

**FINDING
THE LOST
TREASURE**

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FINDING THE LOST TREASURE

By HELEN M. PERSONS

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FINDING THE LOST TREASURE

CHAPTER I

A MYSTERIOUS PAPER

⁵⁵
“W-17 -15x12-6754,” read Desiré slowly. “What *does* it mean?”

“What does what mean, Dissy?” asked her younger sister, who was rolling a ball across the floor to little René.

“Just some figures on an old paper I found, dear. I must tell Jack about them. Do you know where he is?”

“Out there somewhere, I guess,” replied the child, with a vague gesture indicating the front yard.

Desiré flung back her short dark curls and crossed the room to a window where sturdy geraniums raised their scarlet clusters to the very top of the panes. It was the custom in that part of Nova Scotia to make a regular screen of blossoming plants in all front windows, sometimes even in those of the cellar. Peering between two thick stems, she could see her older brother sitting on the doorstep, gazing out across St. Mary’s Bay which lay like a blue, blue flag along the shore.

Crossing the narrow hall and opening the outside door, Desiré dropped down beside the boy and thrust a time-yellowed slip of paper into his hands.

“Did you ever see this?”

“Yes,” he replied slowly. “A few days before he died, *nôtre père* went over the contents of his tin box with me to make sure that I understood all about the bills, and the mortgage on the farm and—”

“Mortgage!” exclaimed Desiré in shocked tones. “I never knew we had one.”

“I, either, until that day. You see *nôtre mère* was sick so long that all our little savings were used up, and ready money was an absolute necessity.”

“And what did he tell you about this?” continued the girl, after a thoughtful pause, running her finger along the line of tantalizing characters.

“Nothing very definite. He said it was a memorandum of some kind that had been handed down in our family for generations. The name of its writer, and its meaning, have been lost in the past; but each father passed it on to his eldest son, with a warning to preserve it most carefully, for it was valuable.”

“And now it belongs to you,” concluded Desiré, half sadly, half proudly.

Jack nodded, and for several moments neither spoke.

John Wistmore, aged 18, Desiré, 14, Priscilla, 9, and René, 5, were direct descendants of John Alden and Priscilla Mullins, whose story the poet Longfellow tells in *The Courtship of Miles Standish*.

The little town of Sissiboo, an Indian corruption of *Six Hiboux*^[1] where they lived, is one of those settled by the Acadians upon their return to the land of their birth some years after the expulsion. So closely, so ramblingly are the villages strung along the shores of St. Mary’s Bay on the northwest coast of Nova Scotia that it is hard to tell where one ends and the next begins. Their inhabitants live exactly as did their ancestors, speaking French and preserving with care all the old habits and customs.

[1] SIX OWLS.

The lives of the children had been simple, happy ones, until the recent death of their father and mother, hardly three months apart. John Wistmore, in whose veins flowed the blood of men of culture and ambition, had been anxious to give his children greater educational advantages than Sissiboo afforded. Jack, therefore, had been sent to Wolfville to school, and was now ready for college; while Desiré was looking forward to high school in the autumn. Now all was changed. Without relatives, without money, and without prospects, they faced the problem of supporting the two younger children and themselves.

“Where did you find this?” asked Jack, rousing himself.

“On the floor in front of the cupboard.”

“It must have slipped from the box when I took out the mortgage. I went over it with Nicolas Bouchard this morning.”

“Oh, does he hold it?”

“Yes—and—”

“He wants his money?”

Jack nodded.

“But what can we do? We can’t possibly pay him.”

“Nothing, I guess, dear, except let him foreclose.”

“Would we get any money at all, then?”

“Very little. Not enough to live on, certainly.”

“I wish I knew what these mean,” she sighed wistfully, touching the paper still between her brother’s fingers. “If we could only find out, maybe we’d get enough money to pay Nicolas.”

Jack laughed in spite of his anxiety. “I’m afraid we’d all starve before they could be interpreted. Too bad, as things have gone, that I didn’t farm as soon as I was old enough—”

“Don’t say that! We’ll hope and plan for your college course—”

“Desiré, dear,” protested her brother, gently but firmly, “it is absolutely out of the question, even to think of such a thing.”

“But, Jack, every one should have some special goal in life, as an incentive if nothing else; and I’m *not* going to give up planning for our education. One never knows when good fortune is waiting just around the next corner to complete one’s own efforts.”

“I guess *our* goal will be to provide food and clothing for the children. I’m afraid it will be a hard pull for you and me to keep the family together—”

“Oh, but we *must* stay together, Jack,” she cried, grasping his arm.

“As far as I can see,” he continued slowly, “the only thing to be done is to move to Halifax or Yarmouth, where I could get work of some kind. Should you mind very much?”

“Whatever you decide, I’ll be willing to do,” replied the girl bravely.

“If it will make you any happier,” continued Jack, giving her one of his grave, sweet smiles, “we’ll place higher education among our day dreams.”

“If you folks ain’t hungry, we are!” announced Priscilla, opening the door behind them so suddenly that both jumped.

“You see?” laughed Jack, as he pulled Desiré up from the low step.

“I’ve just had a wonderful inspiration though,” she whispered as they entered the hall.

CHAPTER II

DESIRÉ'S INSPIRATIONS

It was a quaint old room in which they settled down after supper had been eaten and the children put to bed. The woodwork was painted a deep blue, known as Acadian blue, and the floor was bare except for a couple of oval braided rugs in which the same color predominated. In the center of the room stood a hutch table, one that can be changed to a chest by reversing its hinged top. Around it were half a dozen high-backed chairs, their seats made of strips of deerskin woven in and out like the paper mats made in kindergartens. A spinning wheel stood beside the fireplace, before which sat Jack and Desiré, with no other light except that of the dancing flames.

“Now Dissy,” said the boy, laying his hand affectionately over hers, “let’s have the inspiration.”

“It’s this: that we stay on here as tenants. Nicolas can’t live in this house and his own too!”

“But one trouble with that plan is that Nicolas wants to sell the property and get his money out.”

“Who’d buy it? Nobody ever moves into or out of this town.”

“He has a customer now. André Comeau’s prospective father-in-law wants to move here after the wedding. He can’t bear to have Marie live so far away from him. Sorry to spoil your inspiration, dear.”

Desiré made no reply; for she was very close to tears, and she hated to act like a baby instead of the good pal her brother had always called her.

“We’re going to work on André’s house again tomorrow,” observed Jack presently. “The roof’s on, the floors laid, and by Saturday we should be able to start the barn.”

In New Acadia all the relatives, friends, and neighbors of a man who is about to be married join in building a new house for him. They clear a piece of land, haul materials, and labor for weeks on the construction of house, barn, and sheds. When these are finished, the garden is prepared, the fields ploughed and planted, and the buildings furnished. The bride-to-be contributes linens, and her people stock the farm with animals. Some morning the whole countryside walks to church to see the couple wedded, returning to the home of the bride’s mother, where the day is spent in feasting and merry-making. If the groom can afford it, he then takes his bride to Yarmouth to spend a few days at the Grand Hotel. That is the greatest ambition of every rustic pair.

Jack talked on quietly about the house raising until he saw that his sister had recovered her composure. She was smiling bravely as he kissed her goodnight, but her sleep was broken by feverish dreams of the worn slip of paper, and a long journey.

When Jack returned at dusk the following evening, after a long day’s work on André’s house, he found Desiré waiting for him with sparkling eyes, flushed face, and such an air of repressed excitement that he wondered what had happened while he had been away.

It was necessary to wait until the children had gone to bed before he could question her. They had decided it was best to leave the younger ones out of discussions of ways and means. “Let them be carefree as long as they can,” Desiré had urged, and Jack had agreed.

“Who do you suppose was here today?” she asked, perching on the arm of his chair as soon as they were alone.

“Never could guess,” he replied, slipping his arm around her.

“Old Simon.”

“Starting his spring trip early, isn’t he?”

“Rather. I made him stay to dinner, and we talked and talked.”

Simon drove one of the big covered wagons which are common in Nova Scotia. They have double doors at the back, and are filled with all kinds of groceries and notions, a regular general store on wheels. Many parts of the country are so thinly settled that it would be impossible for people to obtain certain supplies without the existence of these interesting wagons. Some of them specialize in certain things, like ready-to-wear clothing, but most of them carry a little of everything.

“Did he have anything interesting to tell?”

The proprietors of these odd stores act as relayers of bits of news, as well as merchandise, and often bear messages from one part of the peninsula to the other.

“Why—why—I don’t—really know,” faltered Desiré.

“Don’t know?” repeated her brother, turning to look at her in surprise; for although she dearly loved her home, she was always eager for contacts with the outside world.

“Well, you see, we talked business all the time.”

“Business?” he queried, more and more puzzled.

“Yes. Oh, Jack, let *us* get a wagon!”

“Desiré, you must be crazy!” he exclaimed, startled out of his usual calm of manner and speech.

“No, I’m not really. Just listen a minute,” telling off the points on her fingers. “We’d be all together. We’d be earning an honest living, and having a lot of fun, and seeing places; and it’s healthful to be out-of-doors, a lot; and—” she paused for breath.

“But, Dissy,” protested her brother gently, “we couldn’t live in the wagon.”

“Oh, yes, we could.”

“All of us? Day and night?” asked the boy, troubled at this odd notion that had evidently so strongly taken possession of his hitherto sensible sister.

“We could have a little tent for you and René at night. Prissy and I could easily sleep in the wagon. It would be no different from camping, Jack; and lots of people do that.”

“What about winter?”

“Well, of course we couldn’t live that way after it gets real cold, but winter’s a long way off. Maybe we’d make enough by then to rent a couple of rooms in some central place and take just day trips. Or perhaps we’ll find out what that paper means, and have—who knows what?”

Jack shook his head.

“Seriously, Desiré, I don’t see how we can make a living from a traveling store. Simon does, of course; but there is only one of him, and four of us.”

“But,” resumed the girl, after a short pause, “we have no place to go if Nicolas forecloses; we don’t know how else to support ourselves; so wouldn’t traveling around the country all summer give us a chance to see all kinds of places and people? Mightn’t we get in touch with possibilities for the future? Our living expenses would be small; for we could gather wild things to eat—”

“A few bears, or owls, I suppose,” laughed her brother.

“No, silly! Berries, and—and grapes, and things.”

“Heavy diet.”

“And fish,” concluded Desiré triumphantly.

“Another thing,” continued Jack, resuming his gravity, “you wouldn’t want to spoil old Simon’s route by taking some of his customers.”

“Of course not, but there certainly must be sections where there is no traveling store. We could take one of those.”

Just then a heavy knock on the front door startled them both.

CHAPTER III

TWO CALLERS

When Jack opened the door, Nicolas Bouchard stood frowning before him.

“Oh, come in, Nicolas,” he urged hospitably.

“Can’t; it’s too late; but saw you were still up, and wanted to tell you that I just had a message from Yves and he wants to take possession of this place at once. Think you could be out by this day week?”

“How do you know we aren’t going to pay off the mortgage?” flashed Desiré, annoyed at the man for taking things so for granted.

Nicolas gave a grunt. “What with? Don’t get mad. We all know you haven’t got any money. Glad to have you pay if you could, for you’ve always been good neighbors; but a man’s got to take care of his pennies. They’re not so plentiful now as they were when I took that mortgage.”

“Certainly, Nicolas,” said Jack, quietly laying a restraining hand on Desiré’s arm. “You may have the house a week from today.”

The man lingered rather awkwardly.

“Felice said she’d be willing to keep the two little ones, so as you and this girl could go to Boston, and find work—”

Desiré started to speak, but Jack’s hold on her arm tightened.

“They pay good wages there, I’m told,” the man went on. “Or, if you could find some place for the rest, Yves said he’d be glad to have you stay on here and help

him farm.”

“We are indeed grateful for the kindness of our friends,” replied Jack; “but we have decided that we must all stick together, some way.”

Nicolas turned without another word, and strode down the shell-bordered path to the road, and Jack closed the door. In silent dismay the brother and sister faced each other; then the girl’s courage reasserted itself.

“Never mind, dear,” she cried, putting both arms around him. “We’ll surely find something. As *nôtre mère* used to say so often, ‘let’s sleep on it.’ Things always look lots brighter in the morning.”

“You’re such a good little pal, Dissy. We’ll say an extra prayer tonight for help, and tomorrow we’ll try to decide upon something definite.”

Late the following afternoon Desiré stood on the doorstep, watching Priscilla hopping down the dusty road to see a little friend. Early that morning Jack had gone to Meteghan to settle up affairs with Nicolas and Yves, and, to please Desiré, to price an outfit for a traveling store. The sisters, greatly hindered by René, had spent the day going over keepsakes and household belongings of all kinds, trying to decide what they would keep and what they must dispose of.

“Are you going to sell *all* our things, Dissy? Even Mother’s chair?”

“I’m afraid so, dear. You see we can’t carry furniture around with us when we don’t know where or how we are going to live. You have her little silver locket for a keepsake, and I have her prayerbook. We really don’t need anything to remember her by.”

“No; and Jack has *nôtre père*’s watch. But, oh, I—I wish we weren’t going. I’m sort of afraid!”

“Afraid!” chided Desiré, although her own heart was filled with the nameless dread which often accompanies a contemplated change. “With dear old Jack to take care of us? I’m ashamed of you! We’re going to have just lots of good times together. Try not to let Jack know that you mind. Remember, Prissy, it’s far harder on him to be obliged to give up all his own plans and hopes to take care of us, than it is for you and me to make some little sacrifices and pretend we like them.”

“Ye-es,” agreed Priscilla slowly, trying to measure up to what was expected of her.

“What’s the matter with Prissy?” demanded René, deserting his play and coming to stand in front of them. “Has she got a pain?”

“A kind of one,” replied Desiré gently, “but it’s getting better now; so go on with what you were doing, darling.”

The child returned to the corner of the room where he had been making a wagon from spools and a pasteboard box, while Priscilla murmured, “I’ll try not to fuss about things.”

“That’s a brave girl,” commended her sister. “Now, you’ve been in all day; so suppose you run down to see Felice for a little while. Maybe you’ll meet Jack on the way home, but don’t wait for him later than half past five.”

The little girl was almost out of sight when Desiré’s attention was diverted to the opposite direction by the sound of an automobile, apparently coming from Digby. Motor cars were still sufficiently new in Nova Scotia to excuse her waiting to see it pass. Only the well-to-do people owned them, and she had never even had a ride in one. There were rumors that possibly that very summer a bus line would be run to the various interesting parts of the country for the convenience of tourists from the States. Then she might be able to ride a little way, if it didn’t cost too much, just to see how it felt.

A ramshackle Ford jerked to a sudden halt right in front of the house, and a tall, thin man backed carefully out from the driver’s seat and ambled up the path toward her.

“Mademoiselle Wistmore?” he inquired, bashfully removing his blue woolen cap and thrusting it under his arm.

“*Oui, Monsieur.*”

“My name’s Pierre Boisdeau,” he drawled, taking the cap out from under his arm and rolling it nervously between his two big hands.

“Yes?” replied Desiré encouragingly.

“I have a message for you,” pushing the long-suffering cap into his pocket as he spoke.

The girl seated herself upon the broad stone step, and with a gesture invited the stranger to do the same; but he merely placed one foot upon the scraper beside the step, and began in halting embarrassed fashion to deliver his message.

After he had gone, Desiré fairly raced through preparations for supper; then went to look up the road again. If Jack would only come! René trudged around from the back of the house where he had been playing, and announced that he was hungry; so she took him in, gave him his supper, and put him to bed. Before she had finished, Priscilla returned.

“Jack must have been delayed somewhere. We might as well eat, and I’ll get his supper when he comes,” decided the older girl.

While they ate, Priscilla chattered on and on about her playmates, while Desiré said “Yes” and “No” rather absent-mindedly. Where could Jack be?

“I’m going to bed,” yawned Priscilla, about seven o’clock. “We ran so much, I’m tired.”

“All right, dear.”

“Where are *you* going?” inquired the child, stopping on the stairs as she caught sight of her sister throwing a shawl around her shoulders.

“Only out to the road to watch for Jack.”

“You won’t go any farther, and leave us?”

“Of course not. Have I ever left you alone at night?”

“No-o-o.”

“Run along to bed then,” reaching up to pat the brown hand which grasped the stair railing.

What was keeping Jack?

For half an hour Desiré shifted her weight from one foot to the other, watching the darkening road. As soon as she spied his tall form, she ran to meet him and fell into step at his side.

“You must be nearly starved, dear,” she began.

“Not a bit. I happened to be at Henry Simard’s at about supper time, and nothing would do but I must stay and eat with them. I hope you weren’t worried,” looking down at Desiré anxiously.

“I tried not to be; for I thought perhaps you had gone farther than you intended.”

“Nicolas was ready when I got to his house, and Yves met us in Meteghan; so we fixed everything up successfully. The money which came to us I put into the bank for emergencies; for—I’m awfully sorry to have to tell you—there isn’t enough to buy and stock up a wagon, even if we decided to adopt that way of living. So I looked around a bit for some kind of a job.”

“Did you find anything?” asked Desiré, a bit breathlessly.

“Not yet; but I shall. We could—”

“Now that I’ve heard your news,” interrupted the girl eagerly, “just listen to mine. A man named Pierre Boisdeau came in an auto from Digby this afternoon with a message for us. Oh, Jack, the most wonderful thing! When he took some salmon down to Yarmouth the other day, they told him at the docks that old Simon had sent word to be sure to have anyone from up this way go to see him. So he went, and found the poor old man all crippled up with rheumatism. He will have to stay at his daughter’s house all summer. So he won’t be able to peddle. And Jack! He wants *us* to take his wagon! Isn’t that just glorious? He said that if we won’t take it and keep the route for him until he is well again, he’ll likely have to sell out. He doesn’t want to do that. Isn’t it just providential? This will give us a chance to try the experiment without much expense, and will provide for us for several months.”

“We are indeed very fortunate,” replied Jack gravely. “We could hardly take such an offer from anyone else, but Simon is such an old friend that he would feel hurt if we refused. As you say, it will give us a chance to find a place to settle in permanently. In the meantime, we shall be holding the route for him.”

They entered the house and dropped down beside the table, still covered with dishes, to finish their talk.

“Simon wants an answer as soon as possible; for he hates to think of all his customers being deserted for so long. You’d better write to him tonight.”

“I wonder,” said Jack slowly, after a few minutes’ consideration during which his sister scanned his serious, thoughtful face rather anxiously. “I wonder if it would be better for me to go down alone to get the wagon and pick you up on the way back; or, for all of us to ride to Yarmouth on the train, and start the route from there. Which should you like better?”

“To go to Yarmouth, of course; but won’t it cost a lot more?”

“Some, but—”

“I can prepare enough food for us to carry two meals, and there must be some place where we could camp just outside of the city.”

“Anxious to get started?”

“Yes. I hate goodbyes. I’d like to steal out right away, without anybody knowing it.”

“I’m afraid you can’t leave our good neighbors like that. They have known us all our lives; and think how hurt they would feel.”

“I suppose so; but they all want us to do something different, and criticize *nôtre père* for trying to educate us.”

“They don’t understand, but they mean well and have been very kind to us.”

“I know, and I do appreciate it; but—couldn’t we start soon?”

“Day after tomorrow, I should think. I’m afraid one trunk and the box in the store room will be all we can take on our travels. Shall you be able to manage that way?”

“I’ll try to; but what shall I do with the furniture?”

“Give it away, or leave it for Yves. We’ll just have to stifle all sentimental affection for our household gods.”

“We’ll have a house of our own again some day, and get new household gods.”

* * * * *

Intense excitement prevailed in the Clare District on Wednesday afternoon. Little groups of women and children were hurrying along the dusty road. On every doorstep a man or woman too old, or a child too young, to join the procession was sitting waiting to wave farewell to the travelers when they passed. These good people were much disturbed at the departure of the little Wistmore family. It was almost unheard of for any of the Acadian families voluntarily to leave that peaceful section and wander among strangers in unfamiliar parts of the country. Occasionally, within their knowledge, an individual or two had decided to seek his fortune elsewhere; but never before a whole family, and the Wistmores at that! The neighbors had done their best, one and all, to dissuade the children from following such a course; but since their words of advice and warning had proved of no avail, they were now on their way, bearing little gifts of good will, to bid the adventurers Godspeed.

When Jack drove up with André Comeau who was going to take them to the station, three miles away, the yard was filled with little groups of neighbors; and inside the house still others were saying their reluctant farewells. Shaking the hands held out to him on every side, Jack gently pushed through the crowd; and, with André’s help, loaded their one trunk and box onto the wagon. Then he detached Desiré and the children from the weeping women, and helped them up to the seats which had been made of rough planks laid across the wagon box. The crowd drew back, and amid a chorus of “*Bon jour!*” “*Au revoir!*” the travelers started on their journey.

Desiré and Priscilla, with tears rolling down their faces, waved as long as they could see their old friends, and answered salutations from many a doorstep; but Jack, with set face, did not look back at all. Even René was unusually quiet, hardly knowing what to make of it all. The train pulled into the tiny station just as they reached the platform, and there was no time to be lost. Before the children, to whom a railroad was a novelty, had time hardly to glance at the long train, its freight cars placed ahead of the coaches, as is common in Nova Scotia, they were hustled on board, the bell rang, and they were off.

CHAPTER IV

OUT TO SEA

The little party was very quiet during the ride, which took two hours. The older members were occupied with their own thoughts, very serious ones, and the young pair engrossed in looking out of the window.

Rolling rocky land; woods where sombre and stately pines and firs made a fitting background for the graceful slender white trunks of the birch trees; miles of ferns close to the tracks; tiny stations; glimpses, between the trees, of rustic dwellings and a few more pretentious summer homes; flashes of wild flowers; rivers, down whose red mud banks still trickled threads of water, although the tide was out; grey farm buildings; all flowed rapidly past. Then—Yarmouth!

“Stay right here,” directed Jack, after they had alighted from the train, leading the way to a pile of crates on the platform, “until I check our baggage. I thought we’d keep only the night bag, and pick up the rest after we get the wagon.”

