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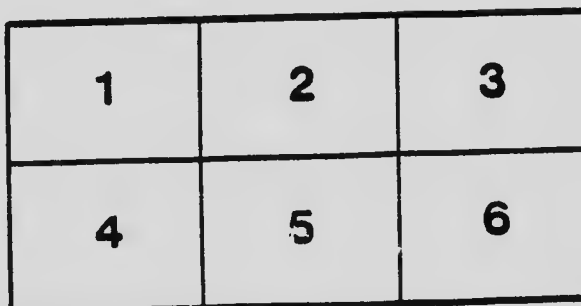
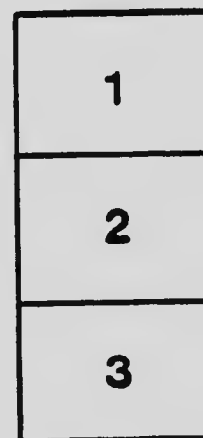
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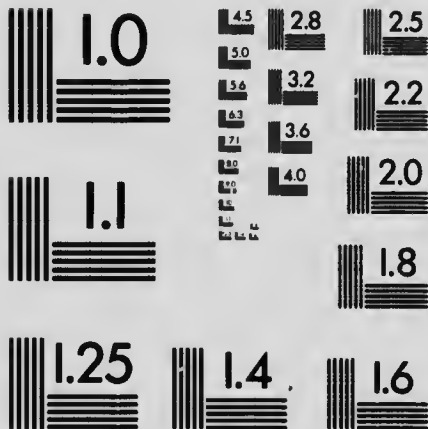
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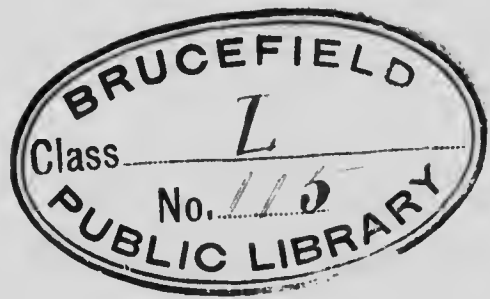
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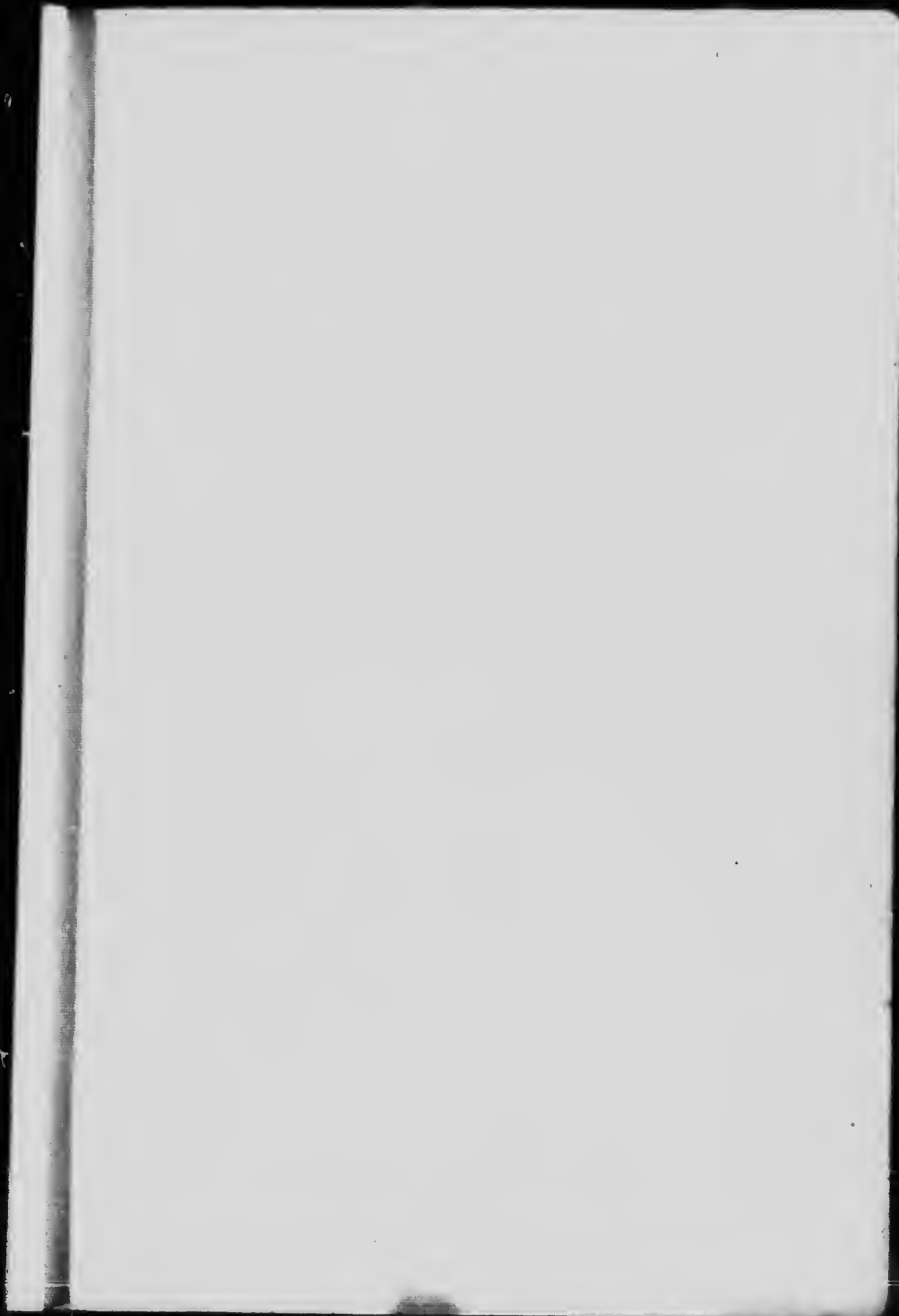
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PINE LAKE

A STORY OF NORTHERN ONTARIO.

BY
MILLIE MAGWOOD.

TORONTO:
WILLIAM BRIGGS

1901

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PINE LAKE.

CHAPTER I.

“**H**ERE we are at last, Miss,” announced the stage-driver, cheerily, as he turned his weary horses towards the hotel door, and sprang to the ground.

Nobody was sorry. Mrs. Brock, the lively little woman with the two children, was very nearly tired out. The baby was fretting and tossing in her arms, and the other child, a little girl of about two years, had fallen asleep with her head on my lap—one of our musical driver’s ballads having proved irresistible. I had been forced to pinch myself to keep awake.

The young man in the front seat climbed slowly out, stretched his long limbs, and took a final stare at this curiosity they called the new Pine Lake teacher, as the stage-driver helped me through the narrow doorway and down the steps to the ground.

On the platform, that ran the whole length of the hotel, was a small crowd of idle, curious men and boys; and I ran upstairs and into the room labelled “Ladies’ Sitting-room,” as quickly as possible. The room was empty, and, throwing aside my hat, I lay

down on the cloth sofa—to rest. Some mean creature afterwards circulated a report to the effect that I was crying when the proprietor of the hotel suddenly opened the door a few minutes later. Not I! Why, I was seventeen years old, and a full-fledged school-teacher. More than that, my mind was very firmly made up that I would shed no homesick tears; so I indignantly deny the statement.

At the same time, I beg leave to emphatically denounce all men and boys who are heartless enough to openly and curiously stare at a lonely and bashful girl the moment she sets foot in their village.

“I beg pardon—you’re the teacher for Pine Lake school, ain’t ye?” inquired the above-mentioned proprietor, as I sat up and rather confusedly rubbed my eyes. I felt drowsy after that long, bumping drive, through and over pitch-holes innumerable.

“Yes, sir; I—I think so,” I stammered.

“Well, one of your trustees is downstairs inquiring for you. John Laidlaw is his name. I’ll send him up. Tired, ain’t ye? Long drive ye’ve had. Lie down an’ rest. Just make yourself at home, an’ the wife ’ll make ye a cup o’ tea.”

And the good-natured man went downstairs and, as I afterwards learned, remarked to Mr. Laidlaw’s son, Peter:

“She’s a young thing to be away among strangers. Homesick, too, I guess. She’s cryin’. See that you keep her amused for a while, Peter, till she gets used to the place an’ the people. Don’t let her think about gittin’ lonesome.”

Little did you think, Ted Cork, of the thorns you unwittingly strewed in my pathway!

I reluctantly rose from the sofa, put my hat upon a very untidy head, and sat down by a window to await the coming of John Laidlaw, who presently appeared.

"Be you oor noo ticher?" he inquired in very loud, broad Scotch, giving my hand at the same time a tremendous shake.

"If you are Mr. Laidlaw, yes," I replied, trying to appear at ease.

"I'm glad tae see ye," he remarked, kindly. "I'm thinkin' ye'll be aboot played oot. The team's at the door, an' I guess the sooner ye git home the better. Will ye be ready the noo?"

"Certainly," I replied, with alacrity; and, without waiting for Mrs. Cork's cup of tea, I seized my valise and followed my big Scotch trustee downstairs.

I took a furtive survey of him as he preceded me down the long flight of steps. As I remember him then, he was a thin, bony man, over six feet in height, with a thin, straggling brown beard, a long Roman nose, and a pair of little twinkling gray eyes. One thing that impressed itself upon my mind at the moment was that one trouser-leg was inside the top of the long cowhide boot, while the other was gradually climbing down its boot-leg, having reached about the middle of the journey, and his green-gray cloth cap had a frayed peak adjusted immediately over the left ear.

We had to run the gauntlet of all those curious

eyes again, as we crossed the platform and I stepped into the sleigh, which already held my trunk.

"This is my son, Peter," announced Mr. Laidlaw. "I'm not goin' home yit. He'll drive ye."

Peter, hanging on to the lines for dear life, murmured, "How d'ye do?" Then the hotel-keeper came up to the sleigh, said good-bye, and put poor, bashful Peter into a fresh state of misery by maliciously saying, "Mind ye keep her amused, an' don't let her get lonesome, Peter."

I being almost as shy as the young man, we both felt exceedingly uncomfortable as we drove out of the village of Blue Bay and down the lonely road to the lake-shore. Half a mile was covered in silence. Peter took an occasional side-glance at me, and I accidentally looked at him every time; whereupon, he invariably blushed, said, "A-a-hem," and requested the horses to "get up." At last, growing desperate, I resolved to break the silence.

"You have a fine team of horses, Mr. Laidlaw," I remarked.

"Think so?" he jauntily inquired. Evidently I had struck the right chord, for he seemed for the moment to forget his shyness.

"I do," I proceeded. "They are so well matched, such splendid trotters, and seem so easily controlled. You must be kind to your horses."

"You bet!" he replied, emphatically. "Any one abuses my horses 's got me to deal with. They know the minute anyone else takes the lines. Ain't never used to anything but kindness."

Here he suddenly remembered that I was a stranger and a girl, and returned to his shell, so to speak. So did I ; and neither of us spoke again until we turned in at a gateway and Peter informed me that we were home.

As we drove up the lane, I noticed that there was a fine bank barn, evidently quite new, and a small log house, standing out clear and gray in the winter twilight against the black background of a small bush, which I found to be a fine protection from the cold lake winds in winter, and a pleasant and profitable home for myriads of mosquitoes in summer.

How dreary the place looked, with not another house in sight ! And this was to be my home for a whole year. I put the thought from me resolutely, and asked my companion where the school was.

"Oh, it's a mile an' a half up that way," he replied, pointing in a north-easterly direction.

Another little thrill of dismay crept over me. It would be no play to walk all that distance before nine o'clock every morning.

As we neared the house, a woman of some three score years came out, holding her hand to her face to shield it from the cold wind, and stood gazing at me with a pair of large, sharp gray eyes, and also, it seemed to me, with a pair of toothless, well exposed gums.

"This is Miss Murphy, mother," said Peter, lifting me bodily out of the sleigh at the side farthest from the house. I ran along the path close to the horses,

ducked my head as I passed under their noses to keep out of the deep snow (thereby winning Peter's lasting admiration), and shook hands with Mrs. Laidlaw. Then we went into the house, and Peter, having deposited my trunk in a snowbank to await further convenience, drove away to the barn.

How small and crowded the little kitchen seemed after the big farm-house at home! Sewing by the only window in the room sat a tall awkward-looking girl of about eighteen. As she rose and turned towards us, I saw that she had a very pretty face, framed with wavy black hair. Except that she was very tall, she was the picture of what her mother must have been at her age.

"This is my girl, Bessie," said Mrs. Laidlaw. Bessie, although very shy, was a nice, friendly girl, and we soon became fast friends.

"An' this is yer bedroom," announced the old lady, throwing open the door of a tiny room which already looked crowded, although it contained only a bed, a small curtained stand and a chair. Wondering where room could be found for my trunk, I laid my coat and hat on the bed and returned to the kitchen to be entertained for an hour in Mrs. Laidlaw's best style.

I was shown Bessie's new hat, her mother's new bonnet, all their fancy-work, mats, etc., until I began to feel myself woefully ignorant, as I was compelled to acknowledge my inability to manufacture any such articles as were being held up to my admiring view.

After a while Peter came in bearing one end of my large trunk, while at the other appeared another young man, as tall but scarcely as lank as his brother. When the trunk had been squeezed with difficulty into the small space between the foot of the bed and the wall, I was introduced to Donald, the only member of the Laidlaw family whom I had not already met. He was a pleasant-looking fellow, slightly stooped from years of hard and constant work, with the gray eyes common to the family, stiff, wiry black hair, a short bristling moustache of the colorless species, and a row of very even white teeth, which he showed now in a pleasant smile as he gave me a hearty welcome to the place.

I could not help contrasting him with his brother as they stood before me for a few moments, Donald—or Don, as I soon learned to call him—chatting and laughing, while Peter leaned silently against the wall, with both hands behind him and his feet crossed. His face generally wore an innocent sort of grin, and he had a habit of giggling which used to irritate me unaccountably. The little “a-hem” I had remarked during the drive was chronic. He never knew what to do with his hands and feet, and all his joints seemed so loose that I often imagined they rattled when he walked.

But no description of Peter Laidlaw would be complete if the pride of his heart, his moustache, were omitted. Just long enough to stroke, of a delicate, whiteish color, and of so luxuriant a growth that I

once heard a young lady remark that it "reminded her of a baseball match, nine on a side." I cannot affirm that this remarkable appendage added much to Peter's beauty, but it certainly added a great deal to his sense of dignity.

While we chatted Bessie prepared the supper, and soon requested us all to "set in," indicating my place at the same time by pointing to a chair—beside Peter.

Poor Peter!

I waited a moment for someone to ask a blessing on the food before us, but such a custom was evidently not an everyday matter here. So silently offering a word of thanks to the Giver of all, I began the meal with the rest.

The evening passed pleasantly enough. About nine o'clock we all went to bed, and pleased I was to lay my head on the soft feathery pillow.

CHAPTER II.

DURING breakfast next morning I inquired as to whether there was a church of the denomination to which I belonged in the village. Receiving an answer in the affirmative, I next asked at what hour service was held.

"Seven i' the evenin'," said Mrs. Laidlaw; "but ye'd just better gae wi' Bessie tae the tither ane."

I replied that although I was aware that all Christian denominations consist of the followers of the same Lord, I had been taught to consider it one of my first duties in life to attend regularly and otherwise support the branch of the Church to which I belonged; whereupon, much to my surprise, Mrs. Laidlaw informed me that the "last ticher had belanged tae the tither kirk i' the village, but had just gane wi' Bessie," and that I would be expected to do likewise. I quietly but promptly declined. A letter of introduction and recommendation from my pastor at home to the pastor of the Blue Bay flock lay in my Bible, and I would as readily have thought of denying my name as my beloved Church—church-home as mother always said. Few women hold wider views on all subjects than

mother always did; but she was much opposed to Christians shifting their adherence from one denomination to another, except as a matter of conscience or necessity. She held that every Christian willing to do the work of Christ should have a church-home. Thus his energies would be turned into a more effective channel of usefulness, and the worker would be surrounded by conditions more conducive to his becoming established in the work and faith of God, and less liable to become lukewarm and lose interest in religion.

What might have been the result of my determined stand at this time I am not just sure. Certain it is that matters looked serious enough for me when Don quietly remarked that "a person surely had a right to attend whatever church pleased her best." Don's word was apparently law in this household, for nothing more was said, although his mother was never able to understand why I should be so unaccountably attached to any particular religious denomination.

I soon learned that neither she nor her husband ever entered a church door except on some special occasion—nothing short of a funeral being sufficient to tempt them thither. The younger members of the family attended church and Sabbath-school regularly, more because their associates did so than from any home influence. Religion was evidently a very minor consideration in this family, and I, as a very babe in Christ, felt the change from the sweet Christian atmosphere of my home very keenly.

There was Sunday-school in the school-house every Sunday morning at ten o'clock, and shortly after breakfast we were on our way thither. Don kept up a pleasant conversation until we reached the steps of the plain little wooden building, and then we hurried in, for the last line of the opening hymn was being sung. The superintendent's voice was saying "Let us pray" as we filed up the aisle between the two rows of seats.

I threw one glance around me as I knelt beside Bessie in the Bible-class, and I am afraid I did not follow the good old man's prayer as attentively as I should have done, for I could not help overhearing some whispered questions and remarks near at hand.

"Is that the new teacher?" in a cautious tone from the seat behind which Bessie and I were kneeling.

"Sh! Not so loud," in an answering whisper.

"Must be her, I guess. Awful young, ain't she?"

"Looks more like a kid than a teacher," contemptuously from some one whom I fervently hoped might prove to be a pupil.

"Don't look very stylish, anyway," said another very audible voice. "Hope she won't be as stuck up as old Jane was."

Bessie grew fidgety, and I had much ado to keep from bursting out laughing. Some remarks followed, concerning as much of my personal appearance as each had noticed in the hurried glances taken while I had walked across the room. Then we heard a suppressed giggle. The owner of the voice that had

given utterance to the opinion that I was a "kid" had evidently been peeping over the back of the seat, for she now exclaimed, "Blest if she hasn't red hair."

This was too much. I laughed till the seat shook. Before I could straighten my face the superintendent said "Amen," and we all rose. Still shaking with laughter, I glanced at the seat in front. It contained five girls, of ages ranging from fourteen to twenty. These, with two others in the seat with us, and six young men behind us, constituted the Bible-class that day. There were three other classes in the room: one of little boys, one of little girls, and another comprised of little tots of both sexes. While the teachers began their work I took a survey of my surroundings.

It was a small square room, with whitewashed walls and four windows, two at each side. A blackboard extended the whole length of the wall opposite the door, and a rusty stove-pipe stretched its weary links from the stove near the door to the chimney-hole above the blackboard. The teacher's desk was a small closed affair, with old-fashioned writing-desk top, and room underneath, as I afterwards found out, for the teacher's knees, as well as rubbers, dusting-cloths, coal-oil can, and a few other indispensables. The children's desks were of a like style, with shelves beneath for books and slates. Along the back of the room were rows of hooks for hats and coats, and on a nail below the blackboard hung a villainous-looking leather strap, cut at one end into half a dozen tails. The desks and the woodwork of the walls were all

alike guiltless of paint ; but the little school-room had a bright, cheery look in spite of its plainness.

I was just vowing that the morrow would see that strap in ashes, when the superintendent's voice recalled me to the business of the hour. He was reviewing the last Sabbath's lesson preparatory to introducing that of to-day, and I strove to listen attentively ; but so many eyes kept travelling over me that I felt my cheeks burn most uncomfortably, and I was glad when the lesson was over, the collection taken, and the last hymn announced.

In my fondness for music of any kind I forgot my embarrassment for the moment, and sang with the rest.

"Crackin' good singer, ain't she?" remarked a young man behind me, as we bowed our heads for the benediction. Again that almost uncontrollable desire to laugh came over me, and I had much ado to keep from disgracing myself by laughing outright.

Next I was introduced to all the grown people present and a few of the children ; and glad I was to find myself at last safely on the way homeward with Peter and Don and Bessie.

That afternoon was not the pleasantest I ever spent. Don always declared that I was homesick ; but I deny it. There was no musical instrument in the house, and everybody was either asleep or exceedingly quiet.

The only enlivening sounds to be heard were the regular and exasperating cadences of Mr. Laidlaw's

snores, as he lay at full length on his back on the old lounge by the window. I felt sorely tempted to either sit down on him, hard, or stuff my handkerchief and mittens into his widely-gaping mouth.

Half-past five and tea-time came at last, to my intense relief, and after supper we prepared for a drive to the village. I won't describe the service in the little church that night. It was thoroughly good, no doubt. I know that all the other services I attended during my year at Pine Lake were very enjoyable and beneficial; but I may as well confess that I do not remember a word of the discourse—not even the text. Looking back, I can recollect nothing but a very disagreeable sensation, as I felt that dozens of pairs of eyes were running up and down and almost burning holes in me, till I felt that I must run somewhere—anywhere, to get out of sight. Once I thought that if I could only see one familiar face I shouldn't mind the—

Just here I reminded Daisy Murphy that she was treading on forbidden ground, and with a mighty effort joined in the singing of the closing hymn.

More introductions followed the benediction. Then I gave my pastor's letter to the pleasant-faced minister, who came down the aisle with outstretched hand to welcome the stranger, and followed Bessie from the church to the waiting sleigh.

CHAPTER III.

NEXT morning I commenced work in the little wooden school-house. I found that my pupils numbered about thirty in all, with an average attendance of from twenty to twenty-five. The little ones from a distance, who could not attend during the winter months on account of the cold and deep snow, were replaced by the larger scholars, who were obliged to work all the summer, so that the average was about the same the year round.

The objectionable strap was at once dropped into the stove, and a reign of love and good-fellowship began which was evidently new to the school. Parents and larger pupils prophesied anarchy, some even going so far as to declare that a month would see me on my way home a confessed failure. But as time passed, all were forced to admit that the pupils had never made more rapid progress or maintained better order.

I must disclaim all credit to myself in the matter. I was simply kind and impartial to all, at the same time firmly insisting that good order and well-prepared lessons should be the rule; and almost without exception my pupils vied with each other in study

and good behavior. Fighting had been a favorite recreation among the boys ; but once I made them thoroughly understand my ideas of a gentleman there was no more fighting, and very seldom even a quarrel.

“Love is the fulfilling of the law.” I loved my scholars and they loved me, and therein, I believe, lies the secret of good management and real progress in education and character-building among children the world over.

But I am wandering from my story.

Thursday afternoon of that first week in Pine Lake school I was given a note by a little fellow whose air of importance and shining eyes told plainly that something pleasant and unusual was about to transpire.

“Something nice, Willie?” I asked, smiling.

“Yes, ma’am,” he answered, shyly, edging away towards his seat.

I opened the envelope, and found that it contained invitations for Bessie, Peter and myself to be present at a small party the next evening, at the home of Willie’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. Rasp. Don and his father had gone to their lumber-camp fifteen miles farther north, which accounts for the three names only being mentioned.

Behold us then, the next evening, suitably attired and on our way to the party. Mrs. Laidlaw had anxiously asked if I were “a dancer,” and on being informed that I was not, indignantly demanded to

be made acquainted with my reasons. Evidently it would be a serious offence to say a word against the most popular amusement of Pine Lake. Moreover, I knew so little about it that I could not vouch for the right or wrong of it from personal knowledge; so I simply replied that I had never been allowed while at home to attend dancing-parties, and had promised my father that I would never dance. I signified my willingness to look on, however, if the other young people desired to spend the evening thus, and inwardly vowed that I would know for myself before the end of the year just wherein lay the wickedness of whirling round a room in time to music.

My parents, knowing well my lively, fun-loving disposition, had endeavored to bring me to womanhood without a personal knowledge of any recreation which they had reason to consider at all doubtful. But although I was outwardly obedient, I must confess that I had an insatiable curiosity with regard to the prohibited amusements.

According to a previous understanding between herself and Mrs. Rasp, Mrs. Laidlaw accompanied us. So, much to my relief, Peter took the sleigh. I had been laboring under an unspoken dread lest some (thus far, to me, unknown) admirer of Bessie's might deprive me of her company at the close of the party, and I be left to be entertained during the two-mile walk home by Peter's "a-hem" and his equally inspiring remarks.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and I enjoyed

the drive there very much. We sang some familiar hymns and songs, keeping time with the rhythmical, silvery chiming of the sleigh-bells, and I was almost sorry when the horses dashed through the gateway and up to Mr. Rasp's door.

The house was a small story-and-a-half frame building, with a low log barn standing a few yards behind it. We were evidently a little late, for as we drove past the windows we could see that the little kitchen was nearly filled with young people. We alighted at the back door, where Mrs. Rasp and her daughter Annie, having heard the bells, stood waiting to receive us. How I dreaded entering that crowded room, where I knew I must again be the cynosure of all eyes! However, if I were ever to become acquainted with the people of my section, I must make an effort to overcome my natural shyness and "be sociable," as Mrs. Laidlaw frequently reminded me. We followed our hostess through a door at one side of the kitchen, into a small bedroom, where we laid our wraps on the bed, arranged our hair, and then re-entered the main part of the house. After greetings had been exchanged on all sides, and I had been introduced to all those present whom I had not already met, someone proposed dancing.

A fiddler had already taken his seat behind the stove, to be out of the way, so the next act was the choosing of partners. Just at this moment the front door opened, and three young men entered. Mrs. Rasp hastened across the room to meet them, and Annie, who sat beside me, whispered :

"There's the Pine Lake dude, Miss Murphy."

"Which one?" I asked, not deeply interested in the announcement, but feeling that I was expected to say something.

"The tallest of the three," she replied. "The dark one next the door is his brother Norman, and the other one is Dan Stilter."

"And what is the name of this dude, and why does he bear such a title?" I asked, smiling.

"Oh, his name is Angus McIvan," she hastened to explain. "They came four years ago from Toronto, and he never seems to forget his city style, even in the lumber woods. I'll bring him over and introduce you," she added, rising and a moment later I saw her conversing with the new *...* is.

Meanwhile the fiddler had been scraping his instrument into tune, the poor thing uttering the most excruciating wails and groans of agony the while. Couples were forming and hastily taking their places. There was need of haste, for everyone present could not dance in one set, which was all the little room could accommodate, and whoever was on the floor first retained the place. Mr. Mason, a young man whom I had met the previous Sunday, promptly appeared at my elbow, and making his bow, requested the pleasure of dancing with me. Not being conversant with ball-room etiquette, I scarcely knew how to reply without causing offence, where the fact was so evident that I was the only non-dancer in the assembly. However, judging that plain truth would be the wisest answer in this case, I replied :

"Thank you ; I do not dance at all. Miss Rasp, over there, is not engaged, I think. Perhaps she will be willing."

I had scarcely uttered the words, and Mr. Mason had but turned his back to look for Miss Rasp, when I beheld Peter coming round the stove with determination in his little squinting eyes.

"I can't dance, Peter. No use," I exclaimed, laughing.

"Won't ye dance, sure?" he asked, curiously.

"No," I replied, firmly.

