians?" asked Winifred. "Might they want to scalp us?"

"Wild? No, bless your little heart! They're very tame indeed. 'Too tame to be picturesque,' one Englishman said. Canajun Injuns nowadays never scalps nobody."

Joyce had put her arm about her sister.

"Ruth dear, don't feel so worried. I'm sure it will not be so bad as it seems now."

The stranger looked at Ruth, and said regretfully—

"Why, miss, you're white as a sheet and all of a tremble. Maybe the house can be repaired all right. The land has fine trees on it; and summer is comin' on, when there'll be rowing and sailing and berry-pickin'. If I was you I'd live in Braybrook till it gets warmer; and you'd better all go round there to-night and stay till the place is put in some sort of order. If you wait at this station there'll be a train along in an hour. It's only four miles from here, and there's good hotels there."

"Oh, no," said Ruth faintly. "We want to go home now."

"But you can't stand it, miss. There's nothin' to sleep on. If it was summer you might make beds of cedar-boughs, but it is too cold for that now; you'd need blankets and comfortables."

"We packed our sheets and china and glass!" exclaimed Winnie; "because we knew Captain Ferris did not leave any. But we thought everything else was here."

"Father, what do you think?" asked Ruth. "Shall we ask the farmer to drive us to Wilderfell, or shall we take that train to Braybrook?"

"I shall certainly go to Wilderfell," said Mr. Gordon. "Joyce and the boys can come with me; but you, Ruth, with Winifred and Christobel, should board with some private family in Braybrook for a few days, till the house is fit for you to live in. You must not stay at an hotel without my protection."

"Father," said Ruth faintly, "if you and Joyce go to Wilderfell, I shall go too. I could not rest in a comfortable place if you were uncomfortable. If others can bear it, I can."

Joyce turned to the man.

"Is there any place in this village where we can buy some blankets and provisions and cheap crockery, so we may manage for the night? Our large boxes are coming by freight. We have only trunks with us."

"Yes, there's Jones's. He has a sort of all-

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round store—dry goods, groceries, boots and shoes, kitchenware, and the post-office thrown in. But he doesn't keep no large stock. There isn't the sale for it. If you like, miss, I'll go with you and interduce you to Jones. Maybe he would hitch up a horse and drive a load, because Brown won't have no room for trunks nor luggage if he takes the family in his market wagon."

Mr. Gordon looked uneasy. The very familiar manners of this rustic annoyed him.

"I will go with my daughter," he said stiffly. "I will purchase whatever is necessary."

"Oh, no, father!" exclaimed Winifred. "Ruth looks as if she might be quite ill. You ought to stay with her. Keith and Neil and I can help Joyce."

"Yes, father, do take Ruth into the station house," advised Neil. "There is a small room with benches. I can help Joyce, and perhaps we can get a cup of tea somewhere for Ruth."

"I guess Brent, the stationmaster, could make the young lady a cup of tea," remarked the stranger. "He has a kittle and fixin's, and he's going to wait here till the next train."

He darted away and returned with Brent, who explained that as this was only a little way-station, with few trains passing, he had only a lad to help him, and had therefore been unable to offer the new arrivals the attention they required; but he

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would now place himself at their disposal, make tea, look out for farmer Brown, and try to arrange for the transportation of the family.

At Jones's shop the stranger, who had introduced himself as Tom Jennings, gave the inexperienced Joyce practical advice about her purchases. Accepting his instructions, she bought bread and butter, tea and sugar, bacon and eggs, a box of soda biscuits, and some cheese. The kitchen-ware was limited for the present to a frying-pan, an iron pot, and a large tin kettle.

"There ain't no stove," said Jennings, "but you can boil and fry over a good bed of coals in the fireplace."

When Joyce had paid for the provisions, some very cheap crockery, and knives, forks, and spoons that would not have been admitted into the kitchen at Woldhurst, she saw with much anxiety that she had little money left, though her father believed that he had given her enough for all necessaries.

"What shall I do, Neil?" she asked aside. "We must have warm bed-clothing, and I think that father gave me all that he had changed into Canadian money."

"Perhaps Mr. Jones will wait a few days till we can pay him," suggested Neil. "But I hope the blankets will not cost much."

The price of the blankets was seven dollars a pair, at which Joyce looked aghast. Perceiving

her hesitation, the shopkeeper took from a shelf thick, quilted "comfortables" of coarse material. Mrs. Jones had made them, and she said she would sell them for two dollars apiece. Joyce still hesitated, and Neil explained—

"We have not money enough. We did not expect we should have to buy these things, and our father's money is all in English gold and silver that you do not take here. If you will put it in a bill, father will pay you next week."

Jones spoke aside with Jennings, then nodded his head.

"All right, miss; all right. I do a cash business, but I'm sure you are square, honest folks, and I'll trust you. How many do you want?"

"Seven at least," said Joyce.

"I've only five; that'll clean out my stock. But you're welcome to them, and I'll drive the things right around to your place for you. It would be hard lines to start in half-starved and frozen."

When the purchasers returned to the station, Keith carrying a jar of honey for which he and Winifred had bargained, Jennings cried out—

"Here's Brown coming just on time. Hullo, Brown! There's a fam'ly here waitin' for you to take them to Ferris's Folly. I promised you would do it, so you mustn't go back on me."

Brown drew his wagon up by the platform, and touched his hat respectfully.

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"It'll make me late gettin' home," he said doubtfully.

"Oh!" gasped Ruth, "if you can't take us, what shall we do? We must have some place to sleep."

The farmer looked at her compassionately.

"I'll take you, miss, for you're sorely in need of rest. I hope you've sent some one on ahead to put the place in some sort of order, or it's little rest you'll get there. Them trunks must stay here for the night, I fear; but we can take along the handbags."

Winifred seized a large basket.

"I must take this. Faithful Nancy and Genevieve are in it. They'd be frightened into convulsions if they were left here alone."

"Pshaw! they're only dolls!" said Keith. "She's so imaginary; she treats them as if they were alive skin-and-bones babies."

The farmer smiled and held out his hand for the basket.

"I'll take them. I have a little maid of my own at home, and she loves her dollies."

When the family had climbed into the lumbering vehicle, the farmer turned to Mr. Gordon and said, with some hesitation—

"I'm afraid you'll be very uncomfortable at Wilderfell, sir. It's not fit for folks to live in without a great deal of repairs. The young lady

doesn't look strong enough for roughing it. My girls and my missus would be pleased if she'd come to our place for a few days, and she could bring the baby with her."

But Ruth would not be persuaded to forsake her motherless charges, and the farmer drove on in silence.

He turned from the main road and drove through an open gateway. The gate lay broken by the roadside, and the fence was dilapidated.

"Here's the entrance to your grounds, sir," he announced. "There's fine timber, and the best maple-bush in the country! You can make more syrup and sugar in the spring than you can use. The neighbours has tapped the trees every spring for years, but they'll have to quit now."

The road wound through the forest, and the trees arched overhead. Some early birds were singing joyously, and the air was sweet with the fragrance of pines.

"How beautiful, how very beautiful it is!" exclaimed Joyce.

She uttered another cry of delight when the farmer drove out on a clearing. The house was set in grounds that sloped to the bay. The blue waters sparkled in the sunshine, and the shores were cut in many a point and curve. On the opposite shore a little town, lying at the foot of a range of hills, nestled to the water's edge.

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“That’s Braybrook,” said the farmer. “Going straight across the water it’s only three miles, though more than four around the curve of the bay. There’s good shops there and nice society.”

Ruth gazed with longing eyes at the houses of the town.

“I wish we were going to live there !”

“For your own sake I could wish you was, miss,” said Brown heartily. “But we’ll do our best to help you out a bit over here.”

“We’d rather live here,” declared Keith. “There’ll be jolly boating and fishing. But where are the farm and garden?”

Brown pointed to a strip of land covered with underbrush.

“There was a straggling sort of garden there once, but no farm. You may have time to clear it and grow a few vegetables this year.”

He helped the travellers to alight from the wagon, and put their luggage on the wide veranda ; then, after promising to send a charwoman early in the morning, he drove away.

Jennings had not exaggerated the condition of the house. The floors bore the prints of muddy boots, and were blackened by soot and ashes from charred logs in the fireplace, where tramps and picnickers had boiled their kettles. The walls were disfigured by the drawings and autographs of the schoolboys ; hardly a window could boast a whole

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pane of glass, and the few pieces of furniture were broken. When Ruth found herself alone with Joyce she laid her head on her sister's shoulder.

"Oh, Joyce dear, I want to help you, but I am so tired that my mind reels; I can't think straight. How can we ever live here?"

"Perhaps when we have some bright fires going it will seem a little better," said Joyce doubtfully. "You do look very ill, Ruth; don't even try to do anything. Take Christobel to the shore and keep in the sunlight for a little while. Don't worry about me. This bracing air makes me feel ready to tackle anything. I shall really enjoy having a lot to do."

Ruth reluctantly agreed to go to the shore and leave Joyce to grapple with the problem of making the house habitable. The boys were ready to help Joyce. Neil raced to the woods with Keith, closely followed by Winifred. When, with shouts and cheers, the three returned, they were dragging great boughs of pine and cedar. After they had made several journeys and laid heaps of cedar boughs and pine needles in the largest room, they danced in glee and declared that being Indians was the best fun in the world.

"Now, Joyce, we'll try to clean up two or three floors, and then put down a green carpet," said Keith. "We found old spades and hoes in the

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stable. First we'll scrape the floors with those and then we'll sweep them with cedar boughs."

"Let's make a big bonfire on the bank," suggested Winifred, "so father can sit there with Ruth and Chrissie till the house is ready. We can get on much faster if father is quite far away."

"There is a lot of wood there already," said Keith, "as if some one had piled it up for a fire. Where are the matches, Joyce?"

Joyce gasped.

"I never thought of matches, Keith; and we have no candles, lamps, or oil. We shall have to sit in darkness this evening, except for the fire-light. Father has matches for his cigars. Ask him for some, but don't waste any."

"Never mind, Joyce; we can make torches with some gummy wood. The more we haven't got the better fun it is. I feel like the Swiss Family Robinson."

"Keith, you are a brick!" exclaimed Joyce.

"And, Joyce, you are splendid!" said Neil. "You do not make a fuss about anything."

Joyce laughed.

"I am like Mark Tapley—my spirits always rise under trying circumstances."

Nearly two hours later, when darkness was falling, Keith blew a horn, and Winifred jingled some old sleigh-bells that she had found in the

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stable, to announce that dinner was ready. Ruth had several times returned to the house to offer help, and each time Joyce had insisted that Ruth's duty was to stay on the shore and keep her father there, so he should not be too much disheartened by the difficulties of housekeeping.

The unsightliness of the dining-room floor was concealed by thickly strewn cedar twigs. A long, rickety table, that had apparently been left by picnickers, was covered with a coarse but clean tablecloth, lent by Mrs. Jones. Logs, with travelling-rugs laid over them, stood in the place of chairs. The room was lighted by the blazing wood in the fireplace and by a torch of pine set in a battered iron kettle.

"Logs are low for sitting on," remarked Winifred, "and the table is very high. But what's the odds as long as you're happy? We are all starving hungry, and we'll have a bang-up time."

"Why, Winifred!" exclaimed Ruth, "where did you learn such expressions?"

"From a boy on the train. He was such an inkeresting boy."

"My dear Ruth," said Mr. Gordon anxiously, "I hope that in future we shall be able to guard the children from undesirable associates. That was one of my reasons for coming to this retired place. I particularly object to slang."

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"I wish you didn't, father," said Winifred calmly. "It has so many useful words for filling in with. And even if I don't slang, Keith will."

"Oh, please all sit down," begged Keith, "or it will get cold. Ruth is to pour the tea, and Joyce will help what she cooked. We only have nursery manners, father, because we never took dinner with you before, except in the *restoryant*."

Joyce seated herself before a steaming dish.

"I am afraid it does not look right, and it is rather smoky. It is bacon and eggs, but the eggs broke and everything got mixed. Neil held the frying-pan over the fire while I tried to turn the eggs."

"Never mind," advised Winifred. "It smells first-rate." She glanced at her father's disapproving face, and said hastily, "I mean it has a delicious *ogre*."

Mr. Gordon looked doubtfully at the mixture, and Keith suggested—

"If you are afraid of it, father, we will make you a Welsh rarebit with toast and cheese, and there's honey afterwards."

Mr. Gordon glanced apprehensively at Joyce, as if he feared she might resent criticisms of her cooking.

"Perhaps it is too rich for Christobel," he suggested.

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"I have bread and milk for Christobel," said Joyce. "I got it from Mrs. Jones." Then, with her characteristic objection to taking any credit to herself that she did not deserve, she hastened to add, "It was Mrs. Jones who thought of it, and said the little ones must have milk."

Mr. Gordon glanced tenderly at his eldest daughter.

"Ruth would have thought of it. She has worn herself out by too much thinking of others."

Joyce flushed, and Neil said quickly—

"Joycie, your 'fry,' or whatever you call it, is fine! You are going to be a champion cook."

Presently Christobel nodded over her bread and milk, and if Keith had not caught her she would have slipped from her log to the floor.

"She fell asleep with the spoon half-way to her mouth," said Winifred. "But no beds are made yet; we were all so busy doing this room and cooking dinner. Lay her on the floor, Ruth, on the rugs and a heap of boughs. I promised Joyce that I would help her make the beds, and the others can wash the dishes. We have no dish-cloths, so you must wipe them with some of the paper that was wrapped about the packages from Mr. Jones's."

"I must help Joyce," said Ruth. "I am much better now, and feel ashamed that I have done so little."

"Come, then," agreed Joyce. "I think that the front room opposite this one will be best for you and Christobel. There are not so many broken panes, and there is an old bedstead and a mattress. Winnie and I can sleep in the room directly behind. There is a door between the two rooms. The boys want to be upstairs, and we have chosen a small room for father in the rear, so he will not be disturbed if Christobel cries."

"But you have no bedstead," said Ruth, when she had looked at the rooms. "You will take cold if you sleep on the floor."

"Not I! There are only two bedsteads, and I am afraid they are very rickety. The wonder is that a single piece of furniture is left, as the house has been open to the public for so many years. Mrs. Jones says Indians seldom steal—the Indians in this neighbourhood, she means; she does not know about others. A family from Toronto were called back to the city by the illness of a relation, and in their hurry they left all the doors of their summer place on this bay shore unlocked. When they returned in a few weeks nothing had been taken, though they had left clothing, provisions, silver, and china in full view. If tramps had come that way, the house might have been stripped of everything of value. But the Indians who were camping near respected their neighbours' property."

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"But they camped in this house, and helped to make it less habitable."

"Because they found it open and begrimed. But we must settle about the rooms. Winnie and the boys are hardy, and we shall sleep soundly on cedar boughs, with those thick things that Mr. Jones calls 'comfortables' spread over them. Now don't worry; we have arranged it all nicely. Let us make your bed. There are no pillows. We must roll up rugs or clothes to take their place. You are to have two 'comfortables'—one to cover the old mattress and one over you, because Christobel must not take cold."

"Wait," said Neil, who had come in to offer aid. "I'll turn that mattress. It is too heavy for you, Joyce; and perhaps the other side will be cleaner."

"I'll help," cried Keith. "Heave ho!"

He seized an end of the mattress and gave it a vigorous pull, but suddenly dropped it and started back, exclaiming—

"Hallo! What's that?"

"Rats!" screamed Winifred. "I saw two jump out! I think—I'll go to father."

"N-no—d-don't disturb him!" cried Ruth, as she jumped on the window seat. "Come up here beside me."

"They are chipmunks," said Neil, as a little creature darted past his feet. "Jones's man

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showed me one in the woods. They are out early this year."

"Then they have lived inside this mattress," added Keith. "Look, here's a nest, and it's full of little bits of paper! That's what happened to that pile of old magazines we found in the closet; they were all torn and gnawed. And here are nuts and nut-shells."

Neil looked with much interest, and remarked—

"It shows that chipmunks are not dormant in the winter; if they were, they would not need food."

"What shall we do?" asked Ruth anxiously. "We can't sleep in a mattress that is full of little animals."

"It won't be full; they have run away. We will clear out the nest and everything in it."

"But they would come back in the night. Oh, Neil, I don't want to make trouble, but I cannot do it! I would rather sit up all night by the fire."

"And in the dark they might get on the bed," added Winnie. She clasped her hands and rolled her eyes. "And, oh, they might think Chrissie's little nose was a nut and bite it off! It would be the worst misfortune that ever happened to this family, to have a daughter without any nose."

"Let's go and see if there is another nest in father's bed," advised Keith. "If there is not we can change mattresses; the chipmunks would

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not find this one in father's room. We can drag the old mattresses over the floors, and they won't be much dirtier than they are now."

"Poor little things!" mourned Winnie. "What a shame to drive them out of their nice bed! But we do need it so much for ourselves."

"It won't be safe to go to bed," declared Ruth. "I will stay awake and watch Christobel."

"Pshaw! what a fuss!" said Keith. "They are pretty, harmless things, and more afraid of you than you are of them. Tommy Jones carries one about in his pocket, tied to a string. He says it's very happy if he gives it lots of nuts. We will find some big, gummy bits of wood that will burn all night, and they won't come near you."

Ruth was silent. Joyce and the boys might arrange the beds as they pleased; she had resolved that when every one had retired she would rise and sit by the fire.

The mattress in the room that had been assigned to Mr. Gordon was unbroken and unoccupied by chipmunks. When the boys had made an exchange and the bed was ready, Neil carried Christobel from her place on the dining-room floor and laid her softly down.

"*She's* happy," he said, with a little catch in his voice. "She'll sleep as well there as in her nursery at home."

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When Winifred and the boys were at rest, and their father had gone to his room, Ruth and Joyce stood on the veranda and looked out over the bay. A silvery band of moonlight fell on the rippling water, and glinted from the spires of the little town on the opposite shore.

“Ruth, we may be happy here,” said Joyce pensively. “We cannot help remembering—and it hurts; but that bay is one of the most beautiful in the world, and people are kind.”

Ruth sighed heavily, and did not answer.

“Let us go in,” advised Joyce. “You are tired; you must rest.”

Long afterward, when Ruth, despite her fears, seemed to have fallen asleep, Joyce lay wakeful and wondering.

“Was she thinking of Basil? Oh, how I wish that he was with us! He would help us to know what we ought to do.”

CHAPTER IV

Chills and Thrills

JOYCE had fallen into an uneasy slumber, when she was awakened by a clutch on her arm.

"Joyce, oh, Joyce!" whispered Winnie hoarsely. "Something's in the room, moving about. I think it's a bear!"

Joyce sat up and listened. Something was certainly moving about the room, rustling the green twigs on the floor. Perhaps it was only one of the dislodged chipmunks.

"Joyce, those holes in the windows are wide enough to let a big animal through; and we are lying on the floor quite near it. If we get up and run it will catch us; and if we stay here—"

"Winnie, hush! There are steps on the veranda!"

As Joyce spoke, heavy steps sounded on the rickety boards without, and a heavy body brushed against the wall.

At that moment Ruth shrieked from the adjoining room—

"Joyce, oh, Joyce, something cold touched my face!"

Christobel woke at her sister's cry and yelled in sympathy.

"Joyce, please light a lamp—I mean that wood gummy torch thing," besought Winifred. "It's better to know the worstest than to wait for it to pounce on us in the dark."

"The only torch is in Ruth's room. I undressed there. Take my hand and come."

Winifred caught the protecting hand, and stepped with Joyce off the heap of cedar boughs that had been their bed. She quivered with terror lest the unseen creature should take hold of her feet, and as she passed the window she uttered a hoarse cry.

"Joyce, there's something white behind a tree outside! The kind Mr. Jennings said this place is haunted—which means ghosts. They come from the Indian washry. Joyce, perhaps that's what is in here."

"Oh, hush, Winnie! You know I have told you there is no truth in such stories."

"But look; you can see it!"

Joyce looked, and, in the moonlight, saw a white object that seemed to be trying to hide behind a spreading pine. She hurried into Ruth's room, but before she could light the torch she heard a pounding at the door.

"What's the row?" cried Neil. "Is anybody hurt?"

"It's dreadful creatures everywhere," replied Winnie. "Now they are rushing and scratching upstairs."

Neil, torch in hand, opened the door; and Keith, dressed but coatless, appeared beside him.

"We heard that racket over our heads," said Keith, "and were glad we decided to sleep downstairs."

"Let's wake father," suggested Neil. "He ought to be in it. Away off there at the back of the house he cannot hear anything."

"No, no; he needs rest," objected Ruth. "The creature that was in this room must have run away."

"Neil, you and Joyce and I will go upstairs to see what it is," said Keith. "Ruth and Winnie can stay here."

Christobel had ceased to cry, and was sitting up, wide-eyed and wondering.

"I'd rather be with Joycie," pleaded Winifred. "Because if a person is not afraid it makes it safer."

"I'm n-not afraid, W-Winnie," faltered Ruth. "St-stay with me. I w-will take c-care of you."

While her brothers went to their room for the guns that Basil Ingram had given them, Joyce

dressed hurriedly, and armed herself with one of the hoes that had been used to scrape the floors. When the boys returned, the three went abreast up the wide, creaking stairs, Neil holding the torch. At the landing they peered into the dim recesses of a large, square hall. A little creature darted past them, then another and another scurried across the hall.

"Just as I thought," said Neil. "It's the same old chipmunks. There must be an army of them. What a work we shall have clearing them out of the house!"

"They like empty houses better than tree-holes," said Keith. "Bill Jones told me that he had a bag of beech-nuts in his father's barn, and the chipmunks took all the kernels to their nests and left the shells in the bag. Let's go down now and find out what's outside. Father won't let me load my gun, but I can point it at the enemy and frighten him."

When Neil had made a hasty search of the upper rooms, and reported that there was nothing to fear, the three descended.

Joyce looked in at her sister's door.

"There are only pretty, harmless chipmunks overhead!" she cried cheerfully. "Now we are going out to make sure what is there."

"Leave the torch inside, Keith," directed Neil from the veranda. "The moon out here makes

it nearly as bright as day. Look, Joyce! What's that black beast behind the clump of trees?"

Joyce saw a dark creature moving.

"Don't shoot, Neil!" she begged. "You'll frighten Ruth. And if you miss——"

But as she spoke her brother fired, and a terrified animal rushed across the clearing.

Ruth, with Christobel clinging to her gown, and followed by Winifred, came out on the veranda.

"I could not leave you alone in danger," she faltered.

"I've brought the spade to throw at it," added Winnie.

Keith shouted with laughter.

"It's nothing but a cow—a big, peaceable old cow! I saw its horns."

"Awful animals have horns," declared Winnie. "Are you sure, Keith?"

"Yes, certain sure. Haven't I seen hundreds of cows!"

"Poor thing!" said Joyce. "It must have strayed a long way from some farm. Perhaps you have killed it, Neil."

"I think I only hit the tree; but I'll go and find out. There's no danger, Ruth."

"Keith and I will go too," said Joyce. "Do go back to bed, Ruth; the children will take cold."

Anxious for her charges, Ruth returned to her

room, and Joyce, with the excited boys, hurried toward the wood.

"I do hope I have not hurt it!" said Neil soberly. "But if I did hit her she can't be far away."

He gave a joyful shout.

"There she is, eating grass as if nothing had happened! Don't the animals sleep in this queer country!"

"Hush!" warned Joyce. "Don't frighten her. We'll steal up and see if she has any wound."

The cow had been grazing in a cleared spot surrounded by trees, not far from the entrance to the wood. When the three adventurers had satisfied themselves that she was unharmed, they set out to return, believing they were in the homeward direction, but presently found themselves in a tangle of pine and underbrush, into which hardly a ray of moonlight penetrated.

"We did not come this way," said Joyce. "We are going deeper into the forest."

"Let us push on, and perhaps we shall come out on a clearing," suggested Neil. "Then we shall know which way to turn."

Following their brother's lead, Joyce and Keith stumbled over fallen trees, and scratched their hands on prickly branches, until they came upon a narrow, winding path, where they got a glimpse of light.

"Listen!" exclaimed Joyce. "What is that strange splashing? It does not sound like waves. Is it possible it is any kind of boat, so late?"

"We are near the shore," said Neil. "If we can get out from the trees we can find our way home along the bank."

A few steps brought the adventurers to the bank at the moment when three canoes, each manned by three Indians, touched the shore below. Joyce had heard some blood-curdling tales of Indians from a young cousin with a lively imagination, who had spent some time in Saskatchewan. She observed that these men were clad in the garments of civilization, and that their aspect was mild.

"Don't run," she whispered. "Don't let them think we are afraid."

"Who's afraid?" inquired Keith, from trembling lips. "But perhaps they are savage Iroquois, and we must defend ourselves."

So saying, he raised his gun as if he were about to fire. Two of the Indians sprang up the bank; one seized Keith, while the other wrenched the gun from his hand.

"What!" they exclaimed. "You would shoot us! How you dare?"

"Don't hurt him!" pleaded Joyce. "See, the gun is not loaded. He is a very little boy, and he was frightened."

The man who held the gun satisfied himself that she spoke the truth. He gave a guttural laugh.

"Frightened! Why? We never hurt you. Your mother, she know you out so late?"

"We have no mother," faltered Keith, who was still in the grasp of his captor. "We came out to shoot bears."

The Indian laughed again.

"You mighty green! There's no bears here. Where do you come from?"

Joyce, whose fears had vanished, gave a hurried account of the arrival at Wilderfell and the adventures of the night. The other Indians had come up the bank, and listened with much interest.

"You live in Cap'n Ferris Folly!" exclaimed one. "If you go back in the woods you be lost again. We'll take you in canoe, and leave you in front of the house. But sit still in the canoe, or you'll be drowned in deep water."

Joyce was very tired, and the men appeared friendly.

"Thank you," she said, controlling the tremor in her voice. "You are very kind, and we shall be glad if you will take us to Wilderfell."

When the Indians proposed that each canoe should take a passenger to avoid overloading, Neil objected; he would not be separated from his sister. The men to whose canoe Joyce had been assigned were angered by his suspicions.

"You be ashamed when you know better," said one. "I have a little girl at my home, and I take good care of your sister. I am a Christian man; I speak in Salvation Army."

"Neil, do as these—gentlemen wish," commanded Joyce. "I know they will take me safely home."

The spokesman patted her arm.

"You're no 'fraid cat. You got grit—fine girl!"

On the homeward way the Indians seemed absorbed in paddling, and few words were spoken till the canoes drew near the Wilderfell clearing. Then Keith shouted—

"See, the whole family is on the bank, waiting for us!"

"We were lost!" cried Joyce; "but these kind gentlemen found us and brought us home."

The Indians drew the canoes to land, and the adventurers gave a hurried account of their wanderings.

Mr. Gordon, who had been awakened by the cries of Winifred, turned to the rescuers.

"I am under great obligation to you for your care of my children. I trust you will permit me to remunerate you."

He drew some silver from his pocket, which the strangers accepted with nods and chucklings.

"We live many miles away," said one, "but

Chills and Thrills

we'll come back some day and bring mats and baskets. Good-bye! Much thanks!"

When the rescuers had embarked, Winifred turned to Joyce.

"It was not a ghost, Joycie, that white thing. It was only a tattered tablecloth hanging to a tree. We think some one came here for a picnic and left it. And we have found some other things about the house that we will tell you to-morrow."

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CHAPTER V

Young Housekeepers and their Difficulties

J OYCE slept soundly after the adventures of the night, and the sun was streaming through the uncurtained windows when she awoke. She looked at her watch—one of the few treasures that she had kept—and when she saw that it was past eight o'clock she dressed quickly.

"How I wish I did not feel so stiff and tired!" she mused. "I'd like to go back to bed; but I must experiment on breakfast, and then wake this sleepy family."

In the hurried buying at Jones's shop, jugs and basins had been forgotten; so Joyce took soap and towel from her handbag and went to the pump in the yard to wash. It seemed a poor substitute for the Woldhurst morning bath, but she said cheerily—

"We need not go bathless long, for we must have tubs for our laundry; and soon it will be warm enough to bathe in that bright, beautiful bay."

The only furniture in the kitchen was a heavy table, fastened into the wall. The kitchen floor was still covered with grime, and the broken window-panes were bespattered ; but the trees in the forest were waving in the morning breeze, and birds were singing merrily.

When Joyce knocked at the door of her brothers' room, Neil answered that he was dressed.

"Joyce," he said, "I am going to milk that old cow. Christobel must have milk, and Dutton showed me how to do it at Woldhurst. It can't be wrong to take it, because the cow will be obliged to me, and so will the owners when we find them and tell."

Joyce was scrambling eggs, when Ruth came to the door, full of self-reproaches.

"I am so very sorry I did not wake earlier, Joyce ; and Christobel would not let me hurry. She screamed when I tried to wash her at the pump, and I was afraid she would disturb father."

Mr. Gordon was poring over a book on the veranda when Winifred announced breakfast. The boys had returned with a brimming pailful of milk, and the young people ate as heartily and chatted as merrily as if they were in their old luxurious home ; but their father was a picture of gloom, and had no appetite.

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Brown had sent, arrived before the family had finished breakfast, and began to clean the kitchen.

"We must let her work in her own way," said Ruth. "She knows more about it than we do, and we shall have time to look over the house."

"It would be a fine place if we could repair it thoroughly," remarked Joyce, as she stood in the hall upstairs; "but we must be thankful if we can put a few rooms in order."

"Give Neil and me the whole upper story," begged Keith. "There are only six rooms and the big hall. We can easily use them for Neil's experiments; and I'm going to be a taxi—I forget the rest of the word; I mean a stuffer of birds and animals."

"If we can afford to buy enough furniture," said Joyce, "we may fit up a room for each of you here. As Neil is skilful with tools, perhaps you can make tables and washstands for yourselves."

"Keith, come here!" shouted Winifred. "I think I have found a secret chamber."

Keith thumped the wall to try if there was a hollow behind it.

"It's solid," he announced. "But we may find secret staircases and chambers that lead to tunnels underground to escape from the Iroquois. There are ruins of an old fort near here, and Mr. Jones dug into an Indian mound and got pots and pans

and all sorts of things that had been buried with the skeletons."

On the previous day, while unloading the goods from the wagon, Joe and Billy Jones had entertained the boys with blood-curdling tales of encounters between the Hurons and Iroquois, and had told them that Wilderfell stood on historic ground of the famous Huron country, leaving Keith with the impression that fierce Iroquois were still roaming the forests, athirst for vengeance.