Before the children had tired of watching the passers-by, he was back again, and they walked slowly toward the centre of the city, not pausing until they reached the tiny park facing the wharf.

“You and the children had better sit here while I go to find out the location of the street where Simon’s daughter lives.”

“Is that the *Grand Hotel*, where André brought Marie after the wedding?” asked Priscilla, looking up in admiration at the big building across the street.

“Yes,” replied Jack.

“Just think!” cried the child ecstatically, giving a little skip, “I’m really looking

at the place I've heard of so many times."

"Well, your education has begun," said Jack. "See that you make the most of all your opportunities."

"What a very funny place," observed Priscilla, looking around her.

"It is a park—" began Desiré.

"But look at those," interrupted the younger girl, pointing to several graves.

"It must have been used as a cemetery first," replied her sister, walking over to read the inscription on a nearby stone, and closely followed by Priscilla. That moment or two gave René the chance for which he had longed, and he was off down the road and onto the wharf. Desiré turned to look for him just in time to see a little blue-clad figure dart across the gang plank of the Boston steamer.

"René!" she called in desperation, racing toward the dock.

The tug which helped the steamer pull away from her slip was already out in the harbor; bells were ringing, the whistle was blowing, dock hands were running about. Across the gang plank ran Desiré and Priscilla just before it was withdrawn, and the ropes were cast off. As they looked helplessly among the crowds of people and piles of luggage for the truant, the tug was steadily pulling on the long tow line, and heading the steamer out to sea.

"My—little—brother," gasped Desiré to an officer.

"What about him?" demanded the busy man curtly.

His brisk manner was just enough, in her distressed state of mind, to reduce the girl immediately to tears.

"He got away from us and is on this boat. That's what's about him," said Priscilla, coming at once to her sister's aid. "Don't mind, Dissy; we'll find him."

An interested spectator of the scene, a tall, energetic type of woman, now joined the group.

"Let me help you look for him, my dear," she said briskly, putting a hand on

Desiré's shoulder. "No need to worry; he's certainly safe."

"But," choked the girl, now fully conscious that the boat was moving, "we can't go on. My big brother is waiting for us in Yarmouth! What—what will he think? What will he *do*?" She wrung her hands distractedly.

"You could go back on the tug, if the boy's found before she leaves us," suggested the officer, coming to the rescue as soon as he fully understood the situation.

"There he is!" shrieked Priscilla, darting to the side of the boat where René was climbing up on a suitcase to look over the railing at the water. Grasping him firmly by the tail of his jacket, she dragged him backward across the salon, and brought him to a violent sitting posture at Desiré's feet.

Meanwhile the officer had ordered the tug to be signalled, and she now came alongside. No time for anything but hurried thanks to their benefactors as the girls and René were helped over the side and onto the tug. Noisily, fussily, she steamed away from the big boat, over whose rails hung the interested passengers, and headed to Yarmouth.

"What ever made you do such a naughty thing, René?" asked Desiré, who had recovered her outward composure.

"Wanted to see big boat," replied the child, not at all impressed by the gravity of his offense. Useless to say more now.

"The young feller needs a good whaling," growled the pilot of the tug, as he brought his boat alongside the wharf.

"There's Jack!" cried Desiré, in great relief, catching sight of him striding rapidly along the street above the docks. "Jump out, quickly, Prissy! Run up and tell him we're all right."

The child sprang to the dock and ran up the incline at top speed, while Desiré lingered to thank the pilot.

"Glad to do it, ma'moiselle. Better keep hold of him hereafter, though."

"I shall," she promised, with a reproachful look at René.

The reunited family met in the little park, and sat down on one of the benches to readjust themselves.

“I’m so sorry, dear,” said Desiré, putting her hand in Jack’s. “You must have been frantic.”

“I couldn’t believe my eyes when I came back and found that you had all disappeared. An old dock hand who saw me looking around said he’d seen a boy, followed by two girls, go aboard the ‘Yarmouth.’ So, knowing René, I came to a close solution of the mystery. I was just going up to the steamship office to see what could be done when Prissy grabbed me from behind.

“René,” he went on, placing the child directly in front of him so he could look into his eyes, “you have been a *very* bad boy; and only the fact that we are out here in a public place prevents me from putting you right across my knee, and giving you something to make you remember your naughtiness. There is to be *no* more running away. Do you understand me?”

The little boy, wiggling slightly as if he already felt the punishment, nodded gravely, impressed by his brother’s stern face and voice.

“What did you find out, Jack?” asked Desiré, when he had released René.

“They told me,” he began, turning toward her, “that Simon lives on a street not so very far from here. I thought if you’re ready, we might walk down there; and perhaps he’d be able to tell us where we could spend the night.”

“Aren’t we going to the hotel?” inquired Priscilla, her face clouding.

“No; we haven’t enough money to stay there,” answered Jack, starting ahead with René.

The little girl pouted, and shed a few quiet tears to which Desiré wisely paid no attention. Slowly they strolled along the main street, pausing to look in the window of a stationer’s where the books and English magazines attracted Desiré’s eye; stopping to gaze admiringly at the jewelry, china, pictures, and souvenirs attractively displayed in another shop.

“Just see the lovely purple stones!” cried Priscilla, who had recovered her good humor.

“Those are amethysts,” explained Jack. “They come from Cape Blomidon,” adding to Desiré, “I heard that another vein split open this year.”

“Isn’t it strange that the intense cold nearly every winter brings more of the beautiful jewels to light?” commented the girl.

“A kind of rough treatment which results in profit and beauty,” mused Jack.

“Yes; and, Jack, maybe it will be like that with us. Things are hard now, but perhaps soon we’ll find—”

“Some am’thysts?” asked René excitedly.

“Perhaps,” replied Jack, giving Desiré one of his rare sweet smiles.

The stores had been left behind now, and on every hand were green tree-shaded lawns enclosed by carefully trimmed hedges of English hawthorne in full bloom. Desiré exclaimed with rapture over their beauty, and the size and style of the houses beyond them. On a little side street they paused before a small cottage, half hidden in vines.

“This must be the place,” decided Jack, opening the white gate which squeaked loudly as if protesting against the entrance of strangers. The sound brought a woman to the door.

“I’m looking for Simon Denard,” began Jack.

“You’ve come to the right place to find him,” she replied, smiling, as she came toward them and put out one hand to pat René’s head. “Simon Denard is my father. I’m Mrs. Chaisson. Come right in.”

In the small living room to which she led them sat old Simon, propped up with pillows in a big chair.

“So here ye are,” was his greeting, as the children dashed across the floor to his side.

“Be careful,” warned Desiré quickly. “You might hurt Simon.”

“Let ’em be! Let ’em be!” protested the old man, beaming upon his visitors.

“What’s an extra stab of pain, or two?”

“Father has told me about you people so often that I feel as if I knew you,” Mrs. Chaisson was saying to Jack, after he introduced Desiré and the children; “so I want you to stay here as long as you’re in town; that is, if you haven’t made other plans.”

The expression on her kindly face indicated clearly that she hoped they hadn’t.

“But there are so many of us,” objected the boy.

“It’s perfectly all right, if you don’t mind kind of camping out a bit.”

“That’s what we expect to do all summer,” said Desiré; “and we’ll surely be glad of any arrangements you make for us, as long as we don’t put you about too much. You are very kind indeed.”

“Then it’s all settled,” said their hostess briskly; “I’ll get supper right away; for you must be hungry.”

The cottage boasted of a living room, dining room, kitchen, and two small bedrooms; so stowing away four extra people was something of an achievement. Immediately after they had finished the simple but delicious meal that Mrs. Chaisson prepared, Desiré shyly offered to help her hostess in preparation for the night.

“Thank you, my dear; if you will clear up the supper table and do the dishes while I hunt up some bedding, it will be very nice.”

“Please don’t trouble yourself about me,” said Jack, detaining Mrs. Chaisson on one of her many trips through the room; “I can sleep on the porch, or anywhere.”

“I’ll fix some place for you,” she replied, putting her hand on his shoulder. “Just go on with your business arrangements.” He and Simon had been discussing the route, customers, stock, and other details.

Like so many childless women, Mrs. Chaisson had a passion for children; and the thoughts of this little family starting out so bravely in search of a living moved her strongly.

“How I wish I could adopt them all,” she thought as she hurried on. “If only we had a little more money; but then, there’s Father, too, now; it couldn’t be done, even with the help of that fine big boy. I don’t wonder that his sister almost worships him.”

Nine o’clock saw them all settled for a good sleep. Old Simon in his own room, Mrs. Chaisson sharing hers with Priscilla, Desiré on the couch in the living room, and Jack and René in hammocks on the screened porch. It had been decided before they slept that as soon as breakfast was over, they would start out upon the great adventure.

“There is no use in hanging around here,” Jack had said to Desiré in their goodnight talk on the front steps.

“Wouldn’t it seem rather odd, or ungrateful, to hurry away so soon?” suggested the girl. “Mrs. Chaisson has been so very good to us.”

“I know that,” replied Jack quickly; “and for that very reason, we can’t take advantage of her. Then too, the longer we stay, the harder it will be for both sides when we do go.”

The boy had immediately sensed the good woman’s distress over their undertaking, and felt that the kindest act would be their immediate departure.

“Of course I realize,” he went on, “that it’s nice for you to have a little rest, and a woman’s companionship; but—”

“Don’t worry over me, Jack dear,” replied his sister, slipping her hand into his. “Whatever you decide is all right. So we’ll all be ready early in the morning.”

“You’re a good little soul,” answered Jack, with an affectionate goodnight kiss. “I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

Completely happy at his words of commendation, Desiré entered the house; and soon everyone was fast asleep. Shortly after midnight, she was suddenly awakened by the sound of a screen door closing, and steps crossing the porch.

CHAPTER V

A MIDNIGHT WALK

The thought that perhaps Jack was ill immediately flashed across Desiré's mind. Throwing on a kimono, she hurried to the door. Down the walk which led to the street, through the gate which had been left part way open, and along the road walked—Priscilla!

No mistaking, even in the shadows, that plump childish form. Where was she going? Without stopping to do more than catch up the child's coat, and her own which hung beside the door, Desiré followed her. Not wanting to call lest she should waken the neighborhood, she had to run to catch up to her sister; for Priscilla had quickened her pace as she approached the end of the road and turned onto the main street. Coming abreast with her at last, Desiré took the child's arm; and, stooping to look at her face, was startled to see that her eyes, though open, were unseeing. Shaking with fright, Desiré asked softly—

“Where are you going, Prissy?”

“To the Grand Hotel,” was the prompt and surprising reply.

“But, darling,” protested the older girl, “it's night, and everybody is in bed and asleep.”

“I'm going to sleep there. I've always wanted to.”

Then Desiré realized in a flash that Priscilla must be walking in her sleep. She remembered now that Mother had once spoken of her doing it when she was a very little girl and had become greatly excited over something. The splendors of the hotel must have been on her mind as she went to sleep.

How to get the child back without arousing her was a problem; she had heard that sleepwalkers must not be wakened suddenly.

“Well, dear,” she said quietly, “it’s getting cool. Let’s put on our coats before we go any farther.”

Priscilla stopped obediently, and, after both girls had put on their coats, Desiré took the little girl’s arm and turned her gently around, beginning a low monologue as she did so.

“You’re going in the wrong direction; we must go this way. Soon we’ll be there. Just down this street. We must be very quiet so no one will hear us. Step softly. Quiet!”

Leading, coaxing, hushing, Desiré finally got her sister into the house without waking any one, and settled her upon the living-room couch; for she dared not trust her out of her sight again that night.

“Now you’re all right,” she whispered, removing the child’s coat. “Isn’t that a lovely bed?”

“Yes,” breathed Priscilla, curling up under the blanket.

Noiselessly Desiré drew a big rocking chair close to her sister’s side, propped her feet up on the edge of the couch, and with the two coats spread over her, prepared to spend the rest of the night. No one must know of this escapade. Mrs. Chaisson would be distressed at not having awakened; Jack would be disturbed at having slept so soundly, and perhaps disapprove of her not calling him; and old Simon would be troubled by the idea of what might have happened. Also, Priscilla would probably be made nervous. Too excited to sleep, she dozed, dreamed, started, and wakened again until the first far-away call of a robin pierced the faint grey dawn. Immediately one in a tree beside the cottage answered; then a cock crowed; a song sparrow began its short sweet strains; and the day of the great adventure had really begun.

“Prissy,” she whispered, a little later, bending over the child.

The blue eyes opened lazily.

“Let’s get dressed, Prissy, and surprise Mrs. Chaisson by having the table set and

things started before she wakens.”

“All right,” agreed the little girl, sitting up; “but—but—how did I get here?”

“You were rather restless; so I brought you out here with me—” began Desiré.

“And you slept in the chair! Oh, you must be so tired, Dissy. Why did you do it?”

“I’m all right, dear. Never mind about it. Don’t say anything of it to *any one!*”

“Why?” asked Priscilla, wondering at her sister’s earnestness.

“Because Jack might be afraid I was too tired to start out today, and—”

“Oh, are we really going this morning?” demanded Priscilla, her mind immediately occupied with the exciting prospect.

“Yes; and it’s going to be a glorious day.”

The sound of their voices roused the others; and while breakfast was being prepared, and the house set in order—for Desiré would not leave their hostess any extra work—Jack got the team and wagon ready for departure. At nine o’clock, after reluctant and affectionate farewells had been exchanged, Jack gathered up the reins. Beside him sat Desiré, and directly back of them on little stools were Priscilla and René.

“Now, remember,” repeated Mrs. Chaisson, handing a lunch basket to Desiré, “that this is your home whenever you are in Yarmouth, or any other time you need one. And whenever you can, let me hear how you’re getting on. We’ll be thinking of you all the time.”

“Thank you,” said Desiré, kissing Mrs. Chaisson affectionately, and adding for the tenth time—“You’ve been so very good to us.”

“We shall never forget it,” said Jack, tightening the reins; and Dolly and Dapple, moving away from the gate, put an end to the farewells.

No one saw, hidden away among the maple saplings, scrub pine, and underbrush which covered the field beside the house, the bulky figure of a man. Neither did

they hear softly muttered words of anger and revenge.

After they had left Yarmouth behind and were jogging along the road back over the same route they had covered on the train the day before, Desiré turned sidewise in the seat to inspect once more the interior of their “store.” At the back was their trunk, and next to it their box; and on either side, reaching to the very top of the wagon, shelves tightly packed with jars, cans, rolls of material. The small tent which they had bought on their way out of town was laid along the floor at one side.

“I must get acquainted with all the stock,” she observed; “so I’ll be able quickly to find what people want.”

“The first time we stop, you can look things over,” replied Jack. “You’d lose your balance and be rolling out if you tried to do it while we’re moving.”

The younger ones laughed hilariously. They were in high spirits now, and even Jack felt a thrill of excitement under his sober, staid manner.

Up and down the long hills they drove, past numberless lakes and ponds, in and out of woods sweet with the odor of sun-warmed pine, and across rivers whose red mud flats made a vivid splash of color on the landscape.

“So many, many little bodies of water,” murmured Desiré.

“The ground is so uneven,” explained Jack, “that the water settles and forms lakes.”

“Why are the river banks so wide, and so very muddy?” asked Priscilla, leaning on the back of the seat.

“Out there,” answered Jack, waving his arm toward the West, “is the Bay of Fundy, a big, windy, rough body of water, an arm of the Atlantic Ocean. This bay has huge tides, rising in some places to a height of fifty or seventy feet. When the tide is high, the water rushes into all the rivers on this side of the country and fills them to overflowing; then all these banks are covered up. The tide comes twice a day; so you see the flats have no time to dry out.”

Through Brazil, Lake Annes, and Hectanooga they had passed without stopping, and then the children began to get hungry. Jack drew up to the side of the road in

the open country, and stopped in the shade of a huge oak tree. There they ate the lunch which Mrs. Chaisson had put up for them, and rested a while, breathing in deep breaths of clover-scented air.

“See the chipmunk, René,” said Jack, pointing to a little animal who was regarding them doubtfully from the trunk of a nearby tree. “See the stripes along his back? Well, once upon a time, many years ago, a wonderful being called Glooscap lived up on Cape Blomidon. He was half god and half man, and tried to make Nova Scotia a very happy, safe place to live in. But there were wicked witches who lived here also, and they wanted to do all kinds of harm. The strongest of them was called Gamona, and any animal who was caught by her was killed or shut up in some cave or hole. One day little Charlie Chipmunk disobeyed his mother and went too far away from home. Suddenly, while he was nibbling at a most delicious nut, he felt himself picked up in terrible sharp claws. What was it his mother had told him to do if he ever got into danger? Alas! He couldn’t remember, and the creature, at whose face he dared not look, was carrying him away so, so fast! Some name he should call. Whose name? Like the lightning which sometimes made their hollow-tree home bright as day, it flashed into his mind.

“‘Glooscap!’ he squeaked.

“Such a tiny, trembling cry reached nowhere at all in that great big forest, yet Glooscap heard it and came to help the little fellow.

“‘Let my child go!’ he ordered, in a voice which, though not very loud, seemed to fill the whole land with its power.

“Gamona ground her teeth with anger. She knew she must obey, yet how she hated to let such a nice plump chipmunk go. Slowly she opened her hand just a little bit, then a little bit more; but the space was not quite wide enough for fat little Charlie. Her long sharp claws scraped his back as he wiggled out, and made long dark scratches. Ever since that day the chipmunk has worn those stripes down the middle of his back.”

“I c’n see ’em jes’ as plain,” observed René.

“Come on,” proposed Priscilla, “see if he’ll eat these crusts.”

“Shouldn’t we have stopped at some of the places we passed?” ventured Desiré,

hesitatingly. She did not want to seem critical of Jack.

“Simon had no names on his list before Saulnierville; and I thought he probably knew the ropes better than we.”

“Shan’t we take on any new customers, then?” Desiré asked anxiously. She was so eager to make a huge success of this strange business.

“Surely, if we can; but the places we passed are so close to Yarmouth that I felt the city would get all their trade,” replied Jack, taking the huge red clover top that René had presented him, and sticking it in Desiré’s black curls. “I hope to get to Church Point in the morning.”

“Then we’d better get started now,” decided Desiré, getting up and shaking off the grass and leaves which the children had thrown upon her in their play.

None of them were accustomed to constant riding, and the afternoon seemed very long. The novelty of the situation and the scenery had worn off, and they were acutely conscious of cramped muscles.

“Can’t I get out and walk for a while?” asked Priscilla, as they approached Meteghan.

“I’d thought we’d stop up here on the main street for a while to see if anyone wants to buy anything,” said Jack, in reply to Desiré’s questioning look; “so if you will follow us *carefully*, you may get out here. But be sure to keep us in close sight, and don’t go wandering off.”

He stopped the horses, and Priscilla scrambled out amid clamors of René to go with her.

“No, Renny,” said Desiré, “you come and ride in front between Jack and me. Won’t that be fun?” pulling him across the back of the seat. But he continued to fret and cry until Jack said sternly:

“René, we’ve had enough of that. Stop it at once or go into the back of the wagon by yourself. You’re too big a boy to act like a baby.”

The child looked at his brother, and quickly recognizing the determination and force in the serious gaze bent upon him, set about controlling himself. Jack

evidently meant business when he spoke in that tone. In their anxiety to compose René before they entered the town proper, they temporarily forgot about Priscilla. Like a flash, Desiré turned to look back.

“Jack!” she gasped, “I don’t see Prissy!”

The boy stopped the horses at once, and for a moment scanned the empty road in consternation.

CHAPTER VI

THE PIE SOCIAL

Turning the team, they started back. Dapple and Dolly lagged along, heads down; they were tired, and it was close to supper time.

Jack and Desiré peered into the bushes and trees on either side of the road for a glimpse of a red coat. Around a bend, among the trees far back from the road, they finally saw what they sought. Stopping the wagon, they watched for a moment to see what she was doing. Intently, apparently without thought of anything else, she was stealthily following a small black and white animal. Before they could shout a warning, she suddenly darted forward and seized the little creature. Out of her hands it twisted, filling the air with a strong, unpleasant odor; then it disappeared into the dense woods.

“Oh!” groaned Jack.

“Priscilla!” called Desiré sharply.

The child looked up, and began coming toward them.

“Stand right where you are,” directed Jack, when she reached the edge of the clearing. “Don’t come any nearer. What on earth possessed you to meddle with a wood pussy?”

“I—I thought it was a kitten,” faltered the little girl, thoroughly frightened.

“If you’d followed us closely, as Jack told you, you wouldn’t have gotten into trouble,” said Desiré severely. “What can we do with her, Jack?”

“I’ll get a pail of water from that pond, while you find fresh clothing; then I’ll

carry the things over to the woods. She'll have to go behind that clump of scrub pine and take off her clothing, make up the garments into a bundle, throw it as far into the woods as she can, then bathe and put on fresh things," replied Jack, taking a pail and starting down the road toward a small, but deep, pool of water.

"I'll go and help her," said Desiré, when he returned.

"Stay right where you are," he directed quietly but firmly. "She can manage perfectly well by herself."

He crossed the road; and Desiré, though she could not quite distinguish the words, listened to the brief, curt orders he issued to the unfortunate little girl. Then he returned and stood leaning against the side of the wagon. René had dozed off, and Desiré laid him on the seat.

"This is one phase of our adventure that we did not consider," began Jack, after a pause. His face looked more serious, even, than usual.

"What? Prissy getting mixed up with a wood pussy?" laughed Desiré.

"No. The problem of discipline. The free and lazy life is going to let the youngsters get a bit out of hand, I'm afraid."

"René's only a baby," said Desiré reassuringly. "We should have no trouble managing him. Of course Priscilla is rather difficult at times; she goes from one extreme to another so quickly. You never know exactly what she will do next. At home, I sometimes sent her to bed; but that would be rather difficult in a wagon. But she's a good little thing, and we'll do the best we can. You mustn't worry about it, Jack," concluded Desiré, bending over to touch his thick brown curls.

He caught her hand in his and held it until Priscilla appeared from among the trees, freshly clothed, and swinging the empty pail in her hand.