"Wait till the dude comes along. He'll teach ye," said Peter, giggling.

Now, that giggle of Peter's always did irritate me, and I turned my back to him as I replied with some dignity :

"There isn't any dude living who can persuade me to break my word."

Peter stared ; and taking no more notice of him, I began to watch with interest the dance which had now begun in earnest.

How very firmly we lean on our own independent backbone at seventeen and thereabout ! And it is well that we do, for it is then that the pitfalls of life are most plentiful and tempting, and it is generally later that we begin to realize the utter brittleness of all support other than the Almighty arm. Thank God for the independent self-reliance of youth, when its possessor has not the other priceless strength on which to depend.

"Address your pardners!" sang out in nasal tones a fellow seated with legs dangling from the table. All the ladies curtsied, while their partners bowed with profound gravity. One style of bow seemed to be in vogue here, and I found myself wondering if the dude of Pine Lake had been the originator thereof. Each gentleman set one foot four or five inches behind the other, drooped his shoulders and ducked his head for an instant, letting his hands dangle, unless they happened to be buried in the depths of his trousers' pockets. I had not intended letting my eyes betray that I was taking note of the graceful limbs thrust backward by those whose backs were toward me, but little Willie was watching me, and he whispered confidentially, as he crowded with difficulty between Peter's chair and mine:

"You ought to see Angus McIvan 'dress his partner, teacher. He don't stick out his hind leg like that. When I get big—" Seeing that I was laughing heartily, he stopped, with an injured look in his big brown eyes.

"Excuse me, Willie," I said, quickly. "You say funny things on purpose to make me laugh, don't you?"

He looked a little mollified, but glanced in a puzzled way from me to Peter, who was giggling more indefatigably than ever.

Meanwhile I had lost an item of the very interesting dance.

"Balance all!"

My! How those boots clattered! I couldn't help wondering how many dust-pans of fine splinters and slivers Mrs. Rasp would sweep up next morning.

"Right and left!" sang the young man with the dangling limbs; and the dancers wound in and out and to and fro till it seemed as if the whole affair must end in "confusion worse confounded." But "Swing your pretty ones all!" came at just the moment the original partners met, and each young man seized his partner and spun round and round most energetically. One young lady I noticed was swung completely off her feet, and laughingly gave her attendant a box on the ear when released.

Then "Ladies' chain!" was announced, and some other figure which I missed, owing to Mrs. Rasp coming to inquire as to my scruples regarding dancing. Having explained to her, I again turned to watch the swiftly moving forms before me.

"Birdie in the cage and three hands round—oh, pretty birdie!" sang the caller-off, and my friend Bessie was the birdie, while three others joined hands and circled round her, forming the cage.

"Birdie fly out and hawk fly in!"

Bessie glided to her place, while her partner gaily hopped into the cage and amused himself with a characteristic step-dance, till, at a new strain in the music, "Hawk fly out and give birdie a swing!" caused him to spring forward, throw his arm about his partner's waist and swing her around until the command, "Promenade all around the hall, and don't forget the

Pine Lake ball!" from the master of ceremonies, sent them all promenading round the little kitchen. The final "Swing your honey-come-chuck" ended the first part of the dance.

As I became more familiar with the music, I learned that the term "honey-come-chuck," used to designate "partner," is often varied to "pretty one," "sweet-heart," "the girl with the rosy cheeks," etc., while often the tables are turned on the opposite sex by such expressions as, "Swing the boy with the waxed moustache," or, "the fellow with holes in his boots." I also learned that the ability of the master of ceremonies to invent new and mirth-provoking terms in his line of business added greatly to his popularity as a caller-off.

Then followed something that Willie whispered was a "cast-iron circle," followed by the "break-down," which was even more lively and energetic than the preceding figures had been.

Truly it was a senseless performance. Father was correct when he said that. It must certainly wear out a vast amount of vitality and shoe leather. But after all there was a something about it that whirled away my critical thoughts, kept my feet tapping the floor in time with the flying feet before me, made my brain reel and my heart thump—an almost irresistible something. Was this the oft-talked-of ruinous fascination of the dance? My promise rang in my ears, and I found myself repeating it in a whisper:—

"No, father. You may trust me. I'll never dance."

Somehow with that the blinding, reckless fascination lost its power, and the victory for me was won. I would make a study of the dance and its effects on those who indulged in it; but whether I decided for myself that it was harmless or sinful, my promise must be kept, and father need never have reason to doubt his daughter's word.

Just then I heard Mrs. Laidlaw's voice. "It's too bad to bind a young bit thing like her sae tight. She niver seen a dance afore, an' her vera face tells she's taken wi' it."

Too bad, was it? Would that there were more parents in the world who, seeing the evil of it, placed their children on their honor to abstain from harmful indulgences until such time as maturity removed the gay thoughtlessness of youth, and revealed to them the dangers they had passed, rather than that sad experience should teach them when too late for aught but repentance.

My face must surely have revealed that I was "taen wi' it," for I afterwards learned that no less than four bets were made that night that before the year had passed Miss Murphy would be dancing with the rest. Small betting was fashionable here. I was surprised when I learned that Angus McIvan had been "taker" in three cases out of the four, even offering two to one that my firmness would stand the strain to which it was likely to be subjected.

My thoughts were interrupted by Miss Rasp's voice at my side, introducing the three last arrivals, and I

turned to meet a pair of deep blue eyes that always seemed to have a laugh in their depths, together with a radiating kind-heartedness that made one feel as if he were an old friend, even before one encountered the hearty clasp of his muscular hand. He was handsome, too, and well dressed; but his charm lay more in the manner by which he seemed unconsciously to make one feel that he was a strong, true friend. I instinctively felt, as his deep, rich voice made me welcome to Pine Lake, that if I ever needed a friend or protector I was sure to find both in the big Scotchman before me.

His brother was a different sort of a man altogether. Norman McIvan was a fine-looking fellow, but there was a gay, reckless dash about him that gave one an instinctive feeling of distrust. In fact, he was one of those people who cannot trust themselves, and in whom the knowledge breeds a recklessness which, unless converted by Divine love into the truest strength, made perfect in its very weakness by its utter dependence on another, is morally certain to ruin the character and soul of the victim whom it possesses.

"Since Miss Murphy won't dance, let us have a few games," proposed Mr. Stilter. No sooner said than done. Partners were again chosen, and we played, "Going to Jerusalem," "Jersey boys," and a few more games which some person jestingly designated "Methodist dances," and which I afterwards learned to place in the same class with the

dancing itself. There is really very little difference between such games and the ordinary social dance.

After a while a game was proposed which I had never seen or heard of before, and with the others I unsuspectingly gave a forfeit every time it was demanded of me, until I had deposited in the hat of Mr. Fred. Weston, who had been unanimously elected "dreamer," a brooch, a handkerchief, and a penknife.

When all the forfeits which the game yielded had been collected, Fred drew his chair to the centre of the floor and sat down. Jessie Smith blindfolded him, and, holding a forfeit over his head, began,

"Heavy, heavy, what hangs over thee?"

"Fine, or superfine?" queried the dreamer.

"Fine," replied Jessie. "Fine" referred to gentleman's wear, and the word "superfine" was used with reference to ladies' forfeits.

"What shall the owner do to redeem it?" she next asked.

"Cross the floor frog-fashion three times," was the reply.

"Norman McIvan, your forfeit," cried Jessie; and the unlucky owner of the tie-pin thereupon entertained the company by hopping as nearly in imitation of a frog as he could until his forfeit was restored to him.

"Heavy, heavy, what hangs over thee?"

"Fine, or superfine?"

"Superfine. What must the owner do to redeem it?"

A little thrill ran down my back as I saw that Jessie held my handkerchief in her hand.

"Walk the cedar swamp with Ned Graham."

"Miss Murphy's forfeit."

The dreamer snatched the bandage from his eyes, and looked at me, as did every one else in the room.

"Rather hard on a new-comer," muttered George Smith to Bessie.

"She won't do it," she replied, and I, overhearing, began to wonder what this new requirement might be.

Ned, a great, hulking fellow, surreptitiously deluging the wood-box with a quantity of tobacco juice, took his stand at the other end of the room, directly opposite me, as I stood with my back to the bedroom door.

"Where is the swamp?" I inquired, whereupon Ned explained that we were to consult each other's taste by asking questions. If I liked what he mentioned, I must take one step forward; if not, then one backward. He would do likewise.

He then opened proceedings by inquiring if I liked Pine Lake. I promptly stepped forward, while a hearty clapping of hands showed approval, and asked Ned if he was fond of pumpkins. A roar of laughter followed, as the big fellow, who I afterwards learned was commonly called "Pumpkin" among the girls, took a huge stride forward. Thus we proceeded, sometimes drawing near each other, and sometimes farther apart, until, having been asked if I liked fruit, and being decidedly fond of it, I found that I

could not step forward without going round the grinning creature before me ; so I innocently inquired, "What next?"

With a hideous leer he reached forward and laid his big hands on my shoulders, with the manifest intention of bestowing a kiss from his tobacco-begrimed mouth on my cheek. Quickly as the thought struck me, I drew back, kissed my hand and laid it with no small force squarely on the thick, coarse lips.

"That's no way to treat a fellow," he declared, taking a step forward, with an evident determination to finish the game by force. I walked backward from him, quite ready to resent a second favor of the kind, but anxious to get out of the fellow's reach. Suddenly, some one from behind caught my arm, and gently but firmly drew me backwards and seated me on a chair.

"You deserve what you got, Ned," said the Pine Lake "dude," standing with his hand on the back of the chair. "You might have explained the thing to her, and given her an opportunity to consent or refuse to play such a game."

Ned sat down without another word.

Tears of mortification and vexation very nearly mastered me for a few minutes, and I was thankful that, except for the shouts of laughter that followed the salute Ned Graham so little appreciated, no one took any notice of me until I had regained my self-control.

The game went on. Some of the girls refused to

submit to the penalties exacted for the redemption of their forfeits ; others gracefully lifted their cheeks or lips to be kissed, as a matter of course, while others again coquettishly resisted until the coveted kiss was taken by superior strength.

Last of all, Jessie, sympathizing with me, but unable fairly to pass by my other two forfeits, held up both at once, and the penalty exacted was to "pick three pails of cherries with Angus McIvan."

"What does that mean?" I asked, looking up at him as he stood leaning against the wall near by.

"More kissing," he replied, smiling a little.

"Who is to do it?" I asked.

"You and I."

"But I mean which of us—you or I?" I persisted, adding, before he could answer, "because, if I am supposed to do it, I'll excuse you, and if it is your next duty in life, you may keep the forfeits. I am neither a wax doll, to be kissed by any one who feels moved that way, nor a kissing-machine, to kiss all who apply."

"Forfeit! forfeit!" yelled Ned, evidently anxious to see how this affair would be settled, and Mr. McIvan quietly took the articles from Jessie's hand and dropped them in my lap.

"We have arranged matters on the credit plan," he said. "I return Miss Murphy's forfeits, and she owes me three pails of cherries, to be delivered whenever she chooses."

I threw him a grateful look, and lunch being announced at the moment, nothing more was said.

The gathering dispersed shortly afterwards; and as I sat beside Bessie, cuddled up on the straw in the sleigh-box, I again wondered wherein lay the actual harm of the dancing I had that evening witnessed for the first time. It looked like a very harmless performance.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR the first few weeks I found my life at Pine Lake to be very quiet and slightly monotonous. Nearly all the men and some of the girls of the place were away in the lumber-camps farther north. Mrs. Laidlaw and Bessie so often told me of the good times when the shanties broke up in the spring that I began to wish the winter was over. The walk to school was far from pleasant, particularly as the road was often unbroken and the drifts frequently reached half-way to my waist. Several times the side-road had been absolutely impassable until men and teams shovelled or tramped the snow. Very stormy mornings Peter always drove me to school, but losing that much time in the morning hindered him so seriously with his work that I never cared to have him go if it was at all possible for me to walk.

Meanwhile, obeying the injunction of the hotel-keeper, my friend Peter was doing all in his power to keep me from feeling lonely, and succeeding so far as to cause me to wish that he and his chronic "a-hem" were in Caribou. After tea, when I sat down in my particular corner with a book, Peter was sure to draw his chair either close beside me or directly opposite,

and, beginning with a sickly "a-hem," open a conversation as void of interest as a desert is of foliage.

In vain I strove to show my anxiety to finish my book. Peter would talk and ask questions, until at last one evening in sheer desperation I threw my book at him. He clumsily caught it; and, seemingly furnished thereby with an inexhaustible fund of amusement, he screwed up his eyes, shook and giggled till I began to feel anxious as to the consequences.

"Peter, you'll hurt yourself," I remarked, at last.

A fresh paroxysm ensued; and he finally choked and coughed until his face took on a purplish hue more alarming than beautiful, and his mother slapped his back and shook him.

"What's struck ye, anyway, ye daft critter?" she anxiously exclaimed.

Peter gasped, and subsided.

"Can't ye ask the lassie polite, like ye su'd, wi'oot spilin' yer owergrown body wi' smirkin'?" she continued, wrathfully.

Then, wiping his eyes upon his coatsleeve, Peter dutifully began by inquiring if I wanted a drive.

Now, I had had five drives during the two weeks just past, and was not particularly anxious for another. Moreover, a lady who had called at the school that day had teasingly remarked that Peter was trying to make his position secure before the other lads got home. This was a new aspect of the case to me, and, child as I was in all but years, annoyed me unspeakably, so that I was not in a mood to be very civil to poor Peter under the present circumstances.

When I answered, "No," he giggled weakly and began again.

"Did iver ye see a shanty?" he inquired.

"What kind of shanty?" I returned, without looking up.

"Why, a lumber shanty," replied Peter, evidently under the conviction that there was no other kind of shanty on the face of the globe. I acknowledged that I had not; whereupon he scratched his head and looked imploringly at his mother. She, knitting furiously, with firmly closed lips, silently declined to help him out of his dilemma.

"Wu'd ye lak to?" he next inquired, while drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead.

"Would I like to what?" said I, mercilessly.

"To see a shanty."

"I don't know."

Unable to listen to her son's lame efforts any longer, Mrs. Laidlaw exclaimed in an exasperated tone:

"Ye'd mak a fine young mon fer ony lass, Peter. Cry shame on ye! Whin ye want a wife yer mither'll hae tae ax the lassie an' the auld mon baith fer ye, belak."

A cold chill ran over me as she continued, turning to me:

"Ticher, the daft gowk wants ye ta dhrive wi' him, o' the Saturday comin', tae see the faither's shanty an' stay the day wi' Elsie Smith an' Jean McIvan. The twa shanties is near thegither. Jean keeps the shanty

fer thae McIvans, an' Elsie fer oor yins, sin her brither Joe warks wi' the faither. Noo, Peter," she added, severely, "can ye ax her wull she gae wi' ye?"

Pitying the poor perspiring boy, I looked over to where Bessie sat behind her mother, silently shaking with laughter, and asked her if she would go.

"I haven't been invited," she replied, with an effort to speak in her usual tone of voice. But her mother detected the laughter at once, and, wheeling round, opened fire on her.

"An' whut fer are ye sittin' there smirkin' till yer face is purple, ye hizzy," she exclaimed, gazing at poor Bessie over her spectacles in a manner that was qualified to strike terror to a braver heart than her daughter's. "I dinna ken whut ye'll find to pucker yer face an' shake aboot. The puir lad isna used wi' 'vitin' the lasses, an' I think it ill becomes ye ta—"

Here, in spite of utmost efforts, I shouted with laughter; Bessie, unable to control herself, joined in, and Peter chuckled until he was in positive danger of taking another spasm.

Mrs. Laidlaw's lips closed tightly, forming a thin blue line, while fire seemed to flash from her eyes and dance around the flying knitting-needles. Gaining some control of myself at length, I apologized, and humbly signified my desire to see a shanty, and my willingness to drive the fifteen miles thereto with Peter, on condition that Bessie be allowed to accompany us. He obligingly consented to take her, but the mother was far from mollified, and it was only

with great difficulty that we gained her consent to the arrangement. At length, however, she ungraciously gave Bessie permission to go, but stipulated that Ada Cosman, a neighbor's daughter, should also be invited to join the party. I knew that this meant a seat by the side of Peter, while the other two girls would occupy a second, but I said nothing at the time.

Saturday morning dawned clear and cold. Ada had come over the night before to ensure an early start; Peter, with some help from Bessie, had done all his work before breakfast, and, that meal over, nothing remained but to "hitch up." We girls had held a consultation in the woodshed, and when Peter started for the barn I slipped out after him.

"Peter," I called.

He turned and ambled back to where I stood at the back door.

"We girls would be glad if you'd fill the sleigh-box with straw and not put in any seats," I said, coaxingly; and Peter promised, with his widest grin.

Great was Mrs. Laidlaw's wrath when she came out, with a towel thrown over her head, to see us off, to behold three girls huddled up together in the bottom of the sleigh, well covered with quilts and shawls, while Peter sat flat, with his long limbs stretched out before him, and a horse-blanket wrapped round them.

"An' is thon the way ye tak' lasses for a dhrive, Peter?" she screamed. "What'll thae McIvans think tae see ye come intil the clearin' in yon fashion?"

Lasses sprawlin' lak Croker squaws i' the sleigh-box, wi'oot a seat! Hae ye no gumption about ye at a', mon?"

As soon as we could edge in a word we explained that we had requested him not to put in any seats; whereupon she declared that we should not go one foot if we persisted in our undignified plan. In the midst of her harangue we bade her a merry good-bye, as the horses, startled by a bit of hard snow slyly thrown by Bessie, bounded away so wildly that Peter could scarcely hold them.

Jolly was the drive to the camp that day. The lonely shore-road and bush-tracks echoed to such laughter as I imagine they seldom heard; and when we came within sight of the "clearin'" we gave three cheers, which were promptly answered from the woods near by, where the men were at work.

It was just ten o'clock when we drew up at the door of the Laidlaw shanty and unbundled ourselves sufficiently to admit of voluntary locomotion. Elsie had a roaring fire in the low old-fashioned stove, with its high box-oven, and we were soon warm and ready for any frolic that might suggest itself.

Elsie informed us that the McIvans were all coming over to dinner, and then the whole crowd was to have supper at their shanty. We were to start for home at about eight in the evening, so we had a long day to spend with our friends.

Of course the other girls were familiar with shanties and shanty-life, but to me everything was new, and I was full of curiosity about all I saw.

First we made a thorough examination of the shanty, inside and outside. It was a snug log building, with a sloping roof of hewn logs and bark, all crevices in roof and walls being stuffed with moss, and not a chink admitting a breath of cold air. The door-way was so low that the men had to stoop to enter, and the door was fastened solely by a wooden lift-latch. The one window was a square hole in the long wall, fitted with small panes of glass.

The interior contained no more furniture than was absolutely necessary, consisting of the stove above mentioned, evenly sawn blocks of wood to serve as chairs, a table of rough pine boards, nailed on a couple of trestles, and covered with red oil cloth, and the bunks. The pots and pans hung on nails behind the stove, and the general wardrobe of the masculine members of the household had its place on the end wall opposite the rows of bunks. Elsie's bed was also at this end of the room, a curtain enclosing it and a small trunk containing her clothing.

In case any of my readers do not know what a bunk is, I may just offer this definition: A bunk is a large substantial shelf, securely fastened to the wall on one side, and upheld by strong posts on the other. It is used for a bedstead. These shelves are usually ranged one above the other, leaving sufficient space between for the occupants to climb in and out.

Next we visited the stables. Built outwardly much like the dwelling, the inside of the stable was warm and comfortable, with all necessary conveniences for feeding.

Half-way between the shanty and the stable was a hole in the snow, where a clear spring bubbled up. Everything was handy and comfortable ; but, oh, the awful, lonely, solemn stillness !

“Don't you almost die of loneliness,” I asked.

Elsie laughed, and acknowledged that she sometimes “felt blue.”

“I just run over to see Jean,” she added. “It would be dreadful if she wasn't here.”

“Do you go home often ?” I inquired.

“Not often,” she answered. “We usually come here in November and December, and go home for a few days at Christmas. Then we seldom leave the woods again until the roads break up in the spring. Of course the men go whenever we need supplies. Dear me !” she broke off, glancing at the tiny alarm clock in the window, “I must get dinner. Girls, if you want to fix up a little you'll find glass, comb and curling-tongs on that shelf over there.”

Refusing all offers of help, she began preparations for dinner, while we made ourselves a little more presentable.

“Am I too late to help ?” said a merry voice at the window, and the next moment a tall, beautiful girl entered the shanty, and was joyfully welcomed by the other girls.

“This is our new teacher, Miss Murphy, Miss Mc-Ivan,” said Elsie, and I immediately received as hearty a greeting as if she had known and loved me for years.

"I know you already, Miss Murphy," she said, with a bright smile. "You see, the little folks at home write us long letters whenever there is a chance to send one, and 'teacher' has been an acquaintance of mine for some weeks. Now," she added, turning to Elsie and flourishing a little crooked knife, "I've brought my own potato-knife, so, Elsie, make room."

Thrusting her small friend aside, she took possession of the big pan, and bade her do something else. A merry dispute followed, during which I watched the new-comer, liking her better every moment.

She was much like her eldest brother. There were the same laughing blue eyes and pearly teeth, the same kind, winning smile, and abundant curly hair of the same color hung down her back in a loose braid, while little roguish curls danced about her white forehead and temple. Every movement was easy and graceful, and the sweet voice betrayed just a slight, soft Gaelic accent as she talked. Out of the lumber-woods, and in society, Jean McIvan would have taken by storm half the hearts she came in contact with, and reigned belle of her social world without a rival.

But no thought of the kind ever entered the warm, innocent heart of the girl. She was as free from vanity and its kindred feelings as the little snow-birds that twittered and hopped about the door. Even the little arts of girlish coquetry that afforded the other girls endless amusement had no place in her thoughts at all. She was just a pure, sweet, grown-up child, whom to know was to love.

Little black-eyed E'sie came out second best in the contest, and was obliged to turn her attention to some other work, while Jean finished paring the huge panful of potatoes.

While dinner was thus in course of preparation we visitors busied ourselves in a most lawless fashion. It all began with an accident. I unintentionally upset a dipperful of water into a pair of long boots standing beside the stove.

"Oh, whose are they?" I cried in consternation.

"Don's," replied Elsie, in fits of laughter. "Now you'll have to serve all alike. It wouldn't be fair to play such a trick on Don and leave the others out."

"That's true," said Bessie; and forthwith we went to work.

Every man in the shanty, except Don, owned a pipe; so four pipes were half-emptied, and the remaining contents sprinkled with pepper. Then we replaced the tobacco and put the pipes in their usual place, after which every coat had its pockets double-sewed shut, and its sleeve-linings firmly joined together, and every trouser-leg was stitched at the knee. In short, all the garments we could lay hold on, except Mr. Laidlaw's, were soon in such a condition that a good half hour's ripping would be required to make it at all possible for their owners to put them on.

Next we placed a stick of cordwood in each bunk except Mr. Laidlaw's and Elsie's. The sticks were buried in the straw-ticks, so that their presence would

not be detected until the body came in contact with their unwelcome corners. A bundle of shavings was placed in each pillow-case, and then we sat down and demurely awaited the time for dinner and the arrival of the men.

When they came we received an uproarious welcome, and there was no pause in the jolly conversation for an hour or more. We girls were intently examining a bit of Elsie's fancy-work, which lay on the window-ledge, when the four pipes were taken, tobacco duly pressed down by four forefingers, and a live coal placed thereon. We all looked up, startled and surprised, as Jim Brown, the new hired man, gave vent to an exclamation he never found in any dictionary, and threw his pipe into the stove.

"What's the matter wi' ye, mon?" said Mr. Laidlaw, sternly. Then suddenly a mystified look crossed his face, succeeded by a very wry expression, as he took his pipe from his lips, spat on the floor, and looked at me.

"Pepper!" exclaimed Joe Smith.

"Miss Murphy, have you been meddling with the pepper?" asked Norman McIvan, while the girls sank on the lower bunks, paralyzed with laughter, in which everybody joined except Jim Brown, who swore audibly as he took another pipe from his valise.

"Thon was the hair-raisin'est smell I iver tasted," said "faither," ruefully, when he had cleaned his pipe out and was puffing comfortably.

Dire was the vengeance in store! We were dragged

outside and our faces well rubbed with the soft snow, in spite of our efforts to defend ourselves.

"Hold thumbs up for surrender and I'll let you go," cried Joe Smith, as he applied a fresh handful to my cheeks, and spat out a mouthful I had succeeded in giving him.

"Never!" I cried, wrenching myself free and making all speed for the open door, with my antagonist close at my heels.

He had just caught my shoulder, when Angus McIvan appeared in the doorway and, catching my outstretched hand, drew me inside, where I sank, wet and breathless, on a block.

"That was quite a battle," said my rescuer, laughing. "If you had needed help I'd have gone out; but you seemed to be a fair match for him."

"Where are the girls?" I asked, running to the window. I had been so busy defending myself that I had not had time to see how they fared; but before he could answer, in they came, pell-mell, as wet and breathless as myself.

"Oh, this is awful!" cried Jean, shaking the snow from her curly hair, and laughing heartily at my dragged locks, which retained no trace whatever of the crimping-iron.

"Clear out, you men!" exclaimed Elsie; "I want to change my stockings."

"And I want to change my boots—and look here," came Don's troubled voice from the wood-box, where he sat sorrowfully pouring the water from his boots

into the frying-pan. A fresh burst of merriment ensued. Then, seizing the broom, Elsie cleared the shanty of all masculinity, Peter included. He pleaded hard to be allowed to remain, claiming that, being a visitor, he should be permitted to spend at least part of the day indoors, but entreaties were of no avail. He had to go.

Left to ourselves, we dried our wet hair and dresses by the stove, while those who had come in with wet feet put on Elsie's stockings.

The work all done, and we comparatively dry once more, some one proposed a walk to the place where the men were at work. Wraps were donned at once, and we set out, following the even bush-road with its two snake-like tracks and high ridge between.

"They're all working together to-day," explained Jean, as she walked beside me. "Our boys are helping Mr. Laidlaw's folks while father is away. He went to Rocky Point yesterday on business."

I had noticed the absence of the old gentleman, and was rather disappointed at not seeing him.

When we reached the place we found everybody hard at work. Mr. Laidlaw and one of the men were sawing the logs into the required lengths with a long cross-cut saw; Don and another man were loading a sleigh from the pile of logs they called "ties"; Jim Brown and the two McIvans were felling trees near by, and Joe Smith was just appearing with his empty sleigh for another load, with Peter perched, tailor-fashion, on the hind bob.

"No wonder they make away with such quantities of pork and molasses, is it?" remarked Jean.

"Work like that in the cold winter air from morning till night should certainly give them an appetite," I replied, laughing.

After watching the work for a few minutes, we mounted Don's load and went with him for a two-mile drive to the shore, where the ties were unloaded and piled, ready for the raftsmen to take away in the spring.

On our return to the clearance we hurried into the McIvan shanty, Jean declaring that supper would be late.