"Let's dig outside and in the cellar and everywhere," advised Keith. "Perhaps the Jesuit missionaries and the French traders buried treasure when they escaped from the savages. Bill Jones says there are deep vaults under the cellar. He tried to go down one day with some boys, but skedaddled back again, it seemed so dark and shivery."

"Skedaddled!" exclaimed Ruth. "Please do not use such expressions, Keith."

"But it is a useful word, Ruth; and we must learn American if we have to live here."

"Even if we are very poor we can be inkeresting," remarked Winifred; "and we may find great riches in the bowls of the earth."

"A good idea!" said Neil aside. "Set those kids seeking for treasure, and they'll dig over the whole garden; but keep them out of the cellar."

The younger members were arranging plans for

treasure-finding, when the elder girls went downstairs to apportion the rooms. They agreed that Ruth and Christobel should keep the large front room in which they had slept, and that Joyce and Winifred should continue to occupy the adjoining one. Two rooms in the west wing were set apart for Mr. Gordon.

"Mrs. C'Shea thinks we should take our meals in the kitchen to save trouble," said Ruth; "but we must not grow into careless ways. If we don't make an effort to keep something of the old standard of manners, Keith and Winifred will degenerate into little savages."

"You are right," agreed Joyce. "If we use the square front room across the hall as a sitting-room, or 'living-room,' as the farmer called it, we can have the one behind it for the dining-room. It will be convenient, and near the kitchen."

Before noon farmer Brown and his wife arrived, driving in an easy carriage instead of the heavy wagon of the previous day.

"You poor young girls have been on my mind," explained Mrs. Brown, "and I have come to see if I can help. We are going to Braybrook, and took this place in on our way. We will get some one to fetch your trunks for you, if you say so; and we could buy you anything you need in Braybrook."

"Oh, thank you so much!" said Ruth fer-

vently. "We shall be so glad to have our trunks. We need many things. Perhaps you could tell us where to go for them in Braybrook, and how much it would cost."

Mrs. Brown willingly accepted Ruth's invitation to inspect the house, and exclaimed sympathetically—

"Dear, dear! It is hard lines for the likes of you to come to this! I'm afraid there's nothing in this house that can be of use to you except them two bedsteads, that can be cleaned and painted. The mattresses isn't fit for making over. You'll need furniture for every room, and carpets and curtains too."

"We must do without carpets and curtains," said Ruth. "We cannot afford to buy them."

Mrs. Brown shook her head.

"That will mean such a lot of scrubbing for you, that's never been used to work. You might have the floors painted, so they could be just washed over; and you can cover your dining-table with oilcloth to save laundering."

"Dine without a tablecloth!" gasped Ruth. "Oh, father could not bear it!"

"He could if he'd make up his mind to it. There's English folks in the next township that was great swells at home. He's some lord's younger son, and she was a baronet's daughter. Since they've got hard up, and can't afford table-

napkins and such fixings, they do without quite cheerful like. She's a right brave one—goes singing about her work without ever a whimper."

Ruth's lip quivered.

"I try to be brave. My sister is brave, but—she is so strong!"

The farmer's wife regarded Ruth critically.

"You are built rather frail like; but so is Mrs. Erringford, and no one ever hears a word about her health. I think maybe your folks and nurses and doctors has always been telling you that you're not able to do things, and so you've come to believe it and to fear it. Try to believe you are strong and hearty, and it will help a powerful lot."

Ruth's eyes filled with tears. She was not accustomed to such plain speaking, and Mrs. Brown seemed to reproach her with thinking of her health instead of working for others. Yet the farmer's wife spoke truth. Ruth was by nature most unselfish, loving-hearted, and conscientious; but, from her babyhood, she had been surrounded by anxious relatives and attendants, who had diligently impressed her with the belief that she was a very frail creature, who would be crushed by the bearing of burdens. She had very expressive, pathetic eyes, which always seemed to be lifted in an appeal for sympathy.

"Don't try to save on kitchen furnishings,"

continued Mrs. Brown. "Get a good stove, and plenty of pots and pans. It pays in the end. I suppose you'll buy a barrel of flour at a time? It's cheaper to make your own bread; besides, you are too far from bakers."

"I shall make bread," said Joyce; "and you are right about kitchen utensils. We must do without wardrobes and bureaus. There are large closets with shelves and drawers off every room, and we can make our own dressing-tables with the wooden boxes that some of our things are packed in. I saw such tables in a farm-house in England. They were covered with pink or blue lining under transparent muslin, and looked very well."

"If you can find time to make them. But you'll have your hands full to overflowing unless you hire a girl."

"We shall do our own work," said Joyce decidedly; "and we *must* find time."

"Very cheap wooden chairs will do for our rooms and the dining-room," remarked Ruth. "But father must have two nice easy-chairs for his study—one to rest in while he is thinking and a leather-seated one for his desk. His large writing-desk and two of his bookcases are the only furniture that we brought. They are coming with the china and linen."

"Humph!" ejaculated Mrs. Brown; and Ruth,

so keenly sensitive to any criticism of her beloved father, added hastily—

“ Those things are for dear father's work ; he needs them as Mr. Brown needs his farm implements. When he has finished what he is writing, he will buy us everything that is necessary.”

“ It's to be hoped so,” replied the visitor, with undisguised doubt in her tone. “ But as you want to economize now, I should say that a long, pine, painted table, with the wooden chairs, and a low-sized cupboard, that you could set things on instead of a sideboard, would do for the dining-room. You'll want plain blinds for all the windows. It's bad to have the sun on your eyes before you wake in the mornings, though if you get up as early as we do you'll be at work before sunrise. You could make cheap curtains for your parlour of cheese-cloth, with red borders stitched on. But first you'll have to get the windows mended, and the leaky places in the roof patched up, and walls and ceilings cleaned and papered, or painted.”

“ How much would it all cost ? ” asked Ruth anxiously.

Mrs. Brown made a rapid calculation on her fingers, and named an approximate amount.

Ruth clasped her hands in despair.

“ We cannot possibly afford it ! We must try to wash the walls, and paint the floors ourselves.”

“ You've never been used to it, and you'd make

sorry work of it. But if your father's willing, we'll have a 'bee.'"

"A 'bee'?" said Ruth inquiringly.

"Yes; that's what we call it here when every one turns in to help. Paper and paint and glass is cheap enough, and the neighbours is willing and handy. A lot of us will paint and paper and whitewash all the rooms you need, though it could not be done on the same day."

"But we could not think of troubling our neighbours to help us in that way," objected Ruth.

"It would not be a trouble to the young people. They'd think it a good lark. Talk it over with your father after we have gone, and if he's agreed, drop a letter for me in the Ferndale post-office. Then some of us will go with you to Braybrook to choose your things, and we'll start in next week."

CHAPTER VI

Mr. Gordon Studies his Family

WHEN Ruth told her father of Mrs. Brown's proposed "bee," he raised his hands in protest.

"My dear Ruth, how could you imagine for a moment that I would permit such an arrangement? We must not be under obligations to the people of the neighbourhood. The children have already become most unruly, and if they make acquaintances among the farmers, they will be quite unmanageable. I accepted Captain Ferris's offer of this secluded spot especially to avoid trouble of that kind. Write to Mrs. Brown, thank her for her offer, and decline it courteously."

When Ruth had written the letter, she laid it before Joyce for criticism. She was troubled lest Mrs. Brown's feelings should be hurt.

"It is a nice letter," said Joyce, "and I think she will understand. A crowd of people here for a 'bee' would make father frantic. However, I think he will not object to her going with us to Braybrook to advise us about buying. It is

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wonderfully kind on her part, for I hear she has a large family and hard work in her farmhouse."

"If the Browns will drive us to Braybrook, we can ask Mrs. O'Shea to take care of the children, so as to leave father undisturbed," said Ruth.

"We should take Neil with us to choose paper and paint. Neil and I can go to Braybrook plasterers and paper-hangers, and ask them for some instructions; then we will do the work."

Ruth looked doubtful.

"I am afraid father would not be willing, but I will ask him."

The children had rent the air with shouts, and Douglas Gordon had wandered into the wood to seek quiet. Ruth found him in a forest cottage that had been a favourite retreat of Captain Ferris. He was seated in the porch, looking dreamily out on the bay. When Ruth told him of Joyce's suggestion, he answered irritably—

"There will be discomfort and confusion enough till the repairs are made. I cannot allow Joyce and Neil to increase it by amateur experiments. Joyce will have sufficient work in doing her share of the housekeeping. I shall have means to pay for the repairing. When I have finished the revision of my manuscripts, I will go to Toronto and arrange with publishers. This cottage also

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must be thoroughly renovated and furnished. I can use all four rooms."

Late in the afternoon Mr. Gordon called Joyce aside.

"I have observed that Ruth is looking very pale and tired," he remarked.

"Yes, father, she is. It has been hard for her to come to this dilapidated place, but it will be better soon."

"Could you not give her more assistance? You are very strong, and she is so fragile."

Joyce's eyes flashed.

"Do you think, father, that I have not helped Ruth?"

"I know that you have done some cooking and housework, but she has the entire charge of Christobel. I discovered her very late last night mending clothes that Keith and Winifred had torn in climbing trees. I understood from Keith this morning that you also had climbed trees. A girl of your age should not set such an example to her younger sister. It is hoydenish and unladylike. And if you are to have a good influence on the children, you must control your temper. A lady should be very gentle in speech and manner. I heard you speaking sharply to Keith this morning."

Joyce's face quivered. She had worked hard, her arms were aching from their unaccustomed burden, and her father judged her unjustly. She

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was silent for a few moments. Then she said, very quietly—

“Indeed, I have helped Ruth as much as possible. As she is not strong enough for heavy work, Neil and I do the lifting and carrying ; and it is easier for her to take care of Christobel. Ruth is a good needlewoman, and I am not. When I try to sew I only cobble, but I shall learn. I have been busy, in one way or another, nearly every moment.” She paused, and presently continued : “About climbing the tree, it was necessary. A large branch near the top was partly broken and hanging down. It might have fallen on the children, so I went up to cut it off. But I do enjoy climbing, and I cannot see why it should make me unwomanly. It may be very useful here in the wilds.”

Joyce's love for Ruth was too deep to give place to any thought of jealousy. She delighted in her sister's beauty, her musical talent, her grace and charm ; she was happy when any one admired Ruth, and she felt that her delicate sister needed a large share of her father's protecting tenderness ; she was hurt only because, when she had tried so hard to do her best, her father had not understood.

As she walked slowly away, Douglas Gordon observed how tall and straight she was ; the fine poise of the head, the whole carriage and physique,

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seemed to betoken strength of body and purpose. Winifred came bounding toward him, uttering a yell that she described as an Indian war-whoop; and after reproving her for boisterous conduct, he inquired gravely—

“Are you fond of your sister Joyce? I know that you love Ruth dearly.”

“Fond of Joyce!” exclaimed Winifred. “Why, father Gordon, what a very funny man you are! All of us like each other very much indeed; but each of us likes Joyce better than any of the rest of us—except you and Christobel, who both seem fonder of Ruth. Baby is too young to be a chooser, and I think she is rather a stupid little child. Of course we do love Ruth, and Mrs. O’Shea says she is as pretty as a picture.”

The father smiled. He was pleased that Mrs. O’Shea had observed Ruth’s beauty. His fair-haired, blue-eyed daughter resembled his beloved only sister, who had died many years ago; Winifred was her mother in miniature; but Joyce bore no likeness to any of his own or his wife’s relations whom he had seen in the flesh. In her early years members of the family had pointed out Joyce’s resemblance to the portrait of an ancestor of whose escapades her descendants spoke without reserve. Though Joyce’s mother declared that the resemblance existed only in imagination,

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she had removed the portrait from the wall. One day Joyce had found it in a closet, and had run to a mirror and gazed at her own face. Returning to the picture, she had touched it with evident delight, and exclaimed, "Dat's all same Joycie growed up big lady!"

Her father had always associated Joyce with the traditions of that undesirable ancestor, and had listened with gloomy forebodings to remarks on his daughter's fearless riding, her agile climbing, and general liveliness. He recalled now how her dark eyes had flashed as she stood before him; and her face, framed in its heavy, black hair, reminded him strikingly of the picture of Lady Gwendolen. As he remained lost in thought, Winifred inquired with interest—

"Why don't you think we love Joycie, father? Is it because she sometimes gets very angry? I'm sorry to say we generally deserve it. This morning she tried to teach us. Keith and I did not want lessons, so we had each eaten a big onion that we thought would shoo her away. Besides, Keith had forgotten about a dead bird that he had put on a shelf. He was going to stuff it and make it look alive, like those in the museum, and it had grown very unpleasant. At first Joyce caught hold of his arm, as if she wanted to shake him; then she sat down in a chair, and laughed and laughed. He promised he would not do it

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again, and we are going to have a lesson to-morrow."

"I am glad to hear it. And remember that little boys and girls must be polite and obedient to elder sisters."

Winifred promised good behaviour and skipped away. When Neil, who had been looking for specimens, came through the wood, his father called him.

"Neil," he said abruptly, "I often see you and your sister Joyce together. Is she an interesting companion—as much so as Ruth?"

Neil looked perplexed.

"Really, father, I never thought of Ruth as a companion. She is a dear, of course; but she is too quiet to be a companion for boys. Joyce is such an all-round good fellow."

"An all-round good fellow! But—I wish my daughters to be womanly and gentle."

"She's womanly enough. She likes children, and she is going to learn to sew. She knows so much of so many things; it's ever such a pity that she will have no time for her books."

"What sort of books?"

"All sorts. Joyce is awfully scientific and clever! She used to help me with my collections—insects and stones."

Mr. Gordon looked relieved. The disposition of the Lady Gwendolen had not been studious.

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Tradition had never hinted at a love for science, or a desire to make collections of insects and stones. Yet in her early childhood Joyce had beaten her heels on the floor and yelled with rage, and Lady Gwendolen had done likewise.

"Joyce has a taste for carpentering," continued Neil. "She helped us to make our rabbit-hutches at Woldhurst, and Dutton said she was wonderfully handy with tools. She used to watch the men building and repairing about the place, and then she had a try at it herself. I think she and I can do the papering and painting here. Ruth says there is not money enough to pay workmen, so our doing it would save expenses."

"She has strange tastes for a girl," said the father reflectively. "Her governesses reported that she could draw very well, but she did not care for music."

"Oh, she does love music. When Ruth played or sang, Joyce said it made her thoughts fly, made her see beautiful visions. But she knew that she had not Ruth's talent, so she studied other things."

Mr. Gordon sighed.

"It is hard that Ruth should be a household drudge, and that she has no piano. If I dispose of my manuscripts as profitably as I expect, I shall be able to buy her one in Toronto."

"I hope so!" said Neil heartily. "But for now, father, won't you give Joyce and me leave

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to paint, paper, plaster, and all the rest of it? Mrs. Brown says materials are cheap, and she will take us to Braybrook to buy them, and to see some men at work."

Mr. Gordon deliberated, and then gave consent.

"But remember," he added, "I must be free from disturbance while I am writing; and you must not upset everything, and increase the present confusion."

CHAPTER VII

An Adventure

THE young Gordons were charmed with Braybrook. The business streets of the little town ran along the water, at the foot of a range of hills, and the dwellings, for the most part, were built on the hillsides. Under farmer Brown's direction, Joyce and Neil visited paperhangers, painters, and glaziers, received instructions, and purchased supplies.

During the progress of repairs, Mr. Gordon went in and out of the rooms, giving advice and suggestions, and hindering the workers, who were relieved by the arrival of his boxes of books, and his immediate interest in arranging them on their shelves in Forest Cottage.

When the work was finished, and pronounced satisfactory, the young renovators danced a jig of victory. The room for Ruth and Christobel had been papered in blue for the blue-eyed, while the walls for Joyce and Winifred bore a pink bud with a green leaf. It is true that the paper was creased here and there, and that Neil looked

ruefully at some stains in the whitewashed ceilings ; but Ruth declared that it was wonderful and far beyond her highest hopes. The ancestral portraits in the dining-room and parlour contrasted oddly with the cheap wooden chairs and tables, and the pine cupboard, which did duty as a sideboard, held some rare old silver and china.

Mr. Gordon decided that his supervision was no longer necessary, and that he might safely go to Toronto to sell a completed manuscript. No tramps had been seen, and the Browns had given assurance that if Indians should pass that way they would do no harm. Mrs. O'Shea promised to come to Wilderfell every night to take care of the family, and the father departed with an easy mind.

The forest trees were exquisite in their spring greenery, and the weather was warm and fine. Keith and Winifred wandered in the wood, gathering flowers or playing hide-and-seek. But one day these delights palled, and the restless pair sought new interests.

"We need a boat," said Winifred. "It is very tiresome to live so far from everybody. When you begin to go to school at Ferndale, I want to go with you."

"Let's hunt for treasure," suggested Keith. "No one told us not to dig in the cellar, so we'll

slip down very softly and bring back a pot of gold."

Joyce was busy with the family washing and Ruth with her mending, and neither heeded the passing hours till Christobel began to clamour for dinner, which was always the midday meal.

Ruth had promised Joyce that she would set the table, and hastened to the kitchen to ask her sister if the boys would be satisfied with dry bread and corned beef.

"I think they need some sweet. Give them bread and molasses instead of pudding," suggested Joyce. "I bought molasses and Indian meal yesterday in Ferndale. Mrs. O'Shea says porridge of Indian meal—she calls it 'mush'—with molasses is cheap and satisfying. We must cut down expenses, Ruth."

"Oh, yes," sighed Ruth. "It would be dreadful to be in debt, and our money has nearly gone. We might do without meat till father comes back. Mrs. Brown says beans are very nourishing and very inexpensive—I mean dried beans, that you soak and boil and then bake. She gives her children dried apples too, soaked and stewed and sweetened with molasses. I hope Keith and Winnie won't grumble."

"They must not be allowed to grumble. Where are they? I have been so busy I forgot them."

"They promised they would not go beyond the borders of the wood. I'll blow the horn for them."

Half an hour later Ruth, white-faced and distraught, returned to her sister, who was hanging out the clothes she had washed.

"Joyce," gasped Ruth, "I can't find them! Neil had been reading in his room, and he helped me. The raft is in its place, moored to a tree, and they promised that they would not dabble in the water."

"I'll take the big bell and go through the wood to the left," said Joyce. "You and Chrissie might search on the right and shout as you go. Perhaps they are hiding for fun."

But bell-ringing, shouting, and searching brought no answer from the wanderers. Neil said he would walk toward Ferndale, that Joyce might go to Farmer Brown's, and Ruth and Christobel should watch the house. If the children were not at the farm the Browns would help in the search.

But Christobel stamped her foot, and declared that she would go to see Mrs. Brown, and Ruth pleaded that she could not stay at home helpless; so all three searchers set forth, leaving the house deserted.

Some time later two young men who were rowing down the bay rested on their oars to

watch a small girl racing to the bank. She was waving her hands frantically and shouting.

"The little one seems to be frightened, Weldron," said one of the oarsmen. "Let's row in and see if there is anything wrong."

As they drew nearer they distinguished the words—

"Oh, do hurry—come! My little brother is buried, and I can't dig him up."

"Buried, child? Where?" asked Weldron.

"Deep down in a vault. He can't breathe."

"Poor kiddie!" exclaimed Weldron. "Is it possible the boy is dead, Glyn, and that she imagines we can bring him back?"

"Quicker! quicker!" pleaded the child. "All the earth is on top of him! We were digging, and it fell!"

"Great Scott!" cried Weldron. "Pull for your life, Ivor!"

Billy Jones met Neil on the road to Ferndale, and assured him that the children were not in the village; and farmer Brown, on his way to Braybrook, told Ruth and Joyce that the wanderers had not been near his farm. Therefore the anxious searchers hurried back to Wilderfell.

When they stood on the veranda Neil held up his hand.

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"Listen! There are people in there! I hear voices!"

As he opened the door a grimy pair rushed at him.

"Joyce! Neil!" cried Winifred. "Keith was nearly smothered to death! He's all over sand into the roots of his hair!"

"We were digging for treasure," explained Keith. It was in a deep vault under the cellar—a big hole, as if some one had digged there before; and when we began to dig it fell on top of me."

Ruth was very white; her teeth chattered, and she leaned against the wall. Joyce took her arm.

"Come and sit down, Ruth. Neil, bring some water."

"I'm quite well," protested Ruth. "I only felt—queer for a minute."

"Yes, you are better, Ruth," agreed Winifred. "There is a pinky streak coming in your face, so it is time to introduce the nice gentlemen—the brave heroes. They risked their lives, and dag and dag in mud till they got Keith out."

"There's no such word as 'dag,'" interrupted Keith.

"It doesn't matter about words now, Keith Gordon. Introducings are more consequential. Come in here, Mr. Ivory Glyn and Mr. Eric Weldron. My sisters will excuse you for being so sandy, and Joyce will brush it out of your hair.

She does mine after I have rolled down the bank. She's more than five-feet-six, but she might have to stand on a chair to reach the top of your heads."

"Dear children," said Ruth, "where did you leave the gentlemen? They will think you are very rude."

"We pushed them into the dining-room, and told them to wait till we called them. Keith, come with me and get them."

"No, remain here," commanded Joyce. "Neil, do go and apologize to them. I am sorry we cannot invite them to stay to dinner, but we have nothing to offer them."

When Neil returned with the young men, who had overheard everything through the open door of the dining-room, Ivor Glyn explained that he and his friend lived in a small cottage three miles from Wilderfell, and that they had been about to cross to Braybrook when they heard the child's cries.

"I am very glad that you live not so very far away," said Winifred. "I have very kind feelings for you, Mr. Ivory Glyn. Something in your face makes me think of Basil."

"Oh, thank you," said Glyn. "And who is Basil?"

"An old, old friend of ours in England. He has a nice white, straight nose like yours. We

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are all very fond of Basil—specially Ruth. He—”

Joyce observed the colour rising in Ruth's face, and turned the conversation by asking for an account of the rescue in the sub-cellar.

Eric Weldron said that a part of the wall had fallen in on a deep excavation that had possibly been intended as a tunnel.

“We'll explore it,” declared Keith. “I think the Hurons or the missionaries made it to hide in from the Iroquois. We'll try again to-morrow.”

“Don't attempt anything of the kind,” said young Glyn. “You would be smothered by the falling earth. Miss Gordon, you should fasten the trap-door that leads to the sub-cellar. Weldron and I will do it for you if you like.”

“Humph!” ejaculated Keith indignantly. “We are not boys and girls that have to be locked out or locked in. If we're told not to go, we won't go; we don't need fastenings.”

“Good for you!” said Glyn. “Shake hands on it, and excuse me.”

Keith shook the offered hand, and Eric Weldron remarked—

“Miss Gordon, that cellar is very damp and unsanitary after years of neglect. It should be thoroughly drained and cleaned.”

“Yes, I noticed it was damp and musty,” said

Ruth. "My father said he would attend to it after his return."

"Won't you stay to dinner?" asked Keith. "We would all be very glad."

Ruth repeated the invitation as cordially as she could, considering the emptiness of the larder; but the young men pleaded a previous engagement and went on their way.

When Ruth had an opportunity for speech aside with Joyce, she remarked—

"I cannot help wondering about those men. They are evidently English gentlemen, but they were so shabbily dressed. Mr. Weldron's boots were broken at the toes, and Mr. Glyn had a rent in his coat."

An hour later Mrs. Brown and her daughters, Lizzie and Mira, arrived at Wilderfell.

"We just had to come," said Mrs. Brown. "Pa got home from Braybrook soon as he could, and told us about the children being lost. But I see they are outdoors, playing as lively as ever. Wherever had they been?"

Joyce told of the accident and the rescue, and Lizzie Brown exclaimed—

"Land sakes! It's good to hear that them two useless 'remittance men' has done some good for once in their lives."

"What are 'remittance men'?" inquired Joyce with interest.

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"Oh, all over Canada and the United States, idle young Englishmen, like that pair—doing nothing, and just lounging round and waiting for the next remittance from home—get that name. They give themselves great airs, as if they were superior to our boys; but they are looked down on by all honest, hard-working fellows."

"Poor lads! I'm often sorry for them," spoke Mrs. Brown of the motherly heart. "It's mostly the fault of the folks at home. One of these is the Honourable Eric Weldron; his father is the Earl of something or other, and this one's the youngest son. He was spoiled, no doubt, till he grew up; and he was never taught any useful, practical way of earning a living. And that's the way with scores of others. Then, because they've got extravagant ways and grown a bit wild, they are shipped off by their folks to the Colonies, expecting the colony—be it Canada, South Africa, or whichever one—to undo and make over all the mistakes of their bringing up. It makes my blood boil!"

"Some do turn out well after all," remarked Mira. "But that pair is too lazy. They'll fish and shoot, but they won't work. Our Bob says their shanty is the worst-looking place—everything in a heap on the floor, and never a bit of cleaning done."

Mrs. Brown looked serious.

"I do feel kindly for them, Miss Gordon; but if I was you I wouldn't have them coming here. They have got in with a bad lot in Braybrook, and you, young girls without any mother, has to be very careful what company you keep; besides, they wouldn't be a good example for Neil."

Douglas Gordon had been annoyed by the familiar manner in which his neighbours addressed his elder son, but Neil had only laughed.

"I'm not the heir of Woldhurst, father. I've got to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, as their boys do; and I must learn to be as one of them."

Ruth, too, looked serious when she replied to the well-meant warning.

"You are right, Mrs. Brown; we must be careful about Neil's companions, though he is a very good boy indeed. And, of course, situated as we are, my sister and I cannot receive visitors here. Perhaps father will go to see the two men and thank them, for they did save Keith's life."

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CHAPTER VIII

New Friends

THE morning after their rescue Keith and Winifred wandered disconsolately by the shore.

"I am beginning to feel rather lonely in this place," mourned Winnie, "and I wish we had some nice friends. People do need other friends, even if they love their own families. I should like to go very often to see the kind Browns; but I heard father tell Ruth that their boys and girls have free-and-easy manners, and do not speak good English, and we must not 'sociate very much. If people are very, very good, I don't mind about their English; and our dear aunt Jane said that yours and mine was atrocious."

"Ruth and Joyce need some other friends," said Keith thoughtfully. "Mrs. Brown was talking about a very nice Mrs. Blackwood who has two twins in Braybrook. If we write her a letter, do you think she would call?"

Winifred's eyes brightened.

"Oh, Keith, let's try! We'll do it now. We'll

go upstairs to your work-room. It's so nice and large and empty; there is room for plenty of thoughts."

For a long time the ingenious pair, uninterrupted, and with "plenty of room for thoughts," scribbled diligently, till Winifred looked up to remark—

"Keith, whatever we have written must do; we have torn up a lot of paper, and there is very little more in the house. Please read yours; I don't like mine."

Keith obeyed, and Winifred listened critically.

"It is third personal, Winnie. Invitations ought to be like that. 'Miss Ruth Gordon and Miss Joyce Gordon would like the pleasure of Mrs. Blackwood and her two twins company for calling any day when she is convenient except on Mondays at Wilderfell Ferrises Foly.'"

"It sounds very good and grown-up, Keith," said Winifred; "but if we send it that way, seeming to come from Ruth and Joyce, it would not be speaking the truth. Let me write a post-scrip on it."

"Be sure you write it well, then; and don't blot it and spoil it. And hurry, too, so we may catch Jones's cart going back to Ferndale. This is the day he goes to the farms with groceries."

Winifred applied herself to her task, and presently read aloud the result—

"Our sisters do not know we are writing this we are sorry because they are lonely and have lost our money and like some society which there isn't any here. Good-by yours affectionately, Keith and Winifred Gordon."

"The spelling is rather bad and you have left out the capitals and punctuation," objected Keith; "but it must do; there is no more time."

"My spelling is as good as yours," began Winifred. But Keith put a stop to argument by folding the letter and enclosing it in an envelope which he had directed to—

"MRS. BLACKWOOD,
"THE LADY WITH TWO TWINS,
"BRAYBROOK, ONTARIO, CANADA."

In the week following the adventure of the children, Ruth, who was alone in the house, saw her father walking slowly across the clearing. His shoulders drooped, his gait was halting; and his daughter's sympathetic heart told her that his journey had ended in failure. She tried to cheer him by her affectionate greeting and by assuring him that everything had gone well in his absence.

"There is comfort in that," he answered wearily; "for I must soon leave you again, to go much farther and for a longer time. The Toronto publishers have declined my book, but have advised me to try in Boston and New York.

It is true I might send it by mail; but I think a personal application is preferable. Would you be nervous if I should leave you the care of the house and children for several weeks?"

"No, father dear. The children have gone with Joyce for a ramble in the wood. We do not wish them to wander far by themselves."

"I am glad they are not here. I have been harassed and disappointed, and I have not the necessary energy to answer their questions."

"Ah, yes; you are very tired. Rest in this chair while I make you a cup of tea. There is fire in the kitchen stove, and the kettle will boil in a moment."

She hastened to the kitchen and presently returned with the tea and a plate of dainty biscuits that Mrs. Brown had sent with her compliments. While her father ate, Ruth told him of the peril of the children and their rescue by the strangers.

"But, Ruth, my dear," he said uneasily, "I cannot allow strange young men to come here in my absence. It is not customary."

"Yes, father; but this was an emergency. Probably they will never call again. They have gone to camp near Mapleton, many miles from here."

At that moment Ruth heard the voices of the returning children, and hastened to warn them

that they must not say a word to poor, tired father about his book, or anything else that might disturb him ; but the two, unheeding, raced to the dining-room, and shouted together the story of the wonderful tunnel leading from the sub-cellar.

"And, father," cried Winifred, "Bobby Brown says there is a very strange mound, made hundreds of years ago, not very far from Wilderfell. It has something to do with snakes."

"Tommy Parker says the schoolmaster thinks perhaps it was built by people that worshipped them—serpentine—that's what he called it. He's a farmer's boy near the Browns, and his second cousin is a civil engineer, so he ought to know. He is going to trade me three bantam hens and a rooster for chipmunks. I've found a way of catching them without hurting. Bob Brown gave me some and two broods hatched last week. We'll keep this family in eggs all summer."

"My dear Keith," said his father seriously ; "your remarks are so unconnected. You should concentrate your mind on one subject."

"Hallo !" cried Neil. "Look out of the window. There is a boat headed for this place. There are two ladies in it and a man ; no, I think it's a boy about my age."

"Oh !" exclaimed Joyce. "Is it possible that people are coming here to call? My hair is tumbled from running, and Winifred's frock is

a disgrace. Ruth, you are always presentable. If they do come, you can receive them, while I rub and scrub the others into respectability."