Without a word Jack helped her into the wagon and they headed once more for the town. The sun had sunk below the horizon; the woods were getting dim; and the sky was a soft rose and gold when they entered Meteghan. Surely the whole population must be abroad, so filled were the streets with people all headed toward the church.

"What do you suppose is going on?" asked Desiré, viewing the scene rather

wistfully.

“I don’t know,” replied Jack, pulling the wagon into a free space between two other vehicles. Almost immediately a tall, awkward youth sauntered over to them.

“Where’s old Simon?”

Jack explained, adding, “What’s doing here?”

“Pie social,” was the laconic reply. “Better go.”

“Where is it held?” asked Desiré, leaning out and smiling down into his keen grey eyes.

“Church basement; it’s for the benefit of the church. Costs you a pie to get in.”

At this point, a companion called to the boy, and he strolled away.

“Like to go?” asked Jack, who had not been unobservant of Desiré’s eager interest.

“How could we? We haven’t any pies.”

“There must be some place to buy them. Surely some enterprising person would foresee the market. Let’s look around a bit.”

He tied the horses to a post and locked the doors. René was wide awake by this time, and eager for new adventures; so the four, Priscilla still silent, walked along the streets of the little town until they found a place bearing a sign—“Pies for sale.” Here they purchased four pies, and turned their steps toward the church. At the door a pretty girl took their donations, and they were allowed to enter. Along the sides of the little basement were rough board counters loaded with pies of every size and variety. One could buy whatever one desired, from a whole pie to a small slice.

“We’re like the Chinese,” smiled Jack, as they stood eating pieces of custard pie; “dessert first, then more substantial food.”

The pretty girl who had been at the door now approached them, and smiling at

Jack, said—“We’re going to dance here tonight after all the pies are sold. Hope you will all stay.”

“I’m sorry, but we shall not be able to,” he replied courteously. “I have old Simon’s wagon out there, and can’t leave it so long.”

“Oh, we heard about the young man who was going to take Simon’s route. My folks know him real well. He often puts the wagon in our barn and stays all night at our house. Why—wait a minute.”

She darted off, and returned almost immediately with a short, thick-set man, who looked like a farmer.

“This is my father, Jean Riboux,” she said. “I’m Prudence.”

“My name is Wistmore,” replied Jack, shaking hands; “and these are my sisters, Desiré and Priscilla; and my little brother René.”

“Pleased to know you, both for yourselves and for old Simon,” responded the man, with unmistakable cordiality. “You must make free at our place, same as he did. Drive over, put up the team, and stay all night.”

Though Jack protested, the man would hear of no refusal, and ten minutes later they turned into a nearby farmyard. Jean took the horses away from Jack, and sent the Wistmores into the house to his wife who had come to the door to meet them.

“Your husband and daughter insisted upon our coming here for the night,” said Jack, after introductions had been made; “but I think it is entirely too much. There are so many of us—”

“There’s always a welcome here for any friends of old Simon’s,” was Mrs. Riboux’s quiet reply; “and we have plenty of room. We were sorry to hear of his bad luck; but then, it turned out well for you,” looking at the little family curiously.

“Yes, the opportunity to take the route came just as we were looking for something for the summer,” said Desiré, smiling shyly at their hostess.

“Oh, then you’re not goin’ to keep it regular?”

“That can not be decided,” contributed Jack, “until we see how things go.”

As they gathered around the table for supper, the boy who had told them about the Pie Social slid into one of the chairs and grinned at Desiré.

“Didn’t think you’d see me again so soon, did you?”

“That’s Ormand, Orrie for short,” explained Prudence, who sat beside Jack right across the table from them.

“I guessed who you people were as soon as I laid eyes on Dapple and Dolly; and I knew you’d turn up here finally.”

The conversation of the elders turned to crops, and continued throughout the meal, while the younger people talked of the coming dance.

“Now,” said Mrs. Riboux to Desiré, as they left the table, “why don’t you put the little fellow to bed and go to the dance with my boy and girl? I’ll watch out for him,” as Desiré hesitated and looked at Jack. “All ages go to these socials, so your sister could go along too,” she added, as the Wistmores started up the long flight of stairs to their rooms.

“I’ll put René to bed while you dress up a bit,” offered Jack, taking the little boy by the hand, and preparing to leave Desiré.

She detained him, however, and asked in a low tone, “What about—?” motioning toward the door of her room, which Priscilla had entered ahead of her.

“Trot on into that room across the hall, Renny,” directed Jack, starting him in the right direction; “and see how nearly ready for bed you can get before I come.”

“Although she is far too young for dances,” he continued, “since it is the custom here for girls of her age to attend them, I should have allowed her to go; but in the light of this afternoon’s escapade, I think she should be deprived of the pleasure. Don’t you?”

“Y—e—s; I suppose so; but I’m afraid she’ll make a fuss, for she expects to go. And I do hate to disappoint her.”

Without replying, Jack stepped into the room where his younger sister was

standing before an old-fashioned mirror combing her hair.

“Priscilla,” he began quietly, “you weren’t counting on going to the dance; were you?”

“Yes, I am,” she retorted quickly, turning to face him. “You heard Mrs. Riboux say that girls of my age go.”

“That is not the point at all. What about this afternoon’s disobedience?”

“It wasn’t my fault that I met that awful animal,” she muttered, half under her breath.

“You are being purposely stupid, Priscilla. You know very well that you were deliberately disobedient in not following the wagon as I told you to. If you can’t obey, we shall all have a miserable summer. To impress that fact on your mind, you must stay right here in your room until we come back; that is, unless René wants something.”

Jack crossed the hall to his own room, and Desiré looked pityingly on her sister, who had thrown herself into a chair beside the window and was giving way to tears. There was no use trying to reason with Priscilla when the child was in one of these moods; so she went about her own preparations for the evening, in silence; but considerable of her own pleasure was taken out of the prospect.

Before leaving, she stooped over the big chair in which the little girl crouched, put her arms around her, and kissed her affectionately without speaking. Priscilla also said nothing, but she returned the kiss; and Desiré, recognizing the act as the beginning of a return to normal conditions, felt happier about leaving her.

Ormand and Prudence Riboux were evidently very popular among the young folks of the country; and they introduced their guests to so many boys and girls that the Wistmores were never at a loss for partners.

“Wasn’t it *fun!*” cried Desiré joyously, as she said goodnight to Jack in the dim upper hall, lighted only by their two candles. “Didn’t you have a good time?”

“Yes, I did.”

“And just think, we’ve made some new friends already. I like the Riboux

family.”

“So do I; they’re fine people,” agreed Jack absentmindedly. He was thinking about tomorrow’s trip into the Clare District. That was going to be the hardest part of the route, going through their old home and its neighboring towns.

“Jack!” cried Desiré, as she entered her room. “Prissy’s gone!”

CHAPTER VII

A FRIGHT

“Gone!” echoed Jack, staring blankly around the room. “Where could she possibly go?”

“I don’t know; but you see she isn’t here.”

There were few places to look. Jack peered under the big bed, while Desiré looked in the clothes press and a deep chest.

“What shall we do?” she whispered, twisting her hands together and trying to force back the tears. “Is René in your room?” as a sudden thought occurred to her.

With two steps, Jack crossed the hall and stuck his head into the room opposite.

“Yes; he’s in bed.”

Mrs. Riboux, sensing that something was wrong, came out of her room, followed by her husband. Their exclamations brought Prudence and Ormand to join the group. A few minutes of excited consultation resulted in Mr. Riboux going out to notify the authorities that a child was missing.

While the women searched the house from top to bottom, Jack and Ormand, aided by the feeble rays of a lantern, looked about the barns and yard. A group of men and boys from the town were soon scouring the nearby woods, and Desiré, who had returned to her room after the fruitless trip through the various rooms, could see the moving lights and hear occasional shouts.

The forced inaction maddened her. If there were only *something* she could do

besides wait. What danger might not Priscilla be in while she stood helpless here?

After a long time Mr. Riboux, followed by Jack and Ormand, crossed the yard, and she ran downstairs hoping for news. Her brother merely shook his head gravely when they met in the kitchen where Mrs. Riboux was making coffee and setting out a lunch for the men who were still in the woods. One by one they straggled in, reporting no luck at all.

Desiré's own acute distress was increased every time she looked at Jack's stern, set face. Well she knew by the deep lines between his eyes that he was blaming himself for Priscilla's disappearance.

Although it had been a great relief to have René sleep through the first excitement, now it was a distinct pleasure to hear his voice from upstairs and be able to run up and see what he wanted. At least it provided something to *do*.

"I'm coming," called Desiré, stopping in her room to get a lamp.

"Don't want you," replied René rudely, as she entered. "Want Prissy. She was going to catch the mouse," he added.

"The mouse," repeated his sister in bewilderment, feeling his head to see if he were feverish.

"Yes," said the little boy, jerking fretfully away from her and pointing to the corner behind the bed.

There lay Priscilla, curled up on the floor, fast asleep, with Polly, the big grey house cat, clasped tightly in her arms. The animal blinked at the light and uttered a loud "Me-o-w!"

Desiré, together with Jack who had by that time followed her, stood speechless, looking down at the sleeping child.

"I want to know if she caught that mouse," demanded René in positive tones.

At that moment Priscilla, aroused by the sound of voices, opened her eyes, a bit bewildered by the sudden awakening. She looked blankly from one to another, her gaze finally centering on Jack's face.

“I didn’t disobey you,” she said. “René called me because he was frightened of a mouse. You said I might leave the room if he wanted anything.”

“But what are you doing down here on the floor, darling?” asked Desiré softly; for Jack could not speak.

“I got Polly and sat down here by the mouse’s hole so’s she could catch him when he came out again; and we all kept so quiet I guess we went to sleep.”

Jack picked the little girl up, carried her to the room across the hall, and held her close for a moment before laying her on the bed.

“Both of you get to sleep as soon as you can,” he directed. “I’ll go down and tell the family she’s found.”

“Is Jack angry at me?” inquired Priscilla, sleepily.

“Not a bit, dear. We thought you were lost. Everybody has been looking all over for you, out in the barn, in the woods, and—”

“And here I was all the time,” giggled the child, wholly unconscious of having been the cause of great anxiety and effort.

Along the shore, the next morning, as the Wistmores started out after parting reluctantly with the Riboux family, were hundreds of gulls looking for food, and the air was filled with their harsh croaking cries. Out on the blue waters floated others, at rest on the ripples. In the meadows herds of black and white cows wandered about, cropping the grass heavy with dew, their bells tinkling constantly as they sought for choicer tidbits.

“Before we get to Saulnierville we make our first stop,” said Desiré, consulting the list she had taken from Jack’s pocket.

“We’ll be there shortly.”

“Oh, I hope we sell just lots of stuff!” cried Priscilla, who was quite herself again.

“Yes, lots of stuff,” echoed René, grabbing Jack around the neck.

“Don’t choke brother,” laughed Desiré, loosening the embracing arms.

Before many minutes passed, they came in sight of a small grey house. An immense grey barn stood behind it, its double doors freshly painted a brilliant red. The farm was enclosed by a grey fence with double gates of pure white.

“Why don’t the gates and the doors match, I wonder,” remarked Priscilla, who had an eye for color combinations.

“I haven’t the faintest idea,” replied Jack, bringing the wagon to a stop before a path bordered with clam shells. The path led up to the front door, and another row of clam shells surrounded the house, which was built, like so many others in Nova Scotia, with overlapped shingles on one side and clapboards on the other three.

“Let the youngsters run about a bit while I go in,” directed Jack, preparing to climb over the wheel.

At this moment the sound of galloping horses on the road over which they had just come made everyone turn; and they saw another wagon, the counterpart of their own, swaying crazily from side to side as the driver urged on his excited animals.

“Runaway!” squealed René delightedly.

“They’ll hit us!” shrieked Priscilla.

Jack deftly pushed off the road into a field, and jumped from the wagon ready to be of assistance. His keen eye saw at once, however, that the approaching team was not out of control. As soon as it came abreast of the Wistmore “store” the driver pulled up with a suddenness which threw the animals on their haunches; and, leaping from his seat, he faced Jack belligerently.

CHAPTER VIII

A FIGHT

“My territory!” growled the man, motioning toward the house. “What are *you* doing here?”

“You’re mistaken,” responded Jack quickly. “I have old Simon’s entire route, and this is the first stop on the list he gave me.”

“It may have been his, but it ain’t goin’ to be yours!”

“And who is going to prevent me?” inquired Jack, in even, quiet tones which Desiré knew meant that he was working hard to keep his temper under control.

“*I* am. I made up my mind soon as I heard the old man was sick, that I would take this route; and nobody’s goin’ to stop me. Least of all, *you*,” he added, looking Jack’s slender form up and down contemptuously.

“You great—big—” began Priscilla excitedly.

“Be quiet, Prissy,” said her brother. “You and the others stand over there beside the wagon.”

As he spoke, he started in the direction of the farmhouse. Like a flash the thick-set figure was in his pathway.

“No, you don’t!” he sneered.

The two measured each other silently for a moment, standing as motionless as dogs in that last tense moment just before they spring.

Jack put out his foot to advance, and his opponent was upon him. They fell heavily to the ground, the stranger on top.

“He’ll kill him!” sobbed Priscilla, while René added his wails to hers.

“Don’t kill Jack!” he cried.

“Hush!” pleaded Desiré, her eyes wide with fright. “Say a prayer that Jack will come out all right.”

The terrified little group watched the two adversaries roll over and over, pounding, grappling, struggling. Then Jack, with a quick twist, loosened the grasp of the other and sprang to his feet. With surprising swiftness, for a man so heavy, the enemy also righted himself and again leaped upon Jack. Back and forth they swayed, locked in a close embrace, each trying desperately to keep his own footing and trip the other. At times they stood stock still waiting to get breath and strength for a renewal of the contest. Then it began all over again.

Finally Jack succeeded in twisting one of his long legs quickly around one of his adversary’s, thereby throwing him heavily to the ground. With a leap, Jack was astride of him, pinning his arms to the earth. The man tried to roll sufficiently to throw him off, but Jack was too well placed to allow him very much motion. Weight, anger, and unskilled methods had worked against him; now Jack had complete advantage.

“Shall I give you what you deserve?” demanded Jack, after a moment’s pause.

“Nough!” muttered the man sullenly.

“Get off this route, then, and *stay* off of it; or next time—” threatened Jack, getting up. “Turn that team right around, and go back to Yarmouth, or wherever you come from!”

Slowly, keeping one eye on Jack the while, he obeyed. As soon as he was on the way, Desiré and the children ran toward their brother.

“Oh, Jack, aren’t you hurt somewhere?” demanded Desiré anxiously.

“Only a few bruises and scratches, thank God!” was the grateful response. “I kept wondering what you would do, poor child, if I were smashed up.”

After a good brushing, and “first-aid” treatment of his scratches, Jack pronounced himself as good as new.

“Children,” said Desiré, “we begged so hard for Jack’s safety. We mustn’t fail to say ‘Thank You’ for what we received. Let’s each say a little prayer of thanksgiving right now.”

After a moment of silence they again turned their attention to the business in hand. Desiré and the children stayed with the wagon, while Jack started once more toward the house.

At his knock, the inner door opened, a woman’s head showed behind the glass of the storm door, and then the outer door was pushed back. Almost every dwelling, no matter how small and unpretentious, has its storm door, and usually these are left on all summer.

“I’m taking old Simon’s route this summer,” began Jack, using the words he was to repeat so many times that season; “and I called to see if you need anything.”

“Yes, I do,” answered the plump little woman in the doorway, her black eyes busily inspecting Jack, and traveling rapidly to the wagon, the girl, and the children on the road. “I’m all out of thread, crackers, kerosene, and—what else was it? Oh, yes, shoe laces. Where’s old Simon? I’ve been watching out for him for three weeks.”

“Sick, in Yarmouth,” replied Jack, turning to go to the wagon to fill her order. The woman followed him.

“This your wife?” she asked, curiously staring at Desiré.

Jack flushed.

“No, my sister; and that is another sister, and my kid brother,” he replied, talking more rapidly than usual to hold the woman’s attention; for Desiré, overcome by laughter, had walked a few steps down the road to recover her composure.

“Where are your folks!”

“Dead,” was the brief reply.

“Now that’s too bad! You so young, and with three youngsters to keep. Dear! Dear!”

Desiré returned just in time to hear the last remarks, and her face twitched so in her efforts to control it that Jack himself had to bury his head in the depths of the wagon while he looked for the cracker boxes.

“Come up to the house with me when this young man carries my things in,” she said to Desiré, taking her by the arm. As if she were indeed a child, she led her along the path to the doorstep.

“Set here,” she directed; and disappeared into the house.

“Ready?” asked Jack, when he came out.

“I don’t know. I was told to ‘set here’; and here I ‘set,’” whispered Desiré.

At that moment the woman returned with a pasteboard box which she thrust into Desiré’s hands.

“Here’s a few cookies for your dinner. They always taste good to children, I guess.”

“Oh, thank you so much. I’m sure we’ll enjoy them,” responded the girl.

“Stop every time you come around,” called the odd little woman, as they closed the gate behind them.

CHAPTER IX IN CAMP

“Well, our first sale wasn’t so bad,” observed Desiré, as they drove away. “But wasn’t she funny?”

“I thought you were going to disgrace us,” said Jack, smiling. “If you can’t behave any better than that, I’ll have to leave you beside the road somewhere and pick you up later.”

“Oh—o—o!” shrieked René.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Jack, turning to look at the small boy behind him.

“Don’t want Dissy left anywhere! Want her with us!”

“Jack’s only fooling, darling; don’t cry,” consoled Desiré, reaching back over the seat to pet the little boy.

Peace and quiet having been restored, they jogged along the sunshiny road, and soon were abreast of St. Mary’s Bay, where flecks of white were dancing over the blue surface.

“White caps,” observed Desiré. “Fundy must be rough today.”

“Those are gulls,” corrected Jack, “at least so the Indians used to believe. The Spirit of the Sea was so fond of the birds that he caught a lot one day and, with a long string, tied their legs together. He keeps them down in his house under the water, and at times he lets the gulls come up to swim on the top of the water for air and exercise.”

“Why don’t they fly away then? *I would!*” asserted René, big-eyed with interest.

“Because the Spirit holds fast to the string, and when he thinks they’ve been out long enough, he pulls them all down under the water again.”

Between Saulnierville and Little Brook they made several stops and substantial sales. The picnic dinner which good Mrs. Riboux had insisted upon packing for them, they ate beside a shady stream in which many little fish darted about among the weeds. René insisted upon trying to catch some with his hands, but succeeded only in getting his clothing so splashed that Desiré had to stand him out in the sun to dry before they could continue on their way.

“There’s Church Point,” cried Desiré, later in the afternoon, pointing to the skyline ahead, where a tall spire topped with a cross rose proudly against the blue.

“How happy the sailors must be when they first catch sight of that point,” mused Jack.

“Why?” asked Priscilla.

“Because the spire can be seen for many miles out at sea, and the sailors use it as a guide.”

The shadows were getting long, and the air was much cooler by the time they drove into the little town. On St. Mary’s Bay several fishing boats had already been anchored near the sands, and farther out on the gilded water others were heading for the shore. Over the slight rise near the church they drove, and in and out among the ox teams and lines of slow-moving cows.

“Everybody’s goin’ home but us,” remarked René rather plaintively, making the tears spring to Desiré’s eyes, while the lines of Jack’s mouth became even more stern.

“Silly!” observed Priscilla. “We *are* home. Home’s where Jack and Desiré are.”

Desiré smiled up at Jack, and leaned back to squeeze her little sister’s arm.

“Shall we try to make our sales before supper, and then camp outside of town?” asked Jack; “or shall we eat, and then sell afterwards.”

“Sell first. Work before pleasure,” Desiré decided promptly.

At a house far beyond the church they came to a halt, and Desiré leaned from the wagon to call to a small boy in blue overalls, who sat on the gate watching them —“Tell your mother that old Simon’s wagon is here, please, and ask her if she wants anything.”

Without a word the little fellow slid down and ran into the house. Almost immediately a tall, loose-jointed man, whose resemblance to the child was marked, came out and crossed the yard.

“The missus is sick,” he explained, “but I know what she wants. She’s been talkin’ of nothin’ else for days. Buttons, five yards of calico, a pencil for the boy, and a few pounds of sugar. Got old Simon’s route for good?”

“I’m not sure. He’s sick in Yarmouth now.”

“So? That’s too bad. Are you going on up the Bay?”

“Expect to,” replied Jack, giving the man his purchases and counting out change.

“When you get to Digby would you tell the lady in the knickknack store that I’ll sell her the pitcher?”

“Glad to, if you’ll tell me how to find her.”

“Her store is the first one of its kind that you’ll pass. She catches all the tourists by a window full of trash, and a sign ‘Souvenir Shoppe’ or something like that. She was out here a few weeks ago looking for stuff, and wanted that pitcher, but the wife didn’t want to sell it then. Since she’s been sick, though, she’s more concerned about money than about old pitchers.”

After several more stops, most of which resulted in sales, Jack pulled off of the main road into a balsam grove, just before dusk.

“You children scamper around and find some dried wood for a fire,” he directed, swinging René down, and going to unharness the horses.

“Do you intend to build a fire in here, Jack?” asked Desiré doubtfully.

“No, on the sand across the road. Take some bacon and whatever else you need from the stock while I feed Dapple and Dolly.”

By the time he had made several trips with great armfuls of grass which he had pulled for the animals, Desiré had gathered together her supplies, and with the children’s help made a fire on the beach and set out their supper. When Jack appeared, he took charge of the frying of the bacon himself.

“Isn’t this *fun*?” demanded Priscilla every few minutes. “Just like a picnic; and lots nicer than eating in a house.”

“Lots nicer,” echoed René, adding, “Now tell me a story.”

“Oliver Owl’s mother had told him again and again that he must not go anywhere near the big cave where the wicked witch Gamona lived,” began Jack slowly; “but Oliver was getting so big and strong that he thought he knew how to take care of himself. He had never seen the old woman, of whom all the forest folks spoke in whispers. So, early one evening, his curiosity got the better of him; and while his mother was making the beds—”

“Jack!” interrupted Priscilla, patronizingly, “people don’t make beds at night!”