After a hearty supper, and a couple of hours spent in the jolliest of games, Peter sidled up to me and asked if I wanted to go home, intimating at the same time that he thought "we'd better be startin'."

Glancing at my watch, I saw that it was indeed time that we were on our way home if we intended to reach there before midnight. Mr. Laidlaw had gone over to their shanty shortly after supper, and when we went over to get ready for the drive home, had a warm fire on, and all the wraps he could find hanging round the stove.

"Angus has business in Blue Bay and is going with you," announced Jean, as she crossed the clearance with us. "Won't he have some fun getting into his clothes!" she added, laughing.

"I'm glad he's coming," remarked Ada, "aren't you, girls? Peter's all right, but there isn't much fun in him."

"There is not," assented Bessie, giving me a nudge. I thought of the evening we had got ourselves into trouble by laughing at Peter, and laughed outright again at the memory.

"How will Angus get back?" asked Ada.

"Oh, he can come back with father Monday afternoon," replied Jean.

"Then your father is to spend Sunday at home?" said Bessie.

"Yes, Pine Lake is only a little out of his way coming from Rocky Point, you know," replied Jean. "He always feels a little anxious about home when he and the boys are away. Mary has only the house and the two cows to look after, but she's only a child; and mother—"

She did not finish the sentence, and as we entered the shanty the subject was dropped.

Angus looked at me with twinkling eyes, and shook his finger at the other girls when he appeared in the doorway a few minutes later to announce that Peter was waiting. He said nothing, however, until we were out of the clearance and speeding along the bush-road, when he soberly asked who had been doing fancy-work at their house.

Peter instantly declared that it "must hev ben the ticher, fer she was niver outen mischief;" and as I could not truthfully deny having had a share in the work, Angus gravely threatened to send in a bill for the cherries I owed him.

I replied that cherries were out of season, and, to

change the subject, began to sing. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and what with the chime of the sleigh-bells, the chatter and the singing, the drive home seemed very short.

Having left Ada at her door, we stopped at the corner nearest Angus's home, and Peter and Bessie invited him to have tea with us the next day. He glanced at me, and I could not refrain from a slight grimace; so with a laughing promise to be there he lifted his cap and we drove away.

This chapter would not be complete without an account of the result of our visit to the camp. Don told us next time he came home that such a night had never before been experienced in that shanty since it was built.

Every man had enough ripping to do to keep him busy till bedtime. Then, when the unsuspecting heads were laid upon the uncompromising shavings, and the cordwood sticks made themselves felt, how Mr. Laidlaw and Elsie in their undisturbed bunks had laughed! Even the victims themselves had joined in heartily.

CHAPTER V.

ONE day, about three weeks after our visit to the lumber-camp, a sleigh dashed up to the school gate, and old Mr. Kennon climbed out, hobbled hastily up the steps, and knocked at the door. I was struck by the horror-stricken expression on the old man's countenance; but before I could speak, he began, breathlessly:

"Ticher, sen' the schule awa', an' come wi' me. An awfu' thing's happen't. Mrs. Prest's wean has burnt itsel' tae death. She's at oor hoose, beside hersel', an' I've come for ye."

Without waiting to ask any questions, I turned back into the school-room, placed the eldest and most trustworthy boy at the head of affairs for the remainder of the afternoon, and put on my coat and cap.

The old man told me, as we drove through the winter field-road to his house, how the calamity had happened. Mrs. Prest, whose husband worked in a lumber-camp about eighteen miles away, had lived alone with her children all the winter. Just six weeks before this I had spent a sorrowful night helping to make a tiny shroud for her baby, who had died

very suddenly. And now came the added affliction of this horrible death of their only remaining child, a little boy of about three years old.

The mother had gone to the stable to feed the cattle, leaving him gaily driving a team composed of a couple of chairs and a string. The stable was not far from the house, and as she went in and out she could hear his lusty shouts to his imaginary horses. Once she ran to the door and peeped in. He was deeply interested in trying to refasten the string, which had given way during his energetic driving ; so she returned to her work, and did not come in again until she had finished.

Meanwhile the little fellow, unable to tie the string, had wearied of his play and wandered about in search of some new amusement. Climbing on a chair, he had gained possession of a box of matches, which had been placed on the top of the old-fashioned kitchen-dresser, where his mother had been sure he would not reach it. Next, he must have taken it to the stove, for the hearth was strewn with burnt matches.

What a sight met the mother's eyes as she opened the door !

"Where's Freddie?" she cried in horror as she noticed the smouldering box of matches and the blaze which was rising from the floor.

Where indeed was Freddie? The floor was on fire, and the child was nowhere to be seen.

Seizing a pail of water from the bench by the door,

Mrs. Prest dashed it over the burning floor, and then ran frantically about the small room, calling the child's name. At last, stooping down, she saw at the farthest corner under the bed, which stood at the other end of the kitchen, something that looked like a bundle, and hastily pushing the bedstead aside, she found all that remained of her beautiful child—a charred, half-roasted mass of flesh and burnt cloth. Seizing him in her arms, she ran, screaming, to her nearest neighbor's. When I arrived she was there still, walking up and down the floor, screaming, moaning, and wringing her hands.

Mr. Kennon's son had gone at once for Mr. Prest, but it would be several hours at best before he could be expected to reach home.

The stricken mother took no notice of our entrance, and Mrs. Kennon beckoned me to the other side of the room, where the tiny corpse, washed and covered with a clean white sheet, lay on the table. As she lifted the sheet I took one look and involuntarily covered my face with my hands.

May God in His mercy grant that such sights be seldom seen! The world is full of trouble and bereavement; every moment some heart is aching for the "touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still"; but bereavement under ordinary circumstances is easy compared with this.

The head and face were unscarred, as were also one little hand and arm; but all the rest of the body was a half-burned mass.

"Poor thing! It's a hard blow," said Mrs. Kennon, as she replaced the sheet and gazed with pitying eyes upon the moaning mother.

At this moment the door opened, and Dr. Fisher came in. After a brief examination of the corpse, he said the child must have died almost instantly, and had suffered extreme agony probably no longer than a minute. Nothing more could be done at present, so after trying to offer a few words of sympathy to the mother, he went away.

There was silence in the house for some time, save for the moans and cries of the half-demented woman, who walked the floor ceaselessly. Suddenly she clasped her head with both hands, and lifting her wild eyes to my face, cried,

"Can you pray?"

I gazed at her helplessly. To be sure I had, as I supposed, prayed every night and morning of my life since I had learned to speak; that is, I had "said my prayers" to a God who seemed very far away. What effect would such prayer have under these circumstances? I felt, as never before, that there was a tremendous lack in my religion, somewhere.

While I hesitated, she seized my arm, and almost screamed,

"Can you pray? If you can, for God's sake do it now, for my reason is going."

Throwing an arm about her waist, and catching her hand in mine, I knelt beside her and prayed. Never in all my life before had the great Father

seemed to me so real, so near, so tenderly compassionate and strong. What I said I do not know. The awful need of the anguished heart beside me seemed to supply the words; or, more likely, the God who listened and answered, knowing that need so much better than I did, put language into my mouth that would express the need of the almost maddened heart.

When I finished, the poor mother, who had been almost frantic a moment before, was sobbing, while the old man and his daughter-in-law wept with her. These were the first tears she had shed, and they seemed to calm her and cool the fevered brain as nothing else could have done.

"That prayer saved her reason," Mrs. Kennon afterwards declared; "an' it went through me own heart so I'll live a better life fer it," she added, wiping her eyes. And I wondered what this strange power of prayer was.

Here was a woman stating that that one prayer, uttered in a time of direst need, had altered her life and saved another from a fate worse than death itself. And I, his humble instrument, had, until that moment, known nothing of real communion with the heavenly Father. But that prayer had its influence on my own life, too; for that one manifestation of the Spirit's power led me to seek further.

For an hour she wept quietly, and at last, when we had persuaded her to lie down on the old man's bed in the kitchen, she fell asleep, and, utterly worn out, slept until her husband arrived.

Neighbors had meanwhile been dropping in, for news of the sad occurrence had spread quickly ; and when Mr. Prest entered the house and his wife awoke at the sound of his voice, there were a number of persons in the room. The poor woman did not seem to notice any one but her husband, as she sprang from the bed and threw her arms about his neck.

"Oh, Dick," she cried, "I couldn't help it."

"No, no, Mary, poor girl ; of course you couldn't," he answered. His voice broke and his big, strong frame shook with sobs, as he held her close and stroked her hair, kissing her lips and cheeks fondly. "Poor girlie !" he said, presently, while tearful faces were turned away and several of the men went outside, brushing their coat-sleeves across their eyes as they went. "I should never have left you all alone with the children. If there's blame anywhere, it lies with me, Mary," he went on.

"No, no, Dick," she interrupted, eagerly. "You had to go and you couldn't take us with you. I oughtn't to have left him alone in the house, but I was afraid he'd catch cold if I kept him out so long."

"You did the best you could, dear," he replied ; and still talking soothingly, he wrapped about her the shawl and scarf Mrs. Kennon brought, and half-carried her to the sleigh at the door.

"Will you come ?" he asked, as he passed me ; and I silently put on my coat and cap.

I had just stepped outside the door when the high-pitched tones of Mrs. Cosman, a burning and shining

light to herself and the neighborhood, fell on my ear :

“ I hope this second visitation of the Lord’s hand won’t be lost on ye again. He has to use means like this sometimes. I hope ye’ll—”

She got no further. Every drop of blood in my body boiled, and unable to listen to another word of the ill-timed admonition, I laid my hand on the old lady’s arm, and said sternly :

“ You might have attended to this before the visitation came, Mrs. Cosman. At present, I think a little of His love and comfort would be better for bleeding hearts,” and, stepping into the sleigh, I took on my knee the board to which the little body had been transferred, and Mr. Kennon drove away.

The good woman made some very uncomplimentary remarks regarding me ; so I afterwards learned. Perhaps I did speak more sharply than I should have done, but surely the heart-broken parents had enough to bear without having one of Mrs. Cosman’s well-known lectures fired broadside at them.

When we arrived at our destination another scene took place. Everything was just as it had been left, of course, and I wished with all my heart that some of us had come and cleared the house of all traces of the tragedy before the poor mother was brought home.

She wandered about the single room, examining the floor where the child had rolled in its agony, wringing her hands and moaning like one in the grasp of intense physical pain.

"Oh, there's a wee bit of his dress—burnt to a crisp!" she would cry. "Oh, look, Miss Murphy—there's the darling's blood! Oh, my baby, my baby!"

I snatched up the empty waterpail, poured water into it from the tea-kettle, seized the first cloth I could get hold of, and speedily washed the floor.

After a while she became comparatively calm; and Mr. Prest, who seemed almost to forget his own heart-ache in his efforts to comfort her, left her lying on the bed while he went out to milk the cows. It was growing dark, so I lit the one lamp on the shelf by the window and proceeded to get supper ready.

Going to the cupboard from the table, where my back had been turned to the bed for a few minutes, I saw that she had risen and was gazing intently at the face of her child, from which she had lifted the cloth we had spread over it.

Not knowing what would come next, and wishing her husband would come in, I watched her. There was no cause for anxiety, however, for she quietly knelt by the little body, and laying one hand on the forehead, murmured;

"Lord, my two babies are with Thee, but I thank Thee that Dick is left to me. Oh, Lord, help me to be strong for Dick's sake, and bring us both to our babies in heaven."

Her head sank on her arm, and there she knelt when Mr. Prest came in with the milk, and I threw a shawl over my head and quietly went outside.

After a while he came to the door and called me. When I came in there was a new light on each face—a softened, tender light that had not been there before, for this great grief had brought them together to the Father's mercy-seat.

In the evening people from every house in the neighborhood gathered in; and the little white cloth-covered coffin arrived from the village with a basket of cut flowers from a sympathizing friend. A parcel was handed me, which I found contained the material for the little shroud, so I set to work, with the help of Bessie, who had just arrived, and we made the last earthly garment little Freddie would ever need. Mrs. Kennon put it on him when it was done, and laid the pitiful little corpse in its last bed, while I arranged the flowers around the smiling little face and over the one scarred hand, laying the other over the roses, as if lovingly clasping the pretty flowers he had loved during his baby life.

Then the mother came, leaning on the father's arm, and they looked long and lovingly at the sweet little face.

"He's beautiful, Mary," he whispered, "but he'll be far lovelier when we see him again;" and with a sob she kissed the cold cheek and turned away.

"He won't be cold and dead there," she murmured; and there were tears on every cheek as we covered the face again and drew the little curtain we had hastily contrived out of a sheet.

About twelve we had lunch, after which some one

started a familiar hymn, and we sang for some time. After a while Mr. Prest again persuaded his wife to lie down on the bed, and, sitting beside her, he patted and soothed her like a child until she slept. Then we spoke in whispers, and she did not wake until every one had gone and I was preparing breakfast.

"You'd better have a sleep, Miss Murphy. You must be tired," she said, when she saw that I was still there. But, tired as I certainly was, I was determined not to leave her for a moment until some one came to take my place.

About seven, Mrs. Kennon arrived to stay until after the funeral, which was to take place at three.

Then I went upstairs, and, lying down on the one other bed the house contained, slept for about an hour.

Dismissing the scholars at noon, I went home to get ready to go to the funeral. Here I found every member of the household in a state of great excitement over a fresh tragedy.

"Oh, Daisy," cried Bessie, the instant I opened the door, "a dreadful thing's happened this morning. Jim Brown was felling a tree, and a limb fell on his head and killed him. He was swearing when it struck him."

I felt as if the power of the Almighty God was manifesting itself in terrors all around us. Oh, what a death to die—to die blaspheming!

The body was being sent home to his friends, and Don had gone to the railway station with his sad

freight. He had stopped on the way to change horses and have dinner, and had gone a few minutes before I came in.

With a strange, eerie feeling oppressing us all, we started for the funeral. The little house was crowded and many stood outside. A short service was held in the house; then the pall-bearers, four of my smaller pupils, lifted their light burden and slowly carried it to the sleigh at the door. There was no hearse nearer than the railway town, twenty-five miles away, so the little bearers climbed into the same sleigh, and we were soon on our way to the graveyard. It was a bitterly cold day, and we had five miles to drive. Nearly every one was shivering when we reached our destination.

How the keen north wind howled, as it lifted the hair of the men who stood with bared heads, while the solemn voice of the minister repeated the beautiful words of the burial service, pointing us to the One whose voice resounds through the centuries:

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

This is the promise of life everlasting to all who believe the risen Christ.

Looking down into the grave, at the bottom of which lay all that remained on earth of her child, the mother's lips moved, and I knew that she was silently praying for strength—for Dick's sake; and the father, with streaming eyes, glanced upward to

the gray skies, where he saw, not the snow-clouds, but the heaven that held his darlings.

As the frozen earth rattled down on the coffin-lid, and he clasped his shrinking wife closer to him, not the cold, howling wind, nor the gray, stormy sky, "nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," could separate them from the warm and living Saviour.

We turned away from the little mound, soon to be hidden by the softly-falling snowflakes, and I wondered what that other funeral would be like, when the remains of him who had died with curses on his lips were laid away to await the resurrection.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE were busy times in the little frame school-house as spring approached, bringing the all-important promotion examinations ever nearer. Twenty in all were to write, and pupils and teacher alike worked hard.

"I shust tells you," Mrs. Weber was heard to remark, "dot teacher, she vas all right, but I don't tinks she vas git mine Herman trough. In dot second book he vas dis tree year, and I tinks he nefer vill come oud dere. He takes his lessons now ven he haf got his supper, but I don't tinks he pass. Ven Miss Murphy tells me mine Herman pass oud dot book, I gifs her de best maple taffy party efer vos in Pine Lake. Dere now!"

I knew nothing of the reward in store until the result of the examination was made public, with Herman's name last on his class list, to be sure, but safely through, and with a few marks to spare.

When he entered the school Thursday morning and beheld his name on the blackboard with the others, the delighted boy stood on his head, then walked on his hands to my desk.

"Please, teacher, can't I go home and tell mother?" he cried, alighting on his feet after a rapid somersault.

Who with a heart could have detained him to correct a grammatical mistake, even if it were an old, old offence on his part? I nodded, and he turned handsprings and somersaults all the way to the door. Then how his heels flew across the field! As he neared the house and threw up his cap his shout of triumph was quite audible in the school-room.

Truth to tell, I was quite as delighted as Herman, for the boy had been an especial task to me. Moreover, all the other pupils had passed the examination fairly well, so that was indeed a day of rejoicing in the little school-house.

Herman returned while I was ringing the bell, and running up to the platform, delivered his mother's invitation:

"Please, teacher, mother says 'come over to tea to-morrow,' and she's going to give you a taffy-party at night 'cause I passed. All the boys an' girls in Pine Lake's comin'. Whoo-ooop! Gee, ain't I glad!"

It was almost impossible for any of us to settle down to the routine of school work that day, and I was glad when four o'clock came at last and the impatient little crowd hastened away to their homes with the glad news of the promotions.

Bessie and I spent the evening manufacturing some little bits of feminine adornment, not neglecting the important matter of hair-crimping. When I left for school Friday morning in my party array, Mrs.

Laidlaw looked me over with an approving smile, and remarked that I'd be the favored lass if Bessie did not outshine me.

"Oh, but Jean'll be there, mother," said Bessie. "She's the prettiest girl in the county, you know."

"Hoots!" cried the old lady, who had been the belle of many a ball in the "auld countrie." "She's gey purty i' the face, but she'll no tak wi' the lads lak the fun an' mischief o' thon yin," pointing to me and smilingly shaking her head.

I went to school thinking over her words. I had learned many things during those months at Pine Lake; some useful things, and some that a head the age of mine would have been better without.

When school was dismissed that afternoon the four little Webers in a body escorted me across the field to their home, where the proud mother met me at the door with a beaming face, a new print dress, and a gaily-wrought apron.

"Vell, teacher!" she exclaimed, grasping my hand, "I vas so glad to see you und tell you how glad I vas. Come and take off your tings. Here was mine Katie, und Henry, und Ted, und esen Herman, all in oder books. I shust says to mine man, dot does beat all."

"I am as glad as you are, Mrs. Weber," I said, lifting the baby, who had crept up to me and lifted her little hands to be taken. "The children have done well, haven't they?"

"Vell, I tink!" she exclaimed; and what her tongue could not express, when confined to the awkward

English, her beaming face did. If appreciation is encouraging to a teacher I had surely met with plenty of encouragement here.

"I shust tinks you ought to haf de best man in Pine Lake, und I invited him fer tea dis night," she went on.

Just then there was a low knock at the door, and she arose and admitted Angus McIvan. Coming in, as he had, at the close of such a sentence, it was little wonder that my cheeks burned.

"I vos shust told Miss Murphy vot I tells you last night, Angus," said Mrs. Weber, evidently under the impression that she was doing two young people a life-long favor in thus arranging probable preliminaries.

He flushed slightly as he held my hand a moment, and smilingly thanked her.

"Her didn't said nodings, but her takes dot pink color pooty quvick," she added, with a meditative look at me which must have materially deepened the pink.

Presently Mrs. Weber left us at one side of the room to entertain each other and the two smallest children, while she set the table. I had no trouble with baby Terry, but the other child, a boy, who had but lately learned to walk, would sit nowhere but on Angus's knee, and play with nothing else than his carefully arranged moustache.

Taking advantage of the momentary absence of our hostess from the room, I remarked that, in charity, a stop should be put to the little fellow's doings, for the

valuable article he had chosen for a toy bade fair to present a much bedraggled appearance for the party.

The entrance of Mr. Weber and the older boys, with the simultaneous announcement of supper, relieved him for the time being of his little tormenter, who was banished to a corner.

Angus was requested to ask a blessing, and having done so, the meal commenced.

"Yer scholars done purty goot, teacher," observed Mr. Weber, in English not much more grammatical than his wife's.

"Yes, I tlink they did," I replied, smiling across the table at my successful pupils, and receiving answering looks of delight from the four well scrubbed little faces.

"You bet!" said his better half. "I shust tells her und Angus vot I tinks; und Angus, he shust smiles, und teacher, she goes red. Nefer mind! Ven dot day coom, she gets de pest parrel of molass I knows how to make, und a bilin' of sugar trowed in. Dot's vot!"

In the innocence of her heart, the good woman went to refill the tea-pot, while I nearly choked on my bread and butter, and my face felt as if I had been stirring "molass" beside a brisk fire for an hour.

"Have some maple molasses, Miss Murph," said a voice with a hint of laughter in its tones.

"Thank you," I replied, as he filled my saucer with the clear amber syrup. "I like it best in small quantities."

With an amused glance at my burning cheeks he

turned to Mr. Weber with some inquiry as to the yield of sap that spring, and once more Mrs. Weber chimed in :

"Oh, dere's lots. Fine run dis year. Your parrel be's ready any time you let's me word." Then out of pity for my evident misery, Angus changed the subject, and began to discuss with Mr. Weber the most approved methods of raising turnips.

Supper over, I helped wash the dishes, and then amused the baby, while the house was cleared of nearly everything movable which it contained. The stove was turned so that it would take up as little room as possible, and boards were placed on chairs all round the room, then covered with folded quilts to make comfortable seats. The low cradle was pushed under the bed in the corner, amid shouts of disapproval from the little lady on my knee, who was only consoled when Angus dropped a candy into her widely opened mouth, in the midst of one of her expressive yells.

"Um, um!" said baby; and Master Willie's attention was drawn from his thus far unsuccessful efforts to get hoid of his former plaything, the moustache. He at once received a handful of candies, and retired to his particular corner, where he consumed them with audible satisfaction.

"Why didn't I think of that sooner?" said Angus, in an undertone

"Why, indeed." I echoed. "Have you any wax with you?"

"No ; I think perhaps molasses would do as well," he replied, gazing far away through the window and soberly twirling the ill-used moustache.

I said no more. Indeed, for months afterwards the very mention of the word "molasses" was sufficient to silence me at any time.

"Efery ting is reaty," announced Mrs. Weber, viewing her arrangements with a satisfied expression. Then catching sight of the candy and the sticky moisture on the baby's little hands, face and bib, she promptly seized her, and, under violent protest, deposited her on the floor.

"You sot dere till you vos done mit dot," she said. "Teacher vas shust so shticky as you vos ven you gets done, pooty soon."

A few minutes later the poor little mite was again moved ; this time to safety and obscurity in Willie's corner, for the guests began to arrive.

Generally the young people of each family would arrive together ; but sometimes a young lady would shyly cross the doorstep, bashfully or jauntily followed by her young man, who hung his hat in the stairway and sat down, while she followed her hostess to the corner where the bed stood. Here she laid aside her outer garments, smoothed her hair, and then took a seat somewhere among the girls, until the beginning of the first dance or game should bring her attendant again to her side, for of course he must be her first partner.

Bessie and Peter came in together—Don being

absent with a rafting gang—and I anxiously asked how they had come.

“Walked,” she answered ; and despair seized upon me ; for George Smith was already hovering near Bessie, and I was sure of being Peter’s victim for the walk home.

Mrs. Weber presently announced that as this was especially “teacher’s party,” no dancing would be permitted, and requested us to begin the fun by playing “squirrel.”

“Oh, Mrs. Weber, let us have just one dance,” cried a voice near the door, and a dozen others seconded the appeal.

“Ask teacher, den,” she responded ; and I at once requested that the amusement of the evening be whatever the guests desired.

I had been present at several dancing-parties during the winter, and was still at a loss to discover just wherein lay the actual wrong of the thing. In fact, as the fascination grew upon me I became less and less capable of judging. I knew every step and figure of the dances I had seen ; and often in the night with my feet tapping the footboard of the bed, I awoke from a dream in which, freed from my promise, I was dancing gaily with the rest.

Looking back through the years I have often wondered how it was that, fascinated as I was with the amusement, I did not yield to the temptation so persistently brought before me by my well-meaning friends at Pine Lake. I have thanked God again and

again for the unyielding self-reliance which kept me true to my word, and saved me from He alone knows what waiting train of evils, while I knew not the power which was even then, unknown to me, keeping me safe by means of the strength of mind I rejoiced to call my own.

But this is digressing from the matter in hand, and we must return to the party.

It was finally decided to have games for an hour, then have our taffy, after which dancing would be the order of the evening until lunch. Two chairs were accordingly set in the middle of the floor, side by side, one facing each way, and our hostess requested me to take one. I obeyed, and, as might be expected, she commanded the ill-starred McIvan to occupy the other. A handkerchief was then thrown by a young man to a young lady, who then chased him round and round until he was caught, we clinging desperately to our unsteady chairs the while. Then the successful huntress threw the handkerchief to another gentleman, and became, in turn, the hunted squirrel; the first gentleman, in the meantime, taking Angus's chair, and the lady, when caught, taking mine.

There was an old tradition that when a feminine squirrel was captured she must purchase her freedom with a kiss, and, shortly after the game began, I, as the honored guest of the evening, was called upon to decide as to whether a protesting damsel should be kissed by force. Taking advantage of the opportunity, I at once prohibited all kissing during the

games, obligingly adding that those boys who wished to kiss might retire to the doorstep, as we girls had no desire to partake of the pleasure in that line. A roar of laughter followed, and, somehow, kissing games went out of fashion that night in Pine Lake.

Game followed game until the taffy was served. The syrup had been boiled to almost the desired thickness during the day, and now needed only a few minutes' brisk fire to finish. A huge panful of well-packed snow was brought in, and ladlefuls of the boiling mass poured on it to cool. Then it was passed round in saucers; and, truly, a more delicious confection was never manufactured. The treat finished—after much malicious damage done to bangs and moustaches by having morsels of the sticky sweetness thrust in their midst—hands and hair all cleansed, and the violin duly tortured to the desired condition, the first sett began to form for the dance.

All eyes were on Angus McIvan as he crossed the floor, and, in a tone that could be heard distinctly all over the room, asked me to be his partner for the quadrille. Looking, I suppose, a little surprised, I replied:

"Thank you. I thought you knew that I never dance."

"I know that you never have danced, but I think you would enjoy it," he answered.

I made no reply, and leaning toward me he murmured, laughingly:

"Your father don't know, and it's only an innocent

bit of fun anyway. Come ; I'll teach you, and a week from now there won't be a better dancer in the township than yourself. I don't like to see you quietly looking on while every one else is having a good time. Come, just this once, and if you don't enjoy yourself, I'll never ask you to dance again."

He took my hand, with his smiling eyes bent on my face ; and the old temptation came again with only a little less force than it had held that first evening I had ever seen a dance. That victory gave me a little added strength for the present, and again I half whispered, "No, father ; you can trust me. I'll never dance."

"Won't you?" said the persuasive voice again, and suddenly my temper rose. What right had he, or anybody else, to try thus to persuade me to prove myself false to my home-training, my mother's prayers, and my own honor? Possibly, if I were weak enough to yield he would laugh with his friends over his victory. I had heard of such things, and the thought added fuel to my anger.

How little I knew of my McIvan ! Not another friend of mine would have been more truly sorry had I failed to bear the test.