"Surely no one would call," said Mr. Gordon anxiously. "We brought no letters of introduction; it would seem like an intrusion on our privacy. But, in any case, the children must not be allowed to come into the drawing-room. In my time, children were very properly kept in the nursery."

"But there isn't one," said Winnie, "and I'm glad."

"Keith," advised Joyce; "don't forget to put on a collar; and be sure your hands, and especially your nails, are clean."

"Don't trouble about me, Joycie," said Winifred. "I'll stand flat against the wall so they can't see the hole in my stocking, or the place where I ripped the gathers out of my frock. I must keep it on, for the hem of the other is full of sand. Keith says it is heavy enough for ballast."

Keith drew Winifred aside.

"Oh, I say, what shall we do if it is Mrs. Blackwood, and she tells father right out that we wrote that letter? We must tell afterwards; but it would be very unpleasant just at this moment."

"Keith, you must run to the bank and meet her. I can't get away from Joyce. Tell her that it would—would precipitate us into difficulties."

Keith nodded and slipped out through the open door before Joyce could catch him. Barefoot, collarless, and dishevelled, he raced to meet the visitors who were coming up the bank, and, almost breathless from his run, he accosted the lady—

"Oh, I say ; if you please, excuse me ; are you Mrs. Blackwood?"

She smiled.

"Yes, that is my name ; and I think yours is Keith Gordon. I must thank you for your note. It gave us a great deal of pleasure."

"I—I want to ask you—don't—don't mention it to the family, especially my father. It might—it might—embarrass him. Winifred and I will tell every one afterwards, perhaps to-morrow ; we are not deceiving children."

"I am sure you are not, dear ; and I hope we shall be very good friends, you and I, and that your sisters will bring you to see us at Braybrook."

She held out her hand, and Keith suddenly became aware of his unwashed condition.

"Oh, I'm sorry ; mine is too sandy," he stammered. "Joyce does try to keep us tidy ; she tries hard ; but she has so many other things to do, and Winnie and I tear so many clothes. She told me to wash and put on a collar and things ; but I had to run and ask you."

"It's all right, old man," said young Terence Blackwood. "My sister and I often go barefoot

when we camp here ; and I find collars quite superfluous then, except in the evenings."

While Keith was introducing himself to the visitors, Christobel had declared that she would stay with Ruth ; that she would not be dressed. But Joyce laid firm hands on her and bore her to the back bedroom, where she promised to be good if dear Joycie would let her wear her "pwettiest dweess." Christobel was undeniably a spoiled child ; but she looked very sweet and tractable when she entered the parlour, meekly holding Joyce's hand, and with a welcoming smile on her rosy face. She had always deported herself becomingly in the presence of strangers, and appreciated their compliments on her appearance and behaviour. Keith and Winifred regarded her as a humbug ; for, among their many faults, duplicity could not be numbered. Christobel now, attracted by the white dress and blue ribbons of Mollie Blackwood, won the hearts of that fair maiden and her mother by, exclaiming, as she clasped Mollie's hand—

"Oh, what a pwetty, pwetty lady !"

Whereupon Winifred whispered to Keith, who was hiding his bare feet behind a curtain—

"Listen to Babe Chrissie ! Isn't she a blarney ? Miss Blackwood is pretty ; but I would not tell her so out loud."

Keith nodded.

"Yes ; I like her nearly red hair and her brown eyes ; and his is just the same as hers. But listen ; I want to hear what they are talking about."

"And are you really going to stay here, on this side of the bay, all winter?" asked Mollie Blackwood. "My brother and I have often thought it would be delightful."

"I was afraid it might be rather isolated and dreary," said Ruth.

"Yes, for a few weeks in the spring and autumn when the roads are bad and the ice is unsafe ; but, except in that short time, you could drive to Braybrook, across the bay on firm ice, or by the road ; and you can snowshoe, toboggan, skate, and have all sorts of good times."

"If you would like it, do come and stay with us," begged Winifred cordially. "We had so many visitors at home, in our nice home in England, and we need them here. In some ways, Keith and I like this place better than Woldhurst. We had to stay with old Hannah in the nursery there ; but here we can see every one who comes. There is no nurse to take care of us."

"I hope your sisters will bring you to spend a day with us," said Mrs. Blackwood ; "and as you seem happy to be free from nurses, I can promise you that you will find no nurse at my house, except myself and my daughter."

"Oh!" exclaimed Winifred. "Do you mean that you do all your own work, like Ruth and Joyce? Don't the Canadian ladies have any servants?"

"Winifred," said her father reprovingly; "do you not know that little girls should not ask questions?"

Winifred hung her head.

"I'm sorry if I was rude, and I hope my sisters will take me to your house. I have kind feelings for you, and I want to see you some more. But—but if you have no one to help your work, such a lot of us—Chrissie and Keith and I, besides Ruth and Joyce and Neil—would be so much trouble."

"That is very thoughtful on your part, dear. I have a maid-of-all-work and an old manservant, quite sufficient for my small house. Your coming will not be any trouble, but a very great pleasure."

Mollie remarked to Joyce—

"English women coming to Canada find the servant question very difficult. There are so few good ones. The girls like to go into shops and factories, and rather look down upon domestic service. Some of our friends have imported coloured servants from the West Indies. Our maid has a holiday when we are in camp. We think it fun then to do everything for ourselves."

"Where is your camp?" asked Joyce.

The colour rose in Mollie's face.

"Oh, we meant to tell you ; we used to camp here. The place had been unoccupied so long that every one had looked on it as public property. We—have found another place for this year."

"It is on the Braybrook side," said Terence, "about six miles from the town."

"But pray do not let our being here change your plans in any way," said Mr. Gordon eagerly, addressing Mrs. Blackwood. "I shall be most happy if you will set up your tents on any part of the grounds that you prefer. It will indeed be a great favour to me. Circumstances will oblige me to go to the United States for an indefinite time, and I have been exceedingly anxious about leaving my children unprotected."

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Blackwood ; "and if I can mother your young family in your absence, it will be a great pleasure to me."

"How jolly !" exclaimed Mollie. "We like Wilderfell better than any other place for camping. As long ago as I can remember, we have come here for picnics and blackberrying ; it seems almost like home."

"Then you know all the places about here," remarked Neil. "Don't you like that winding stream, with points and curves, and deep, dark pools, and places where the trees arch over so you can hardly see daylight? "

"I do, indeed. That is the Creek of the Bride. The name was given from the story of an eloping couple, children of settlers here more than a hundred years ago. The man and maid escaped on that stream from their angry parents, and were married on the banks by a missionary to the Indians. In the pursuit, the bride was nearly drowned and brought to the shore unconscious; and in an agony of remorse, the father vowed that if her life should be spared he would forgive her and give her a large marriage portion. So she recovered, and lived happily for many a year. There are other stories of Wilderfell forest. We will tell them to you when we come to camp."

"I hope the mosquitoes did not sting the bride as they stung Keith and me when we tried fishing in that stream," said Neil. "They are not so bad near the house; but in some parts of the woods, when hundreds of them buzz at once, it sounds like bells."

"You can row on that stream if you smoke the mosquitoes away with smudges," said Terence. "We have often fished there and caught fine speckled trout. We sometimes anointed our faces and hands with an anti-mosquito lotion. They are not so bad later in the season."

Mrs. Blackwood rose to go.

"And may I have the pleasure of welcoming your children to my home?" she asked the father.

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"Would Tuesday of next week be convenient for you and for them?"

"Do you really mean the very whole family?" asked Winifred, open-eyed.

"I do indeed mean the very whole family. I should be sorry to miss one. And I am going to ask a greater favour, that I may keep you and your brother Keith till the end of the week."

Winifred clapped her hands.

"Oh, dear, dear father, you can't say no! It would break my heart."

"I cannot say no," he answered, turning to Mrs. Blackwood. "I feel your kindness deeply; and it will do my daughter Ruth so much good. She has been sadly in need of rest and change."

"I think that is why you asked Keith and me for a longer time," said Winifred. "Even when we are trying very, very hard to help, we make a great deal more work and worriment."

CHAPTER IX

Young Breadwinners

WHEN Keith and Winifred returned after a very happy visit to the Blackwoods, Winifred found the quiet life at Wilderfell rather dull, and when her father reproved her for grumbling she began to cry.

"What has come to the child?" he asked. "She is usually so good-natured. I will not let her go away again. I hoped the change would have been beneficial."

"It was, father. And Mrs. Blackwood's influence has been very good for both Keith and Winnie. I think the excessive heat of yesterday was too much for her; she is not very well."

"Do you feel that you need society and recreation, Ruth? Or are you satisfied here?"

"I enjoyed the day in Braybrook very much, but I am not quite strong enough for both work and amusement; so I am very willing to do without the amusement."

"Mrs. Blackwood told me she was delighted with your singing and playing. You shall have a piano

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as soon as I can afford it, and that will make your home life happier."

"Thank you, father," said Ruth gently. "I shall be glad when we have a piano, for your sake and the children's, as well as my own."

To Ruth the prospect of a piano was in the far distant future, for she knew not how to provide the necessaries of life for the young family without going into debt. Her father had vainly tried to devise means to obtain the money for his journey. One morning Ruth timidly broached the subject of selling some old family jewellery and silver, which had been kept on account of cherished associations. Her father answered, with evident annoyance—

"My dear Ruth, I had hoped that you loved and venerated these things too much to dream of parting with them."

"I do love and venerate them, father; but we have given up many things that were sacred to us. We must have money; we are in debt to Mr. Jones in Ferndale, and I am ashamed to order anything more from him."

"I will pay the bill with interest before long. The man is very prosperous, and it cannot inconvenience him to wait for a few weeks. I will tell him that the delay will be brief."

The day after this conversation Neil handed his father a letter that he had brought from the Ferndale post-office. Mr. Gordon's face

brightened, and after dinner he called Ruth aside.

"I am much relieved," he said. "Your great-aunt Jean, to whom I wrote about my necessities, has raised money on a bond, and has kindly sent it as a loan. Of course, I shall soon repay it."

"Oh!" exclaimed Ruth. "Those dear old aunties have hardly enough for their needs!"

"I feel that most deeply, Ruth. It distresses me that I cannot continue the allowance I gave them in prosperous days, to which dear aunt refers so gratefully. She has received the semi-annual interest on her bond, and I can repay the money before the next interest is due."

"You will pay Mr. Jones now?"

"That must be deferred. This money is necessary for travelling expenses. I must take enough in my purse to prevent my being penniless in a strange city, and I must leave something with you for household needs."

"But can you not pay a part of the debt? Joyce and I will manage with very little money."

Mr. Gordon looked disturbed, and answered in a strained voice—

"I fail to comprehend your attitude of late, Ruth. Do you really infer that because misfortune and the lack of appreciation of my work have obliged me to incur debt that my abhorrence of it is not as keen as your own?"

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"You have no direct dealings with Mr. Jones, father. He told Neil that he is in need of money to pay the wholesale grocers from whom he buys."

"If that is the case I will see him myself, pay him a small sum on account, and explain the reasons for my present inability to pay in full; and I have no doubt that he will be satisfied. If Mrs. O'Shea and her daughter will come from their cottage and stay here every night till Mrs. Blackwood arrives, I shall begin my journey the day after to-morrow."

In the evening, when Mr. Gordon returned from Ferndale, he said that he had made a most satisfactory arrangement with Jones, who was willing to supply the young housekeepers with everything they required from his stock. Ruth was silent, but she determined to buy only such provisions as were necessary for bare existence.

The weather had become oppressively warm; the lively children had lost energy, and preferred lolling on the grass to any form of activity. Neil alone kept up his tramps through the woods. On the day after his father's departure he announced that he had discovered a large swampy place carpeted with flowers.

"Oh, Neil!" exclaimed Joyce. "Perhaps it is the beaver meadow that the Brown boys found. They saw it only once and never could find it again, and that has been the experience of every

one who has had a glimpse of it. It seemed like a fairy story of enchanted gardens of which mortals caught sight now and then, and which eluded them ever afterward."

"It won't elude me," declared Neil. "It is in a strange, labyrinthine sort of a place, but I made marks so I should not lose the trail. If you go with me you'd better wear old clothes and a short dress—a skirt as short as Winnie's; and you will need old boots that you are willing to ruin. Overshoes wouldn't help you unless they were knee-high, for the mud and water would get above them."

"Let's wade in barefoot," suggested Keith.

"Ugh, no!" protested Winifred. "In a swampy, boggy place like that there are snakes and leeches and all sorts of crawly things. And there are mosquitoes too. Look at Neil's face! We'll smear ours before we go."

Neil shook his head.

"You are not going on this trip, kiddie. We should have to spend our time pulling you out of bog-holes."

Winifred pleaded and Keith argued in vain; Neil was firm in his refusal. And when Joyce went to her room to dress for the occasion, Winifred remarked with a shrug—

"I don't want to go to your old bog! I heard the clergyman at Ferndale say that mos-

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quitoes give people fevers and all sorts of dreadful things ; he prays and preaches, so he certainly tells the truth."

The first part of the tramp was not difficult. When the explorers had climbed the fence that separated the Wilderfell grounds from the apparently unclaimed land beyond, they found a winding path that ended in a dense wood which was made almost impenetrable by vines and underbrush.

"Have you mistaken the direction, Neil?" asked Joyce. "You could not have forced your way through this."

"I did not go through this very spot, but it's the right direction. The meadow is not far from the shore, and a moment ago I had a glimpse of the water."

"The mosquitoes are here in evidence," remarked Joyce dubiously.

"Yes ; they prove there is a swampy place here. Ah ! I see now. Turn about and follow me ; we're close to it. That opening in the wood does not mean a trodden path, but it's a way through. Follow me."

"I will. I'll follow to victory or—"

"It will be victory. You see that belt of tamaracks over there? The meadow is just beyond."

Neil walked ahead in silence. When he had

passed beyond the jungle to some open ground, he pointed triumphantly to the tamarack belt.

"Inside of that there are acres and acres of—wait till you see!"

Unmindful now of face swollen by mosquito bites and hands torn by brier and thorn, Joyce ran forward. When she broke through the tamarack belt she shouted with delight. Before her stretched acres of swamp-land covered with a flowery carpet of many colours.

"Moccasin flowers!" she cried. "Lizzie Brown showed me one she had found in a swamp. They are calceolarias, Neil. Oh, what colours! Red and yellow, white, pink, purple; and such large flowers—three or four times the size of the little lady's slipper at home! There are lilies too. And those must be pitcher plants; and what beautiful flowering vines! Oh, Neil, excuse me for thinking you had lost the way."

Neil grinned.

"All inventors and explorers have had to go on never minding when people had lost faith in them. I've been doing that as long as I can remember."

"Yes; when you took the nursery clock to pieces to see how it worked, Hannah called you a 'mischievous plague,' but you said you were thinking out an invention. I wonder why other people can't find this place."

"Because they don't half use their eyes. When they can't get through the jungle they turn back without noticing the little opening between the trees."

"I'm going to use my eyes well on the way back, for I mean to come often. I shall try to transplant some of these flowers. If I can't find a damp enough spot near the house I shall make one."

"You'll have to dig deep if you are going to make it as damp as this," remarked Neil, who was above his ankles in mire.

Joyce laughed.

"I don't mind how wet and muddy I am if I fill my basket with these exquisite flowers. Next time I shall bring two big market baskets for myself, and one each for Win and Keith. Thanks to the grateful Indians, we have baskets galore."

"Are you going to decorate every room in the house?"

"I am going to make a swamp garden, and—I may do other things."

Engrossed in his search for new specimens, Neil did not ask what other things she meant to do. On the way home he remarked that she was unusually silent, and she answered that she was thinking hard. On the following day she took Keith and Winifred to the meadow, and returned late in the afternoon with four large baskets full

of the beautiful flowers. Many of them had been taken up by the roots, with moist earth clinging to them. She planted these in a damp spot near the shore, not far from the old boathouse. In the previous week Terence and Mollie Blackwood had rowed to Wilderfell with a boat in tow. They said that as they possessed two boats and could use only one, they wished to lend the larger one to Joyce.

"We shall need two while we are camping," Mollie had explained apologetically, "so the two families can go on the water together."

Joyce had learned to row during visits to the seaside, and had practised on a small lake in the grounds at Woldhurst. After the visit to the Beaver Meadow she rowed the children along the shore, and decided that, though her muscles were stiff, she was able to take the boat across the bay. On the following morning she rose before five o'clock, and dressed without waking her sisters. After leaving a note for Ruth, stating that she had gone to Braybrook and might not return till late in the afternoon, she took a hurried breakfast and sped to the shore. She quickly refilled the four baskets with the temporarily planted flowers, placed the fragrant burden in the boat, and started on her way.

At the Braybrook wharf she left the boat with a caretaker, and, with the help of an errand-boy,

carried her baskets to the little shop of the only florist in Braybrook. The streets were almost deserted. Clerks were taking down the shutters in some of the business places, and Joyce knew that it was nearly eight o'clock—the hour for opening shops.

Wilkins, the florist, was standing by his door, and he glanced at Joyce inquiringly. Her heart beat fast and her lips trembled. She had impersonated a flower-girl and sold bouquets for the benefit of a charity at Woldhurst, but to offer her wares to supply the needs of the Gordon family was more disturbing than she had expected. Wilkins had moved inside his shop and now stood behind the counter, waiting for her to explain her errand. As she still hesitated, he remarked—

“It is a fine morning, Miss Gordon. I have seen you with Miss Blackwood. If you have come over from Wilderfell you must be an early riser.”

It had seemed to Joyce that her tongue would never move in obedience to her will. With great effort she summoned her self-control; then her timidity left her suddenly, and she stated her case with straightforward clearness.

“Yes, Mr. Wilkins, I left Wilderfell when every one was sleeping. A few days ago we found a place called the Beaver Meadow, not very far from our house; and when I saw its great carpet of flowers I remembered that a lady, who is

staying at one of the hotels here, had paid a dollar for a small bunch of such flowers. Some one told me that she had bought them from a farmer's boy and wanted more, but he could not find any more on the Braybrook side of the water. I hoped that perhaps you could sell these for me. It—seems necessary for me to do this."

"It is very plucky of you to try. If you'll wait here I'll send my boy to the Empire House, where the summer visitors stay. It isn't likely that Braybrook folks would buy, for they have their own gardens."

When the florist's clerk and the errand-boy had carried away the flower baskets, Wilkins busied himself in arranging his wares, till, as with a sudden thought, he turned to Joyce.

"I've been wondering, Miss Gordon, if your father would be willing to let the Methodist Sunday School have its picnic on your grounds. They've gone to Wilderfell every year, and the children like it better than any other place. It's convenient, and so safe for bathing. I teach in the Sunday School, and we've been talking it over. The Church would be willing to pay about ten dollars for the privilege. We are not well off, or we would offer more."

Joyce coloured.

"I think father would not like to take money from a Sunday School. He used to give to

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Churches and Schools ; and as we cannot do so now, I am sure he would be glad to help in other ways."

" It would be helping, miss. If we had to go far—to one of the places on the lake, for instance, or to Sentinel Point—we'd have to charter a large boat and pay more. Most people here have their own boats and could row over to Wilderfell ; the rest could go in a small steamer—the *Princess May*. So you need not hesitate about taking the money. It would make us feel easier."

" We do need money very much," said Joyce seriously. " I will ask my sister if she would be willing. Father is away, and he might be worried if we should write to him about it. When do you want to have your picnic? "

" This day week. We'll talk it over at a meeting this evening. If you'll authorize me to tell the superintendent that you consent, we can settle it to-night and save time and trouble."

" You may say I believe my sister will consent. She will post a letter at Ferndale to-night, so you should receive it in the morning."

He nodded his head.

" That's sufficient. Other Sunday Schools may want to make the same arrangement later. The Church of England and the Presbyterian always went to Wilderfell. I see my boy coming with empty baskets, so he has good luck to report."

He talked with his clerk at the door and returned to Joyce.

"The ladies paid six dollars for the four baskets, Miss Gordon, and if it seems fair to you I'll keep one dollar and give you five. I'd be glad to give you all for your hard work, but I've got to make my business pay."

"You should take at least half," said Joyce. "I could not have sold the flowers without your help. My father would have been displeased if I had gone to the hotel."

"No, thank you, Miss Gordon. I have charged quite a large commission. My boy tells me that there are four families at the hotel, and they would each like a basketful of these wild flowers every week. They will be blooming for some weeks yet."

Tears rose to Joyce's eyes. She was usually reserved in speaking of the family difficulties, but she said impulsively—

"This is a great relief. Until we came here my sister and I never had to think about money, and we have not known how to manage with very little. We shall be so thankful if we can earn something."

"You will do it when you are accustomed to the new life, for you have ingenuity and determination. Perhaps you could sell a few flowers at the picnic, and if you have a little booth for nuts and candies the children would be glad to buy."

Joyce looked doubtful.

"I am afraid my sister would not be willing to do that, but I will ask her."

When Joyce arrived at Wilderfell, Ruth received the news of her enterprise with mingled feelings.

"It was very brave of you, dear; I could not have done it. And five dollars a week for flowers will be such a help. I think father would allow you to go to the florist in that quiet way, but he would object to our selling things here."

"I rather shrink from that myself," said Joyce thoughtfully. "But why should we? It is a thousand times better to earn money by any honest means than to go in debt. Ladies in England have tea-rooms, and there is as much publicity in that as in our having a booth here. Ruth, we must not, we cannot, be hindered by any false pride. You understand now that father does not see things in a practical way, does not know the world that exists about him. I am not fault-finding. Other men who have devoted themselves to the study of antiquity live in the past ages, and not in their own time. We must accept the facts as they are and do the best we can." She paused for a moment, then said, with a whimsical smile, "But would not our relatives be shocked if they knew what I have done to-day?"

"I am afraid they would. I hope father will not be much worried. Do write to him to-night,

Joyce, and ask him if we may take money for the use of the grounds."

"I will write to tell him that we have already promised to do so. We cannot wait for his answer. Let me write to Mr. Wilkins that the Sunday School may come; he must know at once."

Ruth hesitated and Joyce argued, until Ruth consented to her sister's writing the letter of acceptance. Then she lay awake the greater part of the night, fearing that she had done wrong.

The following week brought an answer from Mr. Gordon. He was evidently troubled by his young daughters' plans for self-support; but he did not forbid them, as his own plans had been, so far, unsuccessful. He said, moreover, that the so-called Beaver Meadow was a part of the Wilderfell property, though it had never been fenced.

In a few days the Blackwoods arrived for their camp, and Terence began to set up the tents with the help of two men who had come with him from Braybrook. The camp was in a grove near the shore, not far from the Wilderfell house. It consisted of three tents—one for Terence and any friends who might stay with him, one for Mrs. Blackwood and Mollie, and the day tent, to be used as a dining and sitting-room in stormy weather.

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"In our old-time camping," said Mollie to Joyce, "we slept on cedar boughs on the ground. Now we have portable floors, cot beds, and as much furniture as we need for comfort. Terence will make a rustic wardrobe for our dresses; our other clothes we will keep in trunks."

"Mater wanted to bring a sewing-machine," added Terence, "but we persuaded her to leave it at home and have an easy, lazy time. She is going to knit stockings and mufflers for the Labrador Mission, and we've given her leave to make preserves—if we may all have a hand in stirring and scraping the pot afterwards."

"Let us all go berrying together," advised Mollie. "There is so much wild fruit here—strawberries, raspberries, blackberries. You might make enough for your winter store, Miss Gordon."

"Why do you say 'Miss Gordon'?" asked Winifred. "If you and Joycie are going to be such truly friends as I think you are, you should call yourselves plain Mollie and Terence and Joyce. It's more loving."

Terence laughed.

"We shall be delighted to drop the prefix if Miss Joyce is willing."

"Do so by all means," agreed Joyce heartily. "From the first day when we met I wanted to say, 'Mollie.' But now we must not stay here and hinder you, as you have so much to do."

"We'll help," said Winnie. "Joyce and I will pick enough for our dinner and yours too. We have strawberries for nearly every meal, and the lettuce and cress in our garden are grown enough to use. It's a good thing, because——" Winifred paused; she had been warned that she should not speak of the emptiness of the Wilderfell larder. "It's a good thing," she continued, after reflection, "because fresh green vegebulbs are benefishing for the blood."

Not long before the dinner-hour Winifred arrived at the camp with a dish lined with green leaves and filled with strawberries, while Keith carried two heads of lettuce.

"I grew them in my own garden!" he said proudly. "The ground is very rough, but Mr. Brown says this is the fertiliest land in the township."

"What fine lettuce!" said Mrs. Blackwood. "Won't you and Winnie stay and enjoy the salad with us?"

The table was set under a shady oak, and Winnie's eyes rested longingly on the sugar-bowl; but she said firmly—

"No, thank you. Ruth told us to hurry home. She hopes you will come and sit on our veranda this evening; or, if you like the shore better, we can light a big bonfire on the bank."

In the afternoon Joyce went to make a confes-

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sion to Mrs. Blackwood, who, as guardian during Mr. Gordon's absence, must be informed of the arrangement with the Sunday School.

"There is nothing to be ashamed of or to regret," said Mrs. Blackwood, "except that you did not first ask your father's permission. Now we will all try to make your enterprise a success. Terence will help your brothers to put up some swings. I will give some strong rope for the purpose as my contribution to the Sunday School entertainment. There are trestles and boards in your barn, and the boys can set up some long tables in a shady place. So we shall have everything ready when the visitors arrive."

CHAPTER X

In Peril of Fire

THAT first summer at Wilderfell was busy and happy too. Five Sunday Schools in succession arranged for the use of the grounds. In addition to her weekly sale of flowers, Joyce made jams and jellies under Mrs. Blackwood's supervision, and preserved not only the abundant small fruits of the woods and fields, but currants and gooseberries, crab-apples, cherries, and plums, which she bought from the neighbouring farmers. The summer tourists in Braybrook bought a large quantity of preserves, and a friendly grocer obtained orders from Toronto families. Terence suggested a huge preserving kettle suspended above a fire on the bank, which the campers and householders watched and stirred in turn, making the preserving as well as the berry-picking a recreation instead of a task. To save Joyce's young shoulders from burdens too heavy for them, Ruth engaged Mrs. O'Shea to wash, scrub, and do the rougher work at Wilderfell. The enterprises of the summer

not only enabled the young householders to provide food for the family, but to buy boots and some necessary clothing for the boys.

Early in September the weather became unseasonably warm. No rain had fallen for weeks, and the grass and trees were brown and dry. The dwellers in house and camp lost energy, and made their duties as light as possible. They avoided exercise, and lolled on the grass or swung in hammocks. The families breakfasted apart, but dined and supped in company. The boys had caught a plentiful supply of fish in bay and river; but in the sultry days they were tired of fish and fishing, and agreed that bread and butter, fruit and salads, were the best fare. The berry-picking time had passed, the picnic season was over, and the late autumn fruits were not yet ripe for preserving. Joyce had etched pictures on birch-bark and fungi, and sold them through a fancy-goods shop to summer visitors. Mollie suggested filling pillows with the needles of the fir-trees, and etching appropriate designs on the covers; but Joyce deferred this for cooler weather.

On an oppressive September afternoon a peculiar haze obscured the sunlight, though no clouds were visible.

"What a weird darkness," remarked Ruth; "and the air is hardly breathable. It seems full of smoke."

"There are forest fires somewhere," said Mollie. "A few years ago the sky looked like this till the fires came nearer; then it was lurid. But don't be nervous," she added, as Ruth raised her head from the rug on the grass and gazed at the forest apprehensively. "There is no danger here, with this great body of water. There is terrible danger for people who are surrounded by forest, and there is often great loss for the farmers."

Householders and campers slept fitfully that night. Christobel pattered to the window to see if "day was waking." Winifred tossed and moaned that "God makes the night very long when it is hot." No cooling air came through the open windows, and sitting on the veranda brought no relief. The boys roamed over the house, seeking a cool spot, and finally agreed that lying on the floor gave some relief. When Winifred fell asleep at last Joyce also slept. The room was dark when she heard a clock strike six. She dressed and went out on the veranda. The pall seemed to lighten as she peered, and the trees looked like weird shapes in a heavy cloud. She felt her way to the bank, stumbling as she went. The waves lapped softly on the beach, but she could not see the water.

"I must go back," she thought. "If Winnie wakes in the dark she will be frightened."

When she returned, every one was awake, and she made a fire of chips and boiled the kettle for tea. At the breakfast-table Keith began to grumble.

"This bread is dry, and I am tired of molasses."

"Everything is spoiled by the dreadful heat," said Joyce. "The milk is sour, and the cold boiled potatoes that I meant to fry. Nothing will keep without ice; and if we could buy ice we have no refrigerator."

Keith recklessly poured molasses on his slice of bread, to soak the dryness out of it; and when he had eaten a mouthful he grumbled that it was smoky.

"Shut up!" commanded Neil, with more emphasis than politeness. "If you don't want to eat it, leave it. Everything must be smoky in this atmosphere."

"I could drink a gallon," said Winifred; "but I don't want anything to eat."

"Let's pretend that the tea is iced lemonade and the bread is oranges," advised Keith.

"It's no good," said Winifred fretfully. "I wish you would light every lamp and candle in the house, Ruth. It's distressful to sit here and hardly see across the table."

"Lamps would make it warmer; and the oil is low."

"Everything's always low here. I wish we

were back at Woldhurst. Oh, Joyce, won't it be dreadful if we use all the oil and it never gets light? Perhaps the sun has gone out."

"No, it hasn't," said Keith. "But it's a queer old sun; like a copper-coloured ball swinging in the air with nothing to hold on by."

"Then something must have happened to it. Could it fall, Joyce?"

"No, child; you heard Mrs. Blackwood say that it looked the same years ago."

"Let us go to her; let us be near all the people we can find."

"Terence and Mollie will come here after their breakfast," said Neil. "I'll hang a lantern on the veranda. It is so hard to see in this unnatural darkness."

"Winnie and Keith might hang a lantern on the tree by the bean bed, and pick beans for dinner," suggested Ruth.

Keith welcomed the suggestion.

"We never picked beans in the dark before. We'll be bandits after treasure."

"And every bean pod is a purse of gold," said Winnie. "Let's race to see who'll be richest first."

When Terence and Mollie arrived, they reported that the butter was like oil, and that the remnant of chicken from which Mrs. Blackwood had intended to make a stew was uneatable.

"There are blackberries still on the bushes, but we could not find our way to them," said Mollie. "Cullen did not bring the provisions we expected yesterday from Braybrook, and it is not safe for any one to go to Ferndale."

"We have flour, molasses, beans, and preserves," remarked Joyce.

"And we have biscuits, potatoes, cheese, and plenty of tea and sugar," said Mollie, "so we shall do very well."