“The owls do,” he replied gravely, “because they sleep in them all day and go out only at night. Around the big home tree he fluttered carelessly a while; then, suddenly, off like a shot toward a big pile of rocks whose top he could just see. Not a soul did he meet when he reached them, not a sound did he hear except the murmuring of a little breeze in the very top of the pines. So fast had he hurried that he was a very tired bird, and besides the aching of his wings he felt just a little bit doubtful about what would happen to him when he got home. So he alighted on the very highest rock of the big pile to rest, and decided how he would explain his absence to his mother. Hardly had he settled himself comfortably when a huge claw-like hand shot up from below him and grabbed his feet—”

“Oh!” squealed René.

“With a loud squawk he flapped his wings, and, bending and twisting as well as he could, managed to run his sharp beak into the fingers which grasped him. In the instant which was necessary for Gamona to get a fresh grip, Oliver struggled free; and you may believe that he lost no time in flying away from that

dangerous spot. Instead of going right home, however, he went to see Glooscap, and tell him what had happened.

“My eyes are so small, I can’t see very well,’ he complained, after he had told the whole story.

“I’ll fix that,’ replied Glooscap, stroking the bird’s eyes until they became larger and larger and rounder and rounder. ‘Now you’ll be able to see her wherever you are. Keep faithful watch of her, and notify all the other creatures at night when she is near.’ So that is why the owl has such big eyes, and sits up in the trees crying ‘Who-o-o!’ all night long.

“And now you must go to bed.”

Leaving Priscilla to clear up and keep an eye on René, Jack and Desiré crossed to the grove to get things in order for the night. The tent was small, and after several unsuccessful attempts they succeeded in getting it up. Jack cut some balsam boughs for a mattress, and over them Desiré spread blankets, placing a couple of cushions for pillows. The floor of the nearby wagon was fixed in like manner for the two girls. René and Priscilla went to bed as soon as their quarters were ready for them, but Jack and Desiré, seated on a fallen log at the edge of the grove, lingered to watch the moon rising over the Bay and turning its smooth surface to silver. Fireflies flashed in the long grass at the edge of the grove, and deeper in the woods were mysterious little rustles and murmurs.

“The old settlers,” said Jack softly, “thought the fireflies were evil spirits, and used to set out pails of milk to appease them, and thus keep themselves and their property from all harm.”

“If they were as thick then as they are tonight,” laughed Desiré, “think how many pails they must have had. You know so many things, Jack”; adding, a moment later, something which had been on her mind all day.

“Do you suppose that man will ever come back?”

“You mean the one who disputed our rights?”

Desiré nodded, burying her face on her brother’s shoulder, much as Priscilla might have done.

“I hardly think so, dear,” replied Jack, stroking her curls. “He was pretty well subdued.”

“But he might try to get even with you some way,” shuddered the girl.

“We’ll keep a sharp lookout for him, but otherwise go on our way and try not to worry about mere possibilities, little sister,” decreed the boy firmly.

“If we could only find out what the paper means,” she observed a little later, her eyes on the shining waters of the Bay.

“What paper?” asked Jack suddenly, roused from serious thoughts of his own.

“Why, the one *nôtre père* gave you; the mysterious one.”

“We might stop in the center of each town, read it aloud, and ask the inhabitants to interpret it for us,” Jack suggested. “Or you and I could take turns standing on top of the wagon and shouting it as we go along.”

Desiré laughed at his absurdities, as he intended she should.

“I don’t care. I’m going to pretend that we’re going to find out what it means before the summer is over.”

“Pretend as much as you like, as long as you won’t let yourself be overcome with disappointment if your day dream should turn out to be only a nightmare.”

A crash behind them made them spring to their feet in sudden fright, and a child’s shrieks rang through the woods.

CHAPTER X

A NIGHT PROWLER

“René!” gasped Desiré, darting back toward the tent.

Jack outstripped her, and when she reached the scene, he was just pulling his small brother out from under a pile of canvas.

“Not hurt,” he breathed with relief; “only badly frightened.”

He put René in Desiré’s lap, and went to examine the wreckage.

“One stake pulled right out,” he reported. “Wonder how that happened. I know I had it in tight, and there is practically no wind.”

“Could he have done it in any way?” asked Desiré, motioning to the little boy.

“René,” said Jack, stooping before the child, who was now quiet again, “did you do anything to the rope of the tent to make it fall?”

René glanced up into his brother’s face upon which shone the rays of the full moon, and, turning, burrowed deep into Desiré’s arms.

“Guilty, I guess. Tell me exactly what you did,” directed Jack.

“Woke up. Played I was a gull; rope was my string. Hung on it; old thing came down. Bang!”

“René,” said Jack, taking the child’s face between his hands, and forcing him to meet his eyes, “you must *never, never* pull on the ropes of a tent, or meddle with any part of it. If you do, you can’t sleep in it with me, but will have to stay in the

wagon with the girls.”

He picked him up and set him on a nearby stump.

“Now sit right here and think about what I have just said, while Desiré and I put the tent up again. Don’t move from the place, and watch how much extra work you have made for us when we are all so tired.”

After the tent was once more in place, Jack returned to René.

“Well, are you going to sleep in the tent or in the wagon?”

“In the tent. I won’t touch no ropes, nor nothin’ again, Jack,” promised the child, holding up his arms. “An’ I’m sorry ’bout making you and Dissy work when you’re all tired, ’n’ everything—”

“That’s a good boy,” replied his brother, carrying him off to bed for a second time.

“Goodnight, Desiré,” he said, returning to kiss her after René was disposed of. “If you’re timid, call me.”

“Yes, but, Jack dear, *please* don’t lie awake to take care of us. We’ll be safe.”

Soon the grove was quiet. The moon rose higher and higher, and throughout the night kept benevolent watch over the four children sleeping heavily among the protective trunks of the old balsam trees. Little creatures of the night moved noiselessly over the dried needles on the forest floor so as not to waken the strangers within their midst; and a gentle breeze stole quietly in from the Bay to waft its pungent coolness over the tired travelers.

A couple of hours passed, the moon had left the woods partly in shadow. A dark figure was stealing carefully among the tree trunks, stopping every few minutes to listen.

Beyond a band of moonlight stood the little tent from which could be heard Jack’s loud breathing. Nearby was the wagon where all was silent, and from a dark spot beyond it the horses stamped restlessly. Skirting the habitations of the human beings, the figure made its way silently toward the animals. Then

Dapple's loud whinny sounded through the quiet wood, answered immediately by that of his mate.

"Get away from our horses!" shrilled Priscilla's voice from the back of the wagon.

"What's the matter?" shouted Jack, roused at once by the child's cry.

"Prissy!" cried Desiré; "you—"

"Somebody's bothering Dolly and Dapple, Jack!" called Priscilla.

By that time Jack had lighted a couple of lanterns, and he and Desiré were out in the open.

"Stay here and hold one of these," he directed, "while I see what is wrong."

The horses were straining at their tethers when he reached them, but quieted at once under familiar hands. Following an impulse, Jack presently led them out of the woods and into the little clearing where the wagon and tent were placed.

"Will they disturb you if I fasten them to this tree?" he asked Desiré.

"Not a bit—I—"

"Did you find anyone?" demanded Priscilla.

"Not a single person. I looked all around before I brought the horses out."

"You had a bad dream, dear," began Desiré, "and—"

"But I didn't. I heard Dapple and Dolly holler just as plain, and they never do that unless somebody goes near 'em."

Desiré looked questioningly at her brother, but he was busy tying the animals.

"Now," he said firmly, when he had finished his task, "we'll all go back to bed and right to sleep."

He turned briskly into the tent where René still slept peacefully, and quietness once more descended upon the forest. Jack, however, looped up the flap of the

tent and lay watching over his little family until the soft grey light of the early morning began to filter through the trees.

CHAPTER XI

THE BLUE-COVERED BOOK

Several days later, one beautiful sunny morning, Dapple and Dolly were trotting briskly along the Shore Road toward Digby. For more than two miles this road winds along the shore of Digby Basin, formed by the Bay of Fundy waters flowing through a mile wide break in the North Mountain Range.

“That,” said Jack, pointing to the opening between the mountains, “is Digby Gap, or, as the natives call it, ‘Digby Gut.’ In olden days all the fishing boats used to stop there on their way home long enough for the fishermen to clean their fish, and throw all the ‘guts’ or insides into the water.”

“What a horrid name!” was Priscilla’s comment.

“It’s lovely here, though,” observed Desiré, gazing across the sparkling water to the hazy blue sides of the two big mountains opposite, and back again to the forested slopes beside the wagon.

“We must look out for the little shop the man told us about,” remarked Priscilla, to whom the scenery meant very little.

“Well, you watch for it, Prissy,” directed Jack. Then, turning to Desiré, “Didn’t we get a royal welcome in Sissiboo?”

“Yes; in spite of their disapproval, our old friends were wonderful to us; between the sales we made, and their generous donations, we certainly fared well.”

“Oh, Jack, there’s a bus!” cried Desiré delightedly a few minutes later. A big blue monster bore down upon them, and they had a glimpse of well-dressed people through its windows; then it was gone in a cloud of dust.

“Must be coming from the hotel,” commented her brother. “I understand there’s a big one up here somewhere above the town.”

“I’d love to ride in one of those,” said Priscilla, gazing longingly down the road after the now distant bus. “Wouldn’t you, Desiré?”

“Yes, I should. Perhaps some time we’ll be able to, but not now.”

They drove into the little town, and soon spied the shop of which they were in search.

“You go in and give the lady the message, Desiré,” said Jack, pulling up the team.

Desiré was inclined to be rather too retiring with strangers, and her brother thought she should begin to overcome her diffidence.

“Oh, Jack,” she cried, running out again a couple of minutes later, after delivering her message. “Who do you suppose keeps the shop? The lady who helped me find René on the steamer! It’s the most interesting place. Do come in and see it. She says we can look around as much as we wish.”

“I was going on for some more stock—we’re all out of crackers and a few other things—but you stay, if you wish; I’ll come back for you.”

“Don’t you need me?” she asked doubtfully.

“No; so look at as many things as you can before I get back.”

Desiré, with a happy “Thanks a lot,” ran back into the quaint little shop, while Jack drove on, thinking how sweet she was and how little time she had for herself or her own interests.

The morning was not a busy one at the shop; so the proprietress, a well-groomed New England woman, was free to devote her time to Desiré, to whom she had taken a fancy. Pleased to see that the girl was more interested in the pictures and books than in the foolish toys made to attract tourist trade, she took pains to call her attention to the best that the little store possessed.

“This is an interesting little account of the early history of this country and some

of its settlers,” said Miss Robin, who was a teacher of history in one of the Boston schools, and whose mind naturally centered on her subject.

Desiré took the small blue-bound book in her hands and carefully turned its pages, reading bits here and there.

“Oh!” she suddenly exclaimed aloud.

“What is it?” inquired Miss Robin, looking up from a pile of picture postcards she was putting in order.

“The story of our own ancestors is told here.”

Miss Robin came to look over her shoulder and read:

“In the year 1744 when the question of Acadian loyalty to England resulted in the Expulsion, Jean Godet with Marie, his wife, and Desiré, his little daughter, were driven as exiles from Wolfville to the States. They settled near Boston, and some years later Desiré married one John Wistmore, a descendant of John Alden and Priscilla Mullins. When the Revolutionary War broke out, being loyal Royalists, they returned to Nova Scotia and took up farming in Wilmot, later removing to Sissiboo.”

“I have heard my father tell that same story so many, many times,” said Desiré, looking up at Miss Robin.

“They were really your ancestors, then?” asked that lady. “How very interesting.”

“But this last part he never told us,” continued the girl, indicating the closing words of the article.

“The ruins of the old Godet house near Wolfville may still be seen; for the site was never occupied for any length of time after the family was deported.”

“You must look it up if you ever go to Wolfville,” said Miss Robin.

“Oh, yes, indeed. We expect to get up there some time before winter comes, and I’ll surely hunt for the place.”

“Keep the little book,” urged Miss Robin, when Desiré, catching sight of Jack, laid the volume on the counter; “and if you come back before I go home, stop and tell me what success you had.”

“Maybe,” began Desiré, then stopped abruptly—she’d keep *that* to herself; so she merely thanked Miss Robin warmly, and ran out to the wagon.

“I thought we’d have dinner at one of the little restaurants here,” said Jack, after she had displayed her treasure, “and then push on.”

From the counter of the lunchroom which they selected, they could see the long government pier with the lighthouse at the end; and beside it was moored one of the steamers which cross the Bay of Fundy to St. John, New Brunswick. René was greatly disappointed because they were not going aboard.

“The child’s passion for boats is rivaled only by his passion for Indians,” observed Desiré, as they left the lunchroom.

“He’ll see plenty of the latter at Bear River.”

Desiré looked questioningly at her brother.

“That is,” he replied, “if we get there in time for the Cherry Festival, day after tomorrow.”

“Oh, Jack, can we?”

“Going to try hard to make it.”

Clouds had been slowly gathering since noon, and about five o’clock great drops of rain hit the dusty road with little “plops.”

“Big drops; won’t last long,” prophesied Desiré; but Jack let down the curtains at the side of the seat, and drew out a rubber blanket to spread over their laps. Before they had covered two miles, the rain was coming down in earnest, and Jack turned off the road into the pine woods.

“Wonder if we can keep dry here,” he said, half to himself. “Can’t possibly get to the next town tonight.”

“We’ll have supper right away before the rain begins to come through the trees,” decided Desiré, jumping out.

The pine-covered ground was still dry, and it was very cosy under the thick boughs of the tall trees. The persistent patter of the rain and the murmuring of a brisk little breeze in the tree tops added to their sense of comfort and security.

“If it doesn’t rain any harder than this, we should be able to manage pretty well,” said Desiré encouragingly, as Jack peered anxiously skyward every little while.

Conversation turned upon the book Miss Robin had given Desiré, and then drifted to Nova Scotian history.

“I’m awfully stupid; but it seems to me such a hopeless jumble,” sighed Desiré.

“Maybe I can straighten it out for you by taking bare facts, and not going into detail at all,” said Jack. “Just think of it this way,” he went on. “About the year 1000 a man called Leif the Lucky came here from Iceland, found the country in the possession of the Micmac Indians, and left it to them.

“John Cabot touched here in 1497, and claimed the land for England. In 1606 Samuel de Champlain and some other Frenchman settled at Annapolis Royal, which they called Port Royal. A few years later the English destroyed it, and some of the inhabitants fled to the shores of the Basin of Minas and built the village of Grand Pré.”

“Oh, where Evangeline lived!” interrupted Priscilla.

“Yes, and where they all lived until 1747, that is, the French who were driven out of Port Royal.”

“And what made the English drive those people away from their homes?” inquired Priscilla. “I don’t mean from Port Royal, but from Grand Pré, like Longfellow tells about in *Evangeline*?”

“They thought the French people were not loyal to the British government; for the country then belonged to England. To go back to our story, in 1629 the King

of Scotland gave the entire country to a friend of his, and the name was changed from Acadia to Nova Scotia, which means New Scotland. From that time until 1710 the land was claimed by both France and England, and was in possession of first one and then the other. Finally Great Britain secured it for good. Is it any clearer now?"

"Oh, yes, lots; you make everything so plain, I wish I knew as much as you do," sighed Desiré admiringly.

"I hope some day you will know lots more," smiled Jack, adding, "I'm afraid we're in for a wetting. I have felt several splashes of rain. The trees are getting so heavy with water that it will shower down upon us before long."

"Then you simply can't sleep in the tent," said Desiré decidedly.

"Nothing else for it; there's no room in the wagon."

"Let me think a minute," said Desiré. "I have it! We'll push the trunk and box side by side and put René on them, at our feet; and you can sleep on the wagon seat. You'll have to double up, but it will be better than getting so damp in the tent."

"We didn't count on a pour like this while we were on the road," said Jack. "Too bad we were not near enough to a town to get lodgings."

"But we could hardly afford that; and besides, this is going to be lots of fun. Priscilla, you and René run up and down in that dry path over there while we fix things," directed Desiré.

"The boughs will be too wet to use for beds," said Jack, moving the trunk close to the box at the very back of the wagon.

"We'll just spread the blankets on the floor, then," declared Desiré, briskly.

"But you'll be wretchedly uncomfortable," objected her brother.

"Won't hurt us a bit once in a while. I'll hang this rubber blanket in front of the seat, and a sheet back of it; and with the side curtains down, and a blanket to spread over you, you'll be fairly well off, won't you?" she asked, working rapidly as she talked.

“I’ll be fine. Don’t bother about me.”

When everything was ready, they called the two children and settled down for the night.

“Don’t be frightened if you hear a noise once in a while,” said Jack, as they settled down; “for I shall have to turn around occasionally to stretch my legs.”

“Yes, poor boy; they are far too long for your bed tonight. I hope Renny won’t roll off the trunk; but if he does, he’ll fall on top of us and won’t be hurt.”

“Oh, let’s go—to—sleep—” yawned Priscilla.

“An excellent idea,” agreed Jack; and the little family lay quietly listening to the drip of the rain until they fell asleep.

All night long Desiré dreamed of papering the old Godet house, inside and out, with mysterious figures and letters, which fell off as fast as she pasted them onto it.

The sun was shining brightly as they drove down the hillside at Bear River the second morning after, and into the ravine where dyked lands border the river. Hundreds of cherry trees loaded with brilliant fruit were on every side, and on the water was clustered the craft of those who were to take part in the sports later in the day.

“What funny river banks,” commented Priscilla.

“The ground is below the level of the river,” explained Jack; “and the banks have to be built up of interlaced tree trunks filled in with clay to keep the water from running over the land. They are called dykes.”

“Indians!” cried René, full of excitement, pointing to a group nearby.

Already great numbers of them had come from a neighboring reservation for the games. Under the heavily loaded trees, people from far and wide wandered about, tasting first one variety of fruit and then another. Groups of tourists watched from the roadside, or took part in the feasting.

Jack found a safe place for the wagon, and, after locking it, took his little family

to obtain their share of the cherries which are free to all on that particular day in mid-July each year. Shortly before noon, they carried their lunch to a shady slope from which they had a good view of the place where the sports were to be held. By two o'clock, the fun was in full swing. All kinds of races, on both land and water; throwing contests; log rolling tests; and games of skill or endurance. Anyone could take part, and Desiré urged Jack to enter some of them; but he preferred to remain a spectator. He loved all kinds of sports, and was perfectly fearless; but the chance of possible injury now, when he was the head of the family, kept him from taking part. The Indians were the most clever participants, and frequently won, much to René's delight.

"The youngster sure likes the Indians," observed a man who sat next to Jack. "Used to be scared of 'em when I was a kid. You ought to take him to the St. Anne's celebration some time."

"What's that?" inquired Jack.

"Every year the Indians make a pilgrimage to the Island of the Holy Family, round the 21st of July, and live up there in birch bark tepees until after the feast, on the 26th."

"What do they do?" asked Desiré, leaning forward to look at the narrator.

"Well, every morning they go to Mass and attend to all their religious duties, and very often there are weddings and First Communions. If there's been any quarreling or disputing during the year, the differences are patched up. Then in the evenings they dance and play games."

"What kind of games?" asked René, who was eagerly listening to every word.

"Oh, whinny, hatchet throwing, deer foot, wheel and stick, hunt the button—"

"Oh, I can play that," interrupted René, with just satisfaction.

"It's a sight worth going a distance to see," concluded the man.

"I imagine so," replied Jack; "but I'm afraid we won't get there this year. I have old Simon's traveling store this summer, and—"

"You have? Then you want to open it up when these games are over; for a crowd

like this is almost always in need of some kind of supplies. Anyway, they're sure to buy something, whether they need it or not."

Jack acted on the suggestion, and made so many sales that when the people finally drifted homeward it was too late to go on that night. They put up in a woods just outside of the town, and after supper Desiré made a discovery that did not altogether please her.

"Did you know that some Indians are camped a little farther down the road?" she asked Jack.

"Yes. They may be on their way to the festival of St. Anne's that the man spoke of this afternoon. I'm sure they're quite harmless."

"Oh, I want to see them!" exclaimed René, starting up.

With a quick move, Jack caught the end of the child's blouse and prevented his departure.

"You've seen plenty of Indians today to last you for one while, young man. Besides, it's your bedtime."

"No! No!" wailed René, twisting in his brother's grasp.

"He's tired," murmured Desiré sympathetically.

"Can't act like this, even if he is," said Jack firmly. "René, behave yourself or you'll have to be punished."

The tantrum showed no signs of abating; so Jack promptly picked him up and started for a nearby stream, much to his sister's distress; though she never dreamed of interfering when Jack decided that disciplinary measures were necessary.

Upon reaching the brook, Jack held the boy securely and ducked him a couple of times. Since the purpose of the procedure was punishment, it was rather disconcerting to have the child's tantrum cries change suddenly into squeals of delight.

"Oh, Jack," he sputtered, "do it again. I *love* the water."

Even the serious Jack, in spite of his stern resolves, was quite overcome by the humor of the situation; so he decided to say no more about punishment. However, when he got back to the wagon, he rubbed the little fellow down and put him to bed, refusing Desiré's assistance. He and Desiré enjoyed a good laugh over the incident when the younger children were safe in bed.

"Well, this time tomorrow night, I hope we'll be in Annapolis Royal," he said, shortly after; "and being a longish drive, I guess we'd better go to bed now."

That interesting old town was not to see them on the morrow, however.

Jack was the first to waken on the following morning, much later than usual, and was surprised to find his tent mate gone. Peering out toward the wagon, he saw Desiré getting out of the back of it.

"Dissy," he called, using René's name for her.

"Yes? I was just going to waken you. I'm awfully sorry, but we overslept this morning—"

"Have you seen René?" he interrupted.

"No! Isn't he with you?"

Desiré stood still, letting the pan which she had in her hand fall to the ground.

CHAPTER XII

A SEARCH FOR RENÉ

“He was gone when I woke up,” called Jack, who had been dressing rapidly. He came out of the tent and began looking about the wagon, tent, and surrounding woods in the persistent fashion of people, who, under like circumstances, feel that although search is useless, action of some kind is an immediate necessity.