I rose, and glances were exchanged on all sides, which plainly said, "I told you so," while a look of keen disappointment replaced the smile on Angus's face. I looked straight into his eyes and said, with more emphasis than courtesy :

"Angus McIvan, you are aware that I promised my

father before leaving home that I would never take part in any amusement which he has forbidden. Even if I had never made such a promise, the thought of my mother at home, never doubting that her child is true to her training, would be sufficient to keep me from taking part in what she considers harmful. I have her permission to look on until I have seen enough of this amusement to satisfy myself as to the right or wrong of it; but *I'll never* break the promise I gave my father. I think it is far from kind or honorable of you to ask me to commit a three-fold sin by breaking my word, disobeying my parents, and adding mean cowardice by hiding my doings from them."

Then I turned and hastily took refuge in the dark corner, just under the stairway; for the tears will come sometimes when you don't want them to show themselves, and one hates to be seen furtively wiping them off.

Angus softly clapped his hands, exclaiming beneath his breath as I passed him, "Bravo!" In an instant there was a round of applause so emphatic in its demonstration that the baby woke from her first sleep and added her shrill note to the general noise.

"A-hem! I wuz sartain ye'd dance wi' Angus," said a voice near by, and looking round I was annoyed to see Peter's grin beaming between two of the open stair-steps, almost on a level with my face. I said nothing, hoping that he would go away or keep quiet.

"I guess some o' the boys has lost money on ye," he continued; and I indignantly asked:

"What do you mean?"

"There wuz lots bettin' ye'd dance," he replied, tenderly stroking the left-hand corner of his moustache, "an' Angus hez bet agin all o' thim ye'd stick to yer word. I guess it's purty near a settled thing now."

"Betting!" I cried in horror; for betting, small or great, is a species of gambling for which I always had a genuine disgust.

Peter giggled.

"Angus never takes bettin' money," he remarked, "but he said he'd pay if he lost this time."

"He knew he wasn't likely to lose," said the gentleman under discussion, and I turned to find him standing behind me. He had evidently come up just in time to hear Peter's last sentence.

"Daisy Murphy, you're a brick. Shake hands," he went on, coming round in front of me and holding out his hand.

"Thank you for your good opinion, Mr. McIvan," I replied, putting my hands behind my back.

"Oh, now, don't be angry," said he. "We all admire your firmness and pluck—"

"Thank you," said I, interrupting him. "I must say that I admire your conceit, Mr. McIvan. Did you actually suppose that after all other temptation failed I would dance because *you* asked me?"

He laughed, good-naturedly, as he replied:

"You know better than that, Miss Murphy. Why, I am the humblest fellow in Pine Lake. I was the

only one of all the boys who believed you would keep your promise; all the others were sure you would yield. Now, you must acknowledge that it would have been scarcely fair for me to hang aloof while all the other boys invited you to dance—especially as I had taken their wagers. Look round, now, and tell me if there is one young man in the room who has not asked you to dance with him?"

I had to acknowledge that there was not one.

"Well, then, why visit the iniquity of the whole assembly on my poor head?" he persisted, so pathetically that I laughed in spite of myself, and buried the hatchet by shaking hands, school-boy fashion, to Peter's intense amusement.

"May I sit here?" he asked, drawing a rickety chair up beside me, and, what with the "dude of Pine Lake" on one side, and his antithesis, Peter, on the other, I was well entertained until lunch was announced.

Then games were once more in order, and for a couple of hours we had a very jolly time, until the warning voice of the big clock in the corner told us that it was long past the time when working-people should be in bed. Before putting on our wraps, we all joined hands in a circle, and, keeping time with a peculiar swinging motion of body and arms, we sang a verse of "Auld Lang Syne."

While putting on my coat I beheld Bessie just going out of the door, with George Smith in close attendance, leaving me without a backward glance,

while Peter hovered about the same exit, with eyes turned expectantly in my direction. With a secret sigh I resigned myself to my fate, and turned to thank my kind hostess before saying good-night. Before I reached the door, however, Angus McIvan entered, and, coming up to me, said pleasantly :

“ Jean and Norman brought my buggy over, Miss Murphy, and each has a different plan for the return trip. May I have the pleasure of driving you home to-night—or rather this morning ? ”

And Mrs. Weber smiled a perfect benediction, every line of her good-natured motherly face seeming to tell us that she was mentally calculating the number of gallons of molasses she could make that barrel contain ; and meaning smiles wreathed all faces as we passed the wrathful Peter at the door and drove away.

CHAPTER VII.

ON entering the kitchen next morning I was greatly surprised to find the mistress of the house in high dudgeon. Quite at a loss as to the reason, I said nothing until she remarked, tartly :

“I guess ye hed a fine drive?”

Beginning to see light, so to speak, I answered, pleasantly :

“A very pleasant drive, Mrs. Laidlaw. I’m very fond of a fine horse, and Mr. McIvan has a splendid driver.”

“Ay,” she returned, shortly.

Silence for a few moments. Then she burst out :

“I’d lak ta ken whut fer ye culdna come hame wi’ Peter and Bessie. Ye’d ha’ loked better an’ saved yersel’ bein’ the talk o’ the place.”

I rose from the breakfast table, and looked at the old lady in surprise.

She was evidently in a passion, so I endeavored to speak as quietly as possible.

“Why, Mrs. Laidlaw,” I said, “Bessie left the house with other company before I had my coat on, and Mr. McIvan had his buggy waiting at the door when he asked me to ride home with him. Peter

stood on the doorstep and said nothing. Do you think I should have refused Mr. McIvan and asked Peter to take me home? I think I have a right to walk or drive with whatever company pleases me, and I don't believe that my conduct last night would lead any reasonable person to say anything unfavorable about me."

With a muttered sentence, the only distinguishable word in which was "saucy," she bounced out of the kitchen, while I fled to my bed-room and stayed there until a rap at the door summoned me to dinner.

When I took my place at the table matters were no better. Bessie had been crying, and her little attempts to chat with me were looked upon with undisguised displeasure by her mother. Peter carried his chin an inch higher than usual, and said "a-hem" twice as often as the condition of his bronchial tubes could possibly have required. Mrs. Laidlaw herself flew around with a face as black as a thundercloud, venting her inner wrath on all the pokers, pots and pans that came to hand. Faither alone was like his usual cheery self. He did not seem to even notice that anything was the matter with anybody.

After dinner I again retired to my room and spent the afternoon writing letters. When supper-time came, Bessie, taking hasty advantage of her mother's absence while she went down cellar, tip-toed to my room door and, putting her head in, whispered:

"Daisy, do come out, and never let on you notice

any difference in mother and Peter. It'll soon blow over."

I at once complied, and when Mrs. Laidlaw's head appeared above the trap-door, I was standing at the window serenely discussing the weather with father, who had just come in. We kept up a cheery conversation at the table, and once or twice I even ventured to address Peter, but not meeting with much encouragement, I gave up the attempt to draw him into the talk.

After tea, while Bessie and her mother were washing the dishes, father put on his cap and stalked away to the village for the weekly mail. When he was safely on his way, and the dishes were in their usual places, Mrs. Laidlaw went upstairs and, a moment later, summoned Bessie to join her there.

I promptly rose and started for my room, but Peter suddenly placed his lank body in my way.

"I want to speak till ye," he began.

Certain sounds from overhead confirmed my hasty suspicion that I was the victim of a preconcerted plot, and that Peter's loving and anxious mother was sitting on the floor upstairs with her ear as close to the stovepipe as the heat would allow.

"A-hem! I want to tell ye some-'at afore ye go any funder—hem! hem!" he remarked; and while he paused, evidently at a loss for words, I mischievously filled the big cooking stove with dry wood, so that in a few moments it was almost impossible to sit beside it. The listener just above must have found her position rather uncomfortable.

"I'm thinkin' mebbe ye've seed afore this that I'm wantin' ye, ticher," said Peter at last, standing before me and nervously twisting his fingers, while each movement drew from the loose joints a resounding crack, and I grew almost as nervous as my unexpected suitor.

"Wanting me?" I repeated, not grasping his meaning at once.

"Ye must ha' knowed it," he went on. "I've showed ye whut I think o' ye, and when yer year's up here I'll be ready for ye. I've a good hun'erd acres an' buildin's on it, an' faither 'll gi' me a settin'-out o' stock an' machiner'. Ye'll hae a gude hame an' a gude mon tae ye, ticher. Will ye tak' me?"

The real meaning of his words forced itself upon my mind at last. This, then, was the meaning of all the unceasing attentions that had so annoyed me. Peter wanted to marry me; and, as usual, the ludicrous side of the affair presented itself to me first. A vision of the girls at Westfield, should I introduce the gentleman before me as my husband, flashed across my mind. Then what would father and mother say? Above all, how mine own familiar friend, Dell Franklin, would shout with laughter at the idea! I dared not trust myself to speak lest I should laugh outright.

Suddenly I looked up, and at sight of Peter's face I forgot that I wanted to laugh; for, grown-up child though I was, I instinctively recognized the man's heart in the little squinting gray eyes I had always

disliked so much. This was no laughing matter to him, but a stern, life-long reality, and the funny aspect of the question faded from my mind. He was not only the clownish boy I had so often laughed at and scolded by turns—he was a man; and under the oddities nature and his up-bringing had given him beat a man's heart, honest and true, and as susceptible to joy and sorrow as my own. If I were an honorable girl, I must answer him as he deserved. I forgot the listening ears at the stovepipe above our heads, and with trembling voice and tearful eyes answered :

“Peter, I never imagined it before. I'm only a child, you know; and even if I did care for you, I'm far too young to think about such things. I'm sorry to the bottom of my heart, Peter, but I can't. Some day you'll find a steadier girl than I am, and have a happier home and a better wife than I could ever make you.”

“Won't you come if I wait a few years?” he asked, with a little catch in his voice.

“I can't, Peter,” I answered again, “but I'll be a true friend to you as long as I live,” and giving him my hand for a moment, I ran past him to my room, and, shutting the door, threw myself on the bed and cried heartily.

Was I foolish? A being, calling herself a woman, who made it her chief business in life to receive and reject all the life-offers she could tempt men to lay at her feet, might have made game of it all. But it was too intensely real and heart-wounding to amuse me.

Don was expected home that night, and shortly after Bessie and her mother came downstairs I heard him enter the house. Peter went up to bed a few minutes later. Then I knew by the excited whispering on the other side of my room door that Don was being regaled with the whole story.

Don never could whisper like other people, so his summing up of the matter was quite audible; and, though I felt exceedingly uncomfortable, I could not help overhearing all he said.

"It's a shame, mother," he exclaimed. "The poor thing must be in a fine state, crying her eyes out belike. A young bit of a lass like her!"

Don rarely relapsed into his childhood's dialect, but just now he was highly indignant, and the Scotch accent, which only returned to his speech in moments of excitement, came to his tongue very readily.

"Peter's no fit match fer a lass like thon, an' ye ought to see it," he went on. "He'd never ha' thought o' the like if ye'd let him alone. Now the house 'll never be the same till her again."

More whispering followed; then Don's voice, more stern and indignant than before, replied:

"An' hasn't the girl the right ta drive here if she likes? She couldna get better company nor Angus. He's a gentleman; an' if he's only thought o' pleasant company there's no harm done to anybody. If it's a good wife he wants, why, I hope he'll get Daisy Murphy. Let the ticher alone. She's her own mistress, an' it's easy seen she knows how to look after herself."

I did not hear any more, but apparently this settled the matter. Next morning Mrs. Laidlaw was something like herself, and in the course of a few days life went on the same as usual in the little log-house.

It was long, however, before Peter quite recovered his usual spirits; and there was a look in his eyes sometimes that made my heart ache.

CHAPTER VIII.

TIME sped rapidly that spring. Pine Lake had become a sort of second home to me, and all the families in the section seemed to look upon me as a sort of sister.

There were logging-bees, rag-bees, quilting-bees, and all the other kinds of bees one could think of, each furnishing an excuse for a frolic in the evening—generally a dancing party. I was still studying the social dance as intently as if it had been some useful science in which I had a life-long interest, and the fascination of the thing so grew upon me that I would have made almost any sacrifice to have been released from my promise and permitted by my parents to join in the recreation.

I had heard so much of the effect upon the character of those who habitually indulge in dancing that I was quietly but keenly observing my young friends, thinking that if any change took place it would surely make itself visible before the year was over.

The first week in May everybody began to prepare for the Queen's Birthday. This was one of the very important days of the year in Blue Bay and vicinity,



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and manifold and mysterious were the preparations therefor.

One Friday afternoon, about four o'clock, Angus McIvan called at the school. He was on his way to the village, and as the road lay past my boarding place, and a short detour brought him to the school, he had kindly driven round to offer me a ride home.

I was not long in the buggy before the conversation turned to the inevitable twenty-fourth, and he at length asked me if I had made any engagement for the day.

"Any what?" I asked, absently.

"Are you engaged for the day?" he repeated.

Of course I understood him perfectly, but being in a teasing mood I only glanced at him inquiringly.

"Must I explain?" he asked, in a dry way.

"If you please," said I, gravely, leaning back comfortably to listen.

"Then, as you probably know, it is the custom for young ladies to have an escort on such occasions; that is," he added, "if they care to be bothered with one."

He paused, and I laughed outright.

"Will you accept of my company for the day?" he asked.

"Nonsense, Angus," I impolitely replied. "Why, there are two weeks and three days to think about it. Don't bother me just now."

"But I will," he said. "Why is it, Daisy Murphy, that you will be so—so—"

"Obstinate—contrary—cantankerous," I suggested. "Here's a dictionary in my bag, Angus, if you can find the word you want."

"I think 'provoking' is the word," he answered, laughing. "Every time I muster up courage to ask a favor of this sort, I must either bestir myself to catch you at all, or push my way to your side through a vanguard of a dozen girls. If I ask you beforehand you won't give me a satisfactory answer. Now, what is a fellow to think?"

"Whatever suggests itself to him at the moment, I suppose," I answered, agreeably. I did not like this sort of conversation. It reminded me of Peter's aspirations and the unpleasant ending thereof.

"I want an answer," said Angus.

"Man wants but little here below," I rejoined; "but even that little is not always to be had just to his mind."

"Daisy, you provoking little creature," he began, catching me by the shoulder, but I interrupted him in a very solicitous manner.

"If I were you, Angus, I wouldn't allow myself to become so excited about little things. Why, your hair will soon begin to get thin on top, and there'll be crow's feet around your eyes, and your moustache will grow seedy and grayish. That's what worry does for its victims. Take the advice of a friend and keep cool.

"Go on!" said Angus, twitching the reins slightly.

"Were you addressing me, or Dolly?" I inquired.

"Dolly, of course," he replied. "Come, now, Daisy, do give a fellow a fair hearing for once. You know that—"

"Angus, stop," I interrupted, putting my fingers into my ears.

"All right," said he, laughing. "Only tell me plainly—will you spend the twenty-fourth with me, or would you rather not?"

"'Of two evils, choose the lesser,'" I remarked. "Isn't that a wise saying?"

"I suppose it is."

"I think so, myself," said I. "Now, if I spend the day with you the other boys will let me alone, and if I go with the girls I won't have any peace all day. We never do when we try to have a pleasant time by ourselves."

"Then for the sake of peace you will—"

"Yes, I will—thanks," I interrupted, as he helped me from the buggy at the gate and, smilingly lifting his hat, drove away toward the village.

When the long-talked-of morning arrived everything was bustle in the Laidlaw household. Don drove off in his new buggy before I was up, for the lady of his choice lived at a distance.

Bessie and I had arranged to leave at the same hour—ten o'clock; but long before that the waggon had rumbled away, with Mr. and Mrs. Laidlaw on the back seat and Peter perched in front as driver. A few minutes before the time appointed the two buggies drove up the lane; and having locked the

door and hidden the key among the sweet-mary leaves by the garden-gate, we started for Blue Bay.

We drove through the streets to view the decorations before alighting at the hotel where Bessie and I were to wait while the horses were being stabled for the day.

Evergreen arches, with gay paper streamers, had been erected at intervals on every street, and here and there a width of white cloth was stretched across the road with inscriptions in big black letters, such as "God Save the Queen," "Many Returns," or simply "Victoria." There were two hotels in Blue Bay, one at each end of the village, and, rivals in every way, each had striven to outdo the other in the gorgeousness of its decorations, inside and out. Nearly every house boasted a flag of the world-wide colors—red, white, and blue; and the three stores were positively magnificent with evergreens, colored tissue paper and flags large and small. The little village, with its gay decorations and its constantly increasing crowd of pleasure-seekers, all in holiday attire, was a pretty picture in the bright spring sunshine.

I stood beside Bessie on the balcony of the Farmer's Home, and, leaning over the railing, watched the ever-changing scene below. Old and young were there; from the grandfather, leaning on his stout oak stick, and smiling to see the young folk enjoying themselves all around him, to the baby, crowing or crying in its mother's arms.

I began to remark the truth, too, of Angus's dryly

spoken explanation two weeks before. It certainly did appear to be the custom for every young lady to have an escort, for almost every girl had a swain in close attendance, and where there were a group of girls together they were generally surrounded by a corresponding number of aspiring gentlemen.

Suddenly the peaceful scene was rudely disturbed as a big rough fellow, evidently bent on "making a day of it," in his own way, strode rather unsteadily out of the bar-room door and, swearing loudly, demanded of the proprietor of the Farmer's Home a public interview in the middle of the road. Several of his companions, who as yet were comparatively sober, surrounded him, and with much difficulty succeeded in coaxing him away from the immediate vicinity of the object of his wrath.

Alas! Not even the loyal nation's celebration of the good Queen's birthday can take place without such disgraceful scenes as this. As the hours passed such sights and sounds met one at every turn, until, long before the day was done, the curse under which our country groans had cast a deeper gloom over my heart than anything else had ever done during my short life.

The big ruffian was half-forced and half-coaxed away, still vowing vengeance on the man who, he declared, had insulted him—by preventing the smashing of several glass tumblers on the head of the assistant bartender. I thought, as I watched him making his uncertain way to the other hotel (which

rejoiced in the title of Traveller's Home), how appropriately these places were named ; for who can estimate the number of farmers, of travellers, men of every occupation, who had laid down upon their bar-counters the first or last dollar, which meant home to them ? And what had any one of them to show for the sacrifice of what is so dear to the human heart—home, with all its infinitely tender and binding associations ?

Surely the compensations the rum-fiend offers are sufficiently apparent—a wrecked body, a shivered and blasted intellect ; a manhood, created in the image of the Almighty, degraded to the level of the fiends who delight in its destruction ; and a soul which, by continued self-abandonment and insult to its Maker, must at last dwell forever with the devils in their state of eternal torment. It is the drunkard's choice, not the will of the heavenly Father, who created him for everlasting happiness ; nor the desire of the loving, pleading Saviour, who died to atone for his sins, and who has won pardon for him if he will but repent and turn to God, however late the hour, before Satan has trampled out the last spark of the Divine reason in his soul.

Then to think of the millions of heart-broken wives, and the millions of children on whose names must ever lie the stain of the disgraced and drunken father ! I wondered, as I leaned farther over the balcony to watch the blaspheming ruffian enter the door of the other hotel, to sink a little more of his home, his manhood and his immortal life in its whiskey barrels, why

God did not send fire from heaven to consume the vile soul-poison from off the face of His earth. I have learned since then that the long-suffering God has placed in the hands of His people the work of ridding the world of the liquor curse ; and truly we are doing His work well !

Even then, at the beginning of my Christian experience, and only a childish young creature at best, I felt away down in my heart a burning, aching shame that I, with millions of older and better Christians, could quietly stand by and witness the wholesale slaughter of immortal beings by this most devilish of all hell's plans for the destruction of the human race.

"A penny for your thoughts," said a voice at my elbow, and with a start I turned to find Angus smiling at my troubled face.

"I've been standing here for nearly five minutes," he went on, "and you haven't recognized my existence by even a look."

"Angus," I interrupted, "do you ever drink?"

"Well, sometimes," he answered, "especially in hot weather. I generally like a little liquid of some sort at meal time, too."

"Do you ever drink intoxicating liquors?" I persisted, disdaining to notice his intended witticism.

"No, Daisy," he replied, the smile leaving his face. "I used to take a glass of wine sometimes when we lived in Toronto, but for the last four years I haven't touched it. I'd rather swallow Paris-green. Perhaps you'll know the reason before night."

His words suddenly recalled to my mind the fact that I had once heard that Norman drank most of his earnings. I had heard, too, that the family had left the city in the hope that, once away from the glitter and temptation of the saloons, the headstrong boy might be won to forsake the habit that was fast dragging him to ruin.

He had been absent from home all spring, but had arrived in the village with yesterday's stage, though as yet I had not seen him.

"Hello, up there!" cried Jean's voice from the street below. "Is there room and a welcome for two more?"

Without waiting for an answer she and her inseparable, Elsie, disappeared within the hotel, leaving two disappointed young men gazing ruefully after them.

"Girls, you are utterly heartless," I declared, as they came panting and laughing through the balcony door.

"They might let us enjoy our holiday in peace. Elsie and I are quite sufficient for each other without any masculine nuisances tagging after us all day," said Jean, peeping over the railing and laughing again as she caught sight of the disconsolate faces of their forsaken admirers.

"Experience should surely have taught them a lesson by this time," observed her brother, smiling. "Jean has no heart at all, and if Elsie has one it must be very hard indeed."

"It is," said a voice from the doorway behind us; "the hardest little heart in the world, hard as steel, but just as true as it is hard. How are you, Elsie?"

It was Norman. He stepped forward and shook hands with her as he spoke, and a strange look came over the girl's face.

"I'm quite well, thank you, Norman," she replied, and turning away she crossed the balcony to where George and Bessie were sitting.

I understood the look, at least partly, for a whiff of the abomination called whiskey nearly took my breath as he held out his hand to me, saying gaily:

"And how is my little—what is she to be, Angus?"

I flushed hotly, but, comprehending the situation, avoided looking at the mortified brother and sister, while I asked him some question as to his whereabouts during his absence.

Without answering my inquiry he turned to Angus, still clasping my hand and swaying slightly as he said:

"When is it to be, Angus? Oh, come on! You might tell a fellow. I just heard about it five minutes ago, and I was so delighted, you know, that I came up to offer you the prodigal brother's congratulations."

"Have you seen father this morning?" asked Jean, before Angus could speak. "I've been wanting to speak to him, and we can't find him. Would you mind looking for him, Norman?"

"I'll find him if I have to search the village and drag the bay, if you and Elsie will come with me."

"We'll wait here till you come back with him," said Jean.

"Oh, no," was the brief reply.

Jean and Angus exchanged glances, while I vainly endeavored to disengage my hand. Norman was in no fit condition for ladies' company, that was certain; but how to get rid of him was a problem none of us could solve.

"Say, Miss Murphy," he began, returning to the subject which had apparently left his mind for the moment; "when you come back to Pine Lake to stay, you know, we'll have the jolliest dance that ever—oh, I forgot! you won't dance. Well, then, we'll—"

"Who told you that, Norman?" I interrupted.

"What? About the wedding? Why, Tom Graham told me he heard it for a sure thing."

"Well," said I, "I wish you'd go and tell Tom Graham that when the time comes his invitation will be the first out."

Chuckling, he dropped my hand and went downstairs, muttering:

"Hedges! that's a good one. Tom Graham, the raggedest tough in the place. Ho! ho! That's a good one."

There were tears in Jean's eyes as she went and put her arm around Elsie. She was crying quietly. George and Bessie had considerably disappeared, and I wished that I could do the same for a few minutes.

There was silence on the balcony for a while, then Angus murmured:

"Poor Elsie!"

I looked at him inquiringly, and, lowering his voice to a whisper, he went on:

"Elsie and Norman were to have been married, but he either couldn't or wouldn't give up the drink, and she very rightly refused to become a drunkard's wife."

"Poor girl," said I, and tears filled my eyes at the thought of what the scene just over must have meant to her.

"She and Jean have always been bosom friends since we came here," Angus continued "but since this unfortunate affair one is scarcely ever seen away from home without the other. I've often felt glad of it for both girls. It helps Elsie bear her trouble, and that friendship is Jean's surest safeguard."

"In what way?" I asked.

"Why, you saw them leave those boys a little while ago. Elsie is true as steel to Norman, even though she won't have anything to do with him, and Jean always devotes herself to Elsie, so—Jean's not bad-looking, you know"—he broke off, "and she's too young to understand those fellows who are continually making love to her."

"Calithumpian Parade!" announced a stentorian voice from the street below; and for the time being the conversation was dropped, as we turned to watch the procession of masqueraders just appearing over the brow of the hill at the western end of the village.

But, comical as they were, all their antics could not banish the shade that had settled on Angus's face, and

I knew that the pleasure of the day was spoiled for him and for the girls. For me, too, the charm of the scene had vanished, and I wished I was away from the gay mummery. What was all the sport and gaiety compared with the hearts that were aching all through the gaily-dressed crowd, as hundreds saw husbands, fathers, brothers, lovers, friends, becoming ruffians, blasphemers, madmen, brutes! Every whiff of the detestable odor I was forced to inhale as we went here and there through the crowd that day, gave me to wonder what story of heartache and life and soul ruin it represented.

I vowed that morning as I stood on the hotel balcony, to do all that lay within my small power to fight the demon that is daily glutting itself with the brightest and best of Canada's boys, and wrecking hearts and homes that would otherwise be pure and happy.

CHAPTER IX.

"DAISY, your face looks as if you were going into battle," said Angus, presently.

"So I am," I replied, "to battle for the remainder of my life with this drink devil."

"I'm with you," he responded, briefly, grasping my hand. And, even as he spoke, Norman crossed the street rather unsteadily, lifting his hat with great politeness to a huge old squaw whom he had never seen before, and laughing uproariously when she indignantly refused to shake hands with him.

Suddenly a laughing troop of boys and girls rushed pell-mell through the hall and crowded the little balcony to get a better view of the actors in the gay procession. It was certainly a safer place than the street below, for the Calithumpians had an unpleasant habit of dashing into the crowd, and with their hideous faces and extravagant actions frightening the women and children who were unfortunate enough to come in contact with them.

Heading the procession was a traction engine, with a waggon fastened to it, representing a railway train. A rough box-cover, having apertures for windows, and a door at the back, with a passenger seated at

each window, made the ludicrous representation complete.

Then followed a donkey, imported from Rosston for the occasion, bestridden by a most hideous-looking being in a well-padded pink cotton costume, surmounted by a ghastly grinning mask and an old plug hat. The latter, he touchingly informed us in quavering accents, was a "relic of ould dacency, the hat me father wore," the pathos of the announcement being considerably lessened by his breaking off in the middle of a sentence to strike with all his might at the extreme tips of his charger's long ears.

Next came a bakery on wheels. This was a waggon with a high box, driven by a little lad with an African mask and a scarlet suit well besprinkled with flour, while behind him the baker and his wife were busily at work. The former was a small young man in woman's dress, a high white cap and a white apron, wearing a very frowning and forbidding false face. He was manufacturing cakes and baking them in the oven of an old rusty stove without a pipe; while the baker energetically pounded and floured a huge panful of something supposed to be bread-dough. Of course they quarrelled, and the unfortunate baker's huge body received a drubbing from the floury rolling-pin wielded by his small wife's hand. A bystander, venturing to remonstrate with her, promptly received a handful of flour in his face.