But when the dinner-hour came, no one wanted to eat, and Keith said he should enjoy pickles better than anything else.

"I should like a long, long drink of the iciest water," said Mollie. "My throat is so parched that it feels as if it would crack."

"As the well is dry, the water from the bay must be boiled before drinking," advised Mrs. Blackwood.

"I am glad we are near that bay," sighed Winifred. "Let's put on our bathing suits and sit in it. You need not be afraid we should move and be lost, Ruth. I'll sit tight in one place all the afternoon, and dip my head to wash the ache out of my eyes."

"We are getting smokier and smokier, like a lot of bacon being cured for the winter," remarked Keith.

"Winter! That's the right note," said Terence.

"If you will stop grumbling, I will tell you a nice, cooling story of Antarctic exploration."

He told his story in a croaky voice ; then Mrs. Blackwood tried to read aloud ; but she, too, was hoarse ; and Joyce proposed venturing on the water, very near the shore, with the two boats close together. That plan also failed to give relief ; for the children moved so restlessly that the boats were in danger of upsetting. In trying to land in the darkness, Neil bumped his boat on a log, and Terence drew to shore on some large and slippery stones. As the little party at last went safely up the bank, Ruth observed—

"I can't see a line of the house, and the light we swung from the veranda looks like a ghastly glimmer through the blackness."

"I'm glad I was not a little Egyptian in those days of darkness," said Winifred. "I am sorry for the poor Egyptians, even if Pharaoh told stories and they all deserved it."

"Let us make a rule that no one shall mention fire, heat, smoke, darkness, parchiness, thirstiness, or any other uncomfortable subject," advised Terence. "Whoever breaks it shall be fined."

"I shall soon be unable to mention anything," replied Mollie. "My brain feels as if it were caked."

"Fine one," said Terence.

"Not at all; the law has not been passed yet. I cannot be fined for breaking a law that does not exist."

"Right, Miss Moll. So long as you are able to argue, the state of your brain is not hopeless."

Seated near the tents, with two lanterns hanging from a tree, the members passed the law and made efforts for good cheer. Neil suggested the "Cooling Game." One should toss to another a light ball, and the ball catcher must instantly name something cool and refreshing or pay a forfeit; the forfeits must be funny stories or puns. Even this soon palled; the players complained that they were too languid and weary to think of anything; fines were imposed on every one, and remitted by mutual agreement; the boys strolled away to bathe very near the shore, and the girls reclined on the grass.

The next morning dawned, so to speak, in smoke and darkness. The floors were strewn with ashes, and the children shook ashes from the curtains and their clothing.

Mrs. O'Shea arrived after breakfast, as it was the washing day.

"But it's no use trying to wash," she remarked; "because wid the smoke in the air, everything wud be brown. And who knows if anny iv us will live to see another week?"

"Folks say it's the Day of Judgment comin'."

faltered Mary Jane. "I'd like to ask Father Malone, but he's too busy wid sick folk. It's hard for them in this weather."

"Mrs. Parkins, as lives in the Twelfth Concession, come down the road yisterday," said Mrs. O'Shea. "She was too lonesome and scared to stay wid herself. She says it looks like she read in her Bible, that the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, and the ailments shall melt wid fervid heat. Sure the moon wint down rid as fire, an' the sun must be dar-rkness or we'd have a bit iv light. We thought it might be comfortin' to see Mrs. Blackwood. She's so well edjicated and soothin' like."

"Yes, do come and see her," urged Winnie. "I forget my dreadful alarms when I am near her."

Mrs. Blackwood was soothing as usual, and she invited Mrs. O'Shea and Mary Jane to dine. Mrs. O'Shea accepted the invitation with apologies.

"It's mesilf that knows it's not my place to dine wid quality, but misfortune makes strange companionships."

"I wish we had a better dinner for you," said Mollie.

"'Tis fit for a king; and sarved so iligant, and the talk so fine makes it like the daintiest feast."

"Shake hands, Mrs. O'Shea," said Terence.

"I'm half Irish myself, and I'm glad to see a fellow-countryman rise to the occasion."

When the O'Sheas had gone, Winifred remarked—

"I'm glad they were here. When people come from otherwheres through the blackness, it makes us sure there is otherwheres, and that we'll get to it again."

"Hark!" cried Neil. "Some one is shouting."

The listeners heard a strange, muffled cry coming through the pall over the water.

"Some one has lost his way," said Terence.

"Look, boys, light that heap of wood on the bank. It will serve as a beacon. I will take the lantern and row out to meet him."

"I'll go with you," volunteered Mollie.

"And I," said Joyce.

Mrs. Blackwood looked anxiously at her son; but she would not say a word to hold him back. He answered the look.

"There's no danger, mater; I shall easily find my way back by the light of the fire; but a stranger might miss it."

Neil and Keith begged to be allowed to go, and Terence decided that Neil should accompany him. The boys shouted messages of cheer to the watchers on shore and to the man in the invisible boat. Then for a time the watchers heard no sound, and peered into the gloom, each

trying to hide from the other the great anxiety. And as they watched and waited, shouts rang out again ; this time cheery and confident.

"Coming, coming ; all is well ! We will be with you in a few minutes."

The fire blazed high, and, guided by its rays, the oarsmen made their way through the smoke and fog straight for the shore, towing the boat of the young Englishman, Ivor Glyn.

"Were you coming through that smoke to see us?" asked Winifred. "Did you row all the long way from your house just to see if we were safe?"

He coughed, and seemed unable to reply for a moment. Mrs. Blackwood observed that, though his face was flushed from the exertion of rowing in the almost intolerable heat, he was pitifully thin ; his cheeks were hollow.

"I am very glad to know that every one is safe, Miss Winifred," he said presently ; "but something else called me down the shore." He turned to Mrs. Blackwood : "There's a poor fellow, Jack Benson, living in a little hut on the bank about a mile from Wilderfell. He has no one to take care of him, and he is dying of consumption. A friend of ours on a farm had given us a basket of apples, and Weldron stewed some for him. I found him in a wretched state, gasping for breath in the smoky air. He drank some water that I

got from a spring, with a little apple-juice in it, and said that it refreshed him. Then, after I left him, I lost my way in the darkness. Perhaps, when this wretched smoke has cleared, so it will be safer going, you will send him something, or ask some one to care for him. He has not always done as he ought, but he does not deserve to be left to starve and die alone."

Mrs. Blackwood looked at the young man with the mother-light shining in her eyes.

"No, indeed he does not. Terence will take me to see him. We will do all that we possibly can. I think we may be able to find a place for him in the consumptive ward of Braybrook hospital."

"Oh, thank you," he said, "thank you. That is so good."

"And now will you let us give you some tea? We can boil the water in a few minutes on this good fire."

He hesitated before answering.

"No, you are very kind ; but—Weldron expects me. He may be starting off to Braybrook to look for me if I don't go back. Don't be uneasy. I shall have no trouble in returning. I was rather reckless and pulled too far out ; now I shall keep close along the shore till I reach our shanty."

When he had said a few words to Ruth, Winifred remarked—

"You are kind, like Basil Ingram. Once he sat up all night with a sick man who lives in a poor little hut in England."

Ruth's lip quivered, and Joyce knew that deep down in her heart Ruth cherished the memory of Basil, though she had gone about her daily work with a brave heart. Ruth had asked her never to speak of him, and she had kept silence.

When Glyn had said good-bye, Mrs. Blackwood went with him to his boat. She laid her hand tenderly on his arm.

"My dear boy," she said, "my dear boy, you too are ill, and in need of care. Is there not something we can do for you as well as for that poor fellow? I do not mean in the same way. If there is any trouble in which I could help perhaps you will come and tell me about it. I am the mother of a dear son; I can feel for the sons of other mothers; and you are so far away from your own people."

He stifled a sob; then he clasped her hand and held it.

"Oh, it is good to have any one speak to me so! My mother is dead, and my father has cast me off. He is tired of helping me, and—I am not blaming him. Weldron and I squandered a lot of money for a year or two; then his allowance, too, was stopped. I don't want—money; that I could not take from you; but I shall be glad

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to see you again—when you go to Braybrook. We can't call at Wilderfell. We were on our way up the bank one day when Mr. Gordon met us and gave us to understand that we should not be welcome, that his daughters could not receive us. We have respected his wishes."

"Young girls alone do not receive visitors," said Mrs. Blackwood.

"His dismissal was very curt. We inferred that he had been prejudiced by tales he had heard of us. I want you to know, and to believe, that though we gambled when we first arrived, and were very idle and generally unsatisfactory, we are not really a bad lot. We are going to try to turn over a new leaf, and go to work as common labourers on a farm. A man we know is doing just that. He came down to eating the husks before he braced himself up and worked like a man. I must go now, and I must not detain you. Don't—think hardly of us. I could not bear that *you* should."

"Dear lad," she said, "you are but a lad; I shall never think hardly of you. I shall think most tenderly of your compassion for the suffering. To such as you, visitors of the sick and the friendless, it was said: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father.'"

Then she went back to those who waited on the bank, her eyes still shining with tears.

That night was darker, more oppressive than any preceding. Before morning the darkness gave place to a strange light, and Winifred aroused her sister.

"Joycie, wake quickly. It's such a queer, terrible, yellow light."

Joyce ran to the window, believing that the fire was close to the house. She could see no flames, but a yellow gleam shot with red filtered through the smoke. The boys pounded on the door, and Keith shouted—

"Get up, dress; the fire will soon be here!"

"Don't be frightened," said Neil. "The fire must be near; but it has not come yet to our woods."

Terence and Mollie arrived before breakfast, and Mollie announced—

"Terence thinks the fire is about three miles away. It travels very fast."

"If it should come dangerously near," said Terence, "we'll bring buckets of water from the bay, and pour over the roof and walls of the house and stable; but that is not necessary yet."

Soon after breakfast, Mrs. O'Shea and her daughter came with tales of woe. Farmers were desperately fighting the flames, pouring water over their buildings, and cutting down inflammable material between the forest and their fields. No

trains could come from Toronto, as the flames were on both sides of the railroad, and blazing branches had fallen on the last train that passed through.

"'Tis the fiercest fire in the memory of man," said Mrs. O'Shea. "Phil Martin thinks it was the tail of the comet switching round that started it; others tell that a tremendous big meteor fell whirlin' and blazin' out of a shootin' star and smashed into the thick of the woods."

"We are not afraid," said Mollie. "But we are very sorry for those who may lose their property, and we cannot help them. Come down and see mother; she will make you feel better."

At the camp, Mrs. O'Shea and Mary Jane knelt reverently with the little group while Mrs. Blackwood prayed for those in peril.

"I am comforted," said the Widow O'Shea, as she rose from her knees. "'Tis a Protestant prayer; but it's the wan God over us all; and never holier lips than yours did pray to Him, whether of your Church or mine. Now I've got the courage to go back and tend my little place; and if it burns, 'twill be the will of God, and I'll not be complainin'."

Through that anxious day the dwellers at Wilderfell went many times on the water to watch the progress of the flames. In the evening Neil suggested—

"Let us go to farmer Brown's. The fire is near his farm and we can help."

Mrs. Blackwood agreed. She felt sure that no one would harm house or tent in this extremity, and night or day, the water was illumined by the fire.

After dividing their party in two boats, the boys rowed till they reached the burning woods. Flaming trees stretched out fiery arms and caught their neighbours in fatal embrace; sheets of flame shot upward or veered sideward as the wind changed; a high wind had sprung up, and with sudden gusts it tore away blazing branches and flung them hissing into the water. The roar of the destroyer was like a song of victory as giants of the forest fell in the holocaust of flame. White-capped waves were rolling now, and as the boats rose on their crests and then went deep down into the troughs between them, the girls trembled and clutched the boat-sides.

"It was dead calm when we started," said Mollie. "Where did that great sea come from?"

"Pull nearer the shore," directed Mrs. Blackwood. "It is a land breeze. It is driving us outward."

"Let's go back to Wilderfell," suggested Neil.

"Can't do it," said Terence; "the wind would be dead against us. We must go farther down and try to land."

Amid the roar of the fire, the brilliance of the

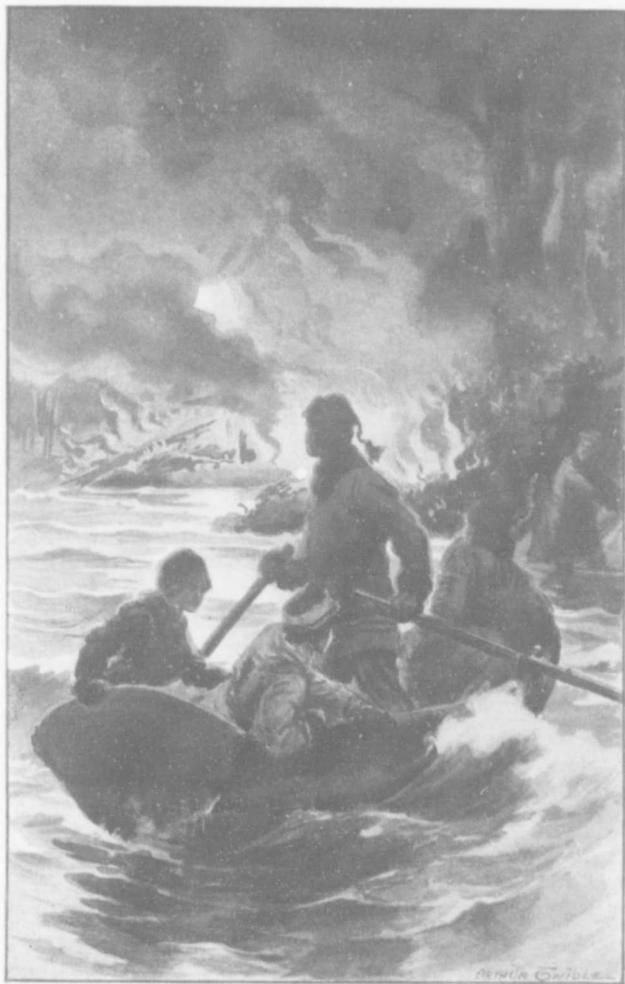
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flame, and the clouds of smoke against the sky, no one had observed another light that shot and forked and circled, or a deep rumbling and ominous sound, till lightning seemed to dart close upon the boat, and thunder crashes brought screams from the terrified children.

The lightning flashes, the forest flames, were reflected in raging waters ; the boats were almost beyond control of the oarsmen, and the gale grew fiercer.

"I never saw a storm come up like this," said Terence ; "but farmer Brown's is just around that point, and I think we can reach it. Pull for it, Neil, and keep your boat close to mine."

Lightning more vivid than before was followed by deafening thunder, and then the rain came down—rain in great blinding sheets that poured into the boats and drenched their occupants.

"Bail, bail !" shouted Terence. "Boys, row with your might ! Girls, find something to bail with ! Ruth, hold the child still somehow !"

"Sit on her," advised Winifred. "Christobel Gordon, if you don't keep perfectly still, Ruth will sit on you, and you will be squozen as flat as a dachhund dog."

Joyce pulled off her shoes and handed one to Mollie.

"Take that and bail ; it's bigger than yours."

Mrs. Blackwood took the tin pail that was in

the boat for such emergencies, and Winifred tried to help by dipping out water with her small hands. But from rain and waves the water came in faster than the quickest hands could bail it out ; the oarsmen could make little headway, and it seemed but a question of minutes before the boats must fill and go down.

"We are opposite Brown's now," said Terence. "Boys, row in slantwise, don't try to cut through direct. There, you can see the house."

No one spoke as the rowers laboured painfully, wind and water disputing every inch of the way and often driving the boats back from the point they had gained. Terence at last, aided by Mollie, brought his boat within a few feet of the beach. Joyce stepped into the shallow water, held to the rope on the prow, and pulled toward shore. Terence landed his passengers safely, and then helped Neil to draw his boat up on the broad beach. The panting watermen stood for a few minutes to recover breath ; then all went up the slope toward the farmhouse. They met farmer Brown and his men returning from the fields, where they had been fighting the flames.

"We were coming to help you," cried Winifred ; "but the rain will do it better."

"Thank God !" said the farmer reverently ; "I believe it will. If this storm lasts a little longer, the country will be saved."

"See, yonder; them flames is hidin' their heads a bit," said Jim Dorrance, a farm hand. "It seems as if they know the fight's up. They are not blazin' near so fierce."

"It's like humans fightin'," added another man. "Look how them fellows is dartin' out, trying to ketch onto the sound trees; and the rain slashin' down on 'em and cuttin' em off."

"How jolly!" cried Keith. "It is a real battle. Watch, watch, the rain is beating! The rain will win!"

In the interest of the fight between flood and flame, the watchers forgot that they were standing with drenched garments in the storm; and soon it was evident that the rain floods had won, and the destroyer was retreating vanquished.

"The danger's past," said the farmer. "There's but a feeble flicker now, and the trees are too wet to blaze up again."

"Let us sing our thanksgiving," said Mrs. Blackwood. And, followed by all the company, stalwart men and gentle maids, she led—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

"Amen," said farmer Brown, when the song of praise had ended; and "Amen" responded the workers from the fields.

"Come in," said Mrs. Brown; "come to the house every one and have a hot drink. It's a

mercy if you don't get your deaths of cold from this drenching. I'll not ask any one to the parlour to drip over the carpet. The kitchen's big, and a little water more or less will do no harm to the painted floor. Good land! Mrs. Blackwood, you're wet to the skin; and there's a great chill in the air since the storm. If there isn't dry clothes enough to go round, there'll be blankets and 'comfortables,' and the wearers of 'em can sit still in chairs, well wrapped and warm."

The energetic woman assembled her guests in the large kitchen, administered to each a drink of hot ginger cordial, and bustled with her daughters about the house, seeking dry clothing, while the visitors sat in their dripping garments around the fire. She returned to summon her guests to the "best room" to change.

"I've only this one spare bedroom," she said apologetically; "so I'll have to put all you ladies in here together for the night. It's big enough to put two large double mattresses on the floor, and that four-poster bed that came to me from my grandmother will be ample for two."

"But, Mrs. Brown, we cannot think of remaining for the night," objected Mrs. Blackwood. "It would give you so much trouble. We had intended to help you, not to add to your burdens. It is not raining so hard now."

"Not raining so hard! Listen to that riot

on the roof! Why, it's showerin' and blowin' so we can't open a window without a flood comin' in. It's glad we are to have you. Company's a treat to me and the girls."

"We are enjoying every minute of it," said Lizzie Brown. "It's a picnic for us."

"Let us make a bargain," suggested Mollie. "If we stay here for the night—and we all want to, we are enjoying every minute of it, too—Lizzie and Mira will come to Braybrook some Saturday and stay over Sunday, to go to Braybrook Church."

Mrs. Brown nodded.

"We'll see about that later. Just now everybody's got to be puttin' on dry clothes."

When the company in dry garments returned to the kitchen, the boys shouted in glee. The dress of her portly hostess hung in folds on slender Mrs. Blackwood. Tall Joyce wore a skirt that only reached her knees, while Winifred's frock trailed on the ground.

Keith danced in delight.

"Look at me! I've got a suit of Bob Brown's because it's miles too big for me, and Neil has Hiram's because it's too small. Let's stay up all night and have a masquerade ball. But, I say, where's Babe Christobel? Couldn't you find clothes for her?"

"The blessed baby's sound asleep on the best room bed," replied Mrs. Brown. "Spite of the

wetting, she seemed well and warm, and she'll take no harm. And now, let's have our suppers, and I hope every one is as good and hungry as I am."

"You may bet on me," announced Keith. Ruth looked at him anxiously, wondering whether he could be persuaded to deport himself becomingly. It was soon evident that he would not, and her sole consolation was that his manners were not much worse than those of Hiram Brown.

The supper was bountiful, and Mrs. Brown beamed appreciation of the children's appetites. Winifred had eaten chicken pie and fried potatoes, and Ruth said she should not have cake and preserves in addition.

"Law, Miss Gordon, it won't do the child no harm," argued the hostess. "Do let me give her one bit of pound cake and a preserved pear. I've brought up a good, stout, healthy family, and ordinary I didn't give 'em mixtures at midnight; but there's that in jollity and excitement that digests victuals better than pepsin or any doctors' stuffs. She'll sleep sound, and wake in the morning fine and well."

As if to prove that Mrs. Brown's confidence was justified, Winifred sank into deep and peaceful slumber almost as soon as her head touched the pillow. Mrs. Blackwood and the girls made plans for the morrow as they undressed; and Mollie

and Joyce examined the ornaments of the room—the hair flowers, the alum baskets, the picture frames, which were ingeniously made from rice, cloves, and acorns.

Before morning the sky had cleared, and the sleepers awoke to the singing of birds and the sunlight streaming through the windows.

Farmer Brown and his sons brought in the glad tidings that the houses on the bay shore were safe, and not a farm in the neighbourhood had been seriously injured. Large stretches of forest, too, had been spared, for the rain had come in time to save most of the trees.

"Farther down the line, where it caught first, it's desolate and blackened now," said the farmer gravely; "but time mends most everything; and in a few years the young trees will grow, and it will be green and grand again."

"How wonderful it is," said Ruth, "to look at such a peaceful and smiling country after the storm and wreck of last night."

"It is like life," responded Mrs. Blackwood; "grief, then gladness—shadow and sunshine. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'"

CHAPTER XI

Delights and Difficulties

THE dwellers in house and camp had a busy time on their return to Wilderfell after the extinction of the forest fires. Two tents had collapsed in the storm, and rain had poured through the open windows of Wilderfell house. But the tents were soon re-erected on new poles ; the rugs and curtains were dried ; and as no water had dripped through the roof to discolour walls and ceilings, there was a general rejoicing that serious damage had not been done. The provisions of the camp were soaked and uneatable, but there was flour in the house ; the children brought green corn and potatoes from the garden, and Neil caught a fish for dinner.

The day before the breaking up of the camp a motor-launch arrived with friends of Mrs. Blackwood, Terence, and Mollie. The young people had a merry time with games, charades, puns, and choruses around the camp-fire. After the departure of the visitors their hosts lingered by the

fireside, unwilling to cut short their last evening together.

"It has been such a happy summer!" said Mollie. "And this is the end—I don't like to think of it."

"But it's not the end," objected Neil. "Even after Terence goes to the university you can row yourself over till the weather is too cold. And Terence promised to come for beech-nutting and butter-nutting. Toronto is near enough to let him run up for week-ends sometimes."

"And you will come to us in turns," said Mrs. Blackwood. "We shall look forward to it."

Mollie clasped her hands and gazed out on the water. She was in a sentimental mood.

"The memories of the weeks we have spent here will remain with us for ever—the rambles in the woods, the rows up that lovely winding river, the birds and flowers, and the call of the whip-poor-will. Let us think of one another—I mean especially think—at the whip-poor-will's hour, eight o'clock."

"Humph!" ejaculated Keith. "That's if it happens to be dark then. It calls in times of darkness, whether it's early or late. You'll have to keep changing the times if you want to arrange your thinkings by that bird."

"Let's remember by all the nice birds," added Winifred—"the long-billed kingfishers diving into

the water, and the sandpipers, and chickadees, and woodpeckers, and humming-birds, and blue jays."

Mollie sighed. The irrepressible children, with their literal interpretations, had dispelled the charm of a romantic moment.

"We were up against some hard conditions this summer," said Neil—"the dry, hot, choky, smoky days and many other things, but now it seems as if everything had been fine and jolly; and, long afterward, it will seem jollier and better. Why do people generally remember the happy times and let the troublesome ones drop away?"

"You are a philosopher, Neil," said Mrs. Blackwood. "I think we remember joy longer than sorrow because goodness and joy are the permanent and real, and unhappiness and evil are negative and fleeting. I do not want to moralize and preach to you; I know that young people shrink from that; but let us carry this thought with us—the survival of the joyful remembrances is a teaching of that permanent blessedness to come: 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'"

Terence turned away his head. Joyce knew that he was thinking of the approaching parting

from his mother, and that he did not want any one to see that tears had come to his eyes.

Terence walked to the house with Joyce when his mother and Mollie had gone to their tent.

"Do try to spend a day with mater and Mollie now and then," he begged. "You are such a jolly good comrade, Joyce; and they will miss me—a boy about a house does make things a bit livelier, you know. I'll run up whenever I can; but if I buckle down to work I must not take too many week-ends off."

"Indeed I'll go as often as possible, Terence. But you see how it is—it would not be fair to leave Ruth here alone."

"No, of course not; but you will manage somehow. Get some one to stay with Ruth, and she will have her days off too."

Wilderfell appeared rather dreary to the house-dwellers when the campers had gone, and Ruth especially looked sad and pale. One evening when the children were asleep, and the elder girls were sitting together with the mending-basket between them, Joyce said abruptly—

"Ruth, it is too hard for you here; the place is too rough, the anxiety too great. You ought to have—your own home. Ruth—forgive me, but tell me—about Basil. Why has he never written? I know he wants to; I know he cares."

"I told him not to write—not for two years. I could not marry him now, so he is free; we are not engaged—I would not let him give any promise. I asked him not to write to any member of this family; and as his mother and Helen are in India, they are not likely to write here."

"I never promised I would not write to him."

"Oh, Joyce, don't; please don't! I know I did right. I will not leave father and the children. You do the best part, Joyce, I know that; but you could not do everything alone. If he does come in two years he will find me waiting; and if—he does not—still I shall know that I did what was right—and I shall bear it. Promise me that you will not write a line to him, to Helen, to any one about this. Joyce, that would make a real breach between us, and we have been such dear sisters. It is my right to ask it—to demand it."

"I promise," said Joyce reluctantly. "I must not interfere. And I am very sure indeed that he will not change, that he feels himself yours even if you would not let him make any promise. It was grand of you, Ruth; and I do fully believe that before two years have passed he will come."

In the morning Neil went to Ferndale, and returned with a letter from the father. It was the same sad story. He had been unable to sell his manuscripts, and men of experience in book publishing had told him that he might have to

wait for many months. He had spent his money and was indebted to his landlady. He had accepted a position as sales agent for some publishers, and was going from house to house trying to sell subscription books, with small success. He was deeply hurt by the rebuffs he had met in this venture and the discourtesy of the people whom he had approached.

The outlook was dismal. The family must face a long and cold winter without any assurance of means to provide food and clothing. At the family prayers that night Ruth lingered on the words, "Give us this day our daily bread"; and when she rose from her knees she said—

"Children, we must not forget that our Father in heaven cares for us, and will provide what we really need."

"Why, of course," said Winifred. "Such beautiful things grow everywhere—the beechnuts, and the butternuts, and the lovely red autumn leaves. The squirrels and chipmunks are filling their nests for the winter; they will not go hungry."

"The boys in my class are coming on Saturday to help us pick nuts," said Keith. "There are heaps of them this winter, and if we are too poor to buy anything else we can eat nuts. We can boil them, and roast them, and make soup of them, and roll them into flour for cakes and bread, and

crush them up for butter. Terence says there's lots of oil in them."

Winifred would not be outdone as a consoler.

"We have turnips and carrots and things in the cellar from our own garden, and we can catch fish even after the bay is frozen. The Indians get fish through holes in the ice. We are going to be very busy, because we must pick heaps of red and gold leaves to varnish and press for the winter, and dip the red rowan berries in something that keeps them looking fresh like those in Mrs. Brown's. This will be a very finely trimmed house."

In the following week Neil's and Keith's school-fellows came on several afternoons, as well as on Saturday, and filled two barrels with butternuts and bags with beechnuts for Wilderfell, besides carrying home heaping baskets for themselves.

Hallowe'en brought good cheer. The weather had been dry and fine, and Mrs. Blackwood, with Mollie and Terence, drove from Braybrook. Terence had come from Toronto to stay over Sunday.

"This is a surprise picnic," said Mrs. Blackwood, "so we have brought our baskets with us."

Keith's eyes sparkled, and he remarked aside to Winnie—

"Good for them! I'm tired of everlasting turnips and potatoes. And there's not enough of

them for all winter. I expect we'll be eating boiled bark off trees, like the people that were lost in the wilderness."

Supper was a merry meal, and a merrier time followed when the young people melted lead and poured it into cold water to try fortunes, burned nuts, and ducked for apples. Winifred remarked wistfully—

"If we had a piano we could finish with singing. Ruth plays good music."

"Indeed she does," said Terence thoughtfully. "She ought to have a piano, Winifred. Keep hoping and believing, and perhaps it will come."

"Oh, of course, when father sells his books; but we are rather tired of waiting."

Mrs. Blackwood glanced at the clock; she had seen that Ruth was disturbed by the child's remark.

"I must break up this merry party, for we have a long drive before us."

"I'm sorry," said Keith. "I wish it would go on being now without an ending. The only distressful thing about enjoyments is when they have to stop."

"You have the pleasure of hoping they will come again. Certainly we hope to come again, and to have, perhaps, even a happier time than this."

October had been a delightful month, with bracing air and sunshiny days. But November

brought heavy skies and a chilly, penetrating atmosphere. The leaden waters of the bay boomed dismally upon the shore; snowfalls, followed by thaw, made the roads almost impassable; and the conditions of weather affected the spirits of the Wilderfell household. The dwelling had not been substantially built, and cold air puffed through crevices of doors and windows.

Ruth, shivering by an open fire, asked—

“Why are we so chilly? Though we did not heat Woldhurst by furnace or steam radiators, such as the Braybrook people use, we did not feel the cold so much. Mrs. Blackwood says we must have stoves for the halls and bedrooms. But how are we to buy them?”

“I don't know,” sighed Joyce. “We feel the cold more because we have not had nourishing food; even the boys shiver and look blue. And Mrs. Brown says that English people generally do not feel the Canadian cold because it is so dry. Ruth, *we must* make money in one way or another for the children's clothes and food, and to repay the dear old aunts. That is nearly due. I have thought and thought and tried, but so far it has been unavailing. And how sordid it seems, this continual harping on money, money!”

“Don't say it has been unavailing, Joyce. You did so well with your flowers and preserves and fir cushions. Perhaps later some other way will

come for you and—for me. I do so much long to help more."

Joyce did not answer. She had gone to Ferndale in the afternoon, hoping that the English mail had brought a letter for her, and she had returned empty-handed. At intervals during the summer she had stolen away from the campers and her family, and had shut herself in Forest Cottage. In that secluded spot she had written and rewritten from drafts that she had made in leisure moments. - In the last week of August, full of hope and enthusiasm, she had sent her manuscripts to magazine editors. A lively story of adventure went to a periodical for boys, and an amusing description of the difficulties of young housekeepers in a new land was addressed to a magazine for girls. Since that time she had sent another descriptive article to an American magazine. Having no experience of the ways of editors, except in regard to her father's books, she had looked for an early answer; and as no word had come she had despondently concluded that her precious manuscripts had gone to the wastebasket.