“What ever shall we do?” whispered Desiré, tears streaming down her cheeks, when Jack returned from a fruitless search of the nearby places.

“Don’t get excited, dear,” he said, putting his arm around her shoulders. “He could have come to no harm, and I’ll find him all right.”

“But you must have help. Oh, I wish we were near the Riboux family!”

“We’ll drive back into the town to make inquiry, and then see what can be done. I know he’s not around here; for I’ve searched everywhere.”

“The—the brook?” faltered Desiré.

“Yes, I rather thought I might find him playing there. He enjoyed it so much last night,” he added, with a feeble effort at a smile, “but there’s no sign of him. Anyway, the water’s not deep enough to drown a dog, much less a hearty youngster.”

“Jack—the Indians—”

“Now, Desiré, don’t let your imagination run away with you. They’re perfectly harmless.”

“What I mean is, could Renny be with them?”

“The camp’s gone. They must have pulled out at daybreak—”

“Well, but he may have followed them,” persisted Desiré. “You know how wild he was to go over there last night.”

“It’s a possibility,” replied Jack, thoughtfully. “Probably you’re right. If so, he is perfectly safe; and I’ll find out in town how to reach them. We’d better eat, and then drive back.”

They roused Priscilla, who began to cry as soon as she heard of her brother’s disappearance, and continued until Jack said gravely—

“Don’t make matters worse, Prissy; you can help by being cheerful. Never cry until you’re *sure* there is something to cry about. It’s a waste of good energy.”

“Now for town,” he continued, as they at last climbed into the wagon which seemed strangely empty without the little boy. Jack was assuming a forced cheeriness, which he was far from feeling; for in spite of his advice to Desiré, he was consumed with anxiety. He felt relieved, now, at the outcome of the “punishment” last night; if René *had* minded, they might think he had run away. But perhaps he had been wrong in adopting this kind of a life, with the children. If anything happened to them!

He was interrupted by hearing Desiré say—

“Prissy, you sit in the back of the wagon and keep watch on the road to see if you can discover any traces of René.”

“Jack, dear,” she went on softly, as they drove into Bear River again, “please don’t blame yourself for what has happened. It surely wasn’t your fault, or anybody’s for that matter. He might have wandered off, even if we’d been at home; and I feel sure he is safe with the Indians.”

“You’re a comfort, Dissy,” replied her brother, managing a half smile.

In front of the post office stood the very man who had given them the information concerning the Indians’ pilgrimage, on the preceding day; and, pulling up, Jack told him in a few words what had happened.

“Now that’s too bad,” replied the man with genuine concern, resting one foot on the wheel hub; “if I was you—”

“Is it far to the Island of the Holy Family?” interrupted Desiré.

“Oh, yes; and come to think on’t, I don’t suppose that band was goin’ there anyhow; they’d not get there in time. They’re probably on their way back to the reservation.”

“Then where could we look for them?” questioned Jack, his heart sinking at the destruction of their hopes.

“If I was you, I’d keep right along this road toward Annapolis Royal, and perhaps you’ll catch up with them. They don’t travel fast, and you could ask in every town if they’d been through. There’s no real cause for you to worry, friends, for the little chap will be well treated. The Indians like little folks.”

Jack looked at Desiré.

“It’s good advice, don’t you think?” she asked.

“Perhaps,” he replied doubtfully, turning the team around, and thanking the man for his help.

“Good luck to you,” he called, as they started off; and Priscilla, leaning out of the back of the wagon, waved a goodbye.

All day long they drove, almost in silence, stopping only for a hurried lunch. Toward evening, when the hills had turned to red purple, they drove across a quaint covered bridge—that is, one which has a roof and solid sides of wood, like a house—over a stream whose sparkling, merry water was as yellow as gold from the reflection of the setting sun.

“I’m awfully hungry,” sighed Priscilla.

“I was just going to propose that we stop under these oaks for supper,” said Desiré. “We can’t live without eating.”

CHAPTER XIII

INDIANS AND STRAWBERRIES

“Should you mind driving all night?” asked Jack, as they prepared to start on after the meal and a short rest.

“Not a bit, if you will take turns driving,” replied Desiré promptly. “Priscilla can stretch out on the blankets, and you and I alternate at the reins.”

“The Indians have such a start on us,” went on Jack. “You see in the first place they left earlier; and then we lost all the time of our search, and going to Bear River and back; and it’s important to catch up as soon as possible, lest they should leave the road somewhere and take a crosscut to the reservation.”

“Of course,” assented Desiré.

Darkness fell; the stars came out; and the full moon gave them light enough to follow the winding road. Several times during the night Desiré persuaded Jack to let her guide Dolly and Dapple while he rested and dozed in the corner of the seat.

On past dark farmhouses whose occupants were sound asleep; past somber, solemn woods, so beautiful in the daylight, but so dense, mysterious, almost terrifying at night; across murmuring black streams; up long hills which made the tired horses breathe heavily, and down the other side where one had to hold a tight rein to keep the faithful animals from stumbling. Occasionally a bat swooped low enough to make Desiré duck her head with fright, and once, while Jack was napping, she caught sight of a huge dark bulk near the edge of a woods; but it disappeared before the snorting horses could be urged onward.

At last the moonlight darkness faded to grey; then to a lighter grey; the sky was

slashed with faint rose, growing rapidly deeper and mingling with gold streaks, until the sun climbed up to survey the land; and another day had come.

“Look, Jack!” cried Desiré, elbowing her sleeping brother.

“Where?” he asked, yawning.

“In that hollow!”

They were on the crest of a hill, from which they could look down into a nearby valley.

“Tents!” exclaimed the boy, now fully aroused.

“Indians!” shouted Priscilla, who, wakened by their voices, had crept up to look over their shoulders.

“Prissy! How you scared me!” cried her sister, jumping violently.

Jack took the reins, and, as fast as the team could travel, headed for the encampment. They reached their objective just as the Indians were beginning to break camp. Everything was in confusion; braves striding here and there; squaws shouldering the big bundles; children crying; dogs barking. Running back and forth from one group to another, they spied René.

Throwing the reins to Desiré, Jack jumped down and approached an Indian who seemed to be directing affairs. With some difficulty, he made the red man understand his story. Partly by signs, partly by broken English, the chief replied that “two suns ago they had found strange white child among them. Where belong, they not know. Going on to reservation. Then send back young brave who know English to find boy’s people.”

At that moment, René caught sight of his brother, ran across the grass, and threw himself into Jack’s arms, crying:

“I found Indians, Jack! I found Indians! Ain’t they *fine*?”

“Yes, I see you did, and they are fine,” replied the boy gravely, handing him over to Desiré, who had left the team and hurried toward them. “Put him in the wagon, and bring me all the candy we have.”

In a moment the girl was back again with several jars of candy. Jack distributed the gaily colored sticks to all the little Indian children, and tried to make the chief understand his gratitude for the care taken of René.

The tribe then struck out through the woods, away from the main road.

“How lucky that we caught up to them right here,” said Desiré, watching them, while René waved his hand and shouted goodbyes.

“You’re a bad, bad boy,” declared Priscilla, “to run away like that and frighten us all!”

René gave her a look which was a compound of disgust and astonishment.

“They were nice to me, and I had a good time. I bet you wish you’d been along. When *you* ran away, you didn’t go with nice Indians, but a smelly old cat who —”

“Never mind, children,” interrupted Jack, as he started the horses and they drove up a slight elevation to a juniper grove.

“We’ll stay here for a while to let the team rest, and incidentally get some ourselves,” he decreed, turning in the shade.

While he made Dolly and Dapple comfortable, Desiré had been trying to make René understand how much trouble he had caused. “You were very naughty,” she was saying, as Jack joined them.

“Yes,” agreed the older boy, “and he’ll have to be punished to make him remember it.”

Jack’s tone made Desiré give him an entreating look; but he pretended not to see.

“Come with me, René,” he said quietly, breaking a small switch from a nearby tree, and leading the child farther into the grove.

A short silence, then a little boy’s cries could be heard; another silence, during which Desiré worked madly at anything she could think of to keep her mind off of what was going on within the woods. Although she recognized the need of drastic punishment in this instance, yet she hated to have the baby hurt. After

what seemed like hours, really not more than five or ten minutes, the brothers emerged from among the trees, hand in hand.

“I’m never, *never* going to run away again, Dissy,” promised the little boy, grasping her around the neck as she stooped to put her arms around him.

“Angry?” asked Jack softly, as the child released himself and ran off to join Priscilla who was playing quietly with a turtle she had discovered.

“Of course not,” replied Desiré quickly. “How could you think such a thing?”

“I hated to do it, especially since I knew it hurt you so much; but he really needed a lesson. We couldn’t risk that sort of thing happening again; it might not turn out so pleasantly another time.”

“I know you do your best for all of us, dear,” she said, laying her head against his arm for a moment; “and don’t worry so much about what we may or may not think about what you do.”

On blankets laid on the ground, Jack and Desiré slept much of the afternoon, while the children played all kinds of games with the turtle.

All the morning the young Wistmores had been driving along roads bordered on either side by hundreds of apple trees. In the valley between the North Mountain on the Bay of Fundy side, and the South Mountain, there are seventy-five miles of orchards where are grown some of the choicest varieties of apples, many barrels of which are shipped to the United States every year.

“This is the most celebrated apple district in the world,” commented Jack.

“How gorgeous the trees must look when they are covered with blossoms,” Desiré remarked. “I think apple trees in bloom are among the most beautiful things in the world.”

“The whole section is famous,” continued Jack. “The first ships built on the American continent were launched down here on the Annapolis River; and on Allen’s Creek, which flows along one side of the fort, the first mill was put up. That was in the days of Champlain.”

They reached Annapolis Royal by this time, and Jack drove up the hills to see the remains of the fort, and point out the items of interest to the members of his family.

“Champlain sailed up the Bay of Fundy,” he said, motioning toward that body of water, “and when he saw the little inlet down there, entered by means of it, into that broad calm body of water called Annapolis Basin. The tree-covered sides of the hills which you see sloping gently to the water’s edge were dotted with lively waterfalls, and he thought it a fine place for a settlement.

“In those days,” he continued, turning toward René, “Great Beaver, who was an enemy of Glooscap, lived in Annapolis Basin with his best friend, a wolf. Now the wolf liked to sail, and Great Beaver made a big raft for him so he could go back and forth across the water. One day Mr. Wolf was lying on the top of North Mountain, resting after his sail, and he saw the Bay of Fundy. Right down to the Great Beaver he rushed, and asked him to dig a canal between the two bodies of water in order that he might have more room for his raft. Great Beaver didn’t like salt water; so he refused to spoil his own home by letting in the tide from Fundy. Clever Mr. Wolf, who knew that Glooscap and the Beaver were not good friends, went secretly to Glooscap and asked him to join the two pieces of water. Glooscap sent the lightning to split open the North Mountain, and through the narrow opening Mr. Wolf sailed gaily back and forth between the Bay of Fundy and Annapolis Basin.”

“And what became of the poor Beaver?” asked Priscilla.

“Oh, he had to go and build a new home in the Basin of Minas.”

“Poor Beaver,” commented René, adding, “Jack, where is Glooscap *now*?”

“He became angry at the number of white men coming to take possession of the land; so he called a big whale to carry him away to some far-off shore. The Indians think, though, that some day he will come back.”

“Oh, I wish he would,” cried the little boy; “I wish he would right *now*, so’s I could see him.”

Going down the hill, they reached the shores of the Basin in time to see the tide come in. Great masses of blue, green and silver water rushed in the Gap to fill to overflowing the Basin and all its tributary streams.

“What a wonderful sight!” exclaimed Desiré.

“I should think the Wolf would have been drowned,” observed René, watching the flood of water, his eyes open very wide.

“Why, he’d go up on the mountain and watch it, not stay *in* it,” said Priscilla in such a scornful tone that Jack and Desiré smiled.

Several days later, they had passed through many little towns and stopped in front of many an isolated house where they disposed of many or few of their wares. The dooryards were gay with flowers, now; for no one was too poor or too lazy to have a garden. Sometimes these gardens were elaborate in shape, and of fair size, with colors and varieties blended beautifully; sometimes only a clump of cheerful red or golden nasturtiums, clustering around a stump or unsightly rock.

“Just look at that field!” exclaimed Desiré, suddenly.

“What’s the matter with it?” inquired Jack.

“It’s just red with strawberries!”

“Oh, let’s get out and pick some,” proposed Priscilla.

“Don’t you think we might be able to sell them in the next town if we gathered enough?” Desiré asked Jack.

“Perhaps. There is a hotel, and lots of boarding houses in Kentville; so I’m told.”

They left the horses to graze in the shade of some trees, and the whole family, armed with various sized dishes, scattered over the field. After a couple of hours’ steady work, they transferred the berries to a basket, covered them with leaves, and continued on their way.

“Who’s going to sell them?” questioned Jack, when they were nearly to Kentville.

“Never thought of that,” confessed Desiré.

“I will,” offered Priscilla. “Let me!”

“Me too,” chimed René. “I can sell berries fine.”

“You’re a bit young, Renny,” said Jack with a smile; then, turning to Priscilla, he said, “All right, if you want to.”

Desiré looked a bit surprised at his willingness; but Jack just drew the team up in front of one of the smaller boarding houses and suggested, “Try here.”

The little girl took the basket which he handed down to her, walked boldly up the path to the front door, and knocked. Through the screen door they heard an annoyed voice say—“Now, I’ve told you—Oh, what is it, child?”

A low conversation ensued, and Priscilla flew out to the wagon again, displaying proudly a couple of silver coins.

“She’ll take some any time, she says; and she knows other places where they would.”

“How would it be,” inquired Desiré thoughtfully as they went on, “if we took time for berry picking so long as they last; even if we don’t cover so much ground, it will be clear profit.”

“We could,” said Jack slowly; “and it would be better for us all to be out of the wagon for a while.”

“In that case,” asked Desiré, “hadn’t we better camp nearby, since we know we can find quantities of berries here, and Kentville is a pretty good market.”

Jack agreed.

A most delightful spot beside a noisy brook, just outside the town, was selected as a camp site; and for two whole weeks they scoured the surrounding country for berries, taking their harvest in to Kentville once a day.

“I guess these are the last,” commented Desiré rather regretfully, as they climbed up a slope toward a bridge on their way home one afternoon.

“Oh, I see a few down there,” cried Priscilla, starting toward the edge of the river

bank.

“Be careful,” called Jack, as she put one foot part way down the bank to reach some clusters beyond her, rather than walk a little farther.

His warning came too late. Even as he spoke, her foot slipped on the mud; and before she could save herself, she slid all the way down the soft slope and rolled into the river.

CHAPTER XIV

TWO MISHAPS

Fortunately the tide was out; so the water was not very deep, and while Desiré stood on the bridge and watched helplessly, and Jack was looking for a place where he could go to her assistance, Priscilla managed to get out of the water.

“Don’t come down,” she called, “you’ll fall too. I’ll be up soon.”

But the mud was very slippery; and again and again she slid back, while René shouted with laughter, and clapped his hands. Even Desiré had to smile; for Priscilla did look funny, plastered with red mud, and dripping with water. Jack again started toward her, but Desiré held him back.

“There is no use in two of you getting in that state. She’s in no danger, and since she is lighter in weight than you, she stands a much better chance of climbing up that bank. Prissy,” she called, “crawl on your hands and knees.”

The little girl obeyed, and finally reached the top, where Jack stretched out a strong hand to pull her over the edge.

“What shall I do?” she wailed, holding her sticky arms out straight from her body, and half blinded by the wet, muddy hair hanging over her face.

“I wish I knew,” said Desiré. “Can you walk home, do you think?”

“I guess so. I’ll try; but—but—I lost all my berries!”

“You look like a big berry yourself, you’re so red,” gurgled René.

At least one of the party was enjoying the incident to the utmost.

It took a long time to scrape and wash the mud off poor Priscilla, and when the task was accomplished they were exhausted.

While the others were occupied, René had been playing about by himself. Just as Priscilla looked once more like herself, the little boy ran toward the group crying at the top of his voice.

“What’s happened?” demanded Jack, advancing to meet the child and picking him up.

“Bite!” he wailed, holding out his finger.

“What bit you?”

“Long, wiggly thing,” sobbed the little fellow. “Ran away so fast.”

“Snake!” said Desiré. “Oh, Jack! What shall we do?”

“Don’t be frightened,” said the boy, calmly sitting down with the little fellow on his lap, and examining the finger carefully. He found the bite, and putting it to his lips, began to suck the blood from it while Desiré helped hold René still.

“Jack, do be careful,” she begged anxiously; “be sure not to swallow any of it,” as he paused to dispose of what he had drawn from the wound. “Be quiet, Renny; brother is trying to make you well; so you mustn’t mind if he hurts you a little.”

Priscilla, with terrified eyes, stood looking on helplessly until Desiré sent her for a box of emergency supplies which she had prepared before leaving Sissiboo.

“I hardly think it was a poisonous snake,” said Jack, when he had done all he could; “but I suppose it is best to be on the safe side. I had better take him in to Kentville to a doctor.”

“Oh, yes,” breathed Desiré, in great relief; “and let him see if you’re all right too.”

They hitched up the horses and drove into the town, and while Jack and Desiré took René to the physician’s office, Priscilla took the berries they had gathered that day to her first customer, Mrs. Auberge. They had become good friends, and

the little girl naturally told her of the recent accidents.

“There are no dangerous snakes right around here,” she said soothingly; “but it does no harm to have a doctor look the boy over. So you’re going on tomorrow? I’ll miss you. How would you like to stay with me for the rest of the summer and help me with the tourists? I’ll pay you.”

“I’d have to ask Jack,” replied the child slowly, after a minute’s thought. “I’ll come back and let you know.”

She met the others just coming out of the doctor’s house.

“Renny and Jack are both all right,” Desiré cried joyfully to her little sister. “Where have you been?”

“I sold the berries to Mrs. Auberge; and—and—Jack—”

“Yes?”

“She wants me to stay here and help her for the rest of the summer, and she’ll pay me.”

Desiré glanced quickly at Jack, who stood regarding Priscilla very gravely.

“Do you want to stay?” he inquired, finally.

“It would bring in some money—I’d be glad—that is—”

“That isn’t what I asked you, Prissy. I said do you *want* to stay.”

“Answer Jack, dear,” urged Desiré, as the child stood silent, hanging her head. “Don’t be afraid to say just what you feel.”

“She isn’t afraid,” said Jack gently. “Do you want to stay with Mrs. Auberge, dear?”

Priscilla shook her head.

“All right,” replied her brother; “that settles it.”

“I told her I’d let her know—” began the little girl.

“Very well. Run back and thank her nicely for her offer, but say that this summer we are all going to stay together. We’ll walk on slowly, and you can catch up with us.”

Before they had gone far, they heard running steps behind them; and Priscilla came abreast, catching Jack by the hand.

“See what she gave me,” holding up a box as she spoke; “a game we can all play; and any time I want to, I can stay and help her.”

“That’s very nice of her,” said Desiré. “How wonderful people are to us everywhere.”

“It’s a good thing,” remarked Jack that night, “that tomorrow we shall return to our regular occupation and way of living. I feel as if I had had enough excitement today to last for the rest of the summer.”

“Oh, of that kind, perhaps,” agreed Desiré; “but there are other kinds; and those I hope we’ll meet. Did the doctor charge much?”

“About half what we made on the berries,” smiled Jack.

“But we’re still a little better off than when we came.”

“Yes, some; but not much.”

“Well, never mind; huckleberries are coming, and we’ll make it up on them,” decided Desiré hopefully. “Wasn’t it dear of Prissy to be willing to go to work?”

“Yes, she spoke of it again when I bade her goodnight; but I said we could support her until she is older. While it can be managed otherwise, I hate to have her cooped up in a strange house doing all kinds of odd jobs.”

“We haven’t done so badly thus far, have we?”

“No; but we haven’t made anywhere near enough to settle down somewhere and go to school.”

“But the summer isn’t over yet; and who knows what will happen before winter

comes?”

“You’re a hopeful little pal, Dissy,” he said, kissing her fondly.

“Now we must begin to look for the Godet house,” said Desiré, pulling out her little blue history the next morning, when they were on the way to Wolfville.

“I was sorry we could get no information, when we passed through Wilmot, about the first Wistmore house in this country,” said Jack.

“They lived on a sheep farm when they came here from the States, and probably the place looks like all others of its kind,” replied Desiré, poring over the book.

“I think the Godet house must be the other side of Grand Pré,” observed Jack, looking over her shoulder. “We’ll go there first.”

So they turned off the main road and drove down the hill, through the straggling village, its long street bordered by spreading trees and scattered white houses far back from the road. The great marsh meadow, which was the Grand Pré of Longfellow’s poem *Evangeline*, has been set apart as a park, and is surrounded by a fence. By going through a gate-house, one enters the enclosure known as Acadian National Park.

As the Wistmores descended the low broad step on the park side of the gate-house, René, his eyes on the distant well of which he had heard his sisters talking, put one foot right into a very small flower-bordered pool at the left of the step. Everyone turned at the sound of the splash.

“Renny!” exclaimed Priscilla severely, “I never saw such a child for water.”

“You rolled right into the river,” retorted the little boy, “and got all red mud too!”

Jack and Desiré exchanged smiles.

For an hour the children wandered over the interesting and beautiful meadowland, dotted with large beds of gorgeous flowers.

“What a sense of spaciousness, and of peace, the place gives one,” observed Desiré, as they stood before the little chapel, gazing about them. “Look, René, at the swallows’ nests.”

On the walls, close to the buttress which supports the sharply slanting roof, several nests were plastered.

“And is this the very same church mentioned in *Evangeline*?” inquired Priscilla, nearly breaking her neck to look up at the belfry, surmounted by a tall four-sided spire.

“No; but it is built on the site of that one, and the row of willows you see down there to the right grew on the main street of Grand Pré. The first settlers brought the shoots from Normandy. The well we passed on our way up is the same one from which the inhabitants of the olden village obtained their water supply. Just north of here is the Basin of Minas, where the people embarked on the ship which carried them away at the time of the Expulsion. This meadowland all around us was protected from the high tides by dykes like you saw a few weeks ago in Bear River. At one side of the Basin lies Cape Blomidon, where the amethysts are found; and—”

“Where Glooscap lived,” interrupted René, always glad to contribute to the narratives.