Close behind this was a most laughable turnout. The only goat the village possessed was hitched to a

small cart, in which sat two children, representing Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb. The lady was very demure, but the little gentleman, partly owing to the fact that his steed was somewhat unmanageable, did more than his allotted share to amuse the spectators.

Then came the barber-shop, another waggon with a little negro driver, in which a barber plied his trade. Dipping a white-wash brush into a pail by his side, he lathered his customer's false face, and proceeded to shave him with the butcher's largest and most murderous-looking knife. Being of an irritable turn of mind, he also lathered all who annoyed him by any unnecessary remarks, making it needful for several young men to seek shelter and clothes-brushes.

Just after this came an amusing burlesque of first love, at the courting stage. The lovers were seated in a rickety carriage drawn by a bony, spavined horse, which fortunately required no attention, following the barber's waggon faithfully, while the occupants of the vehicle did a disgusting amount of what Angus called "spooning barefaced."

Stone-boats, watering-carts, wheel-barrows, gale-harrows, sulky-rakes, and every other species of vehicle to be had for miles around, passed down the street, some of them drawn by oxen, some by oddly caparisoned horses, and one by a quiet old mulley cow.

A dray drawn by one huge horse and a tiny Shetland pony, also from Rosston, brought up the rear,

filled with clowns of every conceivable description. Smart clowns and slow ones, nimble clowns and clumsy ones, lame men and dancing men, tumbled over each other, stood on each others' shoulders, and, altogether, reminded one of a wriggling, squirming mass of fishworms. They traversed the village, and then the dray-load of clowns dismounted and brought their attention and their pranks to bear upon their fellow-actors.

The fun lasted about an hour ; then the Calithumpians again formed in procession to march back to their headquarters.

The conductor shouted "All aboard," the passengers scrambled to their places, the engine whistled for the two hundred and fiftieth time, and heading for the hill, steamed away, followed closely by the donkey at a trot.

Suddenly, just in front of the Farmer's Home, the animal stopped, and with a single expressive "E-aw," lowered his head, raised his heels and deposited his rider in a heap in the dust. Then he gaily ambled over him and away, followed by the clown gesticulating furiously. That donkey evidently understood his business.

The baker and his wife, quite reconciled, sat hand in hand on their stove ; Tom Thumb's goat, butting at every small boy within reach, followed ; then all the others in regular order, until none were left to start except the spavined horse, with his load of real life and the wriggling, sprawling load of clowns.

Alas, for the lovers! The course of true love never did run smooth. While their attention was so rapturously bestowed on each other, a malicious clown had removed a nut from each hind wheel of the buggy, and when the old horse started off at a limping trot, away rolled the wheels, down went the seat, and the unfortunate lovers, still clasped in each other's arms, were next seen sitting in the middle of the road, the lady fast developing hysterics, and her devoted companion frantically trying to soothe her, while, quite unconcerned, the old horse hobbled away out of sight.

They were picked up by the clowns in the dray, and after great difficulty in lifting the lady, now in a limp and unconscious state, into the high vehicle, the last of the Calithumpians drove away, to the manifest relief of many, but to the loudly expressed regret of the little folks, to whom this was the event of the day.

The ringing of a bell downstairs now announced dinner, and on our way to the dining-room we passed the open bar. The thought struck me, as I glanced into the room that represented the traffic that must ever be a blot on the face of God's creation, while the governments of Christian nations allow its manufacture and sale, that this was a strange place for Christian people to patronize. I said as much to Angus, as we took our places at the long table, and he answered gravely:

"That was just what I was thinking; but where there is no public house in which the stuff is not sold, what is a person to do?"

"It seems to me," I replied, "that if one makes up one's mind never to countenance or support these houses by even the price of a meal, there must be some means of obtaining board and lodging elsewhere."

"That's a fact," he said, thoughtfully. "It is really countenancing and supporting licensed hotels to purchase even a meal in one. Certainly, if Christians all believed and acted alike in this matter, temperance houses of hospitality would soon spring up all over the country. But apparently very few ever think of it at all."

"That reminds me of a temperance man who ran for Parliament in our riding last year," said I. "Perhaps you have heard of Allan Lannerd. He is a thorough prohibitionist, and won't countenance the liquor system by even eating a meal in a hotel or putting his horses in a hotel stable. When he came to Westfield he generally left his team in the livery-stable and had his meals at some private boarding-house. It has always seemed queer to me that many of the warmest temperance workers and church pillars in the riding voted against that man."

"Party politics, I suppose," laughed Angus.

actly. He took sides with neither of the two great parties, but, as a Christian man, gave his word all through the campaign to use his vote and his influence in the interest of the right. He was particularly outspoken on the liquor question; and, of course, he was defeated, although there are enough

nominal Christian voters in the riding to have elected him three times over. 'Party before Christ' seems to be the motto of voters about election time. Men talk all the year round about the curse of intemperance, and pray for God's thunderbolts to fall on the abominable traffic. It sounds all right, but when God answers their prayers by putting right into their hands the opportunity to strike a powerful blow at the very root of the evil by electing a true temperance Christian to a seat among the law-makers, the hollowness of prayer and profession shows itself. At election time too often the cry is not, 'Work for Christ and the suppression of the liquor traffic,' but, 'Work and vote for the party,' no matter how unsound its platform may be when viewed in the light of right, and no matter whether the representative in the field be a good man or an animate whiskey barrel."

"Daisy!" exclaimed Angus, shaking with laughter.

"I tell you, it's true," I returned. "To give another instance: there were three men nominated in the riding next to ours for the same election. Here again the Independent was a strong temperance man. The Conservative in the field was well known to be a moderate drinker, while the Reformer was an out-and-out drunkard. Perhaps there is little choice between the two characters, unless that the latter might be said to be of some service to humanity on account of the fact that he shows in himself the beautiful effects of the traffic, while the former has a

worse influence because of his outward show of respectability."

"And what was the result of the election?" queried Angus.

"Why, the drinking man was elected," I replied. "Christian men worked night and day in his interest, because, you see, he was the article the majority of his party in that riding had placed in the field; and the claims of Christianity must retire to the background for the time being, while they hoisted a drunkard to the House of Commons, and sent a Christian (whose only fault was that he had a mind and a conscience of his own) to his home—defeated. As for the other two candidates, neither had an idea, politically, apart from his party. If his particular party had brought forward a bill to the effect that whiskey be sold in the churches every Sunday morning, afternoon and evening, either would unhesitatingly have cried, 'Hurrah! So let it be!'"

"Oh, come now, Daisy," said Angus, "don't you think there are men more conscientious than that in both parties?"

"Undoubtedly there are," said I; "I spoke of those two in particular, though we all know that they are not exceptions to the rule. Indeed, the exception is the man who does not vote and work whichever way the party wind blows. That's what he's there for. What would be the use of having parties in government if each man were to vote as his own judgment directed? Let an M.P. vote against the

party that gave him his seat, and see what will be the result. He is sent there to go with his party, and go with it he must if he has any wish to be elected another time. In this matter of the prohibition of the liquor traffic, especially, I have often marvelled at the wilful blindness of the Christian electors of the country."

"You do not believe in party government, then?" asked Angus, with a glance across the table, and I noticed for the first time that a quiet-looking elderly gentleman across from us was evidently deeply interested in our low-toned conversation.

"I do not," I answered, emphatically. "Of course, I am only a girl; and even if the lords of creation had reached that point of civilization when they will acknowledge that women who have sense enough to obey the laws should have an equal right with their husbands and brothers to help make them, I am too young to have a vote. If I had I should certainly throw all my influence on the side of the right, and not to help any particular party to power. I should vote for the man, not the party. I believe that no country can be perfectly governed until the people have a more direct voice in the government than is possible by means of this party plan."

"You're evidently a new woman, Daisy," laughed Angus. "What plan of government would you suggest as an improvement?"

"Now you're laughing at me," said I.

"Not at all," he declared. "I agree with you in all you've said."

"Then how do you vote—for a good man or a particular party?" I demanded.

"Well, I've only had the privilege of voting in a Parliamentary election once in my life," he replied; "and I'm very glad to be able to say that I voted for a good man, and an Independent as well. If I hadn't I'd be almost afraid to tell you," he added, laughing.

"Then you'll perhaps agree with me when I say that I believe father's opinions on this point are wise. He says that the electors of a riding should choose the man they have reason to believe the best fitted for the position. If all do not decide upon the same man, as would likely be the case, let two or more be nominated. But let them be men who may be trusted to work, speak and vote in accordance with the conscience God gave them, and who are in the habit of letting that conscience be trained and guided by the teachings of the one great Law-Book. Then let every elector vote for the man he believes to be best fitted to represent the people of the riding. When a council of Christian men has been elected by a Christian nation there will surely be no need of two haggling, opposing factions drawing against each other to administer the government of the country."

"You would introduce a revolution," said the gentleman across the table.

"We need one in this respect," I replied. "Our present system of government is certainly not the best."

"Permit me to introduce you to Miss Murphy, Mr. McDow," said Angus. "I would have done so sooner but that I didn't want to risk interrupting Miss Murphy's flow of eloquence. Mr. McDow is the Independent M.P. I referred to," he added, turning to me with a smile, "and I was afraid you might leave your very interesting arguments unfinished if you had known--" He paused and laughed as I gave him an energetic little kick under cover of the table.

Mr. McDow smiled at my flushed face and kindly remarked that he had very much enjoyed our little discussion.

"It is unusual," he added, "for a lady so young as yourself to hold such advanced and pronounced opinions. May I ask how you came to form them?"

"I'm afraid father and mother are in part responsible," I replied. "From my earliest childhood they have always encouraged my natural thirst for information on every proper subject, and have kept the home well supplied with literature of the right sort. Perhaps my views are rather unusual—rather crude in many ways, too, I fear—but they are just the opinions I have formed from my own reading and observation. Mother says every girl should be trained to think for herself, and I have always been accustomed to doing so."

Looking back to that day, I have smiled to think of the very decided views that young woman, scarcely nineteen, expressed so forcibly. But I must say that, as I have grown older in years and experience, my convictions have become only the more deeply rooted;

and I meet numbers of intelligent men and women who hold like ideas. Several times efforts have been made throughout our land to do away with party government, with its attendant train of evils, and may God grant success to the next movement that is made in this direction.

But to return to my story.

"I should like to know your parents," said Mr. McDow. "May I ask where your home is?"

"Near Westfield," I answered.

"Are you a daughter of William Murphy?"

I replied in the affirmative.

"Oh, then, I have met your father," said he. "I had the pleasure of addressing a meeting in Westfield, in favor of the candidate you spoke of a few minutes ago—a fine man he is, too—and your father was the chairman of the evening."

Mother had been ill at the time, so I had not been present at the meeting, but I remember hearing father, when he came home, speak very favorably of the stranger.

"Your present member was also there," said Mr. McDow, smiling.

"Yes," I replied, dryly; "I remember that father said he was scarcely in a proper frame of mind that night. He drinks even more heavily since he has been elected than before, and he has been known as a drinking character almost since his boyhood. Yet doctors, lawyers, manufacturers, educated and, in many cases, Christian men, all over that riding, were out night and day, canvassing and speechifying in

order to get him elected to the House of Commons. He was the article placed in the field by his party, and therefore every man of his party above ground must do all in his power to elect him. Truly an excellent way for Christian people to uphold the temperance cause—to help elect such a character to represent them in the council of the nation!

“It is simply disgusting to see Christians and temperance people working with all their might to keep a staunch, true-hearted Christian man like Mr. Lan-nerd out of Parliament, where he would have done all within his power for the temperance and every other righteous cause, and using the powers God gave them for a better purpose to elect a drunkard, or a man who does even more harm—a tippler—to go to Ottawa and laugh in his sleeve at the temperance men who elected him, while he lays his vote and his influence at the feet of his master, the devil.”

“You have decided views, Miss Murphy,” said Mr. McDow, slowly, “but none that do not carry the stamp of reason. You touched a point a little while ago that Christians too often disregard, when you said that one might always find some other place in which to stay than a licensed hotel. I’ve often thought of it, but I’m afraid I haven’t just cared to face the consequences of such a decided stand as that involves.”

“It would mean more to you than to another man,” said Angus. “Supporters are scarce for political candidates who refuse to patronize a public house that contains a bar-room.”

I looked at the grave face opposite me. If ever a countenance bore the impress of a true and noble life that one did, and I involuntarily remarked :

"Mr. McDow doesn't look like a man who would value his political position more highly than the approval of his God."

His face lit up with a rarely sweet smile as he asked :

"You are a Christian, are you not, Miss Murphy?"

"A very new one," I answered, humbly, "and, I fear, a very ignorant one."

"Mr. McIvan, how is it with you?" he went on, turning to Angus. "Are you a Christian?"

"I am," fell slowly from Angus's lips. It was the first time since he had united with the church three weeks before that I had heard him make the avowal.

"Then shall we all conclude that this table is no place for those who have given themselves to be kept from all evil in the name of the Christ?"

I rose from my chair as I answered :

"Gladly. This is my last meal in a house where the poison is sold."

"And mine," he said, quietly. "Christ needs followers who will be faithful in the little things of life as well as in the great things."

It seemed to me that the coins Angus dropped into the cashier's hat as we passed out gave a very emphatic chink, as though voicing the thought of their owner's mind as expressed when we reached the street, "That's the last money that shall ever go into a whiskey-seller's till from my hand."

CHAPTER X.

WE parted from Mr. McDow at the door, as he was only in the village on business, and was going home at once. As he disappeared in the crowd a voice just behind us asked :

“What’s next on the programme ?”

“Nothing till two o’clock ; then the races and jumping,” answered some one.

“Would you like a boat-ride in the meantime ?” inquired Angus.

Now, I detest races, but I do enjoy a boat-ride ; so I promptly answered in the affirmative, inwardly resolving that it should last longer than the time allotted to the races.

The boats were all out, we were told, but one would be back in about ten minutes. So we left the dock and strolled through the crowd, I taking mental photographs of the odd characters I saw, from the blanketed squaw to the Cheap Jack auctioneer, and Angus, I knew, looking for his brother.

Suddenly a commotion arose in the crowd a little distance from us, and my companion’s face paled as Norman’s voice was heard declaring that he would fight if the——

The language was blasphemous, and I felt the hot blood rush to my cheeks, while I turned away, ashamed to look at Angus.

"Stay here a minute, Daisy," he said, hastily; and in an instant he was pushing his way through the crowd, growing denser every moment, as news of a prospective fight flew from lip to lip.

I climbed on a low wood-pile near by, and watched his powerful form work its way to the little space, where his brother stood, pulling off his coat and swearing, while a huge ruffian, as drunk as himself, confronted him, striving to outdo him in noise and profanity. Angus laid his hand on his brother's shoulder and said something to him in a low tone. He turned with an oath; but, seeing who it was, listened for a moment, then interrupted loudly:

"That's all very well. You're a band-box Christian, and you don't see these things as I do. Let me go, and I'll smash the—"

Again I blushed that I, a woman, formed one of the listening crowd. Angus set his teeth and tightened his hold on his brother's shoulder, as the latter made a frantic dash forward. He spoke to him again, but without effect, for apparently the whiskey-maddened brain had lost all sense of manhood and decency.

"Go back to your sweet-faced little—" he began.

"Stop!" interrupted Angus, sternly, and without finishing his intended sentence. Norman suddenly wrenched himself free, and, with a volley of oaths, started for his antagonist, who was now struggling in

the grasp of several would-be peacemakers. As he sprang forward with uplifted fist, Angus caught him by the collar, and, catching his coat from the ground with the other hand, took him, struggling and swearing, through the crowd, which parted to let them pass, to the Farmer's Home.

Either Norman was too drunk to make use of all his strength, or excitement and indignation lent his brother an unusual amount; at any rate, he was mastered by sheer force, and a few minutes later I saw their father drive away with him in the direction of home.

Then Angus came back to where I still waited beside the wood-pile. Without a word we went to the dock, stepped into our boat, and rowed far out on the water. Neither of us cared to return to the ever-moving, tiresome crowd, where every few steps we went a puff of the vile odor from somebody's lips in passing set us wondering what tale of home misery and heart-ache it foretold.

I tried to imagine, as we ceased rowing and let the boat rock and dance on the tiny blue wavelets, what home would be like where the one who should be its pure-hearted example and strong protector from the approach of unnecessary trouble, habitually transformed himself into a fiend diabolical, as hundreds that day in little Blue Bay were doing.

I thought of Norman McIvan as I had always known him—a quiet, gentlemanly young man, from whose lips no lady ever heard even a rude slang

expression when his tongue and brain were his own. But what changes had rum wrought! I shuddered even yet, out on the quiet, peaceful bay, at thought of the horrible language that had rolled so glibly from his tongue, as he stood in that dense crowd of human beings, and laid his manhood lower than the nature of the brutes that wallow in filth because they know no better.

Oh, if all the men and women who have called themselves Christians—after His holy name, who suffered and died for the lost—would only take in enough of His Spirit to give their time, their strength, their money, their talents, if need be, their homes, to counterbalance the infernal attraction of the licensed bar!

May the day soon come when he who thinks he must have whiskey will not be able to procure it at five cents a glass wherever he goes, but if he be able to obtain even a mouthful, will have to skulk around some law-breaker's back door or wood-pile, and swallow the poison hastily, lest some one register a complaint that the law that forbids the destruction of souls and bodies, happiness and home, is being broken.

But to return to that memorable holiday.

As, late in the afternoon, we left our boat at the dock and went up the little street to the main portion of the village, Angus remarked that it must be nearly time for supper. Then the question arose as to where we should have it. There was no W. C. T. U. in Blue Bay to have a dining-room fitted up and meals served in a pleasant and attractive manner to draw people

from the whiskey-houses. In fact, there was no meal to be had except at the hotels or at the bakery, where the sign "Hot Lunch" in the window gave us an idea of the weak coffee and thin sandwiches to be had behind the shop.

After a brief consultation we decided to brave the remarks of interested gossips and repair to the lunch-room behind the little shop. Accordingly, we turned in that direction; but before we reached the corner of the street we met the Rev. Mr. Jackson, the pastor of the church of which we were both members.

"I've been looking for you people for an hour or more," he exclaimed. "Mrs. Jackson is very anxious to have you come to the parsonage to tea."

Heroically as we had resolved to partake of our hot lunch at the bakery, I must confess that a look of relief came over Angus's face, and he accuses me of murmuring under my breath something which he translates into "Thank goodness!"

Needless to say, we accepted the opportune invitation, and with grateful hearts.

As we passed down the street we noticed that the bulk of the crowd was moving in the direction of the larger of the two docks, known in the village as the Government Dock.

"This must be the log-race," said Angus. "It should be something new to you, Daisy. Shall we watch it?"

Neither Mr. Jackson nor I had ever seen a log-race,

so we walked down to the small dock and waited for the contestants to appear.

There was a little inlet of the bay, about two hundred yards in width, between the small dock, where we stood, and the larger one. This was the scene of the race. There were two taking part, and Angus told us that they were the most skilful river-drivers in the county. The prize offered was a purse of ten dollars, and the race would also decide the championship of the county.

Soon the logs were launched, and each man, clad in shirt, overalls, and shoes—the regular spiked boots of the river-driver were not allowed—sprang to his place on ... slippery bark, and, armed with a long pike-pole, pushed his odd-looking craft from the dock. The little inlet was shallow enough to admit of the pike-poles being used nearly all the way across, and it was certainly a very interesting race.

How they kept their balance on the dancing, rolling logs was a mystery to me; but there they rode with the utmost ease, and when they were half-way across it was very doubtful as to which would reach the goal first.

Suddenly one of the men lost his footing and slipped into the water.

“Oh!” I exclaimed, in terror.

“The water isn’t deep enough to drown a cat,” laughed Angus, and, sure enough, it reached just above the waist of the six-footer who was so in-

opportunately ducked. He promptly remounted his log and steered for the dock; but, owing to the accident, reached the goal just a log's-length behind.

As the crowd cheered lustily for the champion we went up the street to the parsonage, where Mrs. Jackson had tea awaiting us.

There was a concert and fireworks in the village that evening, but we had seen quite enough of the celebrations, and preferred to spend a quiet evening in the minister's pleasant home.

We had some music, and then took our chairs out on the verandah for a twilight chat. How we did enjoy that quiet talk and the chapter and prayer just before we said good-night! Some way the great unequal battle with the drink devil, which I had begun to dimly understand, seemed less hopeless, for I began to understand, too, a little of the infinite strength and wisdom upon which we may depend.

"Taken altogether, Angus," I said, as we drove through the bush in the warm spring night, "there's more misery than pleasure in a day like this. There's too much of the whiskey-fiend's work abroad—I think I'll go fishing next twenty-fourth of May."

"May I go, too?" he inquired, bending his head so close to mine that I instantly pronounced the covers of modern top-buggies to be too narrow, and asked that ours be lowered.

A lively quarrel ensued, which lasted without truce until I alighted at the little garden gate.

"Good-night," said Angus, holding out his hand.

"Good-night," said I, putting mine into my one and only pocket, and backing up the path.

"Cross-patch!" said he.

"Sugar-spoon!" I retorted, and he drove away, laughing.

As I turned towards the house, I glanced up just in time to see a face in the moonlight disappear from Peter's room window. I scarcely knew whether most to feel indignant at or sorry for him.

CHAPTER XI.

TRUE to our resolve, Angus McIvan and I, in a small way, went to work in the temperance cause, and soon had a flourishing little temperance society organized in Pine Lake. Meetings were held once a fortnight in the school-house, and the membership had soon reached a number far beyond our expectations.

Norman was still at home, and had not been drunk since that memorable Queen's Birthday; but all efforts to persuade him to sign the total abstinence pledge proved unsuccessful. He readily acknowledged the evil of the habit, but gave his friends no encouragement to hope that he had given up the drink. In fact, one day he confidently informed me that he didn't believe in pledging one's self to abstain from anything, for the consciousness of the binding promise only increased the power of the temptation.

I replied that I had not found it so with myself in regard to the dancing, but Norman only shook his head and answered:

"That's another affair altogether."

We thought it best not to press him, and it was but rarely the matter was mentioned to him. The

little society was doing good work among the other young men, so we worked on bravely, trusting more to the influence of Elsie and his invalid mother, in Norman's case, than to any other. For in those days we were very prone to trust to human agencies—to the things which are seen, rather than to the resistless power of the unseen God.

The last day of June arrived at last, and the little school was locked up for the six weeks' vacation, the key being left with Mrs. Weber, in order that the door might be opened for Sunday-school and temperance meetings.

I was delighted to find myself once more on the train and hurrying over the familiar road to Westfield. I wasn't homesick—not a bit! But when one has been away from mother, and father, and home, and life-long friends, for six months, one naturally feels glad to get back.

I would like to tell of the jolly greetings and the busy, happy, swiftly-flying days of that first vacation; and I should like to tell you, too, of the pleasant days Dell and I spent at Mr. McDow's beautiful home. But I must hurry back to Pine Lake, and leave my reader's introduction to Westfield and the friends there until some other time.

Crowd the days as you will, old Time only flies the faster the heavier you load his hours with work or pleasure; so my short six weeks were soon at an end.

When the stage drew up with its usual flourish at

the door of the Farmer's Home, I gathered my bruised and battered body together with an effort and an ejaculation of thankfulness that the long, rough ride was over, and prepared to alight. The stage door opened, and I had placed one foot on the top step before I noticed that it was not the stubby fist of the driver that was held out to assist my descent. Glancing through the low opening, I beheld Angus McIvan, with lifted hat and extended hand, while just behind him was Jean's pretty face, beaming all over with smiles of welcome.

"Why, hello!" said I, in bewilderment.

"Come down—quick!" cried Angus, giving my hand a little pull, and I sprang to the ground in the nick of time, while the waggon rattled off down the road, the driver not having noticed that I had thoughtlessly paused on the step.

"See there," said Angus, "if we hadn't been here you might have had a broken neck to take home with you next trip."

"If you hadn't been here so unexpectedly to me I'd have got out at as reasonable a rate of speed as the present stiffness of my joints would allow, and therefore have run no risk," I replied, returning Jean's hearty hug and kiss.

"I'm so glad you're back again," she cried. "I don't see how we ever did without you."

"Nonsense," said I, ungratefully, though very much pleased to know that someone was delighted to see me again.

In the meantime Angus had recovered my valise from the promiscuous pile of bags, parcels and boxes the stage-driver had thrown on the hotel platform, and placed it in the back of his buggy, with an unconscious air of proprietorship that annoyed me exceedingly.

"Thank you," I said, a little shortly, as he turned the horse and led her close to the platform before asking us to get in.

He glanced at me inquiringly, then a little amused sort of laugh fell on my ear as I turned my back to him and climbed into the buggy. Jean followed, smiling.

"What's the matter?" inquired Angus, taking a seat between us, while Dolly trotted away homeward without giving her driver time to lift the reins from the dash-board.

I did not feel capable of explaining in plain words the cause of my injured dignity, so therefore kept silence. But I leave it to you, my girl-reader. Would you like to be treated as if you were the undisputed property of anybody, without even having been asked for your opinion in the matter? I didn't at all. But, of course, it would be a difficult matter to explain, with Jean chuckling beside me.

"Jean and I came out on purpose to meet you," said he, presently, finding that I had no intention of answering his question. "We left father sole monarch of the oat-field until we get back."

"Did you really, Jean?" I asked.

"Why, to be sure," she answered. "I left a pan of cakes in the oven, and the Friday sweeping about half finished, in order to satisfy this fellow's anxiety to be in Blue Bay three-quarters of an hour before the time the stage is due. I don't know whether he imagined that his being on the spot so early would hasten the gipsy-cart, or whether it was only natural impatience; anyway—"

I succeeded at last, after several very vigorous pokes and pinches, in stopping her flow of words; and as soon as I could get a word in at all, remarked that I was grateful to her as well as exceedingly glad to see her.

"She wasn't a bit glad to see you, after all, Angus," Jean remarked, sympathetically. "Isn't it a good thing you thought of bringing me with you?"

"It is, indeed," he answered, dryly.

"But, perhaps, if I wasn't here," she went on, reassuringly, "she might tell—just for the sake of politeness, you know—that she is a little bit glad to see you, too."

He suddenly threw the reins in her lap, and turning round, seized both my hands in his, and demanded of me that I immediately acknowledge that I had been delighted to see him.

"You have a vast amount of what is commonly called 'cheek,'" I remarked, struggling to free myself from his strong grasp.

"Say you were glad to see me, and I'll let you go," was his only reply.

“I won't,” I declared, indignantly. “I'm not a kitten, to be safely handled this way, and I won't tell fibs for your amusement anyway.”

“Would you be telling a fib if you said you were a little bit pleased to see me again?” he asked.

“Steady, Dolly!” said Jean, anxiously; and the obedient animal, evidently imagining that she was drawing breakable goods, crept carefully along at a snail's pace.