November days grew bleaker; the Gordon family shivered in the cold rooms and halls, and the spirits of the girls went lower. There was wood in abundance in the neighbouring forest, and Neil was kept busy hauling and chopping it, so that

he no longer went to school with Keith. He had done occasional work by the day or hour for the farmers, but the season for the employment of extra hands had ended. The beginning of December brought storms and zero weather. The vegetables in the cellar were frozen, and Joyce often had to thaw the bread for breakfast before she could cut and toast it. The snowdrifts were so heavy that Keith could not go to school, and Neil had difficulty in hauling the necessary firewood over the deep, soft snow.

“What numbskulls we were that we did not pile enough wood in the shed and the yard to last for the winter!” said Neil. “The Browns have cords and cords of it ready to use. It should be hauled one year to dry for the next. This green wood is so slow to burn.”

“Mr. Brown says that this November is the coldest he remembers,” remarked Keith. “Sometimes there is no snow in December. As soon as the storms are over and the snow is packed, a lot of boys are coming to help us to chop and haul; then we can have big, blazing fires and keep warm.”

Soon after the snowstorms had ceased Mollie Blackwood arrived one afternoon with an air of importance, and announced that she had come uninvited to spend the night. The sleighing was good, as the past two days had been clear and

cold. She had taken the train to Ferndale and a farmer's sleigh from the station to the entrance of Wilderfell drive.

"She has a secret, a very big secret," whispered Winifred to Keith. "It sounds in her voice and all over her. She can't help showing it."

A part of the secret was soon disclosed, for a heavy sleigh, carrying two large stoves, arrived at the back door.

"Mamma sent them," announced Mollie excitedly. "She has been so worried about you since this awfully cold snap. The landlord put a furnace in our house this year, but we could not take out the stoves till yesterday because the furnace was not working properly. The largest one is for your hall, with a drum above for the upper hall. There are stovepipe holes in every room, so Captain Ferris must have intended to use them. The smaller stove is to fit in the wall between Ruth's and Joyce's rooms and heat them both. The men will put up the hall stove now; they have everything ready, and on Monday they will cut the place in the wall for the other one. You can bank the fires at night so there will be coals in the morning, and you will not have to get up in freezing rooms."

"I'm so thankful, so very thankful!" exclaimed Ruth. "And how good and thoughtful your mother is! Sometimes I have felt that I had

not the courage to get out of bed in the bitter cold, and now we shall be so comfortable. I feel as if everything is going to be better."

Mollie's eyes twinkled, and Winifred cried—

"Look at her! Look at her face! There's more of it, more secrets. Listen, Keith—sleigh bells! Come and see what it is."

The pair rushed off, and presently Keith rushed back.

"Mollie! Joyce! another sleigh is coming with an enormous box! Oh, Mollie, what is it? You know; I'm sure you know!"

Mollie shook her head and made no answer, and with one accord the family ran to the back veranda and awaited the approaching load.

"Say, miss," cried the driver, "have you got another man about here? This pyano'll be hard to get into the house."

"Piano!" gasped Ruth.

"Piano!" exclaimed Winifred. "Where did it come from? It can't be for us."

"Well, that's mighty queer. Didn't you know it was comin'? Ain't you Gordons of Wilderfell?"

"Yes, we are Gordons; this is Wilderfell," answered Ruth.

"It's all right," said Mollie. "I knew it was coming, and the men who are putting up the stoves will help you. Terence thought of it, Ruth. The Carews—you remember you met Mrs. Carew and

Jean at our house last spring—are going to Ottawa for the winter. Mr. Carew is member for this county. Then Mrs. Carew and the girls are going to travel for a year, so their house in Braybrook will be closed. They are storing their furniture, and when we suggested that the piano would be kept in better condition with you than in storage they were delighted. I took it on myself to say that you would be delighted too. And I hope you are, Ruth. I do think you will enjoy it."

"Enjoy it!" faltered Ruth. "Oh, Mollie, I can't tell you—how I have missed it! And the children—it will make them so happy."

"And Haldane, the piano man in Braybrook, is going to send a tuner to-morrow," continued Mollie. "Mrs. Carew says you need not fear to let the children use it, because it is quite an old piano, but in good condition."

Joyce had gone to the pantry to survey her stores, for the men should have something to eat after their long drive. The prospect was not encouraging. She saw before her only a loaf of bread and some cold potatoes.

"I can give them only tea without milk and sugar, butterless bread, and fried potatoes—rather poor fare," she reflected. Then she heard Mollie's voice.

"Open the door, Joyce, please. My hands are busy with my basket. Mamma said that as you

are so far from your base of supplies she would send something for the hungry workmen. She was spicing a round of beef to send to Terence, and she spiced one for you at the same time. I have a cake for the children, a bottle of milk, and some butter and sugar. And here's a box of biscuits; it is always well to have some on hand."

"Oh, I'm so thankful!" said Joyce fervently. "Mollie, your mother thinks of everything. We can never, never repay her!"

"Pax!" cried Mollie. "Don't talk of repaying. The pleasure is ours. She cannot repay you for that."

When the men sat down to the fare that Joyce had spread for them, Keith and Winnie watched them with so much interest that Ruth hastily called them out of the room and reproached them for rudeness.

"Pshaw! they're not shy," said Keith. "We like to see them put their knives in their mouths without cutting themselves. You couldn't do it, Ruth."

"You must stay with me," insisted Ruth. "I am going to try the piano."

The sound of the piano quickly brought the men to the parlour, with cups of tea in their hands.

"I say, miss," remarked the driver, "that's music—the genuyne article. It sounds like it went

out of the very soul of you into them piano notes."

When the men had departed Joyce looked over the fragments that remained on the table.

"They've eaten nearly all the butter, and there's only a crust of bread left and a small piece of cake. We've breakfast to think of, as well as supper to-night. I must send the boys to farmer Brown's for butter, milk, and eggs, and pay for them later. I will, I will find a way!"

It was growing dark, but the boys readily set out for the farm. They came back in high glee, and Keith shouted, as soon as he had opened the outer door—

"Ruth, I'm a fine business agent. I've got four piano pupils for you. The two Miss Parkers were taking tea with the Browns, and when we told them about the piano, they all said they had been wanting a teacher and could not go so far as Braybrook. They think two Salters and two Cranes will want lessons too, if you will give them. They can't afford to pay for two girls in each family, but they'll pay for one in money and the other in trade—I mean flour and poultry and butter and things. They get their own flour ground at the mill. Mrs. Brown said that would be better for them and for you, because they always have lots of things—sometimes more than they can eat or sell."

Ruth sat down at the table and began to sob.

"Pl-please d-don't mind. I'm too gl-glad to b-bear it. We had n-no f-food and n-no m-money, and n-n-ow everything is all right, and I'm t-too h-happy!"

"It's a queer way of showing it," remarked Keith; "but girls are very queer. I hope you won't cry more because Mrs. Brown sent a basket of apples. That's not for the lessons. She threw it in with the milk and butter to show good feeling."

CHAPTER XII

Many Blessings

THE Wilderfell house was now warm and comfortable. The sons of neighbouring farmers had helped Neil and Keith to chop and haul a winter store of wood. Their fathers in turn had lent ox-teams for the purpose of hauling, and much of the wood was under cover in the large shed. The fuel was without cost, for Captain Ferris had given Mr. Gordon permission to cut down as many trees as he chose. The farmer's lads always treated Ruth and Joyce with great respect, but were on terms of easy familiarity with Neil and Keith. Ruth had eight music pupils, for whom she received generous payment in farm products. She had grown happier and more hopeful; but Joyce appeared depressed, and Ruth tried in vain to cheer her by assuring her that the work she did in the house was of more value than the teaching of music.

"I could do housework and earn too if I knew how and where to do it," Joyce answered dismally. "All my plans have failed lately; and we do

need money, Ruth. We have better food, thanks to your music ; but the children's clothes have been mended so often that they will soon be mere patchwork, and their boots are in holes.€ They must have strong ones for going out in the snow."

In long-continued stormy weather the boys were often restless ; but they had merry times on fine days, tobogganing and snowshoeing. They skated, too, on the river and the shallow ponds, and longed for the freezing of the bay, when they could skate to Braybrook. When the sky was overcast, and the dull waves boomed mournfully, Joyce, who was readily affected by atmospheric changes, grew more despondent.

"What is the matter with me?" she asked herself. "I used to be able to fight and down it ; but I don't know how to take hold of this blue-black mood. If I could strike out and accomplish something, I could brace up."

One day she walked to the Ferndale post-office. Though she had tried to make up her mind philosophically to accept the belief that her manuscripts had gone to the waste-basket, hope still lingered, and on this morning she felt a conviction that something awaited her. Ruth had observed her walking rapidly back and forth on the bank, stopping now and then to look out over the dark, rolling water. It was her habit to

pace to and fro when she was anxious or excited, and Ruth had wondered what was on her mind.

When she entered the post-office, the gossip-loving postmaster remarked—

“I have an English letter for you, Miss Gordon ; but I guess it isn't from any of your folks. It looks like a business one from a magazine.”

Joyce caught her breath ; her face flushed and grew pale, and she held out her hand for the letter. Alas ! It was a long and thick envelope, as thick and long as that in which she had sent her story. Her heart sank. It had come back ; she knew that without breaking the seal, and she did not break it till she was at home again, and could shut herself into her room, after telling Winifred that she must not be disturbed.

The usual printed note of rejection accompanied the returned manuscript, with a pencilled line—

“You should have sent English stamps for return. Canadian stamps are not of use here.”

She shook her head impatiently.

“How stupid of me ; how very stupid ! And I sent Canadian stamps to that American magazine too. It was polite of the editor even to return this, and no doubt he thinks that a person with so little common sense is not capable of writing an article.”

Heavy-heartedly she prepared the dinner, and after dinner, feeling that she must have some

outlet for her woes, she sought Neil in his work-room upstairs. She could not speak of it yet ; without a word she handed him the returned manuscript and the rejection slip.

He glanced over it.

" Why, Joyce," he exclaimed, " how sporting of you ! How did you ever find time to write this and never let any one know ? It looks good too."

" No, it is not good. If it had been, they would not have sent it back."

" Oh, but they have hundreds and hundreds sent in, so many more than they can possibly use ; and men who have seen so much life—soldiers and explorers and navigators—write stories for them. Even old practised writers have stories rejected. I know, because a boy at my old school used to try, and they all came back. He typed his ; he said the editors would not look at them unless they were typed, so he hired a machine. He let me practise on it. I can type very well."

Joyce sighed.

" I can't afford to buy or hire a machine, and it would be of no use, for I have no time now. Last summer, when the Blackwoods helped us so much, and we lived a sort of picnic life, there was comparatively little work to do. So that ambition is done for, and more dead than poor father's books, for he goes on hoping, hoping, in spite of every set-back."

"No ; it's not done for. You'll succeed one day. A story of our fire last summer would interest people ; and boys would like a description of this place, just as it stands, the trees, the birds, the kinds of fish, the insects I have collected ; the queer old beaver meadow. I say, Joyce, I have never used my camera. It was packed in the bottom of one of father's boxes. It's there in Forest Cottage. We'll make a good article between us. You'll have to write it ; I never had reason to be proud of my school compositions ; but I can give you plenty of notes. We'll find time, and we'll make it succeed."

"Thank you, Neil ; you have made me feel better. I don't understand why I lose heart so easily now."

He looked at her thoughtfully.

"You were only seventeen in August, Joyce, and you look twenty or more. You have grown so tall, and that's enough to make you tired. Ruth is stronger than she was in England ; it has done her good. She is so slim and fair, perhaps that is why she looks younger than you."

Joyce smiled.

"Your remarks are not quite complimentary, Neil."

"Brothers generally tell the straight truth. But I think my remarks are complimentary. You have done so much, and thought so hard, thinking and

planning for every one. As to looking old, I look more than sixteen, and feel it too. The boys call me a regular old fogey. But coming here has been good for me, Joyce. I was fond of studying and wandering by myself; and if I had stayed at Woldhurst, and gone mooning about, I might have grown unpractical like father. I shall never be that now. I've had to grapple with things just as they are."

"I wish you could study, Neil; go to the university with Terence. Would you like to be a doctor too?"

"Yes, I should like it very much indeed; but I am not going to think of that. I can learn a great deal here from books, and I can learn practical farming too. It's strange that all these acres of splendid land should have gone uncultivated for so many years. If it was our own, it would cost a good deal to clear it; but Mr. Brown says that the timber could be sold at a profit. We might grow some grain on the meadowland. I'm going to have a try at it in the spring."

"Good for you!" said Joyce; "and I'm not going to get in doleful dumps again, Neil. I'm going back to work, and sing over it."

The next day snow fell heavily, so heavily that Keith could not venture to school through the drifts. Wilderfell was cut off from the outer world, and the children, confined to the house,

were irritable and restless. Joyce tried to divert them by tales of snowbound folk, and promised that when the storm abated they should dig paths and build snow forts.

On the fourth day Neil went to Ferndale and brought back a letter from his father.

Alone with Joyce, Ruth announced—

“Father can't come home for Christmas. He is dreadfully discouraged, and I am afraid he is ill. I wish we could send him a money-order, so that at least he might have some comforts at Christmas-time ; but—it is not possible.”

“No ; I am afraid it is not. I'll walk to Ferndale to-morrow. Sometimes a long, quick walk gives me ideas. I'm badly in need of them.”

It sounded strange to her, like the repetition of words in a dream, when the postmaster at Ferndale said to her again—

“I have a letter for you, Miss Gordon. It looks like a business one from a magazine.”

Her heart did not beat faster this time. She held out her hand mechanically. Another manuscript returned. She had ceased to expect the return. But this was a small envelope ! It bore the address of an American magazine to which she had sent her descriptive article. Her heart beat faster now ; her hand trembled so that she could hardly tear open the envelope ! When she held a cheque in her trembling fingers, her eyes

were so misty that at first she could not read. The mists cleared, and she saw that the cheque was for seventy-five dollars! Her wildest hopes had not reached half that amount. Bewildered with delight, she stood before the counter, unmindful of her surroundings, till Jones remarked with evident interest—

"It seems to have brought you good news, Miss Gordon?"

"Oh, yes, indeed; the best kind of news! I am so happy I hardly remembered that I came to buy. Here is a list, Mr. Jones, and my brothers will call for the basket, and please add a jar of honey. I will give the children a treat."

Outside of the shop, she saw farmer Brown's sleigh, and hailed the boy who was driving.

"Bobbie Brown, can you take me to your farm? Do you know if your father has a cow for sale, one that will give lots of milk?"

"Why, yes, Miss Gordon; it just happens that he has. He bought some stock cheap from a man that came in for money and was giving up his place here; and there's a fine cow. Mother can't tend to more than she has now."

"I'll buy it, and the children can have milk every day. Often we cannot send to the farm."

On the way to the farm Joyce told of the acceptance of her manuscript, and Bob gazed at her in open-eyed admiration.

"Land sakes, Miss Joyce! Are you going to have your own pieces printed? How proud we'll be to see them, and to say that we'd often met you."

Farmer Brown was standing by his gate, looking up the road.

"Mr. Brown," cried Joyce, "I've come to ask you to sell me that cow you don't want. I have a cheque, and I will endorse it to your order."

Once more young Bobbie expressed his admiration.

"My, but you are business-like, Miss Gordon! Our girls don't know nothin' about endorsin' cheques."

His father laughed.

"Are you going to begin farming, Miss Gordon? I have an excellent cow for sixty-five dollars. I was going to mention it in Braybrook market on Saturday."

Joyce clapped her hands.

"I have enough and to spare. Will you sell me some bran and hay and whatever she eats in the winter? We'll have pasturage in plenty on our place in the spring. My cheque is for seventy-five dollars. I shall be obliged if you will have it cashed and give me the balance. I want to take it home with me. It won't be quite so exciting as the piano, but every one will be delighted."

"You do like to do things in dramatic style,

Miss Joyce. Come and look at the cow, and if you are satisfied, Bob will drive you home, and I will send Smithers along with your property."

When Joyce had inspected her purchase and declared that the cow was a beauty, she went to the farmhouse, where Bob had already told the story of her success.

"We'll buy that magazine when it comes out," said Lizzie Brown. "Think of knowing a real live authoress, and having pieces printed about places near by!"

Mira rose suddenly and came to Joyce's side.

"Oh, Miss Joyce, that reminds me of something we've talked over among ourselves, I mean the Salters and Cranes and Parkers too. One day when we were talking to Miss Gordon after our lesson—one of the class lessons when she was giving us a sort of catechism on the theory of music—we heard you reading to the children, and we asked leave to stop and listen. We all said that you could read most beautiful, and your sister told us you used to take special lessons from a master that came down to your place from Oxford. Now, we'd like to have lessons in reading aloud. Father and mother are willing, and so are all the others. Then you can have plenty of feed for your cow all winter, and something to spare, without paying out any more of your money. We've all learned elocution, speaking pieces at school; but we don't

read aloud worth a cent ; and very few people seem to practise it specially. It's a beautiful way of spending dull winter evenings, one reading aloud and the others working."

"We find it so," said Joyce. "I often read aloud in the evenings, if I am not too tired. Often, especially of late, I have not had enough energy after the day's work."

"And small blame to you," remarked Mrs. Brown. "You've been just splendid, my dear. The pity of it is that your mother is not here to be proud of her fine daughters."

Joyce put up her hands.

"Oh—don't—I—" Then she said quickly : "About the class : I'm sure I shall be very glad if I can help you. Did you think of any book or author that you would prefer to study?"

"We thought we should like regular English literature lessons," answered Lizzie, "but not too dry, like the text-books in school. Alice Crane thought a course of Dickens or Scott, or any other writer you might wish, would be nice. We thought we might read aloud in turn, with you correcting us, and showing us how ; then we could have a talk about the books and the writers. We would read some at home and study it up. The boys wouldn't join ; they'd rather read dime novels about bandits and wild Indians, and things that never happened. And we've read a pile of trash

too. Our fathers and mothers will all be pleased if we get on to something better."

"It would have to be in the evening," said Mira. "We've more spare time then. Might we go to Wilderfell twice a week, evenings? We could call for one another in turn on different evenings, and all pile into a big farm sleigh and drive over together."

Joyce readily assented, with the reservation—

"If father comes home it might disturb him, and I should have to teach you elsewhere. But meanwhile it will be all right."

"That father! They'd be much better off without him," said Mira to Lizzie in a too audible whisper.

Joyce heard and coloured, and Mrs. Brown shot a reproving glance at her indiscreet daughter. She hastened to make amends.

"Everybody that really knows him has a great respect for your father, Miss Joyce. He is such a good man. He does not look as if he'd ever had an evil thought or done an evil deed; and so handsome and intellectual appearing. And no one could truthfully call him idle. He works so hard at the only kind of work he knows. As the Rev. Mr. Barnes from Ferndale said the other day—and there was a lot of folks here at the time—'The difficulty is that he understands the world of books so much better than the world of men.'

But some day, my dear, some good day, all that learning and hard work of his will have its reward. You mark my words."

"Thank you, Mrs. Brown. I do so much thank you for saying that. I am glad that Mr. Barnes spoke so kindly; it will help to remove from people's minds misunderstanding about father. In England, very great men used to come to our house to talk to father about his researches; and he gave addresses before learned societies. But he does not know how to make money or to take care of it. We must try to do that for him; and perhaps sometime, as you say, his very hard work will have its reward."

Farmer Brown, who had been listening in silence, suddenly remarked—

"While we are a sort of on this subject, Miss Joyce, I presume you have heard sometimes things that folks say about the English who come out here, things that couldn't exactly be called complimentary; but there's never a word said against the right sort of English. Why should there be? Aren't most of the folks here, except the French Canadians, descended from the English settlers, the men who fought and worked and suffered too, in the old pioneer days? And when the likes of them come here now they find hands put out to welcome them. But there's a powerful lot of good-for-nothings that are not and never will be

welcome. Young fellows brought up in idleness that don't know how to work, and that wouldn't work if they did know how—fellows that sponge on hard-working folks, and then sneer at colonials, and call them 'natives' and 'half-breeds.' They insult our boys by the things they say and the things they do ; and then our boys sneer back and talk back, and there's bad blood. Sometimes they reform and make good ; but mostly they end by going to the dogs. Excuse me for talking so ; but it's so often made my blood boil."

"I understand," said Joyce. "I've seen it for myself ; and it has made me angry too. But I am sorry, sorry, for that poor young man, Mr. Ivor Glyn. My brother saw him in Braybrook the other day, thinly clad and shivering with cold ; and he looked so dreadfully white and ill."

"Ah, yes ; we are sorry enough for him," said Mrs. Brown. "Pa brought him here the other day in the sleigh ; and we warmed him up, and gave him some nourishing broth. He has been idle, poor fellow, and wasted his father's money till the father wouldn't help him any more ; but he always kept a civil tongue in his head ; he always acted the gentleman, and now that he's willing to go to work he hasn't the strength to do it. But what do you think the one that's with him is doing now, and him the Honourable Eric Weldron that turned up his nose at trade when he first came over? He's

driving a grocer's cart—or sleigh it is now—in Braybrook ; and in his odd times he is learning carpentering. He says he has no taste for farming ; but he always liked a hammer and chisel and tools. He's going to be a practical carpenter, and go up to Manitoba or Alberta, where such men are needed ; and he tries to cheer up Mr. Glyn by saying he'll take him along. I believe he will go up there and make good ; but the other will not be with him."

No one spoke for a few moments, then Mira said—

"We'll help him all we can ; but we'll not get gloomy over it now. Sometimes there is a real funny side to the young 'remittance men.' One called Richard Blythe—everybody liked him, though he was lazy and idle as could be—used to come here and show us the letters and drawings he was sending to his parents. He was living at the Queen's Hotel in Braybrook ; and he sent home pictures of his hut in the wilderness, and him shooting wild animals out of his windows. He drew them himself ; he was clever at that, and at other things, too, if he would have set his mind to them. The last we heard of him he was cook for a lumber camp. When he did not get any more remittances, he went to work."

Farmer Brown turned to Joyce.

"Miss Gordon, if you go on with your magazine

writing, I can tell you lots of stories of adventures in my grandfather's time, when there was really bears and wild animals in these parts, and the country was a wilderness. I know scores of them, and they'd make good reading, only I never had the skill to write them. And there's another thing : if you'd like to write up about farm-life, and things settlers even now have to face, I can give you the practical side of it. If you'd come here and take down the notes, it would be ever so interesting to me ; and we'd be proud to see the things in print."

" But—that would be your work, Mr. Brown, not mine."

" No, indeed ; it would be your lit'ry skill and knowledge. All I want is to read it after it's printed ; nothing whatever more. So, will you come and listèn, and see what you can do with it? "

" Most thankfully. And now I must hurry home ; my sister will be anxious, and the cow should be there before dark."

" I do wish we could be at your place to see the surprise when the cow gets there," said Mira.

" Come then, both of you," said Bob. " There's room enough in the sleigh. It will help to give the cow a rousin' welcome."

Ruth, who had wondered what had kept Joyce so late, was on the veranda, looking toward the

woodland road, when the sleigh appeared with its lively occupants, followed by the farmer's man leading a cow.

"Oh, Joyce, Joyce," shouted Winifred; "whose cow is that? Where did it come from? Did Mr. Brown lend it to us?"

"Lend! No, indeed!" shouted Lizzie in response. "Your sister bought it with her own money, cash down. We have a bag of feed tied to the back of the sleigh. You are going to make butter for yourselves, if you young ones don't want too much cream. You'll have a regular dairy after a while. There's pasturage enough here for a dozen cows."

"But how did she get the money—how?" clamoured Keith; and while Joyce was giving directions for the stabling of the cow, Lizzie hastened to tell the glad tale. Ruth invited every one to drink a cup of tea in honour of the occasion, and said she was ready to weep for pure joy; but when the Browns had gone, Joyce turned to her anxiously—

"Ruth, was I too hasty? Should I have kept the money for the children's clothes, and to send to father? I can send him five dollars, only to buy some comforts for Christmas, and that will leave five dollars for overshoes."

"It's the best thing you could have done, dear. By having our own milk and butter we can save

money for other things. We shall all flourish and grow fat."

"Then hurrah for the cow!" cried Joyce

"And you can have another hurrah. While you were at Ferndale, the clergyman, Mr. Barnes, called. The organist of his church is going to be married, and he wants me to play the organ on Sunday mornings, and give one evening in the week to the choir practice. He told me it is a poor little organ—we know that—but I told him I would do my best with it. The farmers in turn will call for us and take you and me and the little girls to church. The boys can walk. And some one will call with a sleigh to take me to the choir practice. On the same evening, after practising the hymns for the next Sunday, I am to have a class in singing at sight in the parish rooms. And for all I shall have three dollars a week. That is a great deal for these people to pay; for most of them are not well off. I think Mr. Barnes arranged the class so I should receive more. I only wish I could give my services, and I told him so. He said they would gladly pay—that his parishioners were quite delighted when he proposed it."

"Oh, good! If new ways of earning our living continue to spring on us, we shall be investing in stocks and bonds. I shall write an article on 'How My Sister Trained the Village Choir.' I am sure it ought to be a very amusing one. Oh,

I almost forgot one thing, Ruth ; I shall have to hire a typewriter. The editor who took my article said it might have been rejected without reading because it was not typed. It has not been printed yet ; they pay on acceptance. I can work a machine very well. Father's secretary taught me when he was typing father's manuscripts. I became quite expert, and did pages and pages. I'll ask Mollie if I can hire one in Braybrook. And, Ruth, when I send the money to father I will not tell him I have sold an article. He would never be jealous—that is not in him ; but it might make him feel even more keenly than he feels now that he had failed. Ah ! I am sorry for him, so sorry ! ”

CHAPTER XIII

A Happy Christmas

THE day before Christmas came Mr. Gordon's letter, thanking his daughters for the money they had sent ; Ruth had added her contribution to Joyce's. The poor father could not conceal his sadness and discouragement.

" I have tried so hard for your sakes," he wrote, " and it has been so useless. My children are earning the bread, and I am a drag and a hindrance. Yet I am thankful, most thankful, for your loving thought of me, and relieved that you are not suffering because I have failed."

Ruth answered at once—

" Father dear, we all believe in your work. Some day it will bring you the success you deserve. You have set us the example of an honourable life, and no little thing we can do for you can repay you for that."

Before noon Mr. Brown's laden sleigh arrived at the door.

" These fixings is not only from the Brown family," announced Bob. " Most of them is from

the church folks, on account of the fine way Miss Ruth has trained them for Christmas, and the scroll Miss Joyce did for the church. It doesn't matter who sent what. We put our heads together so there would be enough of each sort."

He brought out, first, two turkeys—one dressed for to-morrow's dinner, the other frozen, to be hung in the pantry till needed. There followed a ham, a roast of beef, a crock of butter and a box of packed eggs, a barrel of apples, a bag of buckwheat for pancakes, maple sugar, syrup, and honey. Then appeared mince-pies and a plum-pudding, loaves of raisin bread, plum-cake, and cookies.

In the afternoon farmer Salter came with another load.

"I happened to be at the station," he explained, "and when I saw the things marked with your name I thought it would be too bad if you did not have them for Christmas. I've brought letters, too, from the post-office."

The "things" were large boxes from aunts and cousins in England, and the children, eager to see the contents, pressed close upon their sisters.

"Go away!" commanded Joyce. "Go away this moment, and stay away! Keith and Winnie, you must take charge of Christobel; and if you come here before we have everything taken out

and put by for to-morrow, you shall not see one thing that is in there. I mean it, and you know when I say I mean it I do not change."

Keith reluctantly took Christobel's hand, and Winifred followed. If they did not obey, Joyce would keep her word and their Christmas would be spoiled.

That night the children hung their stockings on the high fender of the parlour fireplace, and long before daylight on Christmas morning they roused the household. Ruth had left the fire in the hall stove banked, so it could be brought to a cheerful glow in the early morning. The children were comfortable in the warm dressing-gowns and slippers that the aunts had sent—the first presents on which their eyes had rested when they woke. As the stockings could not hold all the gifts, large baskets contained the greater part. Winifred's voice rose higher and shriller as she drew forth the contents of her basket. She had not worn colours since her mother's death, but now the aunts Jean and Ruth had sent to each little one a plaid dress and a crimson one.

"I did truly love my dear mother," said Winifred, in apology for her delight. "But a person can feel just as sorry or as glad inside, no matter what she puts on outside; and I believe mother would be glad to have us wear these pretty frocks. Don't you, Joycie?"

"Yes, dearie. If mother knows, she is glad that you are happy; and she would wish you to wear the pretty dress."

"And you and Ruth must have yours made very soon," added Winifred, gazing with admiring eyes at the garnet cloth and navy-blue serge.

Neil had privately written to his aunts, informing them that the "colonial natives" were clad in accordance with the latest fashions; and the good women, accepting the hint, had enclosed in their letter a money-order with which to pay the best Braybrook dressmaker.

There were suits for the boys, hats and coats for the girls, and warm underclothing for all. A smaller box held carving-tools, music for Ruth, and books for Joyce and Neil.

Neil made the kitchen fire and put on the kettle, and Joyce tried her prentice hand at buckwheat cakes, for which she had set the batter on the previous evening. The boys said she was born to be a cook, and passed their plates for hot cakes and maple syrup, until Joyce warned them that if they ate so much they would not have appetites for dinner.

There was a hurry to wash the dishes and dress for church, but every one was ready when the farmers Brown and Parker called with their big, comfortable sleighs. The little wooden church looked beautiful in its Christmas trimming of

green, red berries of the mountain ash taking the place of holly in the decorations.

After the service many of the congregation congratulated Ruth on the beauty of the carols. The young rector said this had been the most enjoyable service of his ministry in Ferndale; and Mrs. Jones declared that St. Basil's had never heard such music before, and that "one might shut one's eyes and most think she was down in St. James's Cathedral in Toronto."

The return from church was delayed by the greetings and congratulations, and dinner was late; but dishes had been washed and everything put away in good order when the jingle of sleigh bells announced the coming of the Blackwoods.

Their sleigh also was laden, and the first large bundle disclosed two pairs of crimson curtains.

"My friend Mrs. Sinclair gave them to me when she closed her house and went back to England," said Mrs. Blackwood. "I cannot use them with our green carpets and paper, but they will look well in your rooms; and Mrs. Sinclair would be so glad for you to have them."