“Yes,” assented Jack, “where Glooscap lived. After the hay was cut from the meadows,” he continued, “cattle were turned in to graze until winter came.”

“How queer it makes one feel to be here,” observed Desiré dreamily.

They missed Priscilla at that moment, and looking around, saw her standing in front of the large bronze statue of *Evangeline*, which is in the centre of the park.

“She doesn’t look at all like I thought she would,” commented the little girl in disappointed tones, as the others joined her. They all gazed in silence for a moment at the sorrowful figure, looking backward at the land she was so reluctant to leave.

“You probably like to think of her, as I do, in a happier mood,” said Desiré; “but she must have been pretty sad when she went away.”

“We had better go on now,” decided Jack. So they followed the little stream which twists its way across the meadow; a mere thread in some places, in others wide enough to be bridged with single planks. Once it spread out into a fair-sized pond, covered with water lilies and guarded by a family of ducks who regarded

the visitors scornfully.

“Now for *our* house,” cried Desiré as they drove onto the main road again. “Please go very slowly, Jack, so that we won’t miss it.”

They all peered eagerly out of the wagon; and when they saw, up a little lane, a dilapidated-looking building, they all exclaimed together—“*That* must be it!”

Jack drove as close as the underbrush would allow, and they proceeded on foot until they were standing before a small log cabin, windowless, doorless, a huge flat stone for a doorstep, and a chimney built of irregular stones.

CHAPTER XV

THE OLD GODET HOUSE

“No floors,” observed Priscilla, peeking in.

“It’s a mere shell,” said Jack; “everything rotted away but the walls and the chimney.”

“But how stout they are!” exclaimed Desiré, triumphantly.

“We’ll look at it again when we come back this way, if you like,” promised Jack presently; “but now I want to get on to Windsor.”

“There’s the remains of a garden back of the cabin,” commented Priscilla, as they drove away. “I can see three or four flowers.”

“The first seeds of which were doubtless planted by our—how many times great-grandmother, Jack?” asked Desiré.

“Don’t know. The ‘greats’ always did puzzle me.”

“Oh!” cried René, “I always thought you knowed *everything*.”

“Sorry to disappoint you, my boy,” laughed Jack; “but I don’t.”

“And now,” said Priscilla, “I want to see the place where you went to school, Jack. Wasn’t it here?”

“Yes. I’ll show it to you when we come back.”

“How strange,” commented Desiré to Jack, “that you never heard of or saw the

place when you were here.”

The boy smiled. “I was far too busy going to classes, preparing assignments, and coaching some of the other fellows, to hunt up old ruins.”

Desiré was very quiet for the rest of the day, but the next day, when they were camped near the river Avon just beyond the town of Wolfville, she said rather timidly to Jack:

“Do you suppose we could find out anywhere who owns the Godet house now?”

“Possibly; but why?”

“I’d just like to know.”

Her brother looked at her keenly before he said—“We can walk into town and see what information we can get, if you like.”

“Do you suppose the children would be safe if we left them?” looking up at him doubtfully.

“I think so. Priscilla must begin to take a little responsibility now. We’ll have plenty of time to get back before dinner time.”

While Desiré got ready, Jack issued instructions to the two children, closing with—“René, you’re to mind Priscilla; and Prissy, don’t go away from the wagon, or let René out of your sight.”

They had gone only a short distance when Desiré, who had looked back several times, said—“Jack, would you mind very much if I let you go on alone, and I went back?”

“No, of course not; don’t you feel well?” he inquired anxiously.

“Perfectly; but—Prissy *is* pretty young to be left with the wagon and the baby; and it isn’t as if you really needed me along.”

“I think they’re perfectly safe, but if you’d feel better about it, go back by all means,” said her brother kindly.

So Desiré returned to the children, and waited in a fever of suspense for Jack to come back. With one eye on the long road, and the other on her household, or rather wagonhold, duties, she was ready to drop everything and go to meet him as soon as his tall form appeared in the distance.

At full speed she dashed along the highway, raising quite a cloud of fine white dust, and fell into Jack's arms outspread to stop her.

"Good work, Dissy! All our riding hasn't made you forget how to run. Remember the races you and I used to have when we were little, on that smooth path running along the edge of the woods?"

"And the day you fell over a stone and had such a terrible nosebleed? How frightened I was!"

"We had lots of good times together when we were kids, didn't we?" asked Jack, laying his arm affectionately across her shoulders.

"We surely did; but why say 'when we were kids?' We do now, too, only they are a different kind of times."

"And a different kind of race," added Jack, thoughtfully.

"Well, what did you do in town?" asked the girl, unable to restrain her curiosity any longer.

"I rambled about a bit first, asking a question here and there, and finally ended up at the house of Judge Herbine. He's a fine old man, Desiré; you'd like him. As he is quite a story-teller, and very much interested in our affairs, it took some time to get the information I was after; but at last I succeeded in finding out that the house apparently belongs to no one. Some years ago a man from the States wanted to buy the site for a summer home, but when he investigated and found that there wasn't a clear title to the property, he decided not to take it. I don't really understand it, but it's something about some papers that are missing, have been for years and years back. Nobody else wanted it, so—"

"We can take it ourselves," concluded Desiré.

The boy stood stock still in the road, and looked at his sister in frank dismay.

“What on earth do you mean!” he asked.

“Just what I said. If it belongs to nobody, we, being the Godets’ descendants, can surely take it. Who’d have a better right?”

Jack looked more and more puzzled, as he said—“What would you do with it?”

“Do with it? Why, live in it, of course.”

The boy regarded her with such a worried look that she laughed outright.

“I’m perfectly sane, Jack. My plan is this. We’ll have to live somewhere during the winter; and if we board, we’ll use up all the money we make this summer. With this as our headquarters, during unpleasant weather we could make day trips as we planned, and send Prissy to school every day in Wolfville. Or possibly you could get some kind of a job in Windsor for the winter, and I could take charge of the wagon.”

“But nobody could possibly live in that cabin,” objected Jack, brushing away a persistently hovering bee. “It’s hopeless.”

“Indeed it isn’t hopeless. I agree with you that no one could live in it the way it is now, but with new floors and a couple of partitions, it would be fine. You admitted that the walls were stout, and the chimney perfect.”

“With help, I could put down floors—” began Jack half to himself, after a moment’s consideration. “We’ll have to think this out more carefully, though, and talk it over again.” And he added hurriedly as they got near the wagon, and Priscilla dashed out to meet them, “Don’t say anything yet before the children.”

The same afternoon Jack went again to town, and did not return until supper time. Priscilla was curious to know what he did there, but he gave such absurd answers to her questions that she finally gave up.

“I’m not *ever* going to ask you another question,” she announced.

“Not until next time,” teased Jack, ruffling up her hair.

“I suppose you are as curious as Prissy,” he said later on to Desiré, after the children were asleep.

August had come in with a cool wind from over Fundy, and after darkness fell, the chill was more noticeable; so Jack had built a small camp fire, and he and Desiré were sitting beside it on a pile of cedar boughs.

“Well, yes,” admitted Desiré. “I must confess that I am.”

“I went to see a young carpenter that the judge recommended to me—”

“About floors?” asked Desiré eagerly, twisting around so quickly to look directly into his face that the pile of boughs swayed threateningly.

“Look out, Dissy!” warned her brother. “You’ll have us both in the fire if you don’t sit still. Yes, about floors, and partitions.”

“What did he say?”

“He’s busy on one of the farms now, but when the crops are in he’ll do the work for us at a price that we can afford to pay. That is, I think we can if we do well for the rest of the summer.”

“Then we’ll just *have* to,” decreed Desiré, tossing a couple of pine cones into the fire.

“The judge is a good old scout. Seemed so interested in us that I told him what we were doing, or rather trying to do, and he was awfully keen about seeing the rest of you. So he’s coming out tomorrow to lunch—”

“Tomorrow!” exclaimed Desiré. “Why, I thought you were anxious to get on to Windsor; and we’ve already lost a day.”

“Yes, I know; I don’t know just why I hung around here, but it just seemed as if we were meant to.”

“And to *lunch*, Jack,” she added, in dire dismay. “What made you ask him to a meal?”

“I don’t know. The invitation was out before I thought. But you would have asked him, too. He seems so kind of lonely, and he says he dotes on picnics. You can manage something simple; can’t you?” the boy asked anxiously.

“I’ll try hard, of course. Do you suppose you could catch a few fish in the morning?”

“Probably, and I saw some ripe huckleberries as I came along this afternoon. The youngsters can gather some of those, and we’ll get along all right.”

The children were delighted at the prospect of “company,” and immediately after breakfast, Jack escorted them, armed with a tin pail and a couple of cups, across a field to the berry bushes loaded with blue fruit.

“When the pail is filled, go right back the way we came, and take the berries to Desiré,” he instructed, as he set out in a different direction for the river, with his fish pole. The banks of the sparkling stream were pink with masses of wild roses, freshly opened and wet with dew.

“Desiré would be crazy over these,” he thought. “Guess I’ll take some to her when I go back.”

An hour’s fishing resulted in enough fish for a meal; and after cutting an armful of roses, Jack returned to camp. The children had reached there ahead of him, and were busy making things ready for the eagerly awaited guest.

Desiré had laid on the ground, in a shady spot, a red-bordered tablecloth, anchored it at each corner with a stone concealed by a pile of pine cones. She greeted Jack’s offering with enthusiasm—“Just what we need for the centre of the table. Prissy, get an empty fruit can to put them in, and lay some big ferns around it. I must attend to my biscuits.”

It was wonderful what good things Desiré could cook on the little camp stove, which they really had not felt able to afford when they saw it in Yarmouth. “It will pay for itself very soon,” she had argued; “for we can’t live on cold food all the time; and eating in restaurants is awfully expensive.” Jack had approved; so the stove and even a little oven to set on top of it, when needed, had been added to old Simon’s outfit.

About twelve o’clock a Ford coupé was seen in the distance, and soon came to a stop beside the Wistmores who, one and all, stood in a row in front of the camp. A thin little man with heavy white hair got nimbly out of the car.

“This is my family, Judge Herbine,” said Jack; “Desiré, Priscilla, and René.”

“Very glad, indeed, to know you all,” replied the judge, bowing low with old-fashioned courtesy, but gazing searchingly at each one over the tops of the glasses which he wore so far out on his nose that it was a miracle that they stayed on at all. Priscilla was so fascinated by them that she could hardly keep her eyes off them.

“We’ll have lunch right away,” announced Desiré; “so please take your places at the table. This is yours, Judge,” indicating the side facing the road, where a cushion had been placed. The others sat on the ground.

The fish which Jack had fried over a camp fire, while Desiré finished her biscuits, were done to a turn; and the judge did full justice to them.

“These biscuits are mighty fine,” he commented, “and you say you made them on that little gadget of a stove? Marvelous! Marvelous!”

After the huckleberries and some wafers which Desiré had taken from their stock were disposed of, the guest insisted upon helping clear up. He was a lively little man, and skipped hither and thither, carrying dishes, picking up papers, and making himself generally useful.

“Now for a visit,” he said, settling himself beside a tall pine, leaning back against its trunk, and stretching his legs, clad in cream-colored crash, straight out in front of him.

CHAPTER XVI

A NEW FRIEND

“So you’re going to try to live in the old Godet house this winter—”

“Oh, *are* we?” cried Priscilla, throwing herself on Desiré.

“Oh! Oh!” shrieked René joyfully, not very clear as to what the rejoicing was about, but determined to have his full share in it anyway.

“Have I let the cat out of the bag?” inquired the judge, startled at the effect of his question.

“We had not yet told the children,” replied Jack; “but it’s quite all right, for they would have known soon, anyway.”

“Sorry—sorry. You two youngsters just forget what I said.”

The man talked in a rapid, jerky fashion which reminded Desiré of the way a robin runs along, a few steps very fast, stops up short, and then repeats the process.

“Now, I was going to say, where do you expect to house your team this winter?”

Jack and Desiré looked at each other in dismay.

“I never thought of that,” said the boy slowly.

“Well, *I* did. Got an empty barn at my place—no good to me—Ford is lost in it—plenty of room for your horses and wagon—”

“If you’ll let—”

“Now I know just what you’re—going to say—and I *won’t*. But if you’d—feel better about it—let this good sister of yours—make me some biscuits once in a while. Don’t get this kind very often.”

“I’d just love to,” replied Desiré warmly, while Jack tried to express his thanks, to which the old man refused to listen.

“Where are you going from here?” continued the judge.

“Right on to Halifax, then back again,” replied Jack.

“Now I was thinking—while we were eating—know how to make things out of birch bark—and out of pine cones?” turning to Desiré. “No? Then I’ll show you.”

Scrambling lightly to his feet, and followed by the young Wistmores, he darted across the road to a large birch tree; and drawing a knife from his pocket, showed them how to obtain strips of bark without injuring the tree. Returning to the camp, he ordered the two children to gather up a lot of cones. The rest of the afternoon was spent in learning to make boxes, baskets, and picture frames.

“There’re lots of tourists in Halifax—always looking for souvenirs—at railroad station, cab stands, and such. Wharf, too, is a good place to offer this stuff. No reason why you two girls shouldn’t do that—perfectly safe.”

“Now I’m going home,” he announced suddenly at about five o’clock. “Had a good time. See you often this winter. I’ll keep an eye on that boy who is going to fix up your cabin—ready when you come back this way—if you don’t come too soon.”

“Isn’t he *funny*?” commented Priscilla, as the Ford drove out of sight.

“But charming,” added Desiré.

“Oh, yes, I like him a lot.”

“Me, too, like him,” echoed René.

“Tomorrow,” said Desiré, “I want to gather lots of bark and cones, and while we’re on the road I can make up baskets and boxes. Then when we get near enough to Halifax, we’ll pick huckleberries to fill some of them, and wild flowers for the rest—”

“And we’ll sell ’em and make heaps of money,” finished the practical Priscilla.

“We’ll get bunches of cat tails, too,” continued Desiré.

“And later in the season, pretty berries,” said Priscilla.

“And wintergreen—”

“And nuts—”

“And soon you won’t need my poor efforts at all,” concluded Jack, with a half smile.

“Oh, don’t, please, Jack, even in fun,” begged Desiré.

“We’d need you even if you never earned a cent!” cried Priscilla, throwing her arms around Jack’s neck.

René, attempting to imitate her, due to the wagon’s passing over a rut, succeeded only in falling violently on his brother’s shoulder. The combined assault nearly forced Jack forward out of the seat.

“I’ll take your word for it, hereafter,” he gasped, when order was once more restored. “Don’t illustrate again, I beg of you!”

A week later the Wistmore family drove into Halifax.

“I shall have to spend most of the day buying supplies,” said Jack, as they passed the citadel. “I’ll put the wagon up somewhere, and you and the children can look about while I’m busy.”

“But—” protested Desiré, “the boxes of berries, and flowers—”

She had carried out the plan formulated at Wolfville, and had a number of really artistic boxes of choice fruit, partly covered with tiny ferns, and several odd

baskets in which dainty wild flowers were set in moss.

“I hate to have you hanging around offering things for sale,” objected Jack.

“But we can’t afford to be proud that way, dear. It is a perfectly respectable thing to do, and I do so want to be a help—”

“As if you weren’t always,” ejaculated the boy.

“I should think the station might be the best place to start; so drive us over there like a good boy,” urged Desiré.

So Jack kept René with him, and, with many misgivings, left the girls standing near the steps which lead down from the station to the cab platform. The taxi drivers were too busy trying to outdo one another in securing fares to pay much attention to the girls; for a train had just come in. The first few travelers who hurried through the station to secure a taxi did not even see the little saleswomen. When another group appeared, Desiré stepped forward just as they were getting into a cab.

“Wouldn’t you like—” she began timidly.

A haughty-looking elderly woman, who seemed to be the leader of the party, brushed her aside with a curt “No!”

Scarlet with embarrassment, Desiré shrank back.

“Don’t mind her, Dissy,” said Priscilla, hugging her sister’s arm. “She’s ugly mean.”

“Hush!” was the only word Desiré could utter just then. It took all the courage she was able to muster to approach the next travelers, a fat man and two women.

“Would you care to buy a souvenir?” asked Desiré, her heart beating very fast.

“Bless my soul, no!” replied the man, not unkindly but very definitely. “Too much luggage now.”

Only the thoughts of helping Jack urged the girl to persevere. Trembling, dripping with perspiration, she stopped a couple of women who shook their

heads before she could get a word out. Seeing the look of disappointment on her face, the younger of the two held out a coin, saying—"I don't want your wares, but take this."

Stung to the quick, but realizing that no injury was intended, Desiré refused and walked away, ready to cry.

"I'd have taken it if I'd been you," commented Priscilla.

"Of course you wouldn't, Prissy. We do not *beg*. But I guess nobody wants our souvenirs—and I thought them so pretty. We'd better try to find the Public Gardens, where Jack told us to meet him."

"I think the station is a bad place, anyway," said Priscilla. "The people are in too much of a hurry, and they did all have a lot of baggage. Maybe we can find somewhere else."

By asking directions a number of times, they arrived at the Public Gardens—the big iron gates opening into acres of gay flower beds, rare and valuable trees, winding streams, artistic bridges. They were about to enter, when a man who, at a safe distance, had been watching them in the station, and who had followed them to the Gardens, now hurried forward.

CHAPTER XVII

AN OLD ENEMY

Pushing rudely between the two girls, the stranger succeeded, by means of a skillful bit of elbow play, in knocking the souvenirs out of their hands. As if to avoid stepping on the scattered berries and flowers, he took a couple of quick side steps, planting his huge feet directly upon them, and thereby ruining them completely. It was all done so quickly that the girls hardly realized what had happened until they stood looking down at the remains of many days of labor.

Desiré was quite speechless, and seemed momentarily paralyzed. Not so Priscilla, whose quick eyes followed the stranger, striding away over one of the bridges in the Garden.

“Dissy,” she whispered, “it’s that *same man*.”

“What *same man*?”

“The one who fought Jack.”

“It does *look* a lot like him, but—”

“It’s him all right! The mean old pig!”

“Why, Prissy! It was an accident.”

“Wasn’t either, and now we can’t make any money to take to Jack.” Excitedly she burst into tears.

“Don’t, dear,” begged Desiré. “We mustn’t act like babies every time something goes wrong. We’ll just start over again. These didn’t cost anything, and it will be

easy to make new ones.”

“What’s the trouble?” asked Jack, who had come up behind them.

Both girls explained at once.

“Where’s the fellow now?” demanded the boy, his jaw set, his eyes flashing.

“He went over that bridge,” pointed Priscilla.

“Don’t bother about him,” urged Desiré. “You might get arrested. Let’s go back to the wagon.”

Struggling between the wish to avenge the wrong to his little sisters, and the conviction that it was perhaps wiser to avoid conflict in a strange city, he turned abruptly away from the big iron gates.

“Where are we going next?” asked Desiré, as they walked along the street toward the place where the wagon had been left.

“I bought all the stock we need, and I thought, since Simon always did, we’d go on down the South Shore a ways and then come back here to start for—”

“*Home!*” concluded Desiré, “and what fun we’ll have settling down in it.”

“More fun in a wag’n,” declared René.

“You’d holler all right, when the snow blew in on you,” said Priscilla.

Jack hardly heard what they were saying, so puzzled and disturbed was he over the reappearance of his enemy. Was the man following them, or was the meeting purely accidental? Had he been tampering with the horses the night Priscilla roused them? If the fellow were bent on revenge, they were likely to suffer from the effects of his anger and jealousy almost any time.

The next morning they were following the very irregular South Shore line along the Atlantic; past ragged points, around deep bays, through tangles of woodland, then back beside the yellow sands again. Numerous offshore islands looked so inviting that Priscilla was always wishing they could drive out to them. As they rounded St. Margaret’s Bay, the sunshine was brilliant; but almost without

warning, a mile farther on, they were completely enveloped in fog which cut off all view of the ocean.

“Do be very careful, Jack,” pleaded Desiré nervously, as they almost felt their way around an especially blind curve. “Someone might run into us.”

They reached Chester in safety, and spent some time looking about that busy little town. The souvenir shop up the hill above the Lovett House especially attracted Priscilla, and it was with great reluctance that she left it.

“I’d like to have money enough to buy everything I wanted there,” she said, looking longingly back at it.

In a few minutes they missed René, who had been lagging along behind them.

“That boy is hopeless,” groaned Jack, as they retraced their steps to look for him.

Not very far back they discovered him, leaning over the edge of a cobblestone well, trying to lower the heavy bucket.

“I was thirsty,” he explained, as Jack detached him.

“But you might have fallen in!” said Desiré severely.

“I’ll tell you what we can do,” proposed Priscilla; “tie a rope to him, like you do to a little dog, and I’ll lead him. I saw a lady at Halifax with a little boy fastened that way,—”

The proposal called forth a howl from René.

“Won’t be tied like a dog! Won’t have Prissy lead me!”

“Well, let’s go on now before we get into any more difficulties,” said Jack, starting for the shed where he had left the wagon.

“That is Mahone Bay,” he told them, as they gazed out over the large arm of the ocean upon which Chester is located; “and all this section was once a great retreat for pirates. There are so many islands where they hid their booty, and so many little bays and inlets where they could take refuge if pursued.”

“Want to go out there and see pirates,” announced René, as Jack tightened the reins, and Dolly and Dapple began to move.

“There are no pirates there now,” said Priscilla in a disgusted tone.

“Go and see. *I’m* going to be a pirate when I grow up. I think they’re *fine*.”

“It’s a good thing you didn’t give us that piece of information before, Jack,” laughed Desiré, “or we should have been swimming out to find Renny.”

Not very far beyond Chester, they ran into fog again. The road was winding, and very much up and down hill; and as they were about to round a curve near Lunenburg, a heavy automobile loomed up suddenly at their left, out of the grey blanket which enfolded the landscape.