I felt hot all over. It was certainly a most embarrassing position to be in, and that smiling face kept drawing a little nearer to mine every moment. By a sudden, desperate wrench, I managed to free one of my hands, and promptly slapped the provoking creature's ears, at the same time giving him, in no measured terms, my opinion of himself.

But into the midst of my lecture broke Jean's voice, in much relieved tones:

“Now, Dolly, you may trot fast enough to make up for lost time. And for goodness' sake, take us out of this bush and within sight of human beings as quickly as possible. My nerves won't carry me through another such crisis. Why, if I had allowed my attention to wander for a moment, and you, poor faithful animal, had rushed heedlessly over a stone, the consequences might have been serious—broken noses, or bruised heads at the least. We have both done well, Dolly, and you shall have a lump of sugar when I next visit your stall.”

Who could keep up a state of wrath with such a

speech being delivered so near at hand? We were all laughing in a moment, and I soon turned the conversation into a more agreeable channel by making numberless inquiries as to all that had occurred in the section during my absence.

Reports of Sunday-school, temperance society, etc., were all favorable, but I was very sorry to learn that Norman was drinking more heavily than usual. He and Elsie had had a scene, and he had gone away to Rosston, declaring that he would "go to the devil, and she might blame herself for it." By all reports, he seemed to be fulfilling his vow, and poor little Elsie was nearly heart-broken, though as firm as ever in her determination never to marry a drunkard. There must have been a quantity of the material from which martyr-heroines are made in Elsie Smith's small body.

"She'll never give in," said Angus, "and I'm glad she can be so firm. If she were to marry Norman as he is now, she would only give him a push on to ruin, instead of reforming him, as he tries to make her believe."

As he spoke we drew up at the familiar garden gate, and Mrs. Laidlaw and Bessie hastened down the path to greet us.

"Don an' Bessie was gangin' oot ta bring ye ben," said the old lady, "but we kenned Angus 'ud be there when we seed them gae by. Noo," she continued, turning to the others, "ye'll no gae wa' fra' the place wi'oot yer supper. Angus, pit yer horse intil the

third stall as ye gang intil the stable ; and Jean, come ye ben. Ye've no gi'en us a veesit this twa month an' mair."

Angus, to my intense relief, replied that he must go home, but Jean sprang from the buggy and declared her intention of staying until he came for her.

"To-morrow's scrubbing day, so mind you come to-night," she added, as we went through the gate.

More welcomes when "faither" and Don and Peter arrived for supper.

"It's gude ta sae yer bit rosy face fornenst me again," said the old man, as he leaned his elbows on the table and smiled across at me, while Bessie poured the tea. "The hoose didna seem richt wi'oot ye at a'."

Peter giggled, and Don declared that he had been downright lonely.

"There's no use talking, we can't get along without her," chimed in Jean, bringing a sad thought to my heart.

Mother was far from well this summer, and I felt almost guilty at the thought of being away from home for another four months. To be sure, Dell Franklin was with her the greater part of the time, but that wasn't the same to mother as having her own and only daughter at home ; so I had resolved to give up my school at the end of the year.

When I announced this intention there was a chorus of exclamations, and I had much ado to make them understand that it was a clear case of duty, and that I was really as sorry as they appeared to be.

"Isn't it awful!" exclaimed Jean, dolefully; and to change the subject, I began to ply Don with all manner of questions regarding the house he was building on his hundred acres across the road.

Blushing like a girl, the big fellow finished his supper in haste, and made his escape to the barn.

After the dishes were washed and the milking done, Jean asked me to go with her for a little walk, and kept me strolling through the fields and bush until dusk. Great was my surprise, on returning to the house, to find Mrs. Laidlaw and Bessie becomingly attired for company, and the house set in order for a party.

"Ye kep' her awa' ower lang, Jean," said Mrs. Laidlaw, delighted to see my astonishment; "she'll no hae time ta fix hersel'."

Taking the hint, I at once disappeared within my room, and did not emerge therefrom until I had arranged my tumbled hair. I donned my new muslin.

When I again entered the kitchen all the young people around had gathered there, and while I made the round of the room, shaking hands with everybody, I was given to understand that the party was a "welcome home" for me.

Truly, the generous kindness of the people of Pine Lake had made the place seem almost as much like home to me as the old farm at Westfield, if father and mother had been there to make the word complete in all its meaning.

And a jolly "welcome home" it was. Chatting and games occupied the first couple of hours; then some one from outside slyly slipped a black, coffin-shaped box through the window, and in a few minutes the "Pine Lake crowd" was in its element—a rousing, rollicking square-dance. It was still the invariable custom for four or five boys to politely invite me to dance; but by this time it must have become a mere form of courtesy, for six months' steady resistance of temptation had surely convinced every one that I was a hopeless case.

I sat by the stair-door, critically watching the familiar turns of the first dance, and beginning at last to understand, at least in part, my parents' objections to the amusement.

"Very warm here, isn't it?" said a voice at my elbow, and I turned to find Angus standing beside me.

"It is very close," I replied.

"Come out for a walk while this dance lasts," he continued; "it seems to get hotter all the time."

It was nothing unusual for those who found it close when dancing was going on in these small houses to go out for a walk, so I at once arose and accompanied him to the door.

For a few minutes we strolled silently up and down in front of the house, enjoying the cool, fresh air and the beautiful harvest night.

"Let us walk down through the orchard," said Angus at last; and, without answering, I turned with him in that direction and went down the little slope

between the rows of young apple-trees. I was so taken up with the beauty of the scene above and around me that I did not notice that my companion was unusually silent, until he abruptly inquired :

“Daisy, have you any idea as to why I asked you to take this walk with me?”

“Because it was hot in the house,” I answered, promptly, on the alert at once, for of late I had found it wiser to have my wits about me, as the saying is, when alone with Angus McIvan.

“Exactly,” said he, smiling ; and leaning his elbow on the rail-fence, he reached out his other hand with the evident intention of drawing me a little nearer to him. I took myself just out of reach and proposed that we return to the house.

“Not just yet, Daisy. I want a talk with you,” said Angus.

“Indeed!” said I, inquiringly. “Well, I wish you would begin some time soon, for if I remember rightly you haven’t said more than fifteen words since we left the door-step.”

“I’ve been collecting all my forces for a skirmish,” he replied.

I said nothing, and after a moment’s silence he went on :

“I wanted you to come away out here, Daisy, away from the crowd, because I want to tell you something and to ask you a question.”

“Indeed?” said I, in as nearly the same tone as before as the little flutter in my throat would allow.

I had heard people say that their hearts had come into their mouths on very undesirable occasions, and I began to feel afraid that mine was struggling to perform the unusual feat. He turned his back to the fence, and gazed attentively into my face until I turned my attention to the moon and casually remarked that it was—well, it was something about the moon, but I don't recollect just what I did say. My heart was thumping wildly. I felt as if I must speak, scream, cry, or run, and I couldn't do anything but stand there and tremble. My innocent remark must have been funny, for Angus laughed. That rather restored my mental equilibrium by causing me to feel very much aggravated. I turned on him with an indignant rejoinder on the tip of my tongue, but catching the look on his face and in those expressive eyes of his, I turned away in silence and with burning cheeks.

"I wonder when you ever felt such an absorbing interest in the moon before," said Angus.

I began to feel almost as angry with him as I had been that night he had tried to persuade me to dance. Why couldn't he either tell me what burdened his mind or else let me go into the house? It didn't seem very kind of him to keep me standing there, growing more nervous every moment, while his apparent object was to provoke me by gazing into my face and laughing when I did try to make a remark.

"Do you know that I love you, Daisy?" he asked, presently. Again I lifted my eyes to his face with a

saucy reply just ready ; but the amused smile had vanished, and he was looking at me with an expression that effectually banished the nonsense from my tongue, and all at once what little nerve I had left deserted me. Without a word, I fled toward the house as fast as my trembling limbs would carry me.

"No, you don't, you little witch !" exclaimed Angus, overtaking me with a few long strides, and compelling me to walk backward to a fence-corner, where he took the further precaution of standing directly in front of me. "Now, here you stay until you answer my question," he said, in that gently authoritative tone that always provoked me so.

"If you mean the question you asked me just now, why, I can only say 'no.' Now, let me go," I answered, after a vain struggle.

"It's true, whether you know it or not," he coolly returned. "I fell in love with a certain little lady one night last winter. It was a clear case of 'first sight,' Daisy, but my love for you has deepened every hour I've known you—"

"Take care, Angus," I managed to articulate, though with difficulty. "You'd better stop the inflow, or first thing you know you'll be drowned," and I made another attempt to get away.

"Just stay long enough to answer a couple of questions," he said, smilingly. "Now, Daisy, listen—please. I'm in earnest, and I want you to hear me out. I love you more than I know how to tell you, but if you care enough for me to be my wife, I'll be

better able to prove it to you than I am to express what would take a lifetime to tell. Will you be mine, Daisy?"

"You're hurting my hands," said I, so near the brink of tears that I could scarcely speak. He released me at once and stood there, quietly awaiting an answer.

There was silence for several minutes. Something in the eyes bent on my face prevented my intended escape to the house as effectually as if I had been tied, and something seemed whirling in my brain and jumping in my heart that for the moment deprived me of all power of speech or action.

At last, with a mighty effort, I lifted my eyes and opened my lips to speak. He came a step nearer—and somehow, I never can remember just how it came to pass, but I was crying heartily, with a pair of strong arms holding me very closely and tenderly. He did not speak until the worst of the storm was over; then, softly stroking my hair, just like mother used to do, he whispered:

"Poor little girl! I was mean to make you listen to me. I hadn't any idea you would feel so badly."

The big goose actually imagined that because I couldn't help crying I felt badly.

"Don't cry any more, Daisy," he went on, earnestly. "I won't be so mean again. I won't ask any more questions until you are willing to answer them, either; and I won't hold you by force when you want to run away from me."

I began to vaguely wonder if he wasn't promising a little more than he was likely to fulfil, and in order to test the reality of his good intentions I endeavored to get out of the clasp of his strong arms. As I had expected, he held me a degree closer, and, bending his head until his lips were so close to mine that the question seemed almost superfluous, he whispered :

"May I?"

"No," I answered, obstinately, and was immediately prevented from saying anything more for the time being.

"Is this the way you keep your promises, Angus McIvan?" I inquired. "With one breath you tell me you won't ask any more questions till I'm willing to answer, you won't hold me by force, and you'll never be mean to me again, and with the next you break every one of them."

"Not at all," said he, smiling. "You must have been willing to answer that last question. You did so very promptly, at any rate. And I wasn't mean, either, for I only tried to show you what you cry about when I tell you—that I love you. Aren't you willing to say 'yes' or 'no' to my other question now, Daisy?" he added, softly.

"I don't know," I answered, in sober earnest for once.

"You don't know," he repeated. "Well, can you tell me this—do you love me even a little bit?"

"What is love?" I asked.

"A rather difficult thing to define," he replied, smiling.

"Well, if you can't tell me what love is, how can you stand here and tell me that you love me?" I demanded. "If you don't know what it is, how do you know that you do?"

"If I don't know what it is, how do I know I do?" he repeated, laughing. "I once heard it said that love is a hunger of the heart that only marriage can satisfy. It seems to me a very incomplete definition, but I know that nothing short of turning Daisy Murphy into Daisy McIvan can even begin to satisfy the hunger in my heart."

"You must feel weak, Angus," I remarked, sympathetically. "People on the verge of starvation generally do feel that way, I believe. Suppose you let me stand alone."

"And so increase the hunger," said he, giving satisfactory evidence that the weakness had not yet reached his arms. "No, no, Daisy. Here you stay for the present, unless you tell me plainly that you don't want to."

"Well, I don't," I said, with emphasis. "We should both be in the house, for we must be missed by this time."

"Not very seriously," he replied, easily. "See here, Daisy, tell me the truth. Do you care a little more for me than for any one else?"

"More than father and mother, do you mean?" I asked.

"Never mind father and mother just now," said he. "Have you ever known any young man you liked better than you like me?"

"N-no," I replied, hesitatingly, "unless it might be Peter."

He laughed and pulled my ear, as he answered :

"If Peter is my only rival, I feel satisfied. Now, do you care enough for me to leave your father and mother and live with me all your life?"

"That's a very serious question, Angus."

"And requires a serious answer, Daisy."

"Do you care enough for me to put up with all my harum-scarum ways?" I asked, suddenly, looking him straight in the face with all earnestness. "Are you sure the love you talk of is strong enough to stand the test of having to put up with a thoughtless, mischievous girl in the shape of a wife? Can you still love me and be patient when I continually do things I oughtn't to do, and forget the things I should do, and prove to your satisfaction, as well as my own, that I'm a half good enough girl for you?"

"Daisy!"

There was a world of reproach and tenderness in his tones and in the blue eyes that looked into mine.

"You're not a thoughtless, mischievous child," he went on, "and you do yourself far more injustice than you do me by asking such questions. You're the best and sweetest little girl in all the world, and even if you ever possessed the faults you accuse yourself of, I love you, Daisy Murphy, just as you are, and as you are I want you for my wife—to love you and care for you in every possible way, and to honor you, next to God, all my life. I'm not the

sort of fellow to see faults that never existed, and to make a woman's life a burden to her by expecting her to be an angel and a slave combined. Have you really such a hard opinion of me as you—"

"My hard opinions are all concerning myself," I interrupted, hastily. "The faults are all on my side. You haven't one that I know of, except mental blindness—and perhaps I should call that an infirmity rather than a fault. If you are sure that that hungry heart of yours can be satisfied by my love, why, I shall—"

"You can trust me, darling," he whispered. "And you aren't afraid that I'll develop into a crusty, crabbed task-master, and do all that in me lies to upset your favorite platform—equal rights?"

"If you ever do, I'll go home to mother and father," I answered, laughing. "Now, let us go in. Whatever will the folks think of us?"

"Think we're enjoying a moonlight walk," said he. "There's just one thing more, Daisy; and a serious matter it is. You're mine now, you know—"

"I thought you were mine," I interrupted.

"So I am; and that adds much to the importance of what I'm about to say. You've never once in your life given me one little—"

The completion of the sentence was a sort of object-lesson.

"Giving, not receiving, brings the blessing," I sang, softly, shaking my head.

As we neared the open door Angus informed me

that he would drive over for me the next day, as he wanted me to spend the Sunday with his mother.

"Don't you think you might first ask my consent?" I inquired, half indignantly, pausing on the doorstep. But the provoking fellow only pinched my arm and laughed at me.

When we arrived at his home the next evening, Jean met me at the door with a rapturous greeting, and a whispered "I'm so glad." Then I entered the dining-room where the invalid mother lay on her sofa. She held out her arms without a word, and I went into them.

"Isn't it jolly!" exclaimed Jean, dancing round the room in high glee, to the amazement of the three children.

"God bless you," said the mother, softly. "And may my boy prove as good a husband to you as he has been a son to me," she added in a whisper.

"I haven't a single doubt as to his perfection in both relations," said I, lightly, as he entered the room.

The presence of the children, who were, of course, to be kept in ignorance of the state of affairs, prevented any further discussion of the subject; but great was the astonishment of the little folks when their father came a few minutes later, and, taking me bodily in his arms, gave me a resounding kiss. He had begun a little speech when a warning "Sh!" from Jean and a shout of laughter from Angus interrupted him; and, beginning to understand that he

must be silent for the present regarding the subject uppermost in his mind, he laid a finger upon his lips and sat down beside his wife's sofa.

Not a word did I say of all this when I wrote to mother. Mothers are so addicted to the habit of worrying about their absent ones; and I knew mine well enough to feel satisfied that it would be much better to make my confession and introduce her future son-in-law at one and the same time. Of course, I had not the slightest doubt that one glance at the gentleman in question would suffice to satisfy both father and mother that he was all that mortal could desire.

Perhaps this chapter is not interesting or instructive, or—well, anything that a chapter ought to be; but I couldn't tell my story without it. And, anyway, you who toss the tale aside with a contemptuous smile and a muttered, "More love nonsense!" will you tell me what this old hum-drum world would be without its romance? Love-stories may be stale, uninteresting, even silly, to unsympathetic, cold-hearted readers; but a love-story is a life-story every time, and barren is the life that has missed it.

CHAPTER XII.

WITH the latter part of September came another day of great importance in Blue Bay—the annual fall exhibition.

Bessie had been up to the ears in work, as her mother said, for over a month, preparing her exhibit ; and when the morning at last arrived we could scarcely await the hour for starting, so anxious were we to know how her work had compared with that of the rival exhibitors.

Angus and Jean had been visiting friends in their home city, Toronto, for a couple of weeks, and had not yet returned, so I accepted George Smith's invitation to spend the afternoon with Bessie and himself.

Of course, a half holiday at school was a thing to be understood ; and after a hasty dinner and a still hastier toilet, I climbed into the waggon, took a seat between Bessie and Peter, and we rumbled away to the village. The day was a trifle cool, but pleasant. As we neared the fair-grounds we remarked that the large field was crowded, and small boys innumerable were perched on the high board-fence, watching for an opportunity, when the constable's attention was otherwise engaged, to drop slyly to the ground and

disappear among the crowd, thus saving a nickel for refreshments.

But woe to the unlucky urchin who was caught in the dishonorable act! Little Jimmie Blainie, the champion scamp of the small-boy fraternity of Blue Bay, was collared while making a frantic dash for the show-hall, after jumping from the high fence, whence he had previously been banished some dozen times by the sorely harassed constable. I watched the little rogue struggling in the strong grasp of the man of authority, and with a parting reminder from the wand of office in the hand of the constable, sent off until he should be able to pay his fee to the gate-keeper. The constable had no sooner turned his back than, with a muttered ejaculation, Jimmie flashed the required coin from a pocketful of nails, string and other odd articles, and the gate-keeper smilingly received the same, while Jimmie, looking like a much-abused boy, entered the grounds at the heels of his ejector.

Several of his chums, who had availed themselves of the opportunity afforded them while the guardian of the wooden wall was engaged in banishing Jimmie, now gathered round him and shared with him the good things their hoarded nickels had purchased. After all, I think Jimmie gained rather more than he lost by his unsuccessful attempt.

I witnessed this episode while waiting for Mrs. Laidlaw to finish an interesting conversation with a friend, whose children had been undergoing the trying ordeals of the measles and teething; and when

the symptoms and remedies had been fully discussed we moved on toward the show-house.

Just as we reached the steps George Smith came up to us, panting and wiping his forehead, while he profusely apologized for not meeting us at the place agreed upon.

"Father *would* show that old black cow," he explained; "and I had to bring her out—at least I tried to, but she brought me. She took me half a mile past the grounds, too, as fast as we could both travel. Only for Tom Graham I guess we'd be sailing along the shore-road yet at the rate of twenty knots an hour. We met him, and, seeing that I bade fair to reach the north pole unless something was done to prevent, he headed her off with a rail. Once he got her turned round she came just as fast this way, and it was all we could do to persuade her to come in and accept the first prize. That run was well worth the money," he added, as we went up the steps.

The first sound that greeted our ears on entering the building was a shrill "Cock-a-doodle-doo-oo," accompanied and succeeded by cackling of hens, quacking of ducks, gabbling of geese, and a multitude of other sounds that reminded one of a barnyard at daybreak. We went straight to the coops where the fowl were imprisoned, and each was duly admired and the owner's name on the ticket examined before we proceeded to the next division, that of grain and roots.

I cannot say that I was deeply interested in the exhibition at this end of the hall, but nothing must be

overlooked. So we gazed admiringly at the huge mangolds, turnips, carrots, potatoes, etc., sifted the grain through our fingers, handled the long ears of corn, and pronounced the exhibit "very good."

All round the building were tables on which was displayed the handiwork of the ladies of the village and surrounding country, while on the rope-line above, stretched from end to end of the hall, hung mats, crotchet coverlets, patchwork quilts, and other such articles. Huge was the disgust of Mrs. Laidlaw when she found that Bessie's patchwork quilt had been eclipsed by a wonderful piece of work in the same line, manufactured, as the ticket attached informed us, by "Miss Annie Trim, aged 13."

Truly the girl had earned her dollar prize. The quilt was composed entirely of octagonal pieces of red and white cotton, cut the size of a ten-cent piece. Her proud mother stood by and told all interested spectators how Annie had measured, cut, and sewed by hand every minute patch of the quilt, and had disdained all offers of help in the quilting thereof. The bumps of patience and perseverance must have been abnormally developed in that child's head.

I came down several degrees in her good mamma's estimation when I asked if she did not think her daughter would have been much more profitably employed at school.

"Why, Annie passed into the fourth class and left school over a year ago. What more need had she to go to school, when she might be learning to make herself useful?" she demanded, indignantly.

I forebore to argue the point in the presence of so many listeners, but felt sorry that the child, who was really very clever, had been taken from her studies so early and promoted to woman's work and cares several years before she should have had a thought beyond the affairs of school-life and childhood.

Bessie's "Bethlehem Star" shone resplendently near by, with a blue card, denoting second prize, pinned to one lower corner.

"I don't know much about fancy-work, but I like the looks of this one a good deal better," remarked George, viewing the two quilts critically, but taking good care that he was out of Mrs. Trim's hearing. "That other one looks too much like a big checker-board."

"There's naething about the rag but a deal o' work. It's no sae neatly pit thegither," remarked Mrs. Laidlaw, disdainfully.

Bessie's rag mat had taken first prize, while Mrs. Trim's hung limp and ticketless beside it, which rather served to mollify the wrathful old body; and we passed on, criticising or admiring the crocheting, crazy patchwork, outlining, etc., which hung or lay in profusion on all sides.

Bessie had taken, in all, ten prizes, six firsts and four seconds, and a proud mother was Mrs. Laidlaw that day. She had retired from the work and left all the "showin'" to her daughter this year, and well had my friend acquitted herself. Her butter had taken the red ticket, and Mrs. Laidlaw sniffed suspiciously

at the other crocks and rolls, pronouncing them "stale," "streakit," "turnipy," or "carrot-dyed," as each in turn received her condemnation. Bessie's butter was assuredly free from all the faults enumerated, for I had heard the men solemnly warned to "keep the half-Jersey i' the stable till the tither coos was safe i' the field, an' no ta let her onywhere oot o' the late clover-meadow." This was followed by minute instructions regarding the favored animal's rations for some time previous to the fair. The result of this care and Bessie's skill was all that could be desired, for her butter might easily have carried the prize from all competitors at larger exhibitions than that of Blue Bay.

Her pan of bread ranked second; but, among so many, we agreed that she had done remarkably well. The first prize had been awarded to old Grandma Crewman, who was, as the ticket inserted between her loaves stated, eighty-five years old. She was a hale, hearty old body still, and proud, as might be expected, of having won this prize from so many younger competitors.

There was only one exhibitor in painting and crayon-work, and as we drew near the collection I was surprised to recognize the motherly features of Mrs. McIvan, nicely done in crayon-work.

"This is Jean's collection," said Bessie.

"Why, I didn't know that Jean did this kind of work," I exclaimed, in surprise. I had noticed some very fine pictures on the walls of her home, but had never been told that they were her own work.

"She diz a lot of it," remarked Mrs. Laidlaw. "She's a fine, clever lass, is Jean."

Near by was a case of photographs—a sort of advertisement, for the photographer had a tent in the village, and was, as George expressed it, "coining cash." Photographers only visited Blue Bay on such occasions as the present, and many, especially of the young people, took advantage of the opportunity to carry home a souvenir of the day. The sight of the tintypes being shown on all sides seemed to inspire George with a desire to go and do likewise, so he invited Bessie and me to "come and have some shadows taken."

Accordingly, after we had made the round of the show-house, and duly praised the exhibits of the two stores, the tin-shop and the shoe-shop, we went and presented ourselves at the photographer's tent. Mr. Jones, a smiling, fussy little man, with a bald head and one crooked eye, asked us to "please be seated while he finished the couple he was arranging." While George and Bessie seated themselves on the wooden bench inside the tent-flap, I peeped round the calico curtain to see if he was nearly through. There I beheld my friend Don and his bride-soon-to-be striving vainly to assume the position deemed most desirable by the artist.

"Cabinets or tintypes?" inquired the latter, in a business-like tone.

"Cabinets," replied Don.

"I think we'd better change the position, then,"

said Mr. Jones. "Both stand, please. Now, face the lady, sir—so; place one hand behind her—no, the other hand, please. Now, miss, place your left hand on the gentleman's shoulder—exactly; and join your other hands. Correct. Very good. The position for the waltz, you see. I always like a picture to look natural—not as if one had purposely fixed and posed for the occasion."

So the busy little man chatted away, as he ducked his head under the black cloth, while I made a rapid exit from the tent. I couldn't stay another minute without spoiling the scene by a burst of laughter. Don looked so excessively funny and unnatural, standing there so stiff and straight and solemn, grasping the lady's waist and hand as if determined, at all hazards, to prevent her escape from him until the matter in hand was finished. Miss Ross looked almost as comical, standing with one hand against his shoulder, as though pushing him from her. Her head was half turned away, and her face wore a shy, half-frightened look, as if she really did meditate a swift retreat at the first opportunity. Both appeared to be facing one of the most serious ordeals of their lives, instead of being supposed to stand ready for the first lively notes of the violin to send their feet flying over the floor in a merry dance.

When I thought the deed was done I went inside the tent. Don and his sweetheart passed out, and we, in turn, were placed in position. George and Bessie, about two feet apart, were seated side by side

on a log, and I stood behind them, while a painted bush-scene in the background completed the picture. Bessie's demure look, as she sat down where she was directed and folded her hands in her lap, again upset my gravity, and I am afraid I caused the artist considerable anxiety before my face became sobered to the degree of solemnity he considered necessary. I tried to think of all the sorrowful and disagreeable things I could remember at the moment, and had just summoned to my features the most serious expression possible to a face naturally round and prone to grin, when Mr. Jones gave an approving nod and remarked :

"That's just right. Now, ladies, just a moment. Will the gentleman please raise his chin just a shade, and close his mouth? Now—"

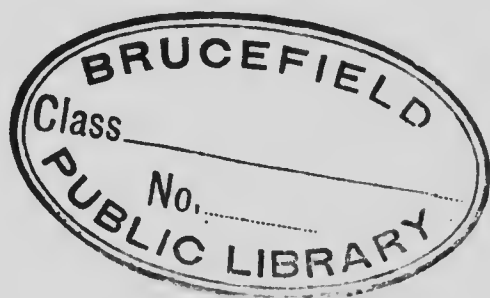
And while George closed his mouth and I opened mine to give vent to a peal of laughter, the picture was taken.

"The lady behind has spoiled it," said the good-natured artist, preparing to try again ; but we insisted on having the pictures finished just as they were, a few minutes later were handed four of the most ludicrous-looking tin-types that photographer had ever turned out.

But for once he had reached his ideal. I, at least, looked perfectly natural, with one hand on my side, head thrown back, and laughter photographed all over face and figure.

Bessie and George were as pleasant and bashful-looking as any one could desire, and everybody declared that I had purposely posed as an eavesdropper in fits of silent laughter behind them.