"Indeed they will look well," said Ruth, "and make our rooms so cheerful! The windows did look cold. We tried to brighten them with autumn leaves and red berries, but now we can draw the

curtains when it is dark and dreary outside ; and with a fire in this big fireplace it will be delightful ! ”

“ How that girl has changed ! ” remarked Terence to his mother. “ She used to be languid and lackadaisical, and now she is almost as lively as Joyce.” Aloud he said, “ With Neil’s help I’ll put up those curtains before we go. Mater and Mollie would like to see the effect.”

Mrs. Blackwood and Mollie had brought also of the work of their hands—dolls, with a fine outfit of clothing for the little ones, knitted mufflers for the boys, and clouds for the girls.

In turn, Ruth presented lace collars and cuffs, over which she had strained her eyes in many a long evening. Joyce gave doilies, on which she had etched pictures of camp-life ; and Winifred proudly exhibited kettle-holders. Neil and Keith had carved a bracket and bookrack for Mrs. Blackwood with the fret-saws and carving-tools they had brought to Wilderfell.

“ All of us made nice things for the Browns and Parkers,” said Keith, “ and they were ever so pleased.”

When the curtains had been hung and admired the boys went with Terence to try their new skates, and the girls sat with Mrs. Blackwood by the fire till the skaters returned. After tea Mrs. Blackwood joined in the games as merrily as the children, and

the evening closed with the singing of Christmas carols.

"I had dreaded this Christmas," confided Ruth before she said good-bye; "but though we have thought very often and anxiously of father, and though we could not help remembering other days, we have been very, very happy."

"And there are many happy days to come for you. It was a hard struggle for such young girls, but the worst is over, I feel sure. Take care of Joyce; don't let her work too hard. She is so ambitious, so eager. Hold her back a little if you can; everything depends on your all keeping well "

CHAPTER XIV

Daughters of the Empire—Tableaux

MOLLIE arrived at Wilderfell in her breeziest style—eyes sparkling, cheeks aglow, hair, loosened by exercise, hanging in red-brown ripples over her shoulders.

“What a show I am!” she exclaimed, as she caught a glimpse of her dishevelled self in Joyce’s glass. “Never mind; I’ll coil up my hair and put myself in order while I’m telling you. I left my snowshoes on the veranda. It was splendid coming across the bay this morning—the snow so crisp and the air so clear! One drinks it in, and it goes through one’s veins like wine—wine of good health. I don’t drink any other kind, you know; neither does Terence, and he says he does not intend to. I’m not going to snowshoe back. I’m going by the train, with Joyce and her trunk. Yes, I’ve come to borrow Joyce for a week—a whole week, not a day short of it.”

“Oh, I’m so glad!” said Ruth. She had followed Mollie into Joyce’s room and had eagerly awaited her news.

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"But, Mollie, I can't; I can't possibly go," protested Joyce. "I will not leave all the house-work and everything else for Ruth to do; and I have my reading-classes twice a week, and a story and an article to finish. A girls' magazine in England to which I sent a story last September has published it, and paid me two pounds. The editor asked for a descriptive article, and I am in the middle of it."

"Let it wait. You will be all the brighter and better able to finish it in a wideawake style when you come back. You are not well, Joyce; you are doing too much. Terence noticed it when he was here at Christmas. He said we must put the brakes on you—not let you burn the candle at both ends." Mollie never paid any heed to the mixing of metaphors. "I'm going to find Neil. He will do all your work, and take your reading-class too. Ruth could do it, but she has not time. Neil reads splendidly, and it will be good discipline for him—take him out of himself. He's rather shy; he does not half show what is in him."

"Yes, Neil can read well; he took lessons with me. Mr. Benson said he had a great deal of dramatic talent, but you couldn't induce him to teach a class of girls. He would run away and hide at the suggestion."

"Come and try. Oh, there he goes, hurrying off somewhere. Winnie, run your very fastest and

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catch him. Tell him I must see him at once on a matter of the utmost importance."

Winnie sped forth, and Mollie, who had arranged her hair becomingly, went with the elder girls to the parlour, talking all the while.

"It is for tableaux we especially want Joyce. Only yesterday Elise Travers, who was staying with our friends the Kenyons, and who was to take two leading parts, had to go hurriedly off to Toronto. She is tall and dark like Joyce, and she was to have been Marguerite on the Isle of Demons in three scenes, and Evangeline in a series of tableaux. All the tableaux are in connection with Canada or Canadian history, and this entertainment will be given by the Daughters of the Empire. They gave a delightful fête last year on Empire Day—May twenty-fourth, you know; that was out-of-doors. The tableaux will be in aid of the Victoria Hospital, in Braybrook, to endow a bed; and later we want to build a new wing."

"Joyce, you would like to help the hospital," urged Ruth. "And I am sure you could take the parts. We so often had tableaux at home, and you posed so naturally."

"But that was only in the schoolroom, or, at Christmas-time, in the drawing-room for our own relatives."

"You will do it just as well, Joyce, before a Braybrook crowd," said Mollie. "We are to have

three rehearsals, and the tableaux will be given in public next Friday evening. All the costumes are ready for you. Elise Travers left what she had for any one who might take her part, and they will fit you perfectly. If you'll do it—and of course you will—Mr. Kenyon has promised to send a big sleigh to convey the whole Gordon family across the ice on Thursday afternoon. Yes, Winnie—I see you've brought back Neil—you are to come too; and you will all sleep in our house—somehow, somewhere. Terence is coming. I persuaded the committee to change from Thursday to Friday so he might come and not miss any lectures. Neil, I'm going to take Joyce to Braybrook for a week, and you are to do her work and teach her classes."

Neil blushed very red.

"Teach a girls' class! No, indeed I won't. They can skip one week. And that concert, or whatever it is, will be on Friday; that is one of their nights, and they'll all want to go to Braybrook for it. They can skip the other. But I'll do the work. I am a dandy cook; and I'll sweep, wash dishes, make beds, bake, wash, iron—do everything that Joyce does. I'm glad she is going; she is working herself to a skeleton."

"You need not trouble about the laundry-work, Neil," said Ruth. "Mrs. O'Shea will come on Monday to do that, and we will ask her to stay in the house on Thursday night when we are

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away. I promise Joyce that I will not do anything more while she is gone than I do when she is here. Neil will help me thoroughly well, and I will hire Mrs. O'Shea for an extra day. So, Joyce, you must go, to oblige Mrs. Blackwood, as well as for your own sake."

"I can't refuse now," said Joyce. "But I am afraid I am thinking most of how much I shall enjoy it."

The boys took Joyce's small trunk on a hand-sleigh to Ferndale station, and Mollie and Joyce walked beside them. On the short journey by train to Braybrook Mollie explained—

"It seems rather odd that the chairman of the committee for this entertainment by the Daughters of the Empire is an American born; so is her husband. But they have been naturalized, and now they are very enthusiastic Canadians. He is Mr. Peyton, head of the great Peyton Lumber Company. They have miles of timber lands, and a model village at Ninatuk, where their mills are. Mr. Peyton has really made the village, and he gave it that Indian name. He has built a library, bowling-alley, and all sorts of things for his men. He has other mills on the North Shore, near the timber lands. And oh, Joyce, that would be a good thing for you to write about! He offered to take us up in the spring in his large motor-boat; and if we could go in the Easter holidays, when

Terence is at home, and you could come with us, you could see the big rafts of lumber brought down the river to the lake, and the men taking them to the mills. It is a long way from Braybrook. We'd have to travel for a day and a night, I think; and it would be cold, but glorious. I'm sure I can arrange it. But now, about the tableaux. We have all the rehearsals at the Peyton place, on the outskirts of Braybrook; and you will enjoy seeing that too. It has beautiful grounds, and is beautiful in every way, because they are rich and spend lavishly."

On the afternoon of the first rehearsal, when the two girls went together to Eildon Mere, the Peyton home, Joyce's delight fully realized Mollie's expectations. Though the gardens were covered with snow, Joyce could see the slope of the lawn from the house to the bay shore, and the splendid elms and oaks in the park. Mollie explained that Mr. Peyton had left these grand old trees of the forest in their natural wild beauty, and had cleared away only underbrush and débris. Eildon was the name of an ancestor of Mr. Peyton, and the Mere was a lake in the park. The large hall where the rehearsals were held had panelled walls and ceiling in light and dark woods from the Canadian forest. Other rooms were similarly panelled, the bedroom where the guests removed their wraps being in bird's-eye maple. At one

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end of the hall was a platform, with a piano, harp, and mandolin ; and Mollie said aside that the platform was used by musicians at the concerts to which Mrs. Peyton invited her Braybrook friends.

The last rehearsal only was in costume, and even at that late time some of the costumes were not ready, and were hurriedly pinned together. Helen Peyton, as manager-in-chief, implored and chided ; this undertaking, on which so much time and thought had been spent, must not fail through the laxity of some of the members. The offenders declared that they were now, and had always been, worthy of dependence, and that everything should be in good order on the night of the tableaux.

They kept their word well, and on the eventful Friday night Miss Peyton beamed satisfaction. Every seat in the house was filled, and behind the scenes every man and maid was ready for the appointed rôle.

The first scene was not a tableau, but a dance in costume, each set of the Lancers representing a different period of Canadian history. The actors sang as they danced, songs appropriate to the historic periods.

Then, as Braybrook was situated in the ancient Huron country, a series of tableaux had been prepared representing the encounters of the French

missionaries and traders with the Iroquois and the destruction of the Mission of Ste. Marie.

Joyce's part as Marguerite on the Isle of Demons was next in order. In olden times the Canadian islands, Belle-Isle and Quirpon, were the terror of sailors, who ascribed the wailing of the winds to the shouts and shrieks of demons. The story goes that Marguerite de Roberval, niece of the Viceroy, loved and clandestinely married a young Frenchman who was not regarded by her relatives as a fit mate for a daughter of that noble house. The young man embarked secretly in the vessel that was carrying Marguerite and her uncle to Canada. When the stowaway was discovered, the proud Viceroy landed Marguerite and her old nurse on the Demons' Isle, whereupon the young husband jumped overboard and reached the island. The demons, says the legend, made fierce onslaughts upon the deserted pair. Marguerite's husband, nurse, and infant died ; but the desolate woman lived for nearly three years on the lonely isle, when a passing ship rescued her and took her to France. The first tableau showed the little family on the haunted island, happy in their love in spite of hardship and trial. In the second scene, Marguerite, clad in the skins of the creatures she had killed for food, stood by the graves of her lost ones. The last scene represented the arrival of the French sailors, and

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Marguerite rejoicing to be again with humankind, yet grieving to leave the resting-place of those whom she loved.

In the series of tableaux representing the story of Evangeline and her long, disappointing search for the lost Gabriel, Roger Peyton read selections from the poem before the curtain rose. The final scene was arranged as a moving tableau, in which Evangeline appeared, clad as a Sister of Mercy, at the door of the almshouse and beheld the dying stretched upon pallets. Joyce kept her pose while Roger read the lines—

"Suddenly, as if arrested by fear or a feeling of wonder,
Still she stood, with her colourless lips apart, while a shudder
Ran through her frame, and, forgotten, the flowerets dropped
from her fingers,
And from her eyes and cheeks the light and bloom of the
morning.
Then there escaped from her lips a cry of such terrible
anguish,
That the dying heard it, and started up from their pillows."

In an old, old man dying on a pallet she had recognized her young lover Gabriel, whom she had sought so long in vain. Swiftly and silently she moved forward and knelt by his bedside. Roger Peyton read on of the death of the beloved Gabriel, and Evangeline, rising, murmured, "Father, I thank Thee."

Other scenes from history and legend followed,

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and the last part was "The Lay of the Emblems." Ruth, who had been hurriedly pressed into service, represented the rose of England, and, with dress and hair decked with roses, came upon the stage singing—

"O beauty glows in the island rose,
The fair, first English flower,
And memory weaves in her emblem leaves,
Proud legends of fame and power."

When Ruth had taken her place, Flora MacTavish, garbed as a thistle, sang—

"The thistle nods forth from the hills of the north
O'er Scotia free and fair,
And warm hearts true, and bonnets blue,
And prowess and faith are there."

Mollie, in soft green, was the shamrock, and sang gaily—

"Green Erin's dell loves the shamrock well,
As it springs to the March sun's smile;
Love, valour, wit, ever blend in it,
Bright type of our own dear isle."

Then appeared Edith Wynne, the maple leaf, singing—

"But the fair forest land, where our free hearths stand,
Though her annals be rough and brief.
O'er her fresh wild woods and her thousand floods,
Rears for emblem the maple leaf."

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The emblems, who had posed as a tableau, remained for a few moments in position, then sprang to their feet as the other actors, dressed to represent the principal parts they had taken, trooped on the stage and stepped into the places that had been assigned to them. Waving maple leaves—artificial ones at that season—they sang the rousing chorus—

“Then hurrah for the leaf, the maple leaf,
Up, Canadians, heart and hand!
High in heaven's free air waves your emblem fair,
The pride of our forest land.”

The audience in the hall joined in a repetition of the chorus, and the festival closed with the singing of “God Save the King.”

Mrs. Peyton, smiling, delighted, congratulated the performers. Everything had gone smoothly; not an actor had failed. And there would be a substantial sum to the credit of the Victoria Hospital.

CHAPTER XV

Lost in a Snowstorm

JOYCE'S hands were busy indeed after her return from Braybrook. Mrs. Peyton had been much interested in the handsome girl who had posed so effectively in the tableaux, and Mollie had further aroused her interest by an eloquent account of the struggles of Ruth and Joyce to provide for the motherless young family.

"And that girl, not yet eighteen, has been so successful, has worked so hard!" said Mrs. Peyton. "But it has aged her; she looks more than twenty. What a pity!"

"Did I hear you say that she can type, and needs a machine?" asked Mr. Peyton.

Mollie's eyes sparkled. Evidently this philanthropic lumber merchant had an idea.

"Oh, yes; she can type very well. She learned from her father's secretary, and copied a lot of her father's manuscript."

"Ah! perhaps she could do something for me. I have a machine to spare in my Braybrook office, and I should be glad to let her have the use of it.

I am writing a book—the draft of it is practically finished—on the Canadian lumber industry, in Quebec as well as Ontario ; and though I am helping to cut down the forests, I have some thought for the future of the country, and have written about the conservation of timber and the growth of young trees. Now, all this needs a great deal of revision and arrangement. Some notes are typed, some written by hand ; and, in general, the matter is rather in disorder. Do you think she could revise and put it in shape, or would that be too much to expect of a girl so young? ”

“ I am sure she could,” said Mollie, with conviction. “ She is clever by heredity, and she particularly studied literature and composition. Her father's secretary taught her a great deal. He let her revise some of Mr. Gordon's manuscript. He took the trouble to point out her mistakes, and she grew quite expert.”

“ Then you may ask Miss Gordon if she will try to do the work for me. If she is willing to make the attempt, I should like her to spend a day here to show her what is necessary ; then I will send the typewriter and manuscript to Wilderfell.”

“ Do you mean,” asked Mollie, with hesitation, “ that she may have the use of your machine in return for doing this work for you? ”

“ Certainly she may use the machine for typing

her stories, but of course I shall pay her at the same rates that I pay others for doing similar work. If she can complete it in three months I shall be glad to give her fifty dollars a month, and after that I think I can find more work for her to do at home, to occupy not more than half of her working day."

"Oh, thank you, thank you! I am so happy!" exclaimed Mollie. "They are such dear, brave girls, and this will mean so much to them."

The conversation took place on the Monday after the tableaux, and Mollie, without loss of time, went on snowshoes across the bay to Wilderfell to tell the good news to Joyce.

"And, Joyce, it is really a large salary for half a day. It would be a hundred dollars a month if you were to work the eight-hour day, but that you could not do. Now you can afford to hire Mrs. O'Shea to do all your hard work—either to come every day from her cottage or to live here. And in the spring you must buy more cows and some pigs, and keep bees, and sell butter and honey; and there will be plenty of work for both Mrs. O'Shea and Mary Jane, and you will all be in clover."

The next day Joyce called on Mr. Peyton, and thereafter spent one day in every week at Eildon Mere, going over the notes with the lumber merchant. The manuscript included information

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on the pulp and paper mills, as well as on the cut timber and standing trees ; and Mr. Peyton, noting Joyce's enthusiastic interest, gave her permission to incorporate information from his notes in an article for a boys' magazine. But for that she must wait till the spring, when she would go with his party to Ninatuk and the timber lands at Dyke's Inlet. To write a lively description she must see the work for herself.

The work appealed to Neil, who had been interested in forestry, and his assistance was valuable to Joyce. When she mentioned this to Mr. Peyton, he remarked—

" I may be able to give your brother a position, if he is willing to begin at the bottom, go in as a common lumberman, and work his way up. My own son did that. He has done hard work in the woods and in the mills. But a lumber camp is a rough place, and the boy is too young yet ; besides, in your father's absence he is needed at home. In a year or two, when he can be spared, I can help him ; and there is every opportunity for advancement in our large company."

From that day Neil applied himself with renewed vigour to the study of forestry, and read all the books that Joyce could bring him from Mr. Peyton's library.

On a February morning Joyce was diligently typing in the upper room that she had chosen for

her work when Mollie Blackwood arrived, and insisted that Ruth should call Joyce downstairs at once. She had skated across the bay, as there had been a thaw, followed by a hard frost, and the ice was clear.

"We have the most delightful plan," she began, in her impulsive way, "and I wish you could both be in it, but there's room for only one in the sleigh."

"Joyce must go," said Ruth. "She has been working too hard again."

"Yes, Joyce, you are looking pale and gaunt; the trip will do you a world of good. We are going to Gardison's Point. We will leave Braybrook on Saturday morning, and call here for you. We will stay over Sunday with the Gardisons and be back on Monday afternoon. Terence is going with us, but he will have to leave early on Monday morning and take the train for Toronto."

"But, Mollie, I cannot. I am doing Mr. Peyton's work."

"Mr. Peyton knows all about it. He said you were to go, that you were looking woefully thin. Roger is going too. He wants to see some timber land of Mr. Gardison's. He will take his own horses."

"But even so, it is Ruth's turn. Except that one night in Braybrook, she has not had an outing for ages."

"Thank you, Joyce," said Ruth; "but I cannot possibly go. I must play the organ at Ferndale on Sunday."

Mollie beamed. She wanted Joyce, but felt that politeness required her to say something appreciative.

"Mamma suggested that you should be with us, but you are always so faithful to your duties and so unselfish about other people's pleasures. It will do Joyce a world of good."

Saturday morning was fair and mild. The January thaw and the succeeding frosts had hardened the snow, and the horses sped over the bay, where in many parts there was glare ice. At the entrance to the lake, Point Lookout and Stony Point approached one another from opposite shores, leaving a comparatively narrow passage from the bay to the great lake. When he had entered the lake, Roger drew up his horses and looked before him with some perplexity.

"We ought to see Gardison's Point from here. It's almost in a straight line across the lake. I've seen it scores of times on a clear day."

"It has certainly grown hazy," said Terence, "but I don't think there is any danger of snow. The sky was so clear when we started; not a cloud in sight."

"I never thought of snow; the weather has been so fine, and the forecast said 'Continued

fine.' Probably the haze will clear. The Gardisons expect us, and Mr. Gardison's lawyer was to meet me this evening. What do you say, Mrs. Blackwood? I will turn back if you do not think it prudent to go on."

"I think it will be quite safe. I have crossed this lake so often without difficulty, and I do not think we shall have any difficulty now. Probably the haze will disappear presently."

Roger urged his horses forward; but soon the sky grew darker and flakes of snow fell. It seemed but a few minutes before blinding flakes were falling so fast that it was impossible to see a yard before the horses' heads. Roger turned his horses' heads in what appeared to be the right direction for the return to Braybrook; but when the snowfall was stayed for a few moments, and the sun shone through the clouds, the travellers found themselves on a wide expanse, with no land in sight. They had no idea in what part of the lake they were, and the only solution appeared to be to drive straight ahead if possible.

"There's sure to be land not far away," said Terence. "I think that is the west, and if we make for it we shall reach the Point before dark. We'll be all right if the snow does not begin its pranks again."

In a few minutes the snow did begin its pranks again, and played them more impishly than before.

It dazzled the eyes of the travellers, found its way under their wraps, melted and trickled down their necks, and covered the sleigh and robes with a blanket of white. The day grew colder, and a sharp wind made the faces of the wayfarers tingle.

"W-we are g-g-going around in a s-s-sort of c-c-c-circle," chattered Mollie.

"Wrap your cloud about your head, Moll, so as to leave only a breathing space," advised Terence.

"I am afraid you are very cold," said Roger gloomily, "and it is all owing to my stupidity."

"Oh, no; indeed it is not. We all wanted to go to Gardison's; and you are not responsible for the snowstorm."

Mollie, by a brave effort, succeeded in keeping her teeth from chattering. But she reluctantly admitted that her feet were cold, and she thought it might do good to run close behind the sleigh.

Joyce got out with her, but running was impossible. The snowfall had been so heavy that the horses ploughed their way with difficulty, and the feet of the would-be runners were clogged at every step. They stood still to try to shake and brush some of the clinging snow from their skirts, and returned to the sleigh. Mollie remarked, with an effort at cheerfulness—

"We ought to be hungry; we seem to have

forgotten it. It must be long past noon, and we all breakfasted early. Let's bring out the baskets."

Terence lighted a match and looked at his watch; it was nearly three o'clock, but no one had been conscious of hunger. In the expectation of arriving at Gardison's Point in time for the midday dinner, Mrs. Blackwood had packed only a small basket with sandwiches and cookies; and the Peyton basket had disappeared, though Roger was sure he had seen his man put it in the sleigh. Terence looked at the small supply of provisions, and advised—

"We'd better divide what we have into two parts, for if we don't arrive at any inhabited place before night we shall need a second meal. If we eat very slowly it will appear to be more."

Eating luncheon with faces wrapped in woollen clouds, and fingers numb under heavy mittens, was both a difficulty and a diversion. Mollie proposed fifty bites to each mouthful, and said it was a pity the travellers had not acquired the gum-chewing habit.

The wayfarers made brave efforts for cheerfulness. In the face of a cutting gale they tried to sing, and then laughed at their failure. They told stories, asked riddles, and encouraged one another with the hope that they must soon arrive somewhere. After supper, so-called, had left the basket empty, it was evident that the sky was

clearing. The snowfall ceased, the clouds rolled away, and a wooded shore came in sight. There was no sign of habitation, but Roger was confident that there were dwellings on the shore not very far away, and turned his horses shoreward. The animals had been very tired from their snow-clogged journeying, but now, inspirited by the neighbourhood of land, they hauled their burden with renewed vigour.

"Hark!" cried Terence. "I hear dogs!"

"A chorus of barks," said Mollie. "Perhaps it is an Indian camp. A farm-house would not have so many dogs."

The bank was steep, and there was no visible road through the dense wood. It would not be possible to drive, and Roger suggested that he should go alone; but to this Mollie objected.

"Oh no, Mr. Peyton. It is so dark, and you have no lantern; you might be lost. There is a tree growing low down on the bank. Tie the horses to that, and let us charge the enemy—if enemy there be—together."

Joyce seconded Mollie's plea. Of course, there was no fear of enemies in Canadian woods, but it would be a relief to get out of the sleigh and explore. Roger submitted; and, cramped by the long journey, and plunging often waist-deep in snow, the adventurers clambered up the bank and waded through drifts in the forests. Suddenly,

from behind a clump of cedar, a pack of dogs rushed out. Mollie, who was terrified of strange dogs, gave vent to wild shrieks, and a man's voice shouted to the dogs to be quiet. A lantern glimmered through the darkness, and the travellers saw a small shanty, almost buried in trees. Two men approached, and three others peered from the doorway.

"What do you want here?" asked the spokesman gruffly.

"Food and shelter," said Roger. "We lost our way in the storm."

"There's no room here, and we haven't food enough for ourselves. If you drive down the shore five miles west, and turn back into the lake, three miles north, you'll come to a farm on Happy Thought Island."

"Is there no place nearer?" asked Mrs. Blackwood.

"A few cabins, but no comfortable place to stay overnight. This part of the shore is thinly settled. If you don't hurry to the island you'll find every one in bed."

"It seems the only thing to do," said Roger. "I'm afraid you will all be exhausted, and the poor horses have no spirit left."

The disappointed travellers returned to the sleigh almost in silence; but when Mollie felt herself safely in the vehicle and moving on, she

lifted up her voice and expressed her opinion of the shantymen.

"I am thankful you did not go alone, Mr. Peyton; they might have murdered you. If this were not good Old Canada I should believe they were brigands, although there is nothing about here to steal. They must be hiding from something, or they would not be in that dense grove with so many dogs for protection. They had some reason for not letting us into the house. Gruff and disagreeable though he was, the man who spoke looked as if he had been accustomed to better things."

"There is nothing unusual in their living in an isolated place," said Terence, "if they want to shoot and trap. But they did seem uneasy. Perhaps the people at Happy Thought may know who they are."

"See, over there!" cried Joyce suddenly. "It looks like a fire springing from the rim of ice. Perhaps there are Indians camping."

A moment later the full moon, red-hued and brilliant, rose above the horizon, seeming to leap from the edge of the frozen lake. A wonderful aurora, like a crown of many colours, flashed from the zenith; its waving streamers mingled with the moon-rays, and the snow-crystals glimmered like gems in the train of the northern night.

"Oh!" cried the enraptured Mollie. "We don't mind now if the way is long. We are driving through fairyland, an enchanted kingdom."

Roger turned to look at her.

"You are a poet," he said, and whipped up his horses.

In the radiance of moonlight and aurora, with the wooded shore and the certainty that they were drawing nearer to a desired haven, the way did not seem so long to any one, though sometimes the travellers nodded drowsily or tried to stretch numbed limbs. When at last they saw the island clearly marked against the white snow, they looked in vain for a gleam of light from the gabled log house.

"It's eleven o'clock," said Terence, "and in a lonely place like this people don't sit up late. It's too bad to disturb them, but we must."

"Let's all shout together when we are near enough," said Mollie. "That will be better than thundering on the door."

Shouting proved to be unnecessary. Before the sleigh touched land the jingle of bells had roused the watch-dogs; and again Mollie shivered with dread as the wide-mouthed, yelping animals leaped on the bank and warned the intruders of the peril of approach.

"What bloodthirsty, terrible creatures!" faltered Mollie, "They'll dart over the ice and

pounce on us. The leader is down the bank. They are coming, coming ! ”

The masterful call of a man stayed the on-rushing dogs. Windows were flung up, and voices shouted—

“ Who is there ? ”

Roger and Terence shouted back an answer, and two young men, who had evidently dressed in haste, came to the shore, quieted the dogs, and offered hospitality.

“ Our name is Bedulf,” said the elder. “ We can give you only very plain accommodation, but you are most welcome.”

“ We are so sorry to disturb you at this hour,” said Mrs. Blackwood.

“ Don't mention it. It will be a pleasure to all of us. We are so far from other people, and it is hard for our mothers and sisters to be shut off from society.”

Mr. and Mrs. Bedulf, with two daughters and the youngest son, awaited their unexpected guests in a large, square hall. The log house was picturesque and spacious. The walls of the hall and adjoining room were hung with antlers, bows and arrows ; and fur rugs lay on the painted floors. A hastily rekindled fire blazed in a deep fireplace. Mrs. Bedulf, a frail little woman, with hair dishevelled and clothing awry from hurried dressing, appeared unconscious of herself and

anxious only for the comfort of her visitors. With the assistance of her daughters, she removed snow-crusted wraps and chafed benumbed hands, while she listened to the story of peril.

"You must stay here at least until Monday," said the elder daughter, Joan. "The sleighing will be very heavy till the snow is packed, and your horses must be exhausted."

Allan, the youngest son, came to announce that the kitchen fire was burning; and Joan, with her sister Alice, went to prepare a hot supper. Pattering feet sounded on the stairs, and Lulu, the baby of the house, appeared in a red flannel wrapper. She demanded an explanation of the presence of visitors, and inquired—

"If there is going to be dinner, will you have a tablecloth? There never is one except when people come."

"How delightful!" said Joyce quickly. "It is the same with us at Wilderfell. We cover our dining-table with oilcloth to save our time and strength. We have discovered so many ways of economizing in work."

"Many settlers have given up what they once regarded as necessities," said Mrs. Bedulf; "and we do all of our work. We bought this place twelve years ago from an Englishman who had grown tired of the isolated life. We were very romantic and unpractical. We expected to employ

farm hands, and brought with us a governess and men and maid-servants. But—we have given them up."

"It was my mistake—a serious one," added Mr. Bedulf; "and I have regretted it bitterly. I would not take advice from well-informed people, who told me I could not make the place profitable. The island was thickly wooded, and no land cleared for farming. We have cleared and cultivated many acres, and the land is most productive. We have abundance of provisions for ourselves; but we are too far from a market, and have no way of shipping and selling without large expense. No one wants to buy a place like this, which is cut off from the mainland in late autumn and early spring. In fine weather we sail to Gardison's Point, or to Hawksbridge, where we get our mail, and when the ice is good we go by sleigh; but there are times when we have no communication with the mainland for weeks."

"I'll never grumble again," declared Joyce. "We often think we are cut off in bad weather, but we are able to go to the post-office at Ferndale nearly every day."

"Indeed, we have no reason to complain," protested Mrs. Bedulf. "We have very happy times together. In the evenings we read aloud in turns, play games, and enjoy a little music. Our friends in England keep us supplied with books and

newspapers, and we get books from a library in Hawksbridge. It is true our news is often belated, but we manage to keep informed of the important events of the time."

The young men, who had been putting up the horses, came in, and presently the lively ringing of a bell announced supper. Some of the dining-room furniture was of rustic manufacture, and some was much worn; but the Bedulfs, like the Gordons, had brought with them to the new land their good old china and silver, and the fine linen of better days covered the table. A savoury stew, hot scones, and coffee were evidence that the daughters of the house were excellent cooks, and their easy, unaffected manners showed that the isolation had not tended to shyness or awkwardness. George Bedulf remarked that he had promised to drive Terence to Hawksbridge very early on Monday morning, so he might catch a train for Toronto. In any case, he had intended to go for supplies and to call at the post-office.

"We had most interesting letters in our last lot," said Alice Bedulf. "Two were from friends in India." She turned to Joyce. "You said you lived in Blankshire. Did you know a family of Ingrams, of the Priory?"

Joyce started.

"Yes; oh yes. They were very dear friends."