CHAPTER XVIII

A COLLISION

Jack turned aside as quickly and as far as he dared, but the machine struck the side of the wagon, ripped off a wheel, and disappeared into the gloom. The children were thrown violently to the floor of the wagon, and Desiré against the side; but Jack managed to keep his seat. The horses stopped instantly, and stood quiet like the intelligent, well-mannered animals that they were. To the accompaniment of René's cries, Jack got his little family out of the tilting wagon and took stock of their injuries. Priscilla had a bad nosebleed, and Desiré a bruised arm. René was only badly frightened, and Jack himself entirely uninjured.

"We certainly can be very thankful," breathed Desiré with relief, after first aid had been given.

"We certainly can," agreed Jack fervently, going to examine the condition of the wagon; "we were very lucky."

"What can we do with it?" inquired Desiré.

"Fortunately we're not very far from Lunenburg," he replied, "and I suppose I can get it fixed there; but it will mean quite a delay, I imagine. If the fog would only lift so that we could see something."

"Why not stay right here until it does?" proposed Desiré.

"Should you be afraid to stay here with the children while I walked to town?" began Jack. "It would save time if I could get the work started today—"

"Not afraid for us, Jack; but for you. Something might hit you. Suppose another

automobile should come along!” She shuddered.

“Well, then we’ll try to get the wagon just off the road, and make ourselves as comfortable as we can until the fog is gone.”

With much difficulty, and many pauses for rest, they succeeded in getting the wagon off the road.

It was a tiresome afternoon, and seemed many hours longer than it really was. Just about six o’clock the grey blanket was whisked away as suddenly as if someone had picked it up, and the land was flooded with late afternoon sunshine. On one side of them were fields with groups of trees here and there; on the other, a wide beach.

“Why not camp in this field?” asked Desiré, as the children darted across to play in the sand. “If we’re going to be held up for a day or two, this is probably as good a place as any.”

Jack agreed. So after charging the children not to go into the water, they set about making a permanent camp. It was too late to go to town that night, but early the next morning Jack took the broken wheel and started out.

“I can have it the day after tomorrow,” he announced upon his return, which Desiré assured him was “not so bad.”

The two days passed very pleasantly. Twice a day, much to René’s delight, they all went in bathing. Playing in the sand became almost as much of a joy to the older ones as to the children, and they laid out wonderful towns across the beach. In the middle of the day, when it was too hot near the water, they spent their time in the grove, and made friends with the squirrels who were busy laying in their stores for the winter. The little creatures got so tame that they would venture into the very laps of the invaders of their domain.

“Now for the road again!” cried Jack, on the evening of the second day, as he put the new wheel on the wagon. “We’ll go to bed early, and get started as soon as it is light.”

Just after daybreak, he came to the wagon where Desiré was collecting supplies for their breakfast.

“Dissy,” he said, “Dolly is very sick!”

“Sick! Oh, Jack, what *shall* we do!” cried Desiré in dismay. Difficulties did seem to be coming too thick and fast.

“I’ve made her as comfortable as I can, but I don’t know what to do next. I’ll have to go to town for help. Give me a sandwich to eat on the way—I can’t wait for breakfast. You and the children keep away from her until I get back.”

In a few minutes Jack disappeared down the road leading to Lunenburg, puzzling over the finding of a pan half filled with bran mash which he had discovered near Dolly. Since he could not arrive at a satisfactory explanation, he wisely decided to keep the discovery to himself.

Desiré gave the children their breakfast, and sent them out on the sand, she herself remaining where she could watch them and keep an eye on the wagon. It seemed hours after Jack had gone when up the road she could see the broad bulk of a team of oxen plodding slowly toward her. As they came closer, she saw that they were pulling one of the flat wooden wagons used for hauling stone. On the boards sat Jack and another man; the driver was walking at the animals’ heads. Jack got off and came hurriedly toward her, after directing the driver to the end of the field where the sick horse lay.

“The doctor thinks he’ll have to take Dolly to his place; so they brought an ox team along,” he explained. Then before Desiré had time to reply, he dashed off to join the other two men.

Half an hour later poor Dolly, reclining on the ox cart, was ready for her ride to Lunenburg.

“I think she will get well; but not right off. She must have ate something very bad,” said Dr. Myers, a stout German, mopping his brow with a big blue handkerchief. “You come see me—say—next day after tomorrow; then I maybe can tell you how long.” He ran clumsily down the road to join his patient.

Jack sat down beside Desiré, and for a long moment they looked at each other without speaking. The children, who had left their play to become spectators of the moving, had returned to the beach at Desiré’s direction, and were now so busy constructing a sea wall that they were oblivious to all else.

“What next, Jack?” asked Desir  at last, laying her hand over his.

CHAPTER XIX

POOR DOLLY!

“I wish I knew,” was the boy’s sad reply to his sister’s question.

Fired by the sight of his deep depression, Desiré put her wits to work to find a way out of this latest catastrophe.

“Perhaps I could get some work in the shipyards in town,” began her brother before she had arrived at any solution of the problem.

“But if Dolly gets well in a few days, would that pay?”

“I don’t think she will—at least not so as to be ready for the road. You see, Dissy, it’s going to take an awful lot of what we’ve made so far to pay the doctor; and while we’re held up here, nothing is coming in, and living expenses go on.”

“That’s so.”

“If I could get a job in the yards for two or three weeks, it would mean a lot to us.”

“We would stay here, and you’d go back and forth every day?”

“Yes, that is if you wouldn’t be afraid—”

“Of course I shouldn’t!”

“It’s only half an hour’s walk, and we can camp down here cheaper than living in town. In October we should settle down in Wolfville; for it will be altogether

too cold to camp after that time. If I could get work for two or three weeks, then we'll start back for Halifax, and get to—”

“*Our* house just about in time,” concluded Desiré gaily.

“How proudly you say that,” smiled Jack.

“I *am* proud of it. Well, we'll follow out your plan then; and while I get dinner you might tell the children what we've decided.”

“Better wait until we see whether I get the job or not,” advised her brother. “It will be hard on you, poor kid, having to manage everything here while I'm gone all day long.”

“Not half so hard, dear, as your having to go to work at something you don't know anything about. I'm used to my work.”

The following afternoon, Jack returned from town, and immediately sought out Desiré who was sitting under a clump of birches mending one of Priscilla's dresses.

“Good news, Dissy!” he cried, dropping down at her feet. “I've got a job.”

“Oh, Jack, that's great! Tell me all about it.”

“When I first went into town, I stopped at Dr. Myers' and saw Dolly. She's lots better, but Doc said she ought to stay there another week. It's expensive, but it would be more so if we lost her; so I don't want to take any chances.”

“Of course not.”

“When she's ready to come back, he'll bring her out here; and he said to let her roam about the field for another week, and then drive her half a day at a time for a while. After that, he says she'll be all right again.”

“Well, that's better than we feared at first.”

“Yes indeed. I thought for a while that poor old Dolly was a goner. And how hard it would have been to tell good old Simon!”

“And what about your job?” For Jack’s eyes were on the expanse of blue ocean, where the sparkling ripples from a distance looked like silver confetti tossed up into the air and then allowed to fall back upon the restless surface of the water.

“Oh, yes. I asked directions from the doctor, and went over to the shipyard. My, but it’s an interesting and busy place, Dissy! Ships just begun, others with their ribs all showing and looking like the carcass of a chicken used to when the kids got through with it; some being painted, some out in the harbor waiting for masts, and others all ready for the deep sea. I found the man who hires the help, and he didn’t seem at all interested in me—said he wasn’t going to take anyone on at present. I’ll admit I was awfully disappointed—”

“Poor old Jack!” murmured his sister sympathetically, laying down her work to put her arms around him, much as she would have done to René.

“Just as I was leaving, who should come lumbering into the office but Dr. Myers. ‘Did you get it?’ he asked. When I said I did not, he grabbed my arm, turned me around, and marched me back to the desk where Mr. Libermann was sitting. ‘I send you this boy to get a job,’ he cried angrily. ‘For why you not gif him one? I know you haf extra work for these few weeks.’ Mr. Libermann seemed a bit taken back, and stammered—‘I did not know he was friend of yours. I’ll see what I can do if—’ ‘You’d better!’ shouted the doctor, shaking his fist under Herr Libermann’s nose. He got up from the desk and disappeared into some quarters at the back of the building, glad to escape, I think, for even a few minutes.

“‘He owe me too many kindnesses,’ grumbled the doctor, ‘for him to refuse what I ask.’ Presently Mr. Libermann returned with the welcome news that I was taken on as an extra hand for three weeks, and could start tomorrow. So once more we are—”

“On the road to prosperity!” finished Desiré, giving him a hug and taking up her sewing again.

“Not exactly prosperity, I’m afraid; but at least the means of existence,” laughed Jack.

“The funny part of the performance,” he went on, “is that Dr. Myers did not tell me to say to Mr. Libermann that he had sent me; and that gentleman didn’t have courage to remind him of the fact when he got so excited over my being turned down.”

The children were delighted when they heard that another three weeks were to be spent in that pleasant spot, but deplored the absence of their playfellow, Jack. Unaccustomed to work of the heavy kind that was required of him in the shipyard, he was naturally very tired when he returned at night; and Desiré tried to prevent the younger ones from making any demands at all upon him. She was careful, too, to keep unpleasant topics and worries from him.

The days were lonely for her; their simple housekeeping was soon done, and she could not play with the children all the time. So in desperation, one day, she took the cover off the box of articles saved from their old home, and hunted through until she found Jack's first year high school books.

"If I can't go to school," she decided, "I can at least study a little by myself. I won't bother Jack now, but later he will help me over the things I can't understand."

After that, the days did not drag so slowly.

The doctor kept an eye on Jack, and at unexpected times dropped into the yards to see him. In spite of the difference in their ages, the two became good friends; and both were genuinely sorry when the end of their companionship arrived.

"The doctor wants me to be on the lookout for a certain kind of ox on the way back to Halifax," said Jack, the night before they broke camp.

"Halifax?" said Priscilla. "I thought we were going to Bridgeriver."

"Bridgewater," corrected Desiré, laughing.

"Well, a river is water," persisted Priscilla, who was always reluctant to admit that she had made a mistake; and disliked very much to be laughed at.

"Sometimes it is red mud," suggested Jack mischievously. "Eh, Prissy?" drawing a feathery grass blade across the back of her neck as she sat in front of him sorting shells and stones.

The children had gathered a bushel or more of beach treasures that they "simply *must* take with them," but Jack had decreed that only one small box could be incorporated in their luggage.

“I thought it best to get back to Wolfville as soon as possible,” explained her brother seriously when she did not respond to his good-natured teasing. “It’s not so very warm now nights.”

“What about the ox?” asked Desiré.

“A friend of the doctor’s, in fact the man who came out here after Dolly, has lost one of his—”

“Lost!” exclaimed Priscilla disdainfully. “How on earth could one lose an ox?”

“The way we nearly lost Dolly,” replied Jack briefly, before continuing his explanation to Desiré. “And naturally he wants to buy a perfect match for the remaining one. He has been around the nearby country, but for some reason—I believe his wife is ill, or something like that—he can’t go far to hunt one up. So the doctor is helping him, and he thought I might just happen to see one on the way to Halifax.”

“How would you know if you did?” demanded Priscilla, with some scorn, still annoyed at having to abandon so many of her marine souvenirs.

“Dr. Myers took me to examine the surviving animal, and I looked him over closely and wrote down a description besides.”

“Read it to us, Jack,” suggested Desiré; “and then we can all be on the watch.”

So Jack read his notes, and when they went to bed they were all hopeful of finding the required animal on their trip back to Halifax.

A couple of days later they were driving along the edge of St. Margaret’s Bay, when Desiré clutched Jack’s arm.

“Look!” she cried.

“Where, and at what?”

“Away over there, in the far corner of that field. Aren’t those oxen? And so many of them.”

Jack stopped the horses and stood up, shading his eyes with his hand.

“Yes, I think they are.”

“Hadn’t you better go and look at them—that is, if they are for sale?”

“Suppose I had, but I wonder how one gets there.”

“There must be a road.”

“I’ll go and see,” offered Priscilla.

“Me too,” chirped René.

“No,” said Jack, “we’ll drive on a bit first.”

A little farther on, a narrow road led far back in the direction of the field in which the oxen were located, and from that side, farm buildings could be seen.

“I don’t believe I’ll try to take the wagon in there,” decided Jack, surveying the road doubtfully.

“You might make a sale,” suggested Priscilla, always with an eye for business.

“And break an axle in one of those holes. No, I’ll walk.”

The children clamored to go too, but Jack refused all company; so they watched him pick his way carefully along until he reached the end of the road which evidently terminated in a barnyard. It was tiresome waiting; so Desiré let the children get out to gather some cat tails which were growing along the edge of a tiny roadside stream.

They were so busy that Jack was right upon them before they were aware of his approach.

“Guess I’ve found what we’re looking for,” he announced jubilantly when he came within earshot.

“Really, Jack!” cried Desiré, almost falling off the seat of the wagon in her excitement, while the children threw themselves on him, flinging the cat tails far and wide.

“As far as I can see, he’s a perfect match. The man raises them for sale. I gave him the doctor’s address, and he promised to get in touch with him at once. However, I’ll write a letter too, and mail it in the first town we come to.”

“Isn’t it nice,” said Desiré, when they were once more on their way, “that you were able to do something for the doctor in return for his kindness to you?”

“Yes; and do you know, Dissy, people have been most awfully kind to us all summer.”

“They surely have. I never dreamed we’d make so many friends.”

“Huh!” said Priscilla bluntly; “some of them weren’t very nice. Those folks in Halifax were just horrid!”

“Hush!” ordered Desiré severely; for she had never repeated to Jack her unpleasant experiences in that city.

Jack looked searchingly at her flushed face, but said nothing more about it until they were alone that evening; then he insisted on hearing the whole story.

“Never again!” he decreed, “shall you or Prissy try to sell things on the street.”

“But we’re all peddlers, Jack dear; you can’t get away from that fact.”

“Dissy,” said her brother, smiling, “you’ll get to be as much of an arguer as Prissy if you’re not careful.”

Halifax was wrapped in a chilly grey fog when the Wistmores drove in a couple of days later. The monotonous tones of the bell buoy in the harbor sounded continuously through the city, and buildings and pavements dripped with moisture.

“Guess we’d better push right on,” decided Jack, “and try to find before night a spot where it is dry enough to camp.”

“*This* certainly isn’t a very pleasant place today,” shivered Desiré, peering over his shoulder at the gloomy streets.

After they got beyond the limits of the city, the fog lifted somewhat so they could see the road quite clearly, and even some distance on either side. About ten miles outside of Halifax they caught sight of something dark under a tree ahead.

CHAPTER XX

GOOD SAMARITANS

“Maybe it’s a bear!” exclaimed René hopefully.

“Somebody’s old ragbag,” suggested Priscilla.

“No,” concluded Desiré, “it’s a man.”

“Must be sick, or dead tired to sit there on such a day,” observed Jack.

Just as he spoke the words, the interested watchers saw the man attempt to get up, and fall heavily back upon the ground. Urging the horses to greater speed, Jack soon brought the wagon abreast of the unfortunate creature. Face down, he lay perfectly motionless.

“Must be unconscious,” said Jack, as they all got out and stumbled up the bank upon which the man was stretched.

Desiré held her breath as her brother was rolling the figure carefully over. There was something strangely familiar about that heavy form. No mistake, it was their old enemy.

Brother and sister faced each other across the quiet body.

“Oh, it’s *him!*” said Priscilla, in disgust.

“He’s the man Jack fought with!” squealed René.

“Must be badly hurt,” said Jack; “wonder what we can do for him.”

“Do! *Do!*” exclaimed Priscilla; “why, leave him here and go on as fast as we can.”

“Prissy!” reproved Jack and Desiré with one accord.

“I’m afraid I can’t carry him to the wagon,” said Jack slowly. “He’s so heavy.”

“Don’t want him in our nice wag’n,” declared René vehemently.

“I can help you,” offered Desiré, striving to conquer her aversion to the man.

At that moment, the object of their concern groaned and opened his eyes. Unseeing, at first, they soon showed recognition of the faces above his.

“What’s the trouble with you?” asked Jack.

“Cracked up somewhere,” was the sullen response.

“How did it happen?”

“Fell over those stones in the fog.”

Desiré turned to glance at the big pile of sharp rocks nearby, and felt that a fall on those could do almost any damage in an unexpected encounter.

“Where can we take you, or what can we do for you?” asked Jack briskly.

“Nothin’.”

“That’s ridiculous! You can’t stay here. Could you walk as far as the wagon if we helped you?”

“Can try.”

With the aid of Jack and Desiré, one on either side, he managed to get up. One or two promptly stifled groans broke from him, and he swayed precariously as he tried to stand.

“One foot’s no good,” he muttered, holding it up and throwing all his weight on the other.

“You two children go back and get into your places in the wagon,” ordered Jack. “Push your stools as close to the front seat as you can.”

Reluctantly they obeyed, hanging over the seat to watch the little procession. Slowly, painfully, stopping often to rest, the injured man was finally helped as far as the wagon.

“Lean on the wheel a minute,” directed Jack, “so my sister can get things fixed for you.”

Desiré opened the back doors, pushed the tent as far to the side as it would go, and arranged a couple of blankets on the floor.

“This is going to be the hardest bit,” observed Jack, when all was ready, “but we’ve got to make it some way.”

“Prissy and I can help him from the wagon, if you can manage out here,” suggested Desiré.

“All right, get in.”

The two girls, Priscilla under protest, grasped the man’s shoulders and pulled, while Jack eased his body and legs up from the ground to the floor of the wagon. Half fainting with pain and exertion, the patient was finally settled on the blankets.

“Where are you going to take him?” asked Desiré softly, as Jack took his place and picked up the reins.

“Back to Halifax, where he can get a doctor. I think his ribs as well as his foot are injured; and Heaven only knows what else.”

They were all very quiet as they re-covered the ten miles to the city. Priscilla was sullen; René somewhat awed; Desiré compassionate, and Jack thoughtful.

As they entered Halifax, Jack turned toward their passenger and asked—

“Any special place here you want to be taken?”

“Wharf. Pal there who’ll look after me.”

Over the cobblestones, down the steep hill to the docks they rattled.

“There he is. Tall fellow beside that pile of crates,” said the man who had been peering out the crack between the doors, which had been propped partly open to give him more air.

“Bill!” he shouted.

The fisherman turned at the sound of his name, and Jack beckoned. With three or four strides he was beside the wagon.

“What’s wanted?”

Before the boy could reply, the injured man called out—“I’m in here, Bill. Had a smash.”

The newcomer, without a word, stepped to the back of the wagon and stuck his head in. After a short conversation, during which the Wistmores stood beside the horses’ heads, he slid the invalid part way out, put his powerful arms under him, and picked him up like a child.

“Much obliged to you for bringing him back,” he said awkwardly to Jack; then strode away down the wharf; but before they were out of earshot, the injured man called back over the other one’s shoulder—“You’ve won!”

“Well, of all strange experiences,” exclaimed Desiré.

“Whatever did he mean?” asked Priscilla.

“Perhaps that he wouldn’t bother us any more,” replied Jack slowly.

“An’ he didn’t give you any money, nor nothin’,” grumbled René, as they started out of Halifax for the second time that day. “I thought if anybody helped anyone else they always gave ’em a—a—re—reward.”

“We *did* get a reward,” said Desiré softly, “but not the kind you mean.”

“Where’s his wagon?” demanded Priscilla.

“Probably he left it in Halifax,” replied Jack carelessly, as he wondered just what

harm to themselves the pile of stones might have thwarted.

Progress on the way back toward Wolfville was necessarily slow; for housewives all along the route were preparing for the coming winter when indoor occupations must replace the activities of the warm months. Thread, wool, and notions of all kinds were in great demand; for the women folk must keep busy with more feminine tasks, the hands that during the summer had helped in gardens and farmyards, as well as in picking blueberries to be shipped to the States. Daily great trucks stop at the scattered houses along certain sections rich in that fruit to gather up supplies and take their loads to the seaports where ships are waiting for them. The average tourists en route from Nova Scotia to the States little know, when they are pacing the decks of the comfortable steamers, that far below are crates and crates of berries which will later be consumed by themselves at home or in hotels.

Several times Jack had to replenish his stock as best he could from some town through which they passed; and Desiré daily rejoiced at the steadily increasing number of coins in their little iron bank.

“We’ll be rich yet!” she exulted, shaking it merrily as they drove away from Mount Uniacke.

“Sorry to destroy your hopes,” said Jack, half under his breath, so as not to be overheard by the two children on the floor behind them, playing a hotly contested game on the board which Mrs. Auberge had given them. “Had you thought that we’ll have to get some kind of furniture for the Godet house?”

Desiré looked at him wide-eyed with surprise and dismay.

“Why, Jack, how stupid I am! I never once thought of it.”

“Nor I, until today. I don’t know what was the matter with our brains.”

As if stunned by the discovery, they drove for some time in utter silence. In the protection afforded by an upturned coat collar, and a hat pulled far down over her curls, the girl let fall a few tears. Jack, gazing fixedly ahead, half buried in a coat at least two sizes too large for him, was apparently oblivious of her distress.

The day was grey and cold, with a brisk wind whirling the golden leaves of the

birches in all directions, scattering the piles of brushwood collected and left beside the road by some native for firewood; rolling the pine cones merrily along in the dust, and making the great firs and balsams toss their branches ceaselessly. Its chill warned of the near approach of snow and ice.

“Jack,” began Desiré at last.

“Yes?” untangling himself from his problems with a start, and turning toward her.

“I’ve been thinking about expenses for the winter. Of course food will cost more, because while we were on the road we had fish and berries to help out; but in regard to the furniture, we could get only what is absolutely necessary for now, and add other pieces as we were able to. We could doubtless pick up used articles at low prices. Think how little we got for our own things when we sold them.”

“But you and the children have got to be comfortable, and warm,” said Jack decidedly. “Camp life in the summer is all right; but too much makeshift doesn’t work in the winter time.”