When Angus came home two weeks later, and was shown the tintypes, he promptly put one in his pocket, and I learned later that he sent it to a photographer in Toronto, with directions to send a dozen cabinet photographs of the lady in the background. When I took him to task for doing so, he merely laughed and remarked that he could never expect to possess another picture of his little Irish Murphy that would be half so true to nature. Thus for once did Mr. Jones reach his ideal.



CHAPTER XIII.

WITH our "shadows" in our pockets were turned to the fair-grounds, and made the rounds of the sheep-pens, cattle-enclosures, pig-racks, etc., by which time it was announced, by a gentleman whose throat and lungs were in excellent condition, that an exhibition of carriage-horses would take place, and a space was cleared for the four waiting teams to exhibit.

I am not sure that the animals shown in this class would have passed muster as carriage-horses at our Westfield exhibition; but no person objected, and Peter's heavy horses trotted off triumphantly with the first prize.

Then followed the other classes of horse-flesh enumerated in the annual prize-list, after which lady-drivers gave an exhibition of their skill. Then came the most interesting sight of the day—the one lady-rider.

There were few ladies in Blue Bay and vicinity who knew how to ride, and no one from the neighborhood had entered but one middle-aged woman. Mrs. Walls was well known in the community. She was a hard-working woman, who was blessed with a drunken

husband and thirteen children, none of whom were as yet earning for themselves. Though she worked all day and often far into the night, and economized to the last degree, she could seldom make ends meet, and likely the tempting prize of three dollars appealed to her strongly.

When the gentleman with the hand-bell and the brazen throat shouted, "Lady Riders!" she entered the ring mounted on the self-same spavined steed the Calithumpians had hired for the Queen's Birthday celebration, as a safe animal to entrust with the lives of the preoccupied lovers.

"Great Scott!" said George, under his breath, "I could hang my hat on his bones and my coat on his tail," which I have no doubt was true.

The framework of the poor brute's half-starved body seemed almost to protrude through the rough hide.

Not having decided to ride until late the previous night, the lady had not had time to procure a riding-habit. She wore, instead, a long brown garment, in fashion much like an apron, put on sideways, and flowing gracefully down to her feet, except when the wind caught and playfully flapped it as she cantered round the ring.

The day being cool, and now threatening rain, and she, poor body, being subject to neuralgia, she had enveloped her head, rusty bonnet and all, in a wide woollen muffler, which had once been a bright scarlet, but now, from long and frequent exposure to all

weathers, had deepened and saddened into a dull, sullen, murky red. The folds of the muffler also encircled her body, the fringed ends being knotted together under the right arm.

As the spavined scarecrow ambled along, urged now and then to a hobbling gallop by her repeated commands to "Gee-up!" and "Go on!"—as also by an occasional whack of the blue umbrella she carried in one hand, which served to remind him that he was in duty bound to do his best, even if his rheumatic bones should ache to-morrow—the crowd cheered wildly.

For my part, I was divided between sympathy with the rider in the hard fight for bread, which I knew had brought her to this, and pity for the poor dumb brute which showed starvation, abuse and suffering in every part of his worn-out body. I just longed to give him one good meal of hay and oats, then send his long-suffering spirit to its rest by means of an overdose of chloroform.

It must be a glorious luxury to such starved and abused creatures to be able to enjoy at least one sweet, sound slumber, when they can forget the helplessness that leaves them dependent upon still lower animals—men who have so lost the image of their Creator that they can inflict heartless cruelties upon the faithful dumb servants God has given them to help to earn their bread. It must be sweet to forget the hunger, the weariness, and the cruel blows which so often madden the tortured brute, struggling in its

dumb way to do its best, and kicked and abused for it knows not what—to forget for even one short hour, in merciful oblivion, the hopeless misery of its existence.

Some one has said that there are horses in heaven, and why not? The statement has often come to me as a probable solution of a conundrum over which I often used to puzzle—why, if God is a God of love and mercy, does He not paralyze the arms of the heartless human brutes who use their God-given strength and reason to abuse and oppress His creatures? And why, if He sees and knows it all, does He allow such cruelty and injustice to be carried on at all?

I could not help thinking that when that poor old aching body lies down for the last time the spirit of life within, it must find a compensation somewhere for its patient, hopeless slavery here. Of course, the worldly-wise laugh at such a ridiculous theory. Horses and other animals are only dumb, soulless brutes, created for man's use and placed under his dominion.

Dumb brutes, I grant you, placed under man's dominion and created purposely for him, but only given in trust by the loving, tender Creator, who has a recompense for all His creatures who are oppressed and suffer wrongfully. And remember this, oh, heartless master, for every neglect in the way of necessary care of the animal which must depend entirely on your tender mercies, for every pang of hunger or thirst it suffers, for every brutal blow, for every pitiless

jerk of the hard metal in the tender mouth, for every unnecessary pain the helpless, dependent beast suffers, there is laid up for you in the hereafter, if not here, a punishment with compound interest. If at the resurrection and the judgment there will be clouds of silent witnesses against the proud, pitiless oppressors of the earth, there you shall surely behold the accusing spirit of the animal God gave you to be your faithful friend and servant, and to be treated accordingly. He who will sit on the great white throne is a God of love and mercy, who suffers in sympathy with His suffering creatures, and has given His promise that they shall be avenged. Think you that He will say to the man who has abused His trust, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"?

To serve Him acceptably man must be kind and just in his dealings with God's dumb creatures as well as with his fellow-beings.

But all this time we have forgotten our "lady rider."

As I watched the exhibition, with a heart aching with sympathy for horse and rider, a few drops of rain began to patter on the hats and bonnets around me, and umbrellas went up all over the crowd. Nothing daunted by this discouraging warning of a coming shower, and determined to win the prize at any rate, Mrs. Walls stopped her horse while she raised her blue umbrella; then, grasping its yellow handle firmly, she again rounded the ring amid the shouts of the watching crowd.

"She's done fine," said a voice behind me, and I turned my head, only to receive a puff of whiskey, second-hand, that made me gasp.

Old John Walls was balancing himself with difficulty and admiring his wife's horsemanship.

"She's good at ridin'," he went on. "When I first knowed her she was as purty a gal as the county held, an' could ride the wildest colt that ever kicked. She ain't jist as young an' spry as she was then, but she's smart yit."

So saying, he spat a flood of tobacco-juice on the skirt of a lady's dress, and, attempting to step forward, lurched against me with such force that but for George Smith catching my arm I could scarcely have kept my feet.

"Get out of this," said George, briefly; and with profuse apologies and assurances that he had tripped over a hillock (that never was there), the old drunkard staggered off.

To think that we, a Christian nation, have taxed, as a luxury, the liquor that turns human beings into sots like that! My blood boiled again at the thought as I watched him stumble along, muttering and spitting filth on whatever happened to be nearest. Surely that one soul was worth more than the whole eight millions of revenue. Ah, surely! Jesus gave His life for him, and is not the Son of God to be valued above eight million dollars? And yet we tax the stuff as a luxury instead of expelling it as a curse. Shame, shame on our boasted Christian land!

A few minutes after the shower began the old horse walked out of the gate with a red ticket hanging to his left ear, and as many of us as could crowd in sought shelter in the hall.

Fortunately the rain did not last long, and we were soon outside again, watching the running, jumping, bag-races, throwing of shoulder-stones, etc.

About five o'clock exhibitors began to collect their goods and prepare for home, George and I helping Bessie with her share of the work. After carefully arranging everything in the waggon, we got into his buggy and went home.

All along the streets, and crowded about the hotels, were the usual sights to remind us of Canada's plague-spot, the poisonous liquor traffic. And again I went home with a sad heart.

As usual, an evening concert ended the day's outing for all who cared to go; but I declined George's cordial invitation to accompany him and Bessie. Wishing them a pleasant time, I watched them drive away after tea, and then sat down to write an account of the day to some one who wasn't there.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE memorable date of the Gunpowder Plot was made doubly memorable in Pine Lake that year by another and very successful plot—one which transformed Miss Emma Ross into Mrs. Donald Laidlaw.

A few weeks previous to the day set for the wedding, Don brought the bride-elect over to spend a couple of days with us and talk matters over.

It had then been arranged that the marriage should take place at eleven a.m., at the bride's home. After the twelve o'clock dinner, music, games, and a general good time should fill up the afternoon; supper should be served at five, then the bridal party would drive to Pine Lake, where the day must wind up, of course, with a dance—the largest dancing party that Don's proud mother had ever had the pleasure and worry of managing. She declared that it would be an all-night and all-dancing party; and the lunch she prepared vied in excellence and variety with the abundant spread prepared at the other parental homestead, for, of course, Pine Lake must not be one degree behind Cedar Hollow.

Nothing less than "a new dress apiece" would do

for Bessie and me, for were we not both bridesmaids? Bessie and Jim Ross, the bride's only brother, were first bridesmaid and best man, while Angus and I were—well, we concluded that our part of the concern would be to look solemn and sympathetic, and to run for water if either of the contracting parties began to show alarming symptoms of hysteria or sudden faintness.

The bride was to wear white, of course; so we agreed to array ourselves in white cashmere also, although Mrs. Laidlaw professed herself unable to "ken what mortal use thae white things 'ud iver be til us, unless we kep' an' laid them by fer oor ain weddins; an', onyhow, she was gey sure there'd no be muckle white aboot them when the dance was dune."

Common sense and economy were certainly on Mrs. Laidlaw's side of the argument; but in all likelihood Don would only be married once, so let all honor be done to the occasion, said we.

When the great day arrived we were all in a condition of excitement and bustle that would surely have eclipsed the mental condition of Guy Fawkes and his gang on that morning of the same day years ago. Everybody was up at an unheard-of hour, the work done as if by magic, and everything put in spic-and-span order for the party.

As none of us would return until the whole crowd arrived together, little Johnny Cosman had been given the promise of a whole quarter, to spend as he

pleased, and unlimited cake and pie, if he stayed all day to attend to the cattle and keep on fires in the house and the back kitchen, or lean-to, at the end of the house. What boy could resist such a prospect? Not Johnny Cosman. He was on the scene bright and early.

As the hour for departure drew near, Peter, Don and "faither" arrayed themselves in fine new suits and squeaking new shoes. Mrs. Laidlaw donned her best black lustre, which I had made over for the occasion, she declaring that the extravagance of Bessie's useless finery and the men's new clothes was expense enough to turn her hair gray, without the additional outlay attendant upon getting a new gown for herself.

Bessie and I carefully parcelled up our new white dresses, donned our ordinary Sunday attire, and, wisely leaving our hair in papers and crimping-pins, pulled our wool Tam-o'-Shanters well over our ears, enveloped our heads in thick black veils, and sat down.

"Which of these mummies is to drive with me?" inquired Angus, as he stood in the doorway and viewed us critically.

Bessie was to drive there with Don, and his voice was now heard from without calling to her to "hurry up." Neither of us answered as we both jumped up and hurried out. I gave Bessie a nudge and went toward Don's buggy, while she, taking the hint, quietly stepped into the other. We were so much alike in our wraps that neither of the young men detected the trick for a few minutes.

As I seated myself in Don's buggy I noticed that Angus made some low-toned remark while tucking the robe around Bessie, and the muffled figure shook with merriment. This, with her continued silence, aroused his suspicions.

"Why don't you speak, Daisy?" I heard him ask. Receiving no reply, he dropped the lines he had just lifted and unceremoniously pulled the veil from her face.

"Well, upon my word!" said he; and a more crestfallen face would be hard to imagine.

Bessie and I shouted with laughter, and Don, coming up at the moment, seized and lifted me bodily out of the seat and deposited me, an unwieldy bundle in my clumsy wraps, in the bottom of Angus's buggy.

"You both deserve a shaking," he declared. "Now, Bess, out you come. I want my sister this last day of freedom, and I rather think Angus wants—"

I looked round quickly, and he left his sentence unfinished.

"A-hem! I guess he does!" dryly remarked Peter, helping his mother into the waggon.

Bessie climbed out, and, still shaking with laughter, got into her brother's rig, and they drove away, while I was with difficulty being disentangled from the maze of skirts, coat, shawl, and robe in which I was bundled.

"You little minx!" exclaimed Angus, as we started, and I laughed again. He seemed to feel much more mortified than the occasion called for.

"If you ever fool me like that again, I'll —" he began.

"No, you won't," I interrupted. "What did you say to Bessie?"

"What did I say?" he repeated, ruefully. "Why, I asked her if she had enough wraps; but, unfortunately, I called her 'my darling' at the end of it."

Whereupon I laughed until I was shaken by my exasperated companion, and commanded to ask his forgiveness.

"Me ask forgiveness!" I exclaimed. "I rather think you had better ask mine. That was a serious offence, and one which I hope I shall never hear of your repeating."

By this time Bessie had told Don all about it, and his grinning face appeared at the side of the buggy ahead, while he inquired in a tone of huge enjoyment if we were sure we had enough wraps, kindly offering to lend us some if we felt cold.

When we reached our destination, a fair-sized frame house, we found it comfortably filled with guests, most of whom were strangers to me. Neither house being very large, it had been thought best to have the "Cedar Hollow crowd," or the bride's friends and neighbors, with only Don's immediate friends from Pine Lake, to the wedding and the "Pine Lake crowd," with such of the Cedar Hollow young people as cared to drive the ten miles, to the party at Laidlaw's in the evening. The plan would thus provide for the entertainment of the friends of both, and not overcrowd either house.

Mrs. Ross met us at the door and conducted us upstairs, while the young men were shown into a room across the hall from that in which her daughter was arraying herself for the ceremony.

Of course, everybody had a present for the bride ; so we handed our gifts to the girl who had been appointed to receive and arrange the same in proper style in the spare bedroom, and went into our respective rooms.

After greetings had been exchanged, we girls proceeded to prepare for the ordeal to come ; and indeed we had little enough time, for an excited voice at the door informed us that the minister was waiting, while we were yet half dressed. We obligingly replied that he might wait a little longer, and, nearly tumbling over each other in our haste, finished our toilet.

Just as the last hairpin was poked into place, and the last glove buttoned, there was a gentle tap at the door. Miss Ross coyly stepped behind it, while I admitted the groom and his supporters.

"Where's Em?" asked her brother ; but before anyone could answer, Don caught sight of something white behind the door, and pounced upon it.

The minister came in at the moment, and found a very blushing and confused bride standing in the midst of a group of laughing young people. Having received his directions, we followed the Rev. Mr. Brown down the stairs, in the order in which we were to enter the parlor.

The auspicious moment had arrived, and I felt like

pulling Angus's hair because he looked so cool and unconcerned, while I was almost flying to pieces with nervousness.

As we neared the parlor door the bride turned deathly pale.

"Oh, Don, I wish it was over," I heard her whisper, tightening her grasp on Don's arm; and the poor fellow, already as nervous as herself, trembled perceptibly as he replied:

"Brace up, girlie! It won't last long; and it's worth while, isn't it?"

She smiled—a very tremulous smile, indeed—as she looked into his face as if seeking to gather strength for the trial by taking a last earnest look at her prize. Then the door opened.

Struggling with a wild desire to laugh, I pinched Angus, who had also noted the little by-play, and biting his lip he shook his head at me.

"Mind you pay strict attention," he whispered, as we entered the room; "your turn comes soon."

We got along amazingly, as Angus afterwards said, until the time-honored expression, "love, honor, and obey," left the minister's lips, and the bride submissively murmured, "I will." Angus was standing almost opposite me, and, accidentally catching my eye, he raised his eyebrows and nodded ever so slightly. No one else noticed him, for every eye was on the bridal pair until I disgraced myself for ever in the eyes of the assembled company by—actually snickering.

Indignant glances were cast at my end of the

semicircle, and I immediately became as solemn and attentive as could be desired. In fact, Angus afterward declared that I stood as straight, impassive and motionless as a sentinel on guard, until the end of the ceremony. To avoid further pitfalls I thenceforward kept my eyes fixed desperately on the toe of the bride's slipper.

What a jolly wedding-party that was! Everybody, old and young, joined in the fun, and the hours flew by so quickly that we were astonished when five o'clock brought supper-time.

When the last table was filled we girls disappeared upstairs, and, after changing our dresses, put on our wraps, and the bridal party headed the procession for Pine Lake.

A general invitation had been given the young people of Cedar Hollow to come over to the dance. To our surprise over half of them came, so that we had a crowded house after all.

Johnny had a roaring fire in both stoves, and very glad we were to crowd round the fires after our long, chilly drive. But time was passing, and Mrs. Laidlaw, senior, soon requested us to "gae wa' ben the ticher's room an' get intil oor finery," which we presently did. Then the bride was introduced to such of her new neighbors as she had not already met; the wedding gifts, still pouring in, were placed on my bed for present safe-keeping, and then the business of the evening began.

Mr. Weber took his place behind the stove and

tuned up his instrument ; a second musician, imported from Blue Bay for the occasion, sat in a corner in the back kitchen and did likewise, thus providing for two sets at a time ; and, beginning to regret Johnny's zeal in keeping on fires, the young people paired off and waited for the opening dance.

CHAPTER XV.

THEN came my hour of temptation. Mrs. Laidlaw, Bessie, Jim Ross and Don all surrounded me, imploring me to lay aside my scruples for this once and appear in the opening dance, which was to consist solely of the bridal party. I had not thought of this, and for a moment the temptation to yield was strong.

The tempter whispered that this was no ordinary occasion. The bride and myself were the only persons present who had never danced, and she was about to set aside the teachings of her parents to appear for the first time on a dancing floor with her husband. Should I yield to their entreaties for just this once and go through the simple quadrille for the sake of appearances, or should I spoil the pleasure of others for—what?

I came back to my senses with a jerk and looked round for Angus. He stood near by, quietly watching, and by neither word nor sign showing that he was in any way interested in my decision.

"Please, Miss Murphy, just this once," pleaded Jim Ross.

"I promised my father not to," I replied.

"Oh, he wouldn't mind if he knew the circumstances," he urged.

Wouldn't he? my noble father, in whose sight a thing was either right or wrong, and no attending circumstances could alter the fact. Neither had I given this matter my closest attention all these months for nothing. The temptation in itself had no longer any power over me, and I answered decidedly :

"I can't possibly join in a dance for even a minute, and this is the last dancing-party I shall ever attend. My father was right. This is not the best amusement for young people, and I've made up my mind to have nothing to do with it. Forgive me, Mrs. Laidlaw. I'll willingly do anything else within my power to add to the pleasure of the evening, but this I *cannot* do."

Before the old lady had uttered half a dozen words of the religious harangue she was beginning, Angus stepped forward and spoke plainly and to the point.

"As Mr. Martin is quite right, Mrs. Laidlaw, and I forgive her for keeping her promise. Daisy," he added, turning to me, "you're a brave girl. Few young ladies could resist such pressure of temptation as has been brought to bear upon you ever since you came here, and still fewer would have the courage, under the same circumstances, to speak as you have just done. Perhaps you won't be sorry to hear that this is my last dancing-party, as well as yours."

And while I flushed at the praise I so little deserved,

he turned to Don and requested him to find substitutes for us both in the opening dance.

"Don," said the bride, with a little quiver in her voice, "mother cried to-day and begged me not to dance to-night."

"Suit yourself, Emma," said Don, promptly. "I won't ask you to do anything that you think isn't right. If I do, don't do it," he added, laughing; and Mrs. Laidlaw, senior, in a state of wrath at white heat, went and compelled "faither" to take the floor with her, and the dance was opened without us.

"These inch-wide Christians are a plagued nuisance," grumbled Jim Ross, as he offered his arm to Bessie.

"Your own father and mother are Christians, and you ought to be proud of them," exclaimed his sister, indignantly; but Jim was out of hearing.

It was an all-night affair, according to Mrs. Laidlaw's plan, and we who did not dance exerted ourselves to make the party a thoroughly enjoyable one. The lunch, which had been the subject of so much thought and labor to Mrs. Laidlaw, was all that could be desired, and everything, as she said, "passed off as it suld, only fer thae contrary lasses spilin' the looks o' the thing;" for which, I think, she never quite forgave either her daughter-in-law or myself.

Late in the night Angus and I sat on the bench by the window watching the dancers. They were waltzing now, and the small room was so crowded with the swinging couples that they often brushed us with feet or skirts as they passed our corner.

Suddenly Angus started and flushed hotly. Jean had just whirled by, and we had unintentionally caught a tenderly-spoken sentence from the lips of her partner. With his lips very close to her ear he had said :

“ I wish I could hold you like this forever, Jean.”

In an instant she disengaged herself from his circling arm, snatched her hand from his, and exclaimed, indignantly :

“ I’m not fond of dancing with rattle-brained children, Fred. You needn’t ask me again until you’re sure your head has become level.”

Without more ado, she caught her small friend Elsie in her arms and gayly waltzed away with her, leaving her discomfited admirer standing where she had left him.

“ Serves him right, the impertinent rascal !” muttered Angus.

“ It does,” said I, laughing ; “ but don’t you think Jean really encouraged him to—”

“ How ?” he interrupted, quickly.

“ If a young lady allowed a young man to hold her in his arms for half an hour at a time under any other circumstances, don’t you think he would be justified in giving expression to his feelings ? that is, if he really admired her, as Fred. Grasser evidently admires Jean.”

“ But the idiot knows that she wouldn’t let him lay his hand on her outside of a dance,” said Angus, gazing wrathfully at the unfortunate Fred., who had

taken himself to the other side of the room and stood, the picture of misery, against the stair-door.

"Oh!" said I, gravely. "Circumstances must indeed alter cases. I should think that if there is anything objectionable about the fact that Fred. Grasser had his arm around Jean's waist, no attending circumstances should make his embrace the more acceptable to her, and particularly the presence of a crowd of people to witness the performance."

Before anything more could be said, Don and his wife came and sat down on our bench.

"Will you tell me, please, why you spoke so strongly against the dancing to-night?" began Mrs. Laidlaw, a little hesitatingly. "You have attended dances, and I never saw one before—mother was so strict. After Jim grew up he did as he pleased, but I never even thought of dancing against mother's will until to-night. It looks simple enough and foolish enough. But where do you see the downright wickedness in it?"

"You don't see it at the first glance, then?" said I. "I confess that I didn't either for long enough. Something I heard years ago, though, often came to my mind before I had thought the thing out to my own satisfaction. A young man in Westfield used to say, 'If a Christian consecrates himself wholly to God, he won't question long as to whether dancing is right or wrong. If it glorifies his God and helps souls on to heaven, it is clearly his duty to dance; if not, then he won't have any time to waste

whirling about uselessly. Time is precious to the followers of Jesus.'"

"That's like some of mother's sayings," said she, thoughtfully; "but I'm not a Christian, Miss Murphy, and I've never looked at things like that."

"What is there in that simple bit of amusement to hinder any one from being a Christian, anyway?" asked Don.

"Don, have you ever tried to live like Christ?" I asked, bluntly.

"No," he answered.

"Neither have I, I'm afraid," I went on, "but I think I'm beginning to partly understand what life meant to Him, and I'd like my life to be a little like His. I'm positive I'll never get any help in a dancing-room, and I'm not likely by means of dancing to help anyone else to live a better life. Have you ever seen any real good come of it, Don?"

"Well," he replied, smiling, "I can't say I ever saw a revival-meeting going on in the same room with a dance."

"Have you ever seen a young man or a young woman who was very fond of dancing, who developed a finer, more manly or more womanly character by indulging in it?"

"I can't say," said Don again, "that I've ever studied the thing like that."

"Have you ever known young people to be led astray by the influences and associations inseparable from a dancing-room?"

I asked the question in a lower tone, and no one answered for a moment. It was well known in Pine Lake that but for her passion for dancing poor Annie Rasp would never have fallen a victim to the temptation that had ruined her life and broken her mother's heart.

"But if some giddy creatures get into bad company and bad habits, that isn't any reason why we shouldn't enjoy life as we go along," said Don at last.

"Don Laidlaw, you know better than that," said I. "Even if the Bible didn't tell us so plainly that the strong should not indulge in those things which cause the weak ones to fall into sin, our own common-sense ought to tell us that it's mean to lead them on to ruin. Those who are weak enough to yield to evil influences are always those who are ready to follow the example of stronger-minded people than themselves. Should we, then, set them an example that we know will ruin them if they follow it? I tell you, Don, there's a fascination—a something about this dancing that isn't from the right source. If it was it wouldn't so often lead young men into the company and habits that tend toward drunkenness and dissipation; and innocent, thoughtless girls, in many cases, to—worse than death."

"Good gracious," exclaimed Don, "I could dance every week in the year and not go down-hill like that."

"How do you know? 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' Anyway, would

you be much farther up-hill at the end of the year, as regards physical health, moral character, or religious experience? It has been proved in thousands of cases that no human being can live a life set apart to the service of God, and at the same time indulge in such recreation as this. I'm not satisfied with my own Christian life at all. I'm only beginning to understand the first lessons of my education for heaven, but I've found out this for myself: no soul will ever glorify God by means of the giddy, selfish pleasure of modern dancing. Besides, it's a well-known fact that this same amusement, which looks so innocent and simple, is ruinous to the health. The excitement of the lively music and the constant motion renders one unconscious of fatigue at the time; but, all the same, there is a strain on the system which, with want of rest, proves deadly if continued."

"Anything will injure the health if it's carried too far," said Don; "but that needn't hinder folks from enjoying themselves in moderation."

"But it wasn't for our own particular enjoyment that we were created, Don," said I, beginning to think that I was being beguiled into delivering a private lecture, rather than taking part in a chat. Still, I did not like to break off the discussion, one-sided though it seemed; for Mrs. Don sat leaning toward me, earnestly taking in every word. I did wish Angus would say something, instead of resting his head against the window-sash, with his big eyes on my face, leaving me to do all the talking.

"You don't think it's a sin to enjoy one's self, do you, Daisy?" he asked, smilingly, as I glanced at him, wondering at his long silence.

"That depends upon one's idea of enjoyment," I replied. "Father says that any useless, selfish pleasure that saps the strength of the body God gave us to use in His service, is certainly sinful. Then what of an amusement which, by a subtle, fascinating power of its own, often leads unthinking girls and boys to depths that they would shudder to think of if their self-respect had not first been destroyed by its associations and contaminations? I tell you, Don, it's a thing to be shunned and discouraged for the sake of the weak ones who fall by its means. There is a sort of reckless spirit in possession of a dancing-room. I've felt its influence, and for the future I mean to keep clear of it. One feels as if nothing in this world or the next is of any importance so long as the present is crowded with pleasure. That isn't the spirit that should animate us if we mean to make a success of life, and leave the world a little better than we found it. I resisted the fascination, but how must it gain upon those who yield to its power? I can easily imagine how it must sap their minds of all desire for noble, earnest work, and fill them with a longing for more pleasure, which fresh indulgence only increases, until the pleasing exercise itself is lost sight of in the evil passions its associations have brought to life. This dancing is the devil's own trap for the weak and thoughtless, and no good ever came of it."

"You have been studying this thing only since you came to Pine Lake," said Angus, slowly, gazing thoughtfully at his beautiful sister across the room. "Have you seen these evil effects upon the character of many of the young people here?"

"That's a very delicate question," said I, hesitatingly.

"Go on, please," said Mrs. Don, earnestly.