"Our cousin, who is married to Colonel

Mortimer, met them in India. Mrs. Ingram was seriously ill in India, and friends sent for her son. My cousin was interested, because she thinks the son is now engaged to Ethel Gladwin, a daughter of Major Gladwin, in Colonel Mortimer's regiment. Ethel was our playmate when we were children."

"Oh!" gasped Joyce. Her head whirled. For a moment she forgot her surroundings; she was back at Woldhurst on that last day when Basil parted from Ruth. Basil, her own loyal comrade, could he be so false to Ruth and to himself? Then she felt her face grow red. She had betrayed a feeling that she should have concealed, and she was aware that not only the Bedulfs, but the friends with whom she had come, were wondering what it meant.

"How interesting!" she said mechanically. "Mrs. Ingram would be glad to have him marry a nice girl."

She heard Mrs. Bedulf's voice.

"You should not repeat idle gossip, Alice. The most ordinary civility is often misconstrued into special attention."

Joan Bedulf abruptly turned the subject to an inquiry about the shantymen on the mainland, whom Mollie had described as "wild creatures."

"The 'wild creatures' are neither brigands nor criminals hiding from justice," said Frank

Bedulf. "They are young Englishmen who settled in that out-of-the-way place about eight years ago, and who seem to be reverting to the customs of the aborigines. They would not invite you into their house because they were ashamed of its disorder. Lots of settlers fall into careless ways. Mother won't admit us to the dining-room unwashed and unbrushed. If we had been men alone, we might have appeared no better than those fellows."

"Indeed you would," declared Joan. "There are five on a farm between here and Hawksbridge, and they never forget that they are gentlemen."

On the following day, when Roger Peyton had made a tour of the island with his host, he said thoughtfully—

"It is possible that you could sell or let a part of your land as a summer resort. Some friends of my father's were looking for an island last year, and could not find one to suit them. They might prefer one in the St. Lawrence or the Muskoka lakes, where they would be near hotels and other summer houses; but this place is very charming, and there would be room for a number of families without trespassing on your farm space. With motor-boats the ten miles to Hawksbridge would be of little consequence, and they could leave motors in a garage at Hawksbridge, and

start from there on trips about the country. If you would be willing, I will gladly see if I can do anything."

"Willing! I should be overjoyed! I had thought of buying a small steam vessel—such as we could work with the assistance, perhaps, of one hired man—or a schooner, to transport our produce to Hawksbridge; but I have not been able to afford it. We have endured bitter experiences, but we have learned a great deal from them; and I believe that now, if I could arrange for transportation, I could make the place pay well. The soil is unusually fertile. If my wife and daughters could have the companionship of people in touch with the outside world for the summer months, it would enliven the rest of the year for them."

"I shall do my very best, and as soon as possible," promised Roger.

On the Monday morning, after the travellers had said good-bye to their hosts and were on the way to Gardison's Point, Roger mentioned the suggestion he had made to Mr. Bedulf.

"And I have often wondered, Miss Gordon," he added, "if your father would sell or let a part of Wilderfell in the same way. There are good places for summer houses along your shore. You could run up little summer houses very quickly and very cheaply if you wanted to let them; or you

could sell strips of land and let the buyers build for themselves."

"And you could keep a lot of cows and hens, and sell milk and butter and eggs to your tenants," said Mollie. "Joyce, you will all be capitalists soon!"

"But it happens that Wilderfell does not belong to us; we have no right to let or sell."

"Oh, what a nuisance! I forgot. And I should not want you to do anything to help that Captain Ferris. You have helped him too much already by improving his place. I know the state it was in when you came—not fit for human beings."

"Please don't say that, Mollie. He meant it kindly; he did not know; he was father's friend. He let us have the place without rent; we only pay the taxes."

"Well, I won't berate him any more; I know you and Ruth don't like it; but I have my own opinion just the same." And Mollie elevated her dainty little nose and tossed her head to emphasize her opinion.

CHAPTER XVI

Winter Days and Sugaring-off

IN describing to Ruth the visit to Happy Thought Island, Joyce had made no reference to the report of the engagement of Basil. As the report had probably risen from idle gossip, it would be cruel to distress Ruth by repeating it.

Ruth was busy with her music pupils and her choir practices, and Joyce often wondered at her cheerfulness and improved health; for Joyce, unlike her old buoyant self, was often troubled by fits of depression. Soon after her return from Happy Thought she spent a night with the Blackwoods, and met many young people of Braybrook at a tobogganing party. Other outings she enjoyed with Mollie, snowshoe tramps and skating contests, and after these events, she returned to Wilderfell in gay spirits.

Towards the end of February heavy clouds often obscured the sky, a thaw had turned the surface of the ice into a leaden-coloured slush, and walking on the road amid slush and snow was difficult. Joyce's depression came upon her again, spite of

valiant efforts to throw it off. One morning, when she had awaked feeling blue and miserable, and had made futile attempts to appear cheerful, she announced to Ruth—

“ I am going to see Mrs. Blackwood ; I shall be back before dark.”

Ruth looked up surprised.

“ I thought you intended to finish a news letter for *The Girls' Circle*, and get it off your mind.”

“ I wanted to ; but my mind is an obstinate mule, and won't go. I've tried prodding, pushing, slashing ; but still the creature balks, so I must give up. Besides, it is all so uncertain. Two of my manuscripts came back yesterday. Of course I mean to go on trying, trying, trying. I am not discouraged ; but I want a little time to adjust myself to failures. Poor father ! I understand now so much better what he must feel under continual reverses.”

“ I am very glad you are going,” said Ruth cordially. “ The Blackwoods always brace me up if I feel down. I am sorry you have to walk to the station on the bad roads, and the ice is impossible.”

“ I will wear my high overshoes, and the walk will do me good.”

The brisk walk that had usually inspirited her failed on this occasion ; and in Mrs. Blackwood's

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cosy sitting-room she made confession of her lack of interest and inability to work.

"My dear child, it is the natural result of over-strain," said her sympathetic hostess. "I am glad you have laid aside your work for to-day."

"I am not working so hard now. Mrs. O'Shea does the rough work, washing, scrubbing, and extra cleaning. If we are very much pressed, we engage her for two or three days in the week. I am stronger than Ruth, and she does not give way to doleful dumps."

"Ruth has not taxed her powers almost to their limit. You have treated yourself as if your strength and endurance were illimitable. Don't work on Mr. Peyton's book all day, and then sit up writing your stories late in the night."

"Ah, Mr. Peyton's book; that has worried me. He is paying me a high salary. I have made inquiries about the rates usually paid to stenographers in offices; and I know that even in the cities fifty dollars a month for only half-day's work is exceptional. If I were an expert, and could do for him what others could not do, I should feel satisfied to accept it; but I am not an expert. Some chapters, I think, will do very well. Others, in which the notes are in disorder, seem to be beyond my ability. I cannot grasp the subject as a whole, and re-arrange and revise. I know he is rich, and is glad to do it; but that

is not the question. I was willing to take the January salary, because I had really done work that was useful to him; the February work was more difficult; it is not well done; and I feel doubtful about taking the salary. Ella Martin, in Boyd and Atwood's office, has only half that much for a whole day's work."

"I see your point. Have you any reason to think Mr. Peyton was disappointed?"

"He said nothing; but I thought he looked dissatisfied when I gave him my last week's work. And I have done my very best. I come to perplexing passages, involved paragraphs, that I cannot make clear, because I have not enough information; and Mr. Peyton has not time to spend in making it clear. Father could. Oh, Mrs. Blackwood, why did I not think of it before? Why should not father come home and do this work and other work for Mr. Peyton? He knows a great deal about forestry, and he could soon study enough about the timber trade. Neil and I could help him in making it readable for people in general; father's books are written only for scholars. If he thought there was work for him at home, he would come back. He has refused to come back, because he said he should only be a burden to us, and he must struggle on a little longer. Ah, poor father, it would make him so happy to help. I will write to him to-night and

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beg him to come. And perhaps Mr. Peyton would engage him for one or two lectures to his men at Ninatuk and Dyke's Inlet. Father's special subject is geology, and once he gave a very entertaining lecture, with magic-lantern views, to a boys' school. The boys' understood it, and enjoyed it, and I think the lumbermen would enjoy it too."

"It is a good idea. I will suggest it to Mr. Peyton; and in any case I hope your father will come back. Now, have you had any diversion lately?"

"I have not found time. I have used every spare minute for my own writing, after putting aside Mr. Peyton's work for the day. Then I have to think of something lively and entertaining for my literature class. The girls were very eager at first; but they will not study; and some of them want to discuss the trashiest novels. Lizzie Brown is the only really studious one."

"Don't be discouraged. They enjoy the meetings, and I am sure they learn something. Mollie and I will join you on one or two evenings, and read aloud and ask questions like your other pupils. That will help to enliven it. And now I propose that after you have had luncheon with us, we go with you to Wilderfell and have a merry party. Though the roads are bad, we can find some conveyance at Ferndale station."

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"Oh, I thank you," said Joyce. "You always help me. I was in a Slough of Despond and could not drag myself out."

After that joyful afternoon with Mrs. Blackwood and Mollie at Wilderfell, Joyce often yielded to Neil's urging, and joined him in some outdoor sport. She was troubled because her letter to her father remained unanswered, and more troubled far when at last a letter came to Ruth from a nurse in New York hospital. The beloved father was in a free ward, suffering from nervous breakdown; but there was no danger. The doctors said that with rest, good food, and care he would soon recover, and in a few weeks he would be strong enough to return to his home. At once Ruth replied, enclosing money from herself and Joyce for the stricken father; and a heart-breaking answer returned from him, written in pencil in a trembling hand. Ruth cried bitterly, and Joyce cheered her.

"It will all seem different to him when he is stronger; and he will be so glad then to help us. Mr. Peyton wants him to do the work, and he will take him on a trip to the timber lands. And now, we must not let ourselves think of his illness; that will not help him."

Encouraging reports came from the hospital, and when the sunny days and frosty nights of March sent the sap flowing in the maple-trees, the

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young Gordons gave themselves whole-heartedly to the labour and delight of sugar-making. Their methods were primitive. They tapped the trees with hatchets, or by boring with augers, and the sap flowed into troughs hewn from blocks of wood—troughs which had remained in the maple bush since neighbouring farmers had placed them there in other years. Easter holidays this year came in the "sugaring-off" season, and Mrs. Blackwood, with Terence and Mollie, spent three days of the happy time at Wilderfell.

Mrs. Blackwood preferred to stay in the house with Ruth, keeping fires going and dry garments ready for the energetic ones who returned for a change after wading waist deep in slush. The untrodden snow in the woods was soft and wet, and the great sledge, drawn by farmer Brown's ox-team, often sank so deep, or tilted so far to one side, that the boys had to be constantly on the alert to save their barrels of sap from upsetting; they poured the sap from the troughs into stout barrels as they went from tree to tree. They drank quantities of the sweet liquid, and Keith said it tasted like the breath of the woods.

Merry indeed was the sugaring-off. The young Gordons with the aid of Mr. Brown's boys, had built a shanty in the woods, for shelter in case of storm, or to eat luncheons in if they did not want to take time to go home. If Mrs. Blackwood had

not insisted on substantial breakfasts, the eager boys would have rushed to the maple bush with only chunks of bread in hand.

The sap was boiled in great pots from the Brown farm, and the Browns contributed also the ox-teams, the experience, and a great part of the labour, agreeing to take in return a part of the sugar and syrup. The pots hung from tripods over large fires in a cleared space. On the first day the boys poured so much boiling syrup on the snow, to make the toffee that the farmers call "gum sugar," that they declared at the end of the afternoon that they wanted no more sweets as long as they lived. Winifred was a cause of continual anxiety as she tried to tiptoe and lean over the hot, bubbling syrup, to watch the stirring that formed the grain of the sugar.

On the last night, stars sparkled in a clear sky, and the bright glow of the fire was reflected on the snow and on the merry faces of boys and girls, who chatted and laughed and gave shouts of delight as they filled jars and pans with the luscious sweetness. Many gallons of syrup, and piles of sugar cakes, large and small, rewarded the energy and hard work of the sugar-makers.

"We could not use it all in both our families if we had it every day all the year round," said Mrs. Brown. "You should sell some to Braybrook grocers."

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"Yes," said Joyce, "after our friends have had their share. Terence, you must take some to college, and think of the wild woods here when you are deep in your books."

Midnight was near when the lively party went to Wilderfell house, where Mrs. Blackwood had helped Ruth to prepare a bountiful supper. The happy workers sat about the table, too hungry and excited to remember that they had cause for fatigue, until Lizzie Brown remarked—

"My, won't we be stiff to-morrow!"

"Don't give it a thought," said Joyce merrily; "sufficient unto the morrow is the stiffness thereof."

After supper, Terence suggested some college glees; but Mr. Brown pointed to the clock.

"No, no, young doctor-that-is-to-be; it's time for our folks to move on, and all in this house to go to bed. But if Miss Gordon will play 'Auld Lang Syne,' we'll join in that for a finish off, and one verse of 'God Save the King,' and then make tracks for home."

Ruth played, and old and young joined hands and danced in a circle, laughing and singing. Terence caught up Christobel, who was still wide awake, and she clung to his neck, shrieking with delight. Then the circle broke, and the sugaring-off ended in cordiality and happiness.

CHAPTER XVII

A Wilderfell Flood

FOR many days of spring Wilderfell was cut off from the outer world ; the roads were almost impassable, and the ice on the bay was unsafe. But when the ice broke and floated away, and the long-prisoned waters, blue as the sky above them, danced and sparkled as if in the joy of freedom, there was gladness in the household, for friends could come again. On one point of land the ice crystals had piled in great heaps, which reflected the sunlight in rainbow colours, and the children rejoiced in running up and down the crystal hills. Before the frost was out of the ground the boys began to dig their garden, early flowers were peeping in the woods, and, unmindful of the damp, Joyce and Winifred went flower-picking and returned with laden arms.

On the anniversary of their arrival, Joyce and Ruth stood together on the veranda, as they had stood on that first night.

“ How much better it is than we dared to hope it could be on that desolate day when we came

to this wreck of a place!" observed Joyce. "We've had some very happy times, and we have found dear friends."

"I should be happy if father could be with us, and other friends," sighed Ruth, and Joyce knew that her thoughts were with Basil.

The snow had been unusually deep that year, and Joyce noticed that the waters of the bay reached a higher point on the beach than they had reached at the same time last year. When she called Neil's attention to it, he answered—

"Oh, yes; with the rain and the melting snow the water is higher everywhere in this county. A dam broke under the press of water in Ardsley township, and Mr. Brown is uneasy about a stream that's near their place. It once flooded a part of his farm."

"Do you think there is any danger from the Creek of the Bride? I noticed yesterday that the water is nearly level with the top of the bank and very deep. It looks now like a rushing stream, while last summer it was shallow, with hardly any current perceptible."

"I don't think there's any danger now, because all the snow has melted. Bob Brown told me that years ago, in his grandfather's time, it overflowed and there was a raging flood, so I have been watching it and measuring. It is a fraction of an inch lower than it was last week. It'll be all

right unless heavy rains come before it goes down farther."

The days continued fair, the water seemed to be subsiding, and the two men who had watched felt that there was no longer need for anxiety. When a cloudy day came, Neil told Joyce in confidence that farmer Brown had examined the stream at his request, and had expressed the opinion that there was no danger, and that even a heavy rainstorm would not swell the waters beyond the bounds of safety. Without a thought of the peril at hand, the young householders went to their beds and slept well and soundly till after midnight.

The lively Winifred was the first to wake.

"Joyce!" she cried; "Joyce! there's dreadful lightning chasing itself all around the sky! It's forked and zig-zagged and every kind, all over everywhere. Oh, Joycie, I'm frightened, I'm frightened! It might strike this house and all of 'us!"

Christobel began to shriek, and Ruth trembled with fear. Joyce, whose more daring spirit seemed to be in accord with the riot of Nature, had always enjoyed a wild storm. She ran now to the window and looked out, excited by the fury of the elements.

"It's grand! it's wonderful!" she cried. "Don't be afraid, Ruth. How can it harm us?"

There are no tall trees near, and this house is not built high, so there's hardly a possibility of the lightning striking here."

"B-but if there's a h-hardly p-possibility, it might do it!" quivered Winifred.

"Oh, listen, listen! What was that awful sound?" cried Ruth. "That was not thunder."

"It was only the crash of a great tree falling," said Joyce. "There is another!"

"Joycie, if they fall that way they will break in the house," mourned Winifred. "I—I think we'd better go down into the cellar."

"They are too far away. The trees near the house are not big enough to do any damage."

The voice of Keith was heard in the hall.

"Hallo, girls! Are you awake? Isn't this a circus? Ha! there's another tree going! We needn't chop any down for firewood this season. If it keeps on the whole forest will be level."

"Keith, come in here!" begged Winifred. "If there's more people it doesn't seem so dreadfully dangerous."

"Go in there and sit still with a lot of girls? Not much! I'm going out. I'm going to take a shower-bath in my pyjamas. It will be the finest ever—"

"Keith," commanded Ruth, "you must not go out! Go back to your room and stay there."

Meanwhile Keith had opened the hall door, and rain dashed in furiously.

"Hi, Joyce!" he cried. "Come out here and help to shut up this old thing! It's blowing so hard I can't do it by myself."

Joyce ran out as Neil came down the stairs, and it required their united strength to close the door against the storm. Neil locked and bolted it, and commanded his young brother to return to his room.

"If you prowl about here you'll keep the girls awake," he advised. "And what's the use anyway? It's so dark you can't see an inch before your nose outside."

"So dark, is it? What's the matter with that for 'luminations?' " inquired Keith, as a succession of vivid electric flashes suddenly revealed out of the darkness a clear-cut picture of lawn and forest, and sparkled in reflected light from the seething waters of the bay.

"It's no use talking about going to bed, Neil, or keeping the girls awake. Nobody's thinking of sleeping with that show going on."

"No, we can't sleep," agreed Ruth. "We put on our dressing-gowns and slippers because it was so cold. Perhaps we'd better dress and be prepared for whatever may happen."

"Oh, pshaw!" retorted Keith. "Nothing's going to happen. I wish it was. It would be

fun if a piece of the roof would blow off, or something to make us hustle. We'd have the time of our lives. I like getting scared."

"There isn't any danger, Ruth," said Neil. "Why don't you all go back to bed? It has turned awfully cold. If you want to sit up I'll light a fire."

"Light a fire!" ejaculated Keith. "You'd better not. All of our chimneys need cleaning. Mrs. O'Shea says they're in a dreadful sooty state, and she's expecting to see them catching fire any day. With all those blustery gusts they'll catch, sure, and we'll all go up in smoke."

"It doesn't matter; the rain would put it out again," said Winifred. "I'd like a fire, or a great many lamps, so we could not see the lightning."

"Neil and I will fasten the shutters tight and draw the curtains so you can't see the flashes," said Joyce. "Then I hope you will get into bed, and I will go into the parlour, where I can watch it from the window. I don't like to miss such a glorious sight."

Winifred protested that she would neither go to bed nor stay in the bedroom unless Joyce stayed too; and as there was a lull in the storm, Joyce said she would go to bed if every one else would do the same. Presently the roaring of the wind diminished, the flashings and the rumblings ceased,

and the lashing torrents of rain softened to a gentle pattering. Then, relieved of their fears, the watchers slept.

When Joyce awoke, with a bewildered sense as of some evil impending, she heard a peculiar, continuous sound, like the rumble of distant thunder; yet, dazed and heavy with sleep, she did not at first associate the sound with any clear thought of danger. When she had shaken off her drowsiness, she realized that the noise was unlike that of any storm in her experience."

"That's not thunder," she said to herself. "It is low down, near the ground; it never stops. Can it be—an earthquake?"

As she slipped from the bed, with the intention of looking out of the window, her feet touched something wet; and when she hurriedly lighted the lamp, she saw that there was water on the floor. Rain was pelting furiously on the roof, and Joyce at first believed that it had dripped through the ceiling from the rooms above, or that, in dashing against the doors and windows, it had found its way through some crack; but that did not explain the ominous rumble. The water seemed icy cold to her feet, but she went to the window and tried to look out. The electric storm had ceased, and no lightning flash illumined the pitchy blackness of the night. The roar had grown louder, and Joyce, with an unwonted sense

of dread, trembled before the menace of the unseen and the unknown. Then for a moment the full moon broke through a rift in the clouds, and lighted up a mass of tossing, roaring waters. The Creek of the Bride had broken its bonds, and appeared to be pouring down in a raging flood on the house and its sleeping occupants.

The bedroom window looked towards the west. Without awaking any one, Joyce ran to the kitchen at the back of the house, from which she might see the north forest through which the stream ran. Blinding sheets of rain seemed to be held backward for a moment, and once more the moonlight shone, to make visible a body that came bounding, leaping down the slope, apparently on its way to wreak its force upon the house.

Back to the bedroom, then to the hall rushed Joyce, shouting to her topmost pitch—

“Wake, wake! The Creek has overflowed! Neil, come down! Help me to take the children up!”

Neil, suddenly aroused, but in full possession of his senses, shouted back in the darkness—

“All right, Joyce, old girl; I’m coming!”

“Light your lamp, Neil; put it in the hall. We must see where we are going.”

While Neil obeyed, Joyce ran back to her room, lighted her lamp, then rushed into Ruth’s room and seized Christobel, shouting to Ruth to follow

her upstairs. The boom of the waters was louder, and as Ruth got out of bed and put her feet on the floor, she felt the cold trickle and gave a cry of understanding. Winifred, dazed and shrieking, called to Joyce to come and save her.

"Winifred, don't be a baby! Follow me at once," commanded Joyce, as she panted beneath the weight of the wriggling Christobel.

On her way to the stairs she passed Neil, who ran to take Winnie in his arms and carry her upstairs. In the hall above Winifred refused to leave the shelter of her brother's arms, and wailed pitifully—

"In another minute we might have been drowned! Will it break down the house? I'd rather be outside. I don't w-want to be b-buried in r-ruins."

"Shut up, Winnie!" commanded Keith. "You are frightening babe Christobel out of her senses."

"She has not got much," whimpered Winifred. "She is a very stupid little child."

"If the house begins to go down," continued Keith, "we'll get on the roof through the trap-door, and swim to some place that is above water."

For the moment Winifred's interest overcame her fears.

"But Christobel can't swim; she didn't learn last summer. Besides, Keith, you might slip off."

"I wouldn't care if I did. I'd catch on to a

floating tree and drift to the top of the ossuary. That would be my Ararat."

Boom! boom! sounded the flooding waters.

"Come to my workroom and look out," advised Neil. "Don't be uneasy, girls; I don't believe this house is in any danger."

The rain had ceased, the clouds had broken, and from the workroom window at the back of the house the watchers saw the moonlight upon the foaming cataract. The course of the flood had been stayed for the moment. A great pine-tree that had been torn up by the roots had fastened its ends in opposite banks of a little gully, and branches, twigs, and other *débris* had caught upon it and formed a temporary dam.

Winifred shrieked again—

"When that thing breaks the water and the wood and everything will come bang down on this house!"

Neil saw that Ruth's face was white, and he hastened to reassure her.

"See, Ruth, Joyce; we are not in the path of that torrent, and it is on lower ground. When it breaks it will sweep down to the bay, yards to the left of us. There will be some damage to a part of the woods and to our clearing, but just now we are not in any danger."

"I see," said Joyce. "Of course, the Creek of the Bride is quite far off, and its overflow has

found an outlet in the bed of the little stream that was always nearly dry."

"Look, look!" cried Keith. "Something is going to happen!"

The refugees looked in silence. There was a short, fierce struggle; the waters dashed on the great prostrate tree like wild creatures for the destruction of their prey. Through the roar rose a creaking sound, a wrench, a crash; then wood and water rushed on together, the timbers eddying and whirling in the grasp of the victor. Here the flood was a dark rolling mass; there, as the moon shone upon it through breaking clouds, it became a gleaming, writhing thing, beautiful and terrible. The watchers stood motionless and voiceless. The children gazed wide-eyed and open-mouthed, as if shrieks of fear had been frozen on their lips.

Suddenly they heard a deafening crash, followed by a roaring louder than the voice of the torrent.

"What can it be?" asked Neil. He pointed to the west, where the flood was eddying wildly. "See how fast it has gone down! It was draining off to the bay, but not like this."

"Hurrah!" shouted Keith; "hurrah! I'll bet it has broken through that old Indian ossuary. Generally, I know, they are pretty solid earth, full of bones and things that were buried with the

dead ; but all the boys said they were sure this one had a tunnel or a cave place. You never would let us explore and dig, but now we will see the inside of it."

"It has evidently broken through something," said Neil ; "and if it goes down much faster the ground will be almost dry to-morrow. The only flood that Mr. Brown remembers was when he was a boy, and it drained into the bay in a few hours."

"Let's go downstairs and see if it has drained off in our rooms," suggested Winifred. "If the bed is not floating all over the room, I'd like to get into it ; I'm cold."

"And get something to eat too," added Keith. "Now, when I know we are not going to be drowned, I'm starving hungry."

Joyce ran nearly to the foot of the stairs.

"Come down !" she cried. "This floor is quite dry. Evidently the flood did not come into the hall. We can soon make the fire burn here. There are coals that we banked up last night. And if it is dry in the kitchen we will have something to eat—a very early breakfast."

Neil came down with two lamps and handed one to Joyce.

"You go to the left, I to the right, and we'll soon explore the house and see if there is damage. The others must stay upstairs."

"Humph ! our commander-in-chief !" grumbled Keith.

"Do as Neil tells you and stay up here with me !" said Ruth sternly.

"S'pose I'll have to !" mumbled the boy, "because I've joined the Junior Scouts. I'm not old enough for the regular ones. I've got improved since I've been a Junior Scout. I always wipe my feet before I come into the house, so as not to muddy your floors."

Joyce presently returned to report.

"Neil is lighting the kitchen fire. All the floors on that side are dry. The water in Ruth's room and mine came through the windows. Ruth's window is blown in, and the rain came through mine underneath ; it fits so badly. We'll have breakfast presently and get thoroughly warm. Then the children can go to sleep upstairs. I am so thankful, so thankful that it is no worse ! All the damage can be very soon repaired. If the cow and the hens are safe, it will be only an interesting experience."

CHAPTER XVIII

What the Flood Revealed

WHEN the sleepers awoke the sun was high and the day was warm. The path of the flood was dank and strewn with wreckage, but the budding trees of the forest nodded gaily in their robe of green, and here and there on the hillocks, the grass showed green and bright. Some of the water had evidently run to the bay ; but a part had drained into a great hollow in the earth.

"It's strange," said Neil, "very strange." He was looking into the deep chasm, which was now almost dry. "The bottom of this cavity appears to be below the level of the bay, so if connected with the bay there would be a lot of water in it. Perhaps it has run into another cavity, deeper still."

"Let's go and see," pleaded Keith. "I believe it is a tunnel made by the Jesuit missionaries long, long ago. You remember the boys told us they thought there was one. We may find secret chambers, where they hid their wealth. We may get treasure and be rich."

Neil laughed.

"The missionaries were very poor, and had no treasures to conceal."

"We will explore some time," promised Joyce. "We are all as eager as you are, Keith. But we must wait till some experienced men are here. The sides might cave in; or the bottom might sink into an excavation below."

"Bother!" exclaimed Keith. "Well, if you won't let me explore, I'll go and look for the cows and hens. I've got to do something. It's too slow here."

Ruth objected.

"Other places may have caved in. We must go over the ground carefully before any one ventures far."

Keith pouted.

"I'm not a baby. I can take care of myself. When every one is trying to manage me, I feel like running away."

"Now, Keith, stop it!" commanded Joyce. "We all want to explore, but in a prudent and proper way; and you will prove best that you are not a baby by trying to act sensibly."

"I don't want to be sensible all the time; it's tiresome. I wish I had been born an elder brother so I could do what I like. I wish I had known enough to come into the family before any of the rest of you."

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"Keith," remarked Winifred rather provokingly, "you said you were not going to grumble after you joined the Junior Scouts."

Keith scowled at her.

"There's enough people nagging at me without your joining in."

He walked off with the air of a much-abused person, but presently approached Joyce with a cheerful countenance.

"I say, Joyce, if you would like me to hang up those wet rugs that were on the floor in Ruth's room and yours, they will dry now in the sun. Neil can help me to wring them."

Joyce smiled encouragingly.

"How nice of you to think of it, Keith. That will be a great help to Ruth and me."

Winifred was trying to assist by carrying a corner of a rug, when she suddenly dropped it and shouted—

"Look, look! All the Browns are coming. They know about our flood."

"Thank God, you are all safe!" cried Mrs. Brown. "It was hard lines that you should come in for the first bad flood there's ever been in these parts. A big piece of the road was washed away. A man who was coming to our house early this morning had to go a roundabout way to get there. That's how we heard of it, and we started at once to see how you had got on. We had to leave

the horses back at Simmons's and come afoot. A little shanty by the road was swept down, but the folks escaped to higher ground."

Farmer Brown looked about him carefully.

"That big gully over there doesn't add to the beauty of your place; but, otherwise, there's very little harm done. Your little people must not go near it till it's filled in, and that will take time."

Keith hastened to express his belief that the cavity was a tunnel made by the Jesuits; and when Mr. Brown had walked round the gully with Neil and his two sons, he said that there evidently had been a cave or tunnel of some kind, and that an examination should be made, with all reasonable precautions to guard against accident.

"The cow is my only anxiety now," said Joyce. "The stable is safe, and so are the fowls, but there is no sign of the cow."

"Your cow is all right," said Billy Brown. "A man will come along with it presently. It strayed over to his place, scared of the flood, I suppose."

When the man arrived, driving the cow, he called out, eager to impart his news—

"Well, that young English chap, Glyn, turned out pretty heroic last night."

"What did he do? Oh, what did he do?" asked Winifred. "Ruth, he is the one that I think is like Basil."

"Why, he'd been in to Braybrook, seeing his

friend Weldron—the Honourable Weldron—that's doing odd jobs for the grocer, Cummings. He got off the train at Ferndale, meaning to walk home, which it would be near four miles, and him with a cough that's took his strength. He got storm-stayed, and took refuge under a shed. Then the flood come up over the road and began beating against Haswell's little shanty, and all them seemingly asleep through the uproar. He crossed over, shoulder deep in water, and beat on the door like to break it down. That roused them, just in time, for the water was rising up the slope to their threshold, and sooner than it takes to tell it, the flood was pouring in on them.

"They rushed out, on to higher ground, and remembered there were two little ones sleeping in a tiny room above. Then young Glyn, though he's panting for his life-breath with an ordinary walk, struggled through the torrent with Haswell, and up the rickety stairs, and got the kids down and out before the old shanty fell. That'll be his finish, out for hours wet to the skin. Some one got word to Weldron, early in the morning, and he come and took him with an ambulance to Braybrook hospital."

"Poor boy," said Mrs. Brown, "for he is but a boy, only twenty-one. My heart went out to him, and we tried to help him in little ways; but he was very proud—not like some 'remittance men'

that we've known that would be willing to live from anybody's bounty, do anything rather than honest work. As I've said before, this poor boy did waste his father's money when he first came out ; but he was barely eighteen, did not know how to work, and fond of fun and excitement ; never a bad lot, and always open-handed and straight in his dealings. And Weldron's a good sort too ; there was a pair of them, much alike ; but when the allowance stopping brought them up with a round turn, poor young Glyn had no strength for work. He did try ; but it was no use."

"They were great chums," said Neil. "Mr. Weldron wanted to take rooms in Braybrook for Glyn, so he could look after him, and see that he was comfortable ; but Glyn would not let him. He pretended that it was better for his health to live in that shack they built on the shore, so he could have fresh air. He had fresh air, certainly. It came in through the cracks, and snow with it. Terence Blackwood went to see him whenever he was in Braybrook. He told Glyn it was because he was studying medicine and wanted to practise on him ; and I went once or twice a week."

"Why, Neil," interrupted Ruth, "you never told us. We would have sent him soup or something nourishing."

Neil blushed.

"I had not thought it necessary to mention it ; had not meant to let it slip out now. It was really Terence's doing, he asked me ; and Mrs. Blackwood sent things by me, jellies and all sorts, and warm things too. He did not seem to mind taking things from Mrs. Blackwood ; he said she was so motherly, and we told him that every one sends to people who are ill. Weldron always stayed with him from Saturday afternoon till early Monday morning, when he had to go back to his work, and he asked the Skinners, who lived not very far away, to look in from time to time, to see if he had proper fires. It would have saved Weldron a lot of time and anxiety if Glyn had gone in to town ; but the poor fellow did not see it."

"Let's talk about something cheerfuller," begged Keith. "When can we begin digging for treasure?"

"Not for a week or more, I guess," said farmer Brown. "Now's a busy time, and we must all get back to work, seeing you are safe. And don't you go near that place, either you or your sister Winifred."

Keith promised, and thereafter impatiently awaited the exploration of the cavity. Meanwhile, he bargained to exchange the relics he expected to discover for rabbits, poultry, and other live stock in the possession of his schoolmates. When the happy time arrived, the excavators found a

part of an artificial cavity, and it appeared probable that a tunnel, now destroyed, had led from an ancient fort.

• In the mound that covered the Indian ossuary they brought to light many relics. Pipes and dishes of clay, curiously carved, had been buried with the dead in accordance with the ancient Indian custom. Some pipes were in the semblance of human heads, others in imitation of birds and animals. The ossuary also contained hammer stones, axes of stone, flint implements, an iron tomahawk, a copper knife, and a number of beads of bright-coloured stone.

The relics in the artificial cavity were of European origin, apparently the property of the missionaries. Among them were a copper kettle and a vessel of brass that had probably been used for the burning of incense, a double-barred cross of white metal, some silver bangles, and other ornaments.

Accounts of the explorations found their way to many newspapers, and members of the Canadian Institute came to Wilderfell to see the cavity.

One day there arrived an antiquarian from Boston, and Joyce took him to Forest Cottage to see her father's drawings and rare books. He sat down with a book in hand, and, poring over it, became oblivious of his surroundings. Joyce wondered uneasily if she had done wrong in admitting

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a stranger to her father's treasures, and moved about the room, putting books in order, till the stranger looked up and expressed his interest. The collection, he said, was most valuable, and he begged to be informed, as soon as possible, of Mr. Gordon's return. He wished not only to have the pleasure of meeting a man of such scholarly attainments, but desired to make an offer for the purchase of some of the rare works for a public library.

CHAPTER XIX

“Welcome Home, Father!”

THE damage from the flood was soon repaired. With the help of some young men of the neighbourhood, Neil built a snake fence about the chasm for the protection of the children and of visitors who might arrive after dark. Excepting the cavity to the west of the house near the bay, the land showed little trace of the deluge. All the wreckage had been cleared, the lawn was green and unharmed, and the vegetables in the garden—the seeds for which had been sown since flood-time—gave promise of an abundant crop. Neil said he would train vines over the high snake fence, and make the cavity within an ornament instead of an eyesore.

Mr. Gordon's recovery had been very slow, but the nurse had written of a great improvement in his condition; then for two weeks his anxious family heard nothing.

On the first day of May Joyce had walked to Ferndale, and was passing by the station when the train came in. An arrival was a rare event,

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and Joyce waited on the platform with some curiosity. One passenger alighted—a stooped and trembling man; and for a moment Joyce looked at him with unrecognizing eyes. Then, with a cry of mingled pain and gladness, she sprang forward.

"Father! oh, dear father! It is so good to have you back again!"

Gone was every trace of the resentment of her young days against his persistent misunderstanding. He had come back weak and needing care, and all that was tender and helpful in her rose to comfort him.

"Glad? Are you really glad, Joyce?"

"Father! Of course I am most thankfully glad! You are tired. Lean on me and come to the waiting-room. I will borrow a horse from Mr. Jones. I came to Ferndale to buy some tea."

Her father leaned feebly on the strong young arm, and Joyce placed him in a chair in the little waiting-room. When she returned from the grocery, Mrs. Jones came with her, bearing a covered tray.

"Dear me, sir, but you do look pulled down!" exclaimed the good woman. "Them big cities is ter'bul on nerves. Jones took a trip to New York, and said he felt that rattled and shaky with the noise that he couldn't have held together

another week. It's fortunate I had a pot of soup on the stove. I'll send my Jimmie for the dishes when he's hitched the horse. You'll be nice and quiet here—nobody but your two selves."

She spread a white cloth on the table, and advised—

"Now, sir, you'd ought to take nourishment many times every day till your strength is built up."

When Mrs. Jones had gone, Joyce drew her father's chair to the table.

"Father," she asked, "did you eat on the journey? Did you have a sleeping-car?"

"No, I was not on the Pullman; it was not necessary. The nurse took me to the station and gave me sandwiches and fruit. She was very good to me. I could not stay longer at the hospital; it is not for convalescents."

He seemed stronger when he had taken the soup, and walked without assistance to the carriage. On the homeward way he leaned back and was silent, and Joyce felt that he was too much in need of rest to talk or to listen.

Winifred saw the approaching carriage, gazed in wonder for a moment, and then darted in to her sister.

"Ruth, oh, Ruth! it's Joycie driving, and a man with her! It's father; I'm sure it's father!"

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Ruth ran out in time to help him to alight, and Joyce took possession of Winifred.

"You must come with me, Winnie. Ruth will take care of father. He is too tired to talk now. But you can help me to make his room ready for him and a nice tea."

When she brought in the tea her father was lying on the sofa with closed eyes.

"Unless he is sleeping, Ruth," said Joyce, "he should drink some tea. And here are fresh eggs. Perhaps he could take a raw egg beaten lightly. I am going back now with Mr. Jones's horse. The children have promised that they will not come in."

Mr. Gordon opened his eyes.

"Joyce, you will be tired; you will have to walk from Ferndale. Let the boys take the horse when they come home."

"Indeed, father dear, I shall not be tired. I have something to do in Ferndale, and I shall be home before dark. Ruth, father's room is ready if he wants to go to bed."

When Joyce returned, two hours later, she did not come on foot, but in the doctor's carriage. Doctor Wild found the patient resting comfortably in his own room. His report was cheering: the father was evidently weak and in need of rest and care, but with freedom from worry, with nourishing food and an outdoor life, he would soon be well.

After dinner Joyce called the young family about her, and warned Keith and Winifred that they must not say a word to father about anything that might trouble him. If he wished to talk to them, they must choose bright and cheering subjects.

"Well, everything is rather bright now," said Winifred. "We will put cushions on the bottom of the boat, and Keith and I will tell him interesting things while we row. It will be warm enough in the middle of the day, and we will talk of how sunshiny it is in Canada, and what beautiful flowers are springing up even in the worst places where the flood was."

The morning after her father's return, Joyce found him resting in the parlour, on a sofa that Mrs. Brown had sent for his use when she heard of his arrival. Mrs. Jones had given a lamentable account of his condition, and expressed the belief that he was not "long for this world," which depressing information had brought Mrs. Brown immediately to Wilderfell, the sofa following in a cart.

Mr. Gordon held a magazine in his hand, and he looked up quickly as Joyce entered the room.

"Joyce," he said, and paused for a moment. His face was set; his voice sounded stern. Joyce recognized the magazine; it was one that contained a description of the struggles of young

girls in a new land. Was her father very angry? Did he think there was some lack of refinement in putting before the world the troubles of a household? But she had not mentioned Wilderfell; she had given no indication of the part of Canada in which the uncleared farm was situated, and she had signed herself merely “J. Gordon”—not an uncommon name. She had hoped the old days of misunderstanding were over. Why should he look at her now as if she had done some grievous wrong?

“Joyce,” he said again, and once more paused.

“Yes, father; what is it?” she asked gently, while her voice trembled.

“Joyce, your name is in this periodical; you have described this place—the life—the hardships. Why?”

“I don't want to trouble you, father. It was because we needed food and clothes for the children; and few people who would read it could possibly know to whom it referred. It was never meant as a complaint. You see, I made them all come out happy and prosperous.”

“I see. And you received money for it to help you to feed the children?”

“Yes, father; it was a great joy to us all.”

“And why—did you not—write to me of it? I never had even a hint from any one.”

His voice was strained, but it did not sound

angry ; and he was looking at her with a strange yearning in his eyes.

She put her hand on his shoulder.

"Ah, father, father dear ! just then you were disappointed, we knew. We all believed that some day you would succeed, but you did not believe it ; you had lost heart. So I feared it might in some way hurt you, and I asked them all to promise not to write of it till, till—everything should be going successfully for you too."

He put his hands up over his face ; then he held out one and grasped Joyce's.

"My child," he said, "my dear child ! How little I knew you ! Forgive me—Joyce, forgive me !"

"Oh, don't, father, don't !" she begged. "There is nothing to forgive. I was a wild tomboy ; and it is no wonder you feared I might never be tamed, and trained into any sort of decorum. I must tell you that I was up on the roof this morning. It seemed necessary. It had been raining in the night, and the waterpipes from the roof were running over. I knew they were stopped in some way, so I climbed up to clear them out. So, after all, it is a good thing that I am sufficiently agile, for the boys are not always at hand."

"Yes, climb if you will ; it may be very useful in this new world. I see now that those boyish

sports in which you delighted have only served to make you strong; and the gentle, womanly thought has grown with your strength."

He was silent for a moment; then he added—

"But I am not worthy of my children. They have done so bravely, and I—"

"Father, you have tried bravely—how bravely only your children, who know how hard it has been for you, can fully understand. You are discouraged because all your hard trying did not succeed; but it will succeed—it will! As soon as you are strong enough, Mr. Peyton has work for you—work that you can do well, and for which he will pay liberally."

The wearied man sat up; his eyes brightened. Hope, that had almost died in him, showed life again.

"What is it, Joyce? What is it that I can do? I shall be—so thankful!"

"There are several things, father—not only one; and they are all interesting."

In a few words she told him of her attempt to revise Mr. Peyton's book, and of her growing conviction that she was not qualified to do it well.

"I did work on it, father, and put the notes in better order; but it needed some one more experienced. And when I told Mr. Peyton so, and suggested that you should do it when you were well enough, he was delighted, and said he would wait,

if necessary, till the summer for your return. He gave me other work to do at home, so my salary went on ; and I do think I have helped him.

"He wants you to help him with the lumber and forestry book, and with some papers about the rocks and mineral resources of his North Shore lands. And for that he would like to take you on a trip to his mills and places at Ninatuk and Dyke's Inlet. And he suggested, too, that you might give some easily understood lectures to his millmen. Neil and I thought they would like one about the cave men of the long ago ; and you have the stereopticon and pictures to illustrate it. If you don't mind, after you write out that lecture, Neil and I will tell you if there is anything in it that the men would not understand. They are very intelligent, and some are quite well educated ; but you know, father, you have been accustomed to address only scientific people, and it needs to be made simple."

"Yes ; you are right," he said humbly. "I am afraid I had little regard for the opinions or the understandings of the unlearned, but I know better now."

"And Mr. Peyton wants a good descriptive catalogue of his library. He has a large collection, and he thought you would, perhaps, help me to do that for him. I think I am able to do that, if you will give me some suggestions about the

classification. There will be work for you and for me for a long time, and everything will go happily for us now—" She paused, for she thought of Basil. Would everything go happily for Ruth? Then she added, with conviction, "For you and for all of us."

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CHAPTER XX

A Delightful Surprise

AS soon as Mr. Gordon was strong enough to receive visitors, interested antiquarians came to see the ossuary and excavations. Dr. Hilbracht, from Boston, took a room at farmer Brown's, and spent hours at Forest Cottage with Mr. Gordon. He examined the book manuscripts, and said he was sure he could place them with a publisher of scientific works; but though they would bring fame they would probably bring no money, as the limited edition that would be sold to libraries and to men of scientific attainments would do no more than pay the cost of publication.

But for some of the books—the rare and valuable books so dear to their possessor—he offered a large payment. And Mr. Gordon at last reluctantly consented to give them up; he did not need them for his work, and he would have still a valuable collection. He must repay the old aunts the money he had borrowed, and with interest; and the house was in need of much repair. When he had made up his mind to the

sacrifice he became happy, and interested in planning what he could do for his children.

One day Winifred remarked—

“Of course, we are all very, very sorry that father was so ill; but it has made him more understanding. He likes alive people better, and skeletons not so well.”

The enforced meeting with all sorts and conditions of men, and unknown conditions of life, had opened the father's blinded eyes. He spoke little of his trials and wanderings; but the elder girls knew that he had lived in very poor lodgings, and had endured hunger and cold. He was, nevertheless, much disturbed when he found his children on intimate terms with their neighbours, and expressed his anxiety to Ruth and Joyce.

His daughters agreed that the manners of the Brown and Salter boys left much to be desired, and regretted that Keith and Winifred preferred to follow their use, or misuse, of the English language.

“But, father dear,” pleaded Ruth, “remember what we owe to the kindness of the Browns. If they had not helped us in many ways, I think we could not have struggled through our first months of trial here. I can never forget their thoughtfulness and sympathy. We can reform the children's manners, but we could never make amends to Mrs. Brown if we should draw away

from her family now. Mira and Lizzie are high-principled, splendid girls ; and they can do no harm to Joyce and me. For the next three months you will see less of them, as they will be too busy in the summer for the reading-classes, and will come for music only once a week."

" No ; certainly we must not hurt Mrs. Brown's feelings. I am grateful to her for her kindness to you ; and in this country people do not expect distinction of class."

Joyce laughed.

" Oh, father, in all my life I never heard so much of that as in Braybrook. The Blackwoods and the Peytons never refer to anything of the kind, but some of the girls are always harping on it : ' She is not in our set ' ; or, ' We won't call on them ; they were not in society in Belfield ' ; or, ' They were nobodies a few years ago.' The Kilwoods, who have a house on the bay shore for the summer, will associate with only a few of the Braybrook families, and do not even return the calls of others."

" Ah ! that is very ill-bred. One should never, with intention, wound the feelings of another ; and such remarks as you have mentioned are not in good taste. I should not care for the girls who made them."

Early in June Joyce went with her father on the long-promised trip to the timber-lands, and

in the pure bracing air of the great lakes Joyce's eyes brightened and the colour came back to her face. When the boat wound in and out among countless islands, when it passed bold, rocky shores, with the great pine forests beyond them, she was silent from sheer delight. Most of the timber had gone down to the mills ; but she saw one belated raft, with its French Canadian crew singing gaily on their way.

When the yachting party landed at one of the milling settlements, Eric Weldron came to the shore. Joyce knew that Mr. Peyton had offered him a position long ago, but he had refused to leave Braybrook while his friend lived. He looked older and more sad, and he talked to Joyce apart of Ivor Glyn. There never was truer comrade, he said, or more unselfish nature. The trouble had all come because he had been thrown out into a world of which he knew nothing, and told to take care of himself. For men strong of body and strong of will, that might be the best discipline, but not for such boys as Ivor.

" I am strong," said the young man, " but I feel as if I had not half the heart left to succeed since his life was broken. I am doing some office work in the mill, and next winter I am to go into the lumber camps and learn the business from the bottom. If I 'make good,' Mr. Peyton says he will give me the same chance for promotion as he

would a son of his own. I like the work. I do not doubt that I shall get on, and— But there is no good in thinking of what might have been, of what ought to have been—for Ivor."

Soon after the return home, when Joyce and her father were working happily together on Mr. Peyton's book, the whole Bedulf family arrived one afternoon for a brief visit. Roger Peyton had taken a party of friends to see Happy Thought Island. The visitors had been delighted with the surroundings, had bought strips of land, and had arranged to begin at once the building of cottages, which would be ready for occupation next summer.

Mrs. Bedulf had not enjoyed such an outing for years. She was full of happy anticipations. Mr. Peyton had become very much interested in her brave sons, and was sure that, with his many boats and teams, he could devise means for marketing the farm produce; then the boys could go in turn to the Agricultural College, and the girls could take trips away from home and see something of life.

The next day came Roger Peyton, with other friends who wanted to build summer cottages, and who thought that Wilderfell would be an ideal spot.

"But the place is not mine," objected Mr. Gordon. "I do not know whether Captain Ferris would be willing to sell."

"Would you write to him?" asked Roger. He

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spoke aside. "If Captain Ferris should sell, I think the settlers would not disturb you. They would be here only in the summer, and the land that they prefer is on the bay shore, nearly half a mile from your house."

"I will, of course, write at once to Captain Ferris," replied Mr. Gordon. "It is my duty to do so."

The next day came the great surprise. It was a very warm June day, and Ruth had set the supper-table on the veranda, in the shade of a large maple-tree. At the sound of wheels every one looked up; and Winifred cried, jumping to her feet—

"It is Mr. Brown's best carriage, with two ladies; and if—if—I did not know it could not possibly be—I would know it was aunt Ruth and aunt Jean."

"But it is ! it is !" shouted Joyce. "How did they come? Why?"

Ruth, who had risen, sat down again, trembling. For one moment the thought had flashed through her mind—"Perhaps Basil has come too." Then she stilled her trembling, and arose.

"He has not come; he has not," she said. "I must not let myself—think of it."

So many arms were clasped round the frail little ladies, so many kisses were pressed upon them, that the father commanded—

"Children, have some consideration! Remember, your aunts are not strong. You will smother them with your welcome."

"Come with me," said Joyce, when she had extricated aunt Ruth from a sticky embrace. "Ruth will bring aunt Jean to our rooms. When you have taken off your things and are a little rested, we will give you some tea in the dining-room, where you will be quiet. We take a supper-tea at this time, as we dine at midday. And I hope you are hungry enough for that."

"Hungry! yes, we are indeed, my dear; and we are tired, but not too tired to see the dear children. How they have grown! So handsome too!"

"You will see them to better advantage when they have partly recovered from their excitement. We have been anxious about you. Our letters were unanswered; so many weeks had passed since we had heard. We were afraid that one of you was ill."

"Ill! Far from it. We are very well, and with such good news. But I am not going to tell you that now; we must have the whole family in council."

After supper, when the excitement of the children had abated, and the family in council had gathered in the sitting-room, the great secret was made known.

Aunt Jean began—

“Douglas, you remember that piece of land that Ruth and I inherited from our great-grandfather—a barren, useless, sandy waste, we always called it; it ate up taxes and gave nothing in return—”

“And we thought it never would,” chimed in aunt Ruth. “We had almost determined to let it be sold for taxes. Then—”

“Then,” went on aunt Jean, “the railroad came that way and—think of it!—right through our property. We were obliged to sell a part of it, and glad indeed to do so. We received a fair price. But that is not the best, the great news—”

“No, indeed,” from aunt Ruth; “that is not the great news. The great news is—”

“The great news is that we—”

“We have sold to—”

“Sold to a man—”

“A manufactory.”

“It was such a good site!”

“Water power—and the railroad—”

“The railroad station close at hand.”

“Three companies offered to buy—and we were so glad—”

“So glad that we did not take the first offer. Our waiting seemed—”

“Seemed like an inspiration.”

‘Now, to be brief—we sold—through our agent

—for a sum beyond our wildest hopes. And then—— ”

“Then we had another inspiration. We went to Captain Ferris—we knew—— ”

“We knew that you thought this place could be made valuable—and he jumped at our offer. He sold to us—— ”

“Sold to us for less than a third of what we had received for our once barren land.”

“And here, my dear Douglas—— ”

“Here is the deed—— ”

“Here are all the legal documents that make you the possessor of Wilderfell.”

And the two aunts, each holding a corner of the precious package, rose and handed it with a grand air to Douglas Gordon, who was for the moment speechless. He was overwhelmed by the kindness of the aged ladies ; and he was, moreover, embarrassed by the doubt whether he wished to be the owner of Wilderfell. He still cherished dreams of money and fame from his work, when he would return to the land that he loved and buy Woldhurst back.

But his children did not share his doubts. They realized that it was most unlikely that they could ever afford to live in England, and they had learned to love this beautiful Wilderfell of the new land. Neil, often so silent, was the first to speak.

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"We all thank you, dear aunts; and we are all glad, so very glad, though we are almost too taken by surprise to know how to tell you. I have been wishing to do many things here, but it did not seem worth while till we knew whether we would stay."

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"We can sell the land now beyond Beachy Cove," said Joyce. "That is, if the aunts are willing. It is only a small part, aunt Ruth, aunt Jean, and not near this house."

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In a few words she explained Roger Peyton's proposal, and the price that his friends had offered.

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"How delightful!" said the two ladies together. "We are certainly willing, as you will receive for a minor part as much as we paid for the whole estate."

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"But we should not be dealing fairly by Captain Ferris," objected Douglas Gordon. "If he had been aware of these offers, he would not have sold the land for so little."

"But, indeed," said Joyce, "if we had not come he would have lost it. The taxes were in arrears, and the place had been advertised for sale. We paid a little, and Mrs. Blackwood and Terence went to the court house, where the tax office is, and made some arrangement. I have always been afraid that they paid a part; but they would not let us know. But now, when we sell the land, we can pay everything, and have enough for

repairing the house and buying stock, and for all our most urgent needs."

"Nevertheless, we should offer a part of our profit to our good friend Captain Ferris," insisted Mr. Gordon. "Honour is better far than riches."

"Yes, father; surely it is. But if Captain Ferris accepts your offer, I shall be sorry for his own sake."

"And now," said Keith, who had been eagerly waiting for an opportunity, "we can clear a little of the land—not for a big farm, not till Neil is grown up, but to grow what we need for our animals. We want cows, to make butter and cheese to sell—Mrs. O'Shea is a good dairywoman. And we want fields of buckwheat for ourselves and our bees. There is pasture enough here for sheep too. And when Neil goes into the lumber business, I'll run the farm."

"Mr. Peyton would be willing to clear the timber off a tract large enough for all our purposes," said Neil. "He was looking at it the other day. And that would give us more money to go on with."

"But, dear aunts, said Ruth, "what do you think about it? Would you like these changes? And—about yourselves——"

"About ourselves," said aunt Jean. "Perhaps we are too old to become settlers in a new land ;

A Delightful Surprise

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but we should like to stay with you for the summer, and go back before it grows very cold."

"I wish you could live with us," said Ruth earnestly.

"Thank you, my dear ; but that would not be best at our age. But we have—some little plans——"

"Some interesting little plans," added aunt Ruth.

"That will unfold themselves in the course of a few weeks."

CHAPTER XXI

All's Well

BY return mail came the answer to Douglas Gordon's offer to John Ferris, and Joyce said triumphantly—

“Ah! I felt sure that Captain Ferris would do what was right. When we came to this place, dilapidated and wretched as it was, I was angry, and said things that were not kind; but I soon realized that he did not know, and had tried to help us.”

“And he has helped us splendidly, wonderfully!” added Neil; “and we shall be for ever grateful.”

Captain Ferris had refused to accept any further payment for the land.

“For more than twenty years,” he wrote, “the place lay waste, and was only a source of expense to me. It has now become a source of profit to you through the enterprise of your fine boys and girls, and if they can make more and more of it I shall be delighted. I bought the place when land and labour were very cheap, and the price

that your good aunts offered me was more than I had paid. I hesitated to accept it, until they assured me that the land had increased in value. I am fully satisfied with my bargain, and want nothing more."

"We'll make him presents at Christmas," said Keith. "Neil can carve him something from the wood of one of his trees; and I can make him a model of a birch-bark canoe—a little one; and we can send him an Indian pipe and a bowl from the ossuary, if that Canadian Institute and those bone-collecting people from Boston don't want everything."

"A very good idea!" said Joyce. "We will all make something for him and for Mrs. Ferris from the products of the land; and perhaps some time when we are very flourishing they will come and see us here."

Soon there was a hum of busy life in the neighbourhood of Wilderfell. Roger Peyton had arranged the sale of the plots of land; and the building of the summer cottages, under the direction of a Toronto architect, had begun. The Blackwoods had set up their tents on the old camping-ground; and Roger found it advisable to row to Wilderfell very often, to oversee the building operations, and, incidentally, to spend the afternoon at the camp.

Mr. Gordon watched the erection of the cottages

with some misgivings. The prospect of near and very lively neighbours was not pleasing ; but, at most, the cottages would be occupied only for four months in the year ; they were nearly half a mile away, and the seclusion of his own Forest Cottage in the depths of the wood was unimpaired. And he was becoming less averse to society. He often took Keith and Winifred for a walk, and tried to teach them. In the early Wilderfell days, Keith had hidden in the barn at the prospect of such a walk ; but now "father" had become more companionable, and the children looked forward to a ramble with him and the interesting things he would tell them.

Soon after the arrival of the aunts, Joyce had asked them of Basil. Had they seen him, or heard anything of him? A glance passed between the two—a glance that seemed to say, "Ah! we know something, but we will not tell," and both parried the question and turned the subject. Joyce would not ask again ; she was convinced that the aunts knew something of interest, which, in due time, they would reveal. Could they smile and look happy at the mention of his name if his marriage to Ethel Gladwin was near? Perhaps they could, for they did not know about Ruth. She had never mentioned his name to her aunts, but Joyce often saw her looking at them wistfully with a question in her eyes.

On an afternoon in July, Ruth was alone on the veranda. Her father was reading in Forest Cottage; the boys were with Terence, fishing; the aunts and Joyce had taken the children to the Blackwood camp; and Ruth did not know that Winifred had grown weary, and had wandered into the wood. Suddenly the child, with hair flying, hands outstretched, and eyes flaming with excitement, darted over the clearing, and shouted in wild delight—

“Ruth, oh, Ruth! he has come at last! He is almost here! Now you'll be glad, so glad!”

Ruth sprang to her feet; her face was white, her lips trembled.

“Who—who has come? What—do you mean—Winnie?”

“Basil—our own dear Basil Ingram! I met him on the woods road. Somebody had brought him to the gate, and he is walking from there. He'll be here in a minute. I ran because I wanted to be the first to tell.”

Ruth sank into her chair; her head fell back, and Winifred cried in alarm—

“Ruth—what is the matter? He's here! Basil—I know—I know she is glad!”

Ruth rose again, steadying herself by the arm of her chair. She turned to Basil, trying to speak, but her voice refused her will.

He had no need for words; the shining eyes,

the radiant joy in her face, to which the colour was returning, told him the story of her heart.

As he stood, clasping her, she faltered—

“Basil—I knew—I knew—you would come—though I heard of you—never one word.”

“Never heard from me? Ruth, I wrote soon after you left Woldhurst ; again when I was going to India, and once from there. When no answer came, I believed you were determined to hold me to my promise, and I did not write again.”

“The letters never came. But, Basil, if it had been many, many years I would have waited for you, sure that you were coming ; and in that surety I have been peaceful and—happy.”

“I heard of you from your aunts ; they knew that I was coming, but they wished to keep it secret. They, if you are willing, Ruth—they will be here at our wedding.”

“Willing ! Oh, Basil ! But—I cannot leave Joyce alone yet.”

“They will stay for a year. They wrote to me immediately after they arrived. They are going to take a house in Braybrook, and keep Christobel with them for the year ; if your father will consent, perhaps Winifred too.”

They had forgotten Winifred's presence, forgotten that there was any one near to hear or to see ; but now her voice piped up—

“About the house—that's the great secrets Mrs.

Blackwood has been having with our aunts. I heard them talking about 'all ready furnished,' and 'let for a year'; and I know some one has theirs in England for a year. But I am not going to live with them; it would be awf'ly dull, even if I do love them. They trouble because I don't have lessons regular; but I will study with father and Joyce every day, and poor Joyce would be so very lonely without me."

"Run away and ask her about it," suggested Basil. And Winifred, eager to impart the glad tidings, raced to the shore.

Busy and joyous were the days that followed. Changes in Basil's property required his early return to England, and the date of the wedding was set for the first week in September. The father's sorrow at the prospect of parting from his most dearly loved child was softened by Basil's promise to return with her next year and spend the whole summer. Keith suggested that Basil should buy some Wilderfell land and build a summer cottage, and in preparation for that event the young man rejoiced the hearts of the boys by a present of sheep, poultry, and bees, on the sole condition that they should make them profitable, and provide Ruth with all the honey she could use in her rustic cottage.

At the Blackwood camp Terence erected another

tent, to accommodate two sewing-women from Braybrook. While the sewing-machines hummed merrily, Mrs. Blackwood and the aunts worked, advised, and superintended; and the boys said they were practising to become champion oarsmen, by reason of the many times that they rowed Ruth back and forth to the Braybrook dressmakers. The girls from the neighbouring farms—the Browns, Salters, and Parkers—sought excuses for calls at Wilderfell, and sat up late, trying their young eyes, in the making of dainty lace for the bride.

Basil soon became a prime favourite, and a few days before the wedding, when the members of the choir called, and with much ceremony presented Ruth with an illuminated address and a souvenir brooch of Braybrook; they presented the young bridegroom also with a picture of Sunlight Cove, near Wilderfell, which had been painted by a Braybrook artist. The choir practised diligently on the wedding hymns, and covered themselves and the new organist with glory by singing them with enthusiasm and without a mistake.

There were tears at the parting from Ruth, but there was rejoicing in her joy and in the thought of reunion. And thus, after all the struggle, the hardships, and the heartache, the second summer at Wilderfell ended in hope and happiness.

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