"Yes, go on," echoed Angus and Don; and very slowly and unwillingly I made answer:

"I can't see into their hearts to know how much they have really changed, but in many cases I have seen better girls than myself gradually losing their perfect girlish modesty. Many of them are not so particular as they were as to how or with whom they dance. Their manner is different, and, indeed, the girls themselves do not seem as pure as they were. A girl's nature is like a peach—much careless handling soon rubs the bloom off, and, by and by, softens and taints it, no matter how pure and sweet it may have been in the first place."

"I see," murmured Angus, with his thoughtful gaze following his idolized sister, who was now gaily waltzing with Bessie. It was one of Jean's peculiarities that while she was very fond of the rhythmical motion, she preferred dancing with her girl friends or her brothers.

"What of the boys?" inquired Don, carelessly, noting that his wife's eyes anxiously followed her brother's movements.

"Oh, I do wish Lena wouldn't dance with Jim," broke from his sister's lips.

"Why?" queried Don.

"She's nothing but an innocent child," she replied, "and though he is my own brother, I can't bear to see her where she is now."

"Nonsense, Emma," laughed Don. "That's only a dance."

"Only a dance," she repeated. "Yes; Jim has been through many a dance, but I wish he hadn't. You haven't answered Don's question, Miss Murphy," she added, turning to me.

"What of the boys?" I said, slowly. "I think I need scarcely say that young men who are allowed such liberties because it is 'only a dance,' soon grow careless in their behavior and conversation—soon lose the thorough, natural respect for womanhood that every man ought to have. Even if there were no other attending evils, *that alone* should make dancing a thing to be condemned."

Without a word Angus rose, and, crossing the room, brought Jean over to our bench and kept her with us till the crowd dispersed. What passed between them on the way home I do not know, but Jean never danced again.

Was I too hard on a popular youthful amusement?

Surely, when Christ Himself teaches that what is not for Him is against Him, we should not allow a mistaken idea of moderation to prevent us from denouncing with all our might an evil which is one of

the most subtle and insidious of the moral poisons continuously imbibed by modern society. Let us rather speak plainly, and abide by the consequences; and let all right-thinking young people consider in the light of morality and the teachings of Jesus, the Perfect Man and the Son of God, this popular recreation, which, while apparently harmless, is in reality the cause of untold evil.

I have depicted the amusement as seen in rural communities, but human nature is the same the world over. Is this fascinating evil, then, the less a thing to be avoided in the so-called higher circles of society, among whose members daily labor is not a necessity, and, therefore, an influence that more than counter-balances that of worldly pleasure? Is dancing any more to the glory of God in the millionaire's elegant ball-room than it is in the farmer's kitchen?

Where luxury, ease and self-indulgence have already inflamed the blood; where luscious wines and voluptuous music intoxicate the senses; where fashion decrees that modest woman shall wear gowns such as should never be worn outside her bedroom door; where everything tends to the same end—the gratification of the instinct of selfish enjoyment—is the social dance a thing to be desired for the upbuilding of a pure society?

Do we ever find Jesus amid such scenes? He never had time for useless self-indulgence while on earth. His very meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him; and suffering humanity weighed on His

heart continually. And shall we find Christ in the hearts of the devotees of such scenes and interests at the present day?

Let Himself answer :

“ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

“ He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”

Is the unselfish love and sacrifice of the cross of Christ upheld and honored in the whirl and passionate self-enjoyment of the dance? Surely the disciple who enters there leaves the consecrated cross behind him at the door ; and it is not to be laid down and taken up at the will of the careless Christian.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRISTMAS drew near, and busy were the closing weeks of the term. The annual Sunday-school entertainment was a time-honored institution in Pine Lake, and, as usual, the teacher must take the lead and the responsibility in the preparation for the same. The young people of the section held a meeting in the school one evening to decide upon our programme, and thus it was arranged.

Of course, we must have a Christmas tree, and I suggested the addition of a real live Santa Claus. The proposition was hailed with delight, and the next question to be settled was the number of dialogues, recitations, and musical selections necessary for a first-class programme. Every dialogue book in the section was present, and we finally agreed upon two comic farces and two temperance dialogues.

The chosen choir consisted of about a dozen boys and girls, with Jean as organist.

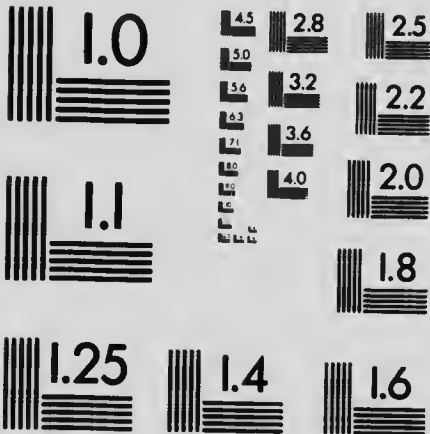
Her instrument, being the nearest, was brought to the school next day, and business began in earnest.

Besides the four nights' practice with the young people every week, I had the children to provide for and train in their share of the programme; so days



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and evenings were alike busy until the momentous evening arrived.

It was a lengthy programme, consisting, in all, of thirty-one items, including the chairman's speech. Not knowing who might be selected for this position, and fearing a lengthy oration, I had, in copying the programme, inserted in parentheses a concise little sentence—"Boil it down"—just after the item, "Chairman's Address."

Judge of my feelings when Dr. Fisher was chosen, and the mean man convulsed the audience by telling them about it.

The children acted their parts perfectly. I was really proud of them, for without exception they behaved excellently and gave no one trouble or uneasiness all through the long programme.

Our amateur choir acquitted itself finely, and the dialogues were well acted. These latter seemed by far the most entertaining portion of our programme, if we were to judge by the applause of our appreciative audience. The temperance dialogues, with their life-like representations of the horrors of a drunkard's home, and the fearful effects of the drink on human nature, were pronounced "first-class," while the comic farces received more than their share of appreciation.

When the curtain rose and discovered old Dr. Pill-paste mixing his drugs and muttering to himself, he was greeted by a round of applause, which was repeated when he raised his head and his identity

was betrayed by the small portion of his face visible above his bushy gray horse-hair beard. George Smith had taken this part, and seemed to forget, for the time being, that he had ever been anybody else than Dr. Pillpaste all his life. In one stormy scene he refused to allow his daughter (Jean) to marry her chosen lover, but a sheeted ghost, thereafter haunting him perpetually, at length drew from him a reluctant consent. The closing act proved the ghost and the lover to be one and the same person, and amid much laughter the outwitted paterfamilias gave the pair his fatherly blessing.

Next on the list was a school chorus, after which Santa Claus, in fur cap and coat, with a false face to which was attached a long white beard, emerged from the curtained corner and made ready to distribute the gifts. Another young man, disguised as Santa's assistant, stood on a step-ladder, and handed down the books, toys, and candy bags, which were then delivered by the friendly saint, with a few words of greeting or advice, to the scholar whose name was written on the ticket attached to each.

I was standing at one side of the platform, half-concealed by the curtains, watching the delighted little faces as each in turn carried away a gift and a parcel of sweets, when suddenly the jolly voice of St. Nick called out :

“Miss Murphy—from the Temperance Society.”

There was a clapping of hands as I stepped forward, and, bowing my thanks, received a beautiful

album, bound in plush, the color of our blue ribbon badges. Upon opening it I found within a photograph of each member of our little band of temperance workers. That album is still one of my treasured possessions.

I had scarcely recovered from my surprise when I was again summoned by Santa Claus, this time to receive a handsomely bound Bible from the Sunday-school. Thinking that I had been treated more generously than I deserved, I went down one of the side aisles to speak to a lady friend, and I was almost immediately requested by the chairman to come forward.

Santa Claus and his assistant, having finished their task, stood beside the dismantled tree, and on the platform were three of my pupils, each holding a gift, while a third met me with an address which was nothing if not complimentary.

When he had finished, my arms were loaded with Pine Lake tokens of its friendly regard, but not so full as my heart with gratitude and love to the people who had become as dear to me as life-long friends. I found myself in possession of a large velvet work-box, satin-lined, and containing all the dainty, useful little articles belonging to such contrivances; a volume of Wordsworth's poems, a travelling-case with toilet articles, and a pair of tall cut-glass vases.

Was ever country school-teacher more royally treated?

There was a pause. Evidently I was expected to

make a speech, and, with hands and arms full, I turned to the audience. But as I looked into the kindly faces of young and old before me, each beaming with good-will and friendship, and thought of all their kindness to me, a stranger, now crowned by this generous parting gift, I was completely overcome. With the first sentence I attempted to utter, the tears mastered me. Just managing to falter a few words of thanks, I sobbed outright, and hastily sought cover behind the curtain. In an instant handkerchiefs were waving all over the room, and when the chairman began to speak, he was interrupted by repeated calls for "the teacher."

"No use, Miss Murphy. You'll have to unload, and come out," said that gentleman, putting his head around the curtain. So I placed my gifts on the desk in the corner, and came out again. I doubt if many of the Pine Lake people had heard of the well-known Chautauqua salute, but I am sure that every handkerchief in that crowded room was waving enthusiastically as I followed the chairman to the centre of the platform.

Instantly one of my small boys climbed on top of a seat and shouted in his shrill, boyish treble :

"Three cheers for the teacher wot's never give one of us a lickin'!" And, amid shouts of laughter, he led the cheers, waving his little cap over his head with enthusiasm.

This done, the chairman asked for order, and in the silence that followed I forgot that I was, in reality,

making my first public speech, forgot the strangers present, forgot every thing and everybody but the dear friends before me, and told them how much I appreciated their kindness to me during the year I had spent with them, and how I should always love them, and never, never forget Pine Lake as long as I should live.

The strangers present must have thought this a very childish little talk, for the tears would keep interrupting me, and, after all, I was only a grown-up child. But when I again turned to leave the platform, the Pine Lake people rose in a body, and, waving hats and handkerchiefs, cheered lustily.

While they were still on their feet, Jean struck the opening chord of "God save the Queen," and with the singing of Britain's loyal anthem the entertainment closed.

I was glad to find myself at last alone with Angus, out in the cool, quiet night. The strain of the week just over, together with the excitement of the evening, had been almost too much for me, and I was glad to lean back in my corner of the buggy and indulge myself in the luxury of being quiet for a while. Angus, knowing that I was very weary, considerately said nothing to me until I broke the silence, as we neared the big gate, by asking him if he had known before that evening of the presentation and address.

"Why, certainly," said he.

"Then why on earth didn't you give me a hint of it?" I demanded, sitting up straight to look at him with great indignation.

"That would have spoiled the whole affair," he answered.

"But," said I, by no means mollified, "if I had had any idea of such a thing I shouldn't have been taken so completely by surprise, and made such a—such a baby of myself. You—"

"Daisy," interrupted Angus, "I wouldn't have had that little scene to-night one whit other than it was for the world. That first little sob told the Pine Lake people more plainly than an all-night speech could have told them, that you love them, and that the parting will be painful to you as well as to them. While the handkerchiefs were waving, and the tears were running down your cheeks because your hands were too full to wipe them away, I felt like telling the crowd that you are coming back some time to stay. When will it be, darling?"

"I don't know, Angus."

"Why don't you know?"

"Because I must never leave mother again until she becomes stronger. She has failed sadly since last Christmas. Come home with me, Angus, and talk the matter over with her yourself," I added, as Dolly stopped at the gate.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO days later we had a public examination in our school, and nearly all the parents and young people in the section were present. Beginning at nine o'clock sharp, the examinations of the classes in the studies of the months just passed lasted, with only a short intermission, until almost twelve. Then a chairman was elected, and speeches became the order of the day.

As Angus took the chair, I retired from the platform and occupied a seat among the children. Several of the gentlemen present made short speeches, and every passing moment brought the last trying ordeal nearer.

How I wished it was over!

At length the last speaker had finished his eulogy of the children's progress and the general condition of the school, and with kindly expressed regrets that the "teacher wot never give one of them a lickin'" must leave the section, he sat down.

Then, with a pleasant smile, the young chairman arose, and made a little speech for which we were all unprepared. He remarked that while he joined with the others in lamenting the impending departure of the lady in question, he differed from them in that he

was not one of those who sorrow without hope. When he had reached this point, he paused. Then, meeting my startled glance, he went on, with a laugh in his blue eyes and in the clear tones of his voice :

“ I do not sorrow without hope—of her speedy return. And as the school I hope she will then take charge of will consist of only one pupil, she will have ample time to renew old acquaintances.”

There was a burst of laughter and applause that served to greatly lessen the depression that had settled upon us all. My cheeks were aflame, and I heartily wished for a moment that I had refused to give the barefaced fellow my promise until the very last hour before leaving the section. In the midst of the laughter and hum of talk his unexpected announcement had occasioned, the chairman calmly proceeded with the duties of his office, and requested me to say a few words to the school.

How I ever recovered my wits sufficiently to speak at all has always been a mystery to me. Truth to tell, I felt more like pounding Angus McIvan than delivering a parting address ; but I had many things to say to the children, whom I loved almost as if they had been my own brothers and sisters, and I soon forgot my discomfiture when I began to speak.

There was no use attempting to finish the closing chorus we began. An ignominious breakdown in the middle of the second verse decided that ; so, forming in line, the pupils passed out, bidding me good-bye at the door as they went.

"This is the most sorrowful funeral I ever was at," remarked a young man, as, having kissed the last weeping child, and wiped my own overflowing eyes, I turned to shake hands with the grown people.

"Funeral of what?" some one asked.

"Of the most pleasant year Pine Lake has had for some time," he replied, grasping my hand, as he in turn passed out of the school.

At last it was all over, and glad I was to shut myself up in my little bedroom for a while. My trunk was already packed and locked, and kneeling beside it I asked God to bless Pine Lake and the many friends I was leaving behind.

Then Bessie came to tell me that dinner was waiting, and I went out with her and tried to force down a few mouthfuls of the roast duck Mrs. Laidlaw had prepared for the occasion.

Dinner was scarcely over when Angus arrived, grip in hand, and was greeted with open-eyed wonder by the family, none of whom were aware of his intended visit to Westfield. A few minutes later the livery rig he had ordered drove up to the door, and while the men carried my trunk out, I said good-bye to Bessie and her mother, the latter promising to allow Bessie to pay me a long visit sometime soon.

Peter and "father" were standing beside the carriage, and Don and his wife entered the gate as I stepped from the door.

If there is one experience more trying than any other it is that of bidding friends farewell for an

indefinite length of time. If one could just call out "By-by," and be off without more ado, partings wouldn't be half so heart-rending. But when one's female friends cling to one and weep real tears of real sorrow, when there is a little catch in the men's voices as they say the saddest word earth knows—"good-bye"—this farewell business becomes a matter of heartache.

It was with a distinct feeling of relief that I settled back in the seat and let Angus tuck the robes more closely about me, as we started rapidly down the road towards the village.

It was already long past three o'clock, and we were anxious to reach Rosston in time to catch the 7.10 train, which in the present state of the roads would be just possible, so our driver had brought his best team, and we soon left the vicinity of Pine Lake and Blue Bay far behind.

"I have a piece of news for you. Daisy," said Angus, breaking a long silence.

"Have you?" said I, a little absently. I was thinking of home and mother, and father and Dell.

"Mother had a letter from Norman last night," said he, "which tells a wonderful story. He has been converted, and has turned his back on his old life forever."

"Oh, Angus!" I exclaimed, sitting upright in my excitement, heedless of shawl and robes.

"You foolish little being!" chided Angus, softly, as he carefully bundled me up again. "You'll catch

your death of cold if you don't stay inside your wraps."

"But tell me all about it," I urged.

"I won't tell you another word if you don't sit still and keep yourself warm," he replied.

"Keep myself cool, why didn't you say?" said I, in resignation submitting to being half-smothered in the folds of an extra muffler. "I'll promise to keep cool, sit still, keep myself warm, or anything else you happen to think of, if you'll only hurry up and tell me about Norman. Do go on, Angus. How did it all happen?"

"Why, he was in a bar-room one evening, and a Salvation Army lass came in, selling the *War Cry*. He had a glass of whiskey in his hand when she came up to him, and paused with it half-way to his lips, while she offered him a paper. He set the glass down and bought one, then again lifted the liquor to his mouth, but had scarcely tasted it when she laid her hand on his arm. 'Young man,' she said, 'you're drinking poison to your manhood and death to your immortal soul. For your mother's sake, and for the sake of the Christ who died for you, give it up.' She left the bar-room as quietly and modestly as she had entered, and Norman set his glass of liquor on the counter and followed her out into the street and all the way to the barracks. His account of the meeting, and how he sought and found the Saviour, is very touching. I believe he is soundly converted."

"Oh, I am so thankful!" I exclaimed, as he paused. "And your mother, Angus?"

"We have always known," he answered, slowly, "that Norman's way of life was her heaviest burden, but I'm sure not one of us ever half realized her trouble. She read the letter in silence, then, calling us all around her, she read it aloud, and asked us to kneel. We have been accustomed since our earliest infancy to hearing mother praise, but I can never recollect hearing before such a burst of praise and thanksgiving from her lips. It seems as if her last earthly desire is satisfied, and she is entirely at rest. I've thought sometimes to-day that she won't be with us much longer. She has been an invalid for many years, you know."

His voice broke, and I loved and respected him none the less for the tears that he hastily brushed from his eyes. The tie between that mother and her children was a very close one, and we had all seen for some time that she was failing more rapidly than we cared to acknowledge, even to ourselves. Her intense yearning over her younger son in his waywardness and folly had been her strongest hold on life, and now that she was fully at rest concerning him, she seemed, as Angus expressed it, "simply waiting for her summons home."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE reached Rosston barely in time to catch the train for Westfield. As the horses stopped Angus sprang from the carriage and lifted me out, wraps and all, and at the same moment Norman ran down the platform steps to meet us. Without a word, the brothers' hands met in a close, lingering clasp, and I turned my head away for a moment. Both were deeply moved; but, after the fashion of men, neither spoke of what filled the heart of each to overflowing.

"And how is Daisy?" inquired Norman, presently, catching both my hands in his.

Before I could reply the conductor shouted "All aboard!" and Angus darted into the waiting-room for tickets and checks, while Norman and our driver carried my trunk across the platform. Then the former, catching my arm, hurried me into a car, and just as the train began to move Angus swung himself up the steps.

"Good-bye," said Norman, with a hasty hand-clasp.

"Good-bye," we called after him, as he sprang from the moving train; and in another instant we had

rounded the bend and were being whirled homeward.

"Does Elsie know?" I asked, as Angus turned from the window.

"Know what?" he inquired.

"That Norman has become a Christian."

"Oh," said he, "I forgot to tell you about that. Jean ran over to see her soon after mother's letter came, and found the poor little girl sobbing as if her heart would break, and her mother at her wits' end to know what to do with her. Jean put her arms round her, in that loving way of hers, and soon, in very broken sentences, the trouble came out. She had just had a letter from Norman, and he was coming home. Not much in that to cause tears, but her trouble was this: Since he had become a Christian and forsaken his evil ways, he reminded her of her promise to marry him, and she seemed to feel that it would be impossible for her to become the wife of a Christian without becoming a Christian herself."

"Wasn't she right?" said I.

"Certainly," replied Angus. "'Two cannot walk together except they be agreed.' The news of Norman's conversion had brought Elsie to the point of decision, and, seeing how the case stood, Jean at once brought her home to mother. No one can make the way plainer than mother—God bless her—and Elsie's in the light, as she says, to-day. Norman goes home with the rig we came out in."

What a meeting there would be! I almost wished that we could be there. But soon my thoughts sped

faster than the train to the home and the welcome awaiting us. I had not told mother of my engagement, and had only sent a card one day ahead of us to tell her that I was bringing a friend home to spend Christmas. Dell knew the whole story, of course, but was under vows of secrecy, so that the appearance of their future son-in-law would be the first father and mother would know of his existence.

As the train drew up at the familiar depot, I threw on my wraps and darted out of the door before anyone else had reached it.

"You seem to be in a hurry," remarked Angus, overtaking me with a few of his long strides, in time to help me down the steps.

There was a familiar figure in a big brown overcoat at the corner of the platform, peering right and left in search of some one. In an instant I had both arms around his neck and was being hugged, in turn, almost to the point of strangulation.

"See here, Mr. Murphy, I think it's nearly time I had my turn," cried a merry girlish voice; and I was no sooner out of father's embrace than I was seized by a pair of strong young arms and whirled round in a sort of jig, until I gasped:

"Oh, Dell, leave me breath enough to introduce—"

"I beg pardon," she interrupted, hastily releasing me, and holding out her hand to Angus, who stood smilingly watching the scene. "This is Mr. McIvan, I'm sure," she continued. "I know you without an

introduction. Welcome to Westfield. Daisy, I'll spare your blushes. Allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. McIvan, your prospective son-in-law, Mr. Murphy."

Completely taken by surprise, father glanced inquiringly at me, as he shook hands with Angus, who was now laughing merrily. I was literally speechless; so, seeing that no further explanation was forthcoming, father joined in the laughter of the other two, saying in his hearty way:

"I don't know whether this is one of Dell's jokes or a solemn fact; but you're very welcome, anyway."

"There is truth in what Miss Franklin says," remarked Angus, "but we had intended asking your opinion in the matter."

"Oh, all right," said father, pinching my cheek with his thumb and fore-finger. "I'll get a better look at you when we get home, and then we'll see. Where's your trunk, Daisy? Oh, I see it. Well, I'll bring the carriage round here."

He disappeared round the corner of the station, and we girls were left alone while Angus went to see about our checks.

"He's splendid," said Dell, emphatically, as she watched his tall, erect form cross the platform.

"Wait until you know him," said I, proudly.

"Don't begin, Daisy, I beg," she implored. "Of course, I know he's an angel incarnate. Your letters have prepared me to watch the back of his coat—I'm sure his wings are sprouting."

The approach of the gentleman in question prevented the utterance of the indignant retort that was on the tip of my tongue. At the same moment the carriage came round, and in a few minutes we were driving through the town.

Much as I loved Pine Lake, it did seem good to see the familiar streets and faces again; and the occasional "Hello, Daisy! Glad to see you back," as we passed an intimate acquaintance, was music to my ear.

As we neared the house the door opened wide, and I sprang from the carriage almost before it had come to a standstill, crying:

"Mother!"

The dear arms were round me in a moment, and between her kisses she said, tenderly:

"God bless my Daisy. Mother's glad to have her back again."

She always had a habit of talking to me like that in moments of unusual emotion. Somehow, she seemed to think of me still as a little child, in spite of the fact that I was a much taller person than herself. And I liked it just as well as I did when I used to toddle at her heels from morning till night, tumbling and bumping my nose, now and then, for a little variety.

Dell's voice at the door reminded me of the fact that my joy at the sight of the beloved mother had caused me to forget, for the moment, that I had brought her a guest.

"My friend, Mr. McIvan, mother," I said, as he came in. "Angus, let me introduce you to the best mother on earth."

"Not even excepting mine?" he queried, bowing reverently over the thin little hand that seemed almost lost in his big palm.

"Not even excepting yours," I replied, hugging her again, while she gave him the hearty welcome that was always ready for any friend her daughter might bring to her.

"Guess some supper would be acceptable," remarked Dell, throwing aside her wraps and disappearing through the kitchen door, while we divested ourselves of our outside garments and made ourselves comfortable beside the warm fire.

I haven't told my readers anything about Dell Franklin, because my story has been of Pine Lake and its people, rather than of Westfield. I may have something more to say of her some day, but at present have time to but merely introduce my friend. She was an orphan, and had lived since childhood with an uncle who owned the farm next to ours. Her life had been far from pleasant, and but for the fact that she had been bound by her father, at death, to live with this uncle until she should reach the age of eighteen, mother would have had her to live with us years before. Her uncle was kind enough to her, in his way, but his wife was a vixen and had led her a sorry and slavish existence. She would be eighteen in the beginning of the new year, however, and it was an

understood thing that she should then come to be as a second daughter in our home.

"Hurrah, Daisy!" she cried, presently, from the rear of the house. "Mother's got a big fish stuffed with good things, and roasted beautifully. She didn't forget what somebody likes."

"Good news," said father, coming in just in time to catch the latter part of the announcement. "We're ready for all the good things you have out there, Dell. Bring 'em along. Here, Daisy, child, I want you beside me for to-night. We'll put Angus between mother and Dell, where he'll be well looked after."

What a happy little feast it was!—everybody talking and laughing, while sometimes the dainties mother had prepared for the important occasion were almost forgotten, until a gentle reminder from her, or a brusque "Help yourselves" from father, made us think of our appetites.

After supper father went to the barn to attend to his evening chores, and Angus, carrying the lantern and a milk pail, went with him.

Dell, disdainful of all help, promptly huddled the dishes off the table and retired to the kitchen to wash them, shutting the door behind her.

When we were alone I drew a footstool up to the fire and sat down, laying my head on mother's knee.

There was silence for a moment, while the gentle hand smoothed my hair; then she bent over me with a smile.

"Tell me all about it, daughter," she said.

The tender mother-heart had divined my secret before I mentioned it, but I told her the story from the beginning. She asked no questions, and made no remarks until I had finished, when she put her hand under my chin, and, lifting my face, looked long and tenderly into my eyes.

"He is a good and noble young man—a Christian, Daisy?" she asked.

"Yes, mother," I replied.

"And you're sure you love him with the love that will last a lifetime, and be strong and true to the end?"

"Quite sure, mother."

As I spoke another hand was laid on my head, and I glanced up in surprise to find Angus bending over me. I was sitting with my back to the open hall-door, and had not heard him come in.

"I've been having a talk with Mr. Murphy," he said to mother, "and he has sent me to you. May I have this Daisy to plant in my garden?"

Mother's eyes dwelt long, and thoughtfully on the handsome face, which was an index to the fine character of the man. Then, as he knelt beside her chair with one arm about my shoulders and the other hand clasping one of hers, she gave her answer:

"My little girl has made her choice, and I'm sure it has been a wise one," she said. "I can trust you, Angus McIvan, even with my one treasured child, for I believe you are worthy of her. But I must ask you both to wait a while. You must see for

yourselves," and here her voice was a little broken, and the tears gathered in her soft brown eyes, "that I can't hope to be here very much longer—perhaps not many months. It is an unspeakable joy to me to know that my Daisy will be safe and happy in the love of a true Christian husband, but I don't want you to leave me, darling—"

"Oh, mother, don't!" I sobbed, burying my head in her lap.

She said no more for a moment; then, again stroking my hair softly, she went on:

"There is no use hiding the truth, dear. I won't be with you a great while, and I want my daughter—"

"Mother, darling, I'll never leave you," I cried.

"I knew you wouldn't, Daisy," she answered, very tenderly. "But there is another thing I wanted to say. When I have gone away I don't want the old home left desolate for father. Will you be willing to come and live here, Angus? That has always been our plan whenever we have talked of our child's future. The farm will be hers when we are through with it, anyway, and then you may please yourselves about living here. I only want you to promise to stay with father as long as he lives."

Angus gave the promise readily enough, although I knew it involved the upsetting of many a cherished plan in which his farm at Pine Lake figured.

"God bless you!" said mother, fervently, laying a hand on his head.

THE END.