“You must be comfortable, too,” added Desiré affectionately; “but we *can* do with a couple of mattresses on the floor, and a table and four chairs for the present. Maybe we could buy those from someone in Wolfville who had more than they needed, and get them cheaper that way.”

“We must have a stove, dishes, and bedding,” added Jack.

“The fireplace will do for heating; and I can cook on the camp stove. We’ve had enough dishes and bedding for the summer; so a couple of extra blankets will be all that we’ll have to buy in that line.”

“But I don’t want you to live like that,” interrupted her brother; “we should have been more comfortable if we’d stayed in Sissiboo—”

“Oh, Jack! With you killing yourself trying to pay off a big debt, and no prospects for years and years! As it is, at least we’re not in debt; we’ve had a lovely summer, in spite of a few unpleasant spots; we’re all healthy and together; and we’re going to live in the Godet house this winter.”

“You’re a cheerful little partner, Dissy,” said Jack, looking at her so admiringly that she flushed with shame as she recalled the tears so recently shed.

“Of course we have money enough to get actual necessities for the winter,” he continued, shamed by his sister’s courage into taking a more hopeful view of their situation. “And I’m hoping that I’ll be able to pick up something steady in Wolfville, or even Windsor, for the winter.”

“Perhaps the judge will be able to help you.”

“He might.”

“So don’t get all blue and discouraged again, Jack dear; we’ll come out all right.”

Late in the afternoon of another dull day, they stopped in front of Judge Herbine’s house.

“Guess we got here just in time,” observed Jack, as he got out, pointing to a few stray flakes of snow idling aimlessly through the air as if they didn’t care whether they stayed up or floated down.

The judge himself opened the door.

“So here you are at last!” was his pleasant greeting. “Come in—have a cup of tea—before you go—to look at your own place. Work’s all done.”

They were all cold and tired, and very glad to accept his invitation. His housekeeper, Madam Lovemore—for the judge had never married—bustled around preparing a substantial supper instead of “tea.” She was a sociable, motherly creature, who loved to have company at any time; but the thoughts of these poor young things driving so many miles in the cold, and going to live in that old house, so touched her heart that no effort was too great, and no food too fine to be placed before them.

“Favored—” remarked the judge, as he seated his guests at the dining room table. “Best plum preserves—my housekeeper must like your looks.”

Madam Lovemore, who was just taking her accustomed place at the foot of the

table, smiled indulgently at him, as one might smile at an outspoken child.

The meal lasted a long time; for the judge wanted to hear all about their summer. Once he excused himself and disappeared into the kitchen where he held a lengthy conversation with some unseen person.

“Right away!” they heard him say, as he was about to re-enter the dining room.

“We’ll go over—with you,” he said, when Jack proposed their departure, saying that they counted on staying in the house that night, living camp fashion until they had a chance to get the necessities. For an hour, René had been asleep on the horse-hair sofa, and Priscilla’s head kept nodding.

“They’re tired, poor dears,” said Madam Lovemore compassionately, as she helped Desiré put their wraps on.

When they went outside, they discovered that the world had completely changed its appearance. A thin layer of snow made the roads look like strips of white cloth; each dried weed, seed pod, and knot of grass had a spotless cap; and the outstretched arms of the firs held their light burden so tenderly that not a flake was shaken off.

The judge was to drive over in the Ford, Madam Lovemore holding the still sleeping René in her lap.

“He’ll be awful mad tomorrow,” volunteered Priscilla, who was now fully awake, “when he hears that he’s been riding in an automobile and didn’t know anything about it.”

The judge laughed, a sudden explosion, over almost before it began.

“In that case—you’d better come in here too; so you can tell him—what it felt like.”

The little girl’s wistful look and tone had not been unnoticed by the judge; and though they were somewhat crowded, both he and his housekeeper gladly put up with the slight discomfort of an additional passenger.

“Prissy is thrilled to death,” said Desiré to Jack, as they followed the Ford with as much speed as the tired horses were able to make.

“Yes, but I wish you could have had a ride, too. You’ve always wanted one.”

“Oh, some day I shall.”

The headlights of the judge’s car, which had just turned off the main road into the lane leading to the Godet house, revealed the fact that all underbrush had been cleared away, and the road filled in. So occupied were they with the unexpected improvement, that not until they had stopped in front of the cabin did they notice that it was lighted.

CHAPTER XXI

A SURPRISE

The judge, with René in his arms, ushered them inside.

“Welcome—to Wolfville!” he cried, “and to the old Godet house.”

Jack and Desiré stood quite speechless, and even the generally talkative Priscilla could find no words. They could only look while the judge and his housekeeper watched them smilingly, though very close to tears themselves.

René broke the spell.

“Oh—o—o!” he wailed, digging his fists into his eyes, still half asleep.

“What’s the matter—young fellow?” demanded the judge, who still held him.

“I didn’t finish my piece of cake!” wailed the child. He had dozed off at the table, before finishing his supper.

They all laughed, while Madam Lovemore consoled René by promising him another piece the next day. Then the young Wistmores inspected their home.

Partitions separated the cabin into three rooms: a large one, across one end, which was to do duty as a general living room, with a place for cooking at one end; and two small ones as sleeping quarters. The partitions and floors were painted a soft blue, which was relieved by the dark logs of the side walls and the beamed roof. Rag rugs lay upon the floor, a table occupied the centre of the living room, and around it were four ladder-back chairs. Beside the stone fireplace was a low wooden rocker and a high-backed upholstered one. Each bedroom had a fully furnished double wooden bed, and a wash stand. There was

a bright fire in the fireplace; simple muslin curtains were hung at the windows; and a few pots of geraniums on a small stand added to the homelikeness of the place.

“But—the furniture—” began Desiré, when she was able to put her thoughts into words. Jack was still too dazed to speak.

“Gifts from the people of Wolfville to the children of the ancient Acadians,” replied the judge pompously.

“We can never repay them,” faltered Jack.

“Don’t want you to. They were glad—to do it. Liked idea—descendants to occupy old house—deserted for so long.”

“Such a welcome I never dreamed of,” murmured Desiré. “I don’t see why people are so kind to us.”

The judge and his good housekeeper exchanged smiles at her naive remark.

“Why, don’t you want them to be?” demanded Priscilla in astonishment.

“Of course,” answered her sister, attempting unsuccessfully to draw the child to her side; but Priscilla was too bent on inspecting article by article in her new home to have any time for cuddling just then.

“Now you folks—had better—get to bed,” said the judge, preparing for departure. “You’ve had a hard day—lots of excitement. I’ll lead the team back with me. Will they follow—the Ford—do you think?”

“I imagine so,” replied Jack. “They’re very gentle.”

He followed the judge outside to help him with the horses, while Madam Lovemore bade an affectionate goodnight to her new friends.

“Just run over any time anything bothers you, my dear,” she said to Desiré.

“N’ not no other time?” asked René, fearful of such an agreement working to his disadvantage.

“Whenever you like—” began the housekeeper.

“Don’t tell him that,” advised Desiré, “or you may see him oftener than you wish.”

Meanwhile Jack was saying to the judge, “Of course I know that you are really the one to be thanked for all that,” waving his arm at the cozy, lighted cabin.

“Not at all,” asserted the man stoutly. “The neighbors all helped. Liked it. Lots of fun.”

“Yet they never would have known about us, or our needs, if you had not told them, and made suggestions. I just can’t express my very deep gratitude, especially on account of my little sisters. René can rough it, but I hate to have the girls deprived of ordinary comforts. Sometimes I wonder if I have done the right thing—”

“One always wonders that—no matter what one does. Go in, boy,—and send my housekeeper out. Want to get home.”

Housekeeping in the new home was a delight and a novelty, after the many weeks of camp life; and the Wistmores were very happy. Jack took Priscilla into Wolfville the second day after they arrived, and made arrangements for her to attend school, much to her chagrin, for she had hoped for a longer holiday.

“No sense in her running about for days, and missing something which will cause trouble for her later,” Jack had said, when discussing the matter with Desiré. “While it is still pleasant, she can walk back and forth morning and afternoon, and carry her lunch. In winter, we’ll try to make some different arrangements.”

After settling Priscilla, Jack consulted the judge about getting work for himself.

“See what I can do,” he promised; and while he was waiting, Jack helped Desiré with the lessons she was trying to do by herself.

The snow which had greeted them on their arrival disappeared almost immediately, and the beautiful days of Indian summer hovered over the valley of the Gaspereau. Jack and Desiré, sometimes accompanied by René, but oftener

leaving him with his staunch admirer, Madam Lovemore, spent many hours rambling around the country after their work was done. It was a treat to both; for though they had much in common, they seldom had opportunities for private companionship, due to the constant demands of the younger members of the family.

After a week of idling, Jack made some trips through the nearby country with the wagon, but the day schedules were soon exhausted; and he began to be anxious about a different job. Some of the nearer neighbors began to drop in occasionally; so Desiré could not be his constant companion, and he grew restless.

“The people within a day’s drive are too near Wolfville for this to be a very good place for a store like ours,” he told Desiré when he returned one afternoon after a rather profitless day. “One does not sell enough to pay for expenses. So I guess we’ll decide to put up the wagon and team for the winter. In the spring, as soon as the roads permit, I’ll have to take it back to old Simon at Yarmouth.”

“Don’t you mean *we’ll* take it back, dear?” asked Desiré.

“Perhaps; we’ll see when the time comes. I hope the judge will be able to find a job for me pretty soon; my own efforts are fruitless.”

“Don’t worry; if we have to use up all of our little nest egg, we’ll do it; that’s all.”

Desiré spoke bravely, but she felt sad to see Jack’s prospects of continuing his education retreat so far into the background as almost to disappear. The succeeding days were anxious ones. Jack roamed about, restless and worried, not having enough with which to occupy himself; for the weather had changed, and outdoor rambles were over for that year.

One afternoon a heavy rain began to fall, and it looked as if it meant to continue indefinitely.

“Poor Prissy will get soaked,” said Desiré, gazing out of the window for the fifth time.

“I’ll go after her,” offered Jack.

“But what good would it do for you to get soaked, too?”

“None, I suppose. The poor kid ought to have a raincoat and an umbrella,” he muttered, half to himself.

“I’ve been thinking about clothes, Jack, and it seems to me that we’ll have to draw some of what we got for the farm—”

“But that’s in the bank at Yarmouth,” objected Jack quickly, “and you know we said it shouldn’t be touched except for sickness or other emergencies.”

“I know, but this is an emergency; isn’t it? If we don’t buy a few necessary articles of clothing, we’ll run the risk of sickness, and that would be far more expensive.”

“You’re right, of course. Make out a list of what we need, and then we’ll count the probable cost.”

“We’ll do it together,” said Desiré, getting pencil and paper, and sitting down at the table beside her brother.

They were so engrossed in their problem that they both jumped violently when there was a quick knock, and the judge stepped into the room, closely followed by Priscilla. René, who had been amusing himself in the corner with some toys which had been part of the “furnishings” of the cabin, darted across the room to fling himself upon the caller.

“This is a—terrible day!” exclaimed the judge. “Thought the girl might—be drowned if—she tried to—walk home. So I hitched up the old Ford—and went after her.”

Desiré began to express her gratitude, but he brushed aside her attempts.

“Nothing to it—wanted to see this boy—anyhow,” taking the chair Jack offered him, and glancing up at the tall, broad-shouldered fellow with a smile which, as Priscilla said, made his face “all crinkled.”

“Guess I’ve got—a job for you,” he continued. “Know old man Beaumont?”

Jack shook his head gravely, though his heart rejoiced at the prospect of finding

employment at last.

“He’s been postman around here—for—I don’t know how many years. Too old now—but won’t give up; been trying to fix things—so he’d have a helper. Orders came couple of weeks ago—good job for you—if you want it.”

“*Want it!*” repeated Jack. “You can’t possibly imagine how much I want it.”

“Government furnishes a little wagon—you’ll use one of your own horses—that is until snow gets too deep. Then you’ll have to go on—on snowshoes. Have to go to town—to get your orders—better go now in my Ford.”

So, in an excited bustle, Jack got ready and departed with the judge.

“Don’t worry—about his getting wet,” the judge leaned far out of the car to call to Desiré, who was standing in the doorway, “I’ll bring him—back again.”

It was supper time before they returned, and the rain had subsided for a time; but the judge refused to come in although Desiré ran out to the car and urged him to stay.

“I can’t thank you enough,” she added, leaning over the door after he had started the engine, “for getting Jack the job. He was so restless and worried, and *almost* unhappy; and when Jack’s upset, well—it just about kills me.”

The judge’s keen eyes softened, and he patted her hand kindly, saying, “Run in, child—you’ll catch cold. Hear all Jack has to tell you.”

He drove rapidly down the lane, and Desiré returned to her family. They spent a happy evening around the fire, making plans for the future. Now there would be no need of drawing on the previous funds for clothing!

The next day the sun came out, and as soon as breakfast was over the whole family started out for Wolfville, picking their way carefully around the big puddles. They left Priscilla at school, and then went on to Judge Herbine’s to clear out the wagon preparatory to putting it up for the winter.

“Where are you going to put all that?” asked Madam Lovemore, coming out in the midst of their labors, to look at all the stock spread on papers on the barn floor.

“Some of it we’ll use ourselves, and the rest store until spring,” answered Desiré, who was busy sorting goods that would keep from those which would not, while Jack, with pencil and paper, was taking inventory.

“There’s lots of room in the attic. Just take what you want to save up there. No use carting it down to your house, where you need all the space you have.”

The judge had ambled in while she was talking, and strolled around, peering at first one pile and then another.

“You’ve a day’s job here,” he observed. “When you hear the bell—come in to dinner.”

By night the task was finished, and the wagon empty. The judge presented Jack with a shovel and an axe, saying, “Can’t travel without these in these parts in the winter time. You’ll want them—in the mail wagon. They’re going to send it down—in the morning.”

Desiré looked at him in surprise.

“Why will he need a shovel and an axe?” she asked.

“Caught in storms sometimes—have to dig your way out—trees fall in high winds—only way is to chop your way through.”

Throughout supper, to which the judge insisted upon their staying also, Desiré was very quiet; and on the way home she took little part in the children’s chatter.

“What’s the matter, Dissy?” inquired Jack, after the younger ones were in bed.

“Oh, Jack! I was so very glad when you got the appointment; and now I’m so afraid for you,” she whispered, dropping her head on his broad shoulder.

“But why?” he asked in surprise, slipping his arm around her.

“Because of the storms—the falling trees,” she choked. “I never thought of that part of it.”

“But I’m strong and well, dear; and the work won’t hurt me. And I promise you that I’ll be very careful, and take no foolish chances. I don’t like to think of you

sitting at home, nervous and unhappy, all the time I'm away. That would make the work much harder. So you'll try to be brave, and not worry?"

Desiré made a desperate effort to put aside her fears, and promised to do as Jack wished.

CHAPTER XXII

CAUGHT BY STORM

Jack had seen the storm approaching as he was driving along a lonely road above a valley in the late afternoon, but it would have been about as far to turn back to the nearest shelter as it would to go on as fast as he could to the next. Urging the horses to do their best (for during the severe weather he was using the team), he drew up the robe, turned down the sides of his cap, and fastened up his coat collar. The snow came down faster and faster.

“Good thing there’s no wind,” he muttered; but even as he spoke a spiteful gust snatched up an armful of snow, and whirled it into his face. The horses did their best, but the road seemed endless; nothing could be seen except limitless stretches of white country, and trees whose branches sagged under their heavy loads.

There was a sudden crash, and right across his way dropped a huge limb of a birch tree, stretching from one side of the road to the other. The horses stopped, snorting with fright, and when Jack had quieted them, he reached into the back of the wagon for the axe, and got out to clear a pathway. He dared not try to drive around it; for he could not tell, on account of the snow, just where the ground began to slope sharply away toward the valley; and he wasn’t really anxious for a roll down those hills.

Chopping the way through was a hard task for one, and Jack had to stop very often to rest; by the time he finished, it was dark.

“Well, now we’re going on,” he said cheerily, giving a pat to either horse as he passed their heads after dragging out the cut section of the tree. The patient animals had stood quietly, heads dropped, bodies relaxed, while he worked. He

had thrown blankets across them, and the rest had given them a chance to get their wind again. So they threw themselves gallantly forward to their task, and soon pulled the wagon down into the valley.

Here the road was not so good; for the snow had blown down the sides of the hills and settled in drifts, some small and fairly passable, others most difficult to plough through. Several times Jack had to get out and shovel before the horses were able to get the wagon any farther on its way. The lanterns on the wagon gave a fair light, with the help of the whiteness all about them, but the road became increasingly difficult to follow; and at last Jack had to admit to himself that he was lost. He had no idea which way to turn; but it was impossible to stand still for the night—they would be buried before morning if the snow kept on, and the horses would perish. Recalling various stories of the intelligence, or instinct, of animals under like circumstances, he decided to give the horses a loose rein and trust to Providence. The faithful beasts plodded on and on, while Jack strained his eyes through the whirling snowflakes, searching for signs of habitation.

Some time during the night he saw a dim outline in front of him, and the horses stopped. With an unspoken prayer of gratitude, he dropped down from the seat, stiffly walked a few steps to the house, and knocked.

CHAPTER XXIII

SHELTER

After an interval, a light appeared; the door opened a crack, and a gruff voice demanded what was wanted. Jack, in a few words, explained his presence and the man immediately threw wide the door, bidding him enter and make himself at home.

“But my team—” began Jack.

The man cut him short. “I’ll look after it. Go in and go to bed. The missus will show you where.”

A big dim room, with one flickering lamp; a woman wrapped in a shawl, standing in a doorway opening into another room; several figures, each rolled in a blanket and lying near the fireplace—such a sight greeted Jack as he entered.

“Here’s a blanket,” said the woman. “You can lie wherever you like in this room.”

She disappeared at once, and the boy spread the blanket on the floor a little beyond the other dark, motionless figures. He rolled himself in the blanket, and, using the mail bag for a pillow, tried to sleep. Being exhausted, in spite of the hard bed he dropped off almost as soon as the man came in from caring for the team.

In the morning he felt stiff and sore, and his head ached, due to sleeping on the floor, he supposed. His host and hostess greeted him as casually as if he had been dropping in there every night, and offered him breakfast.

“My name’s De Vigne,” said the man, as they sat down to the table.

The three dark figures of last night still lay rolled up beside the hearth, and Jack kept looking at them as he gave his host a brief account of his adventures. Finally, curiosity getting the better of him, he ventured, "Those fellows sick?"

"Yes," answered De Vigne, glancing carelessly at them. "Flu, I guess. One of them is our hired man. The other fellows dropped in here last night a few hours ahead of you."

Jack was a brave boy, with no foolish dread of illness; but the flu! The disease which had deprived them of their father, of that he was afraid; not so much on his own account, but because of Desiré. Poor girl, she must be half frantic by now. If he'd only had some way of getting word to her. He must lose no time in starting out again.

Mr. De Vigne gave him the necessary directions for getting back on his route again, and an hour later he was delivering the letters which had taken him to that lonely section. Then he headed for home.

The sun came out and the snowy fields became dazzling. If only his head wouldn't ache so hard, and his stomach feel so queer. Probably when he got some of Desiré's good cooking, he'd be all right. Yesterday he hadn't eaten much, and he had been able to swallow very little of the breakfast provided this morning by the De Vignes. Encouraging himself in every way he could, he managed to drive all the way back; and in the middle of the afternoon, put the team in its place. As he was leaving the barn, he met the judge who had hurried out as soon as he caught sight of the open door.

"By Jove, boy!" he began; then stopped. "You're sick! Come right in and go to bed. We'll take care of you."

"Desiré," faltered Jack, swaying a little in the judge's grasp.

"I'll get her—Jonas! Come here and help me!"

With the aid of the hired man, the judge soon had Jack in bed in the room next to his own, and had sent for the doctor. Madam Lovemore was rushing around, heating bottles, and preparing broth. The trusty Ford never made such good time as it did going down to the cabin and back. The snow flew in all directions as the judge forced the machine through it. Desiré, worn and terrified by her night of fruitless watching, almost fainted when the judge appeared and told her his story.

Jack's needs, however, forced her to make a desperate effort to be calm. In a very short time the judge deposited her and the two children on his own doorstep.

"We've plenty of room," he decreed, "and you must all stay here until the boy's well."

"He's asleep now, my dear," was Madam Lovemore's greeting as she kissed Desiré in the hall. "The doctor's been here; and while he's not positive, yet he thinks it's just a heavy cold."

All the hours of waiting, the anxiety, the shock, resulted in one wild burst of tears when Desiré peered in at Jack, sleeping heavily, his face red, his lips drawn in tense lines. Madam Lovemore led her hastily into a room on the opposite side of the hall, and closed the door. Sitting down in a big rocker, she drew the girl into her lap as if she had been René, and let her cry.

"I'm—sorry—" gasped Desiré presently.

"It's only natural, you poor little girl. Have your cry out, and you'll feel lots better. Then we'll make some plans."

Jack slept most of the day, waking once to smile feebly at Desiré who was bending over him. She could not trust herself to speak, and only kissed him tenderly.

Under the care of good Dr. Caronne, and with the help of the delicious, nourishing foods prepared by Madam Lovemore, and the combined nursing of the entire household, Jack escaped the flu. After a couple of days he was able to get up, and a week later the Wistmores returned to their own home; and Jack went back to work.

"We can never, never hope to repay what they have done for us," said Jack gravely, when they were talking of the kindness of their host and hostess that night. "You children must remember that, and do everything you can for them, every little thing."

"I will," announced René solemnly. "I'm goin' to marry Mad'm Lovemore when I grow up."

“I’m sure,” said Jack, “that would be a wonderful way to repay her.”

During the rest of the winter Jack used snowshoes for delivering the mail, and Desiré was so fascinated by them that she learned to use her brother’s when he did not need them. One day when he came from Windsor he brought her a pair, and suggested that whenever he went on short trips, she accompany him. She was delighted, and quite often after that she left René at the judge’s, and went skimming over the snow with her beloved brother, dearer now than ever after the fear of losing him.

“It’s so mild out that I shouldn’t be surprised if we had rain,” announced Jack, when he came in from his day’s work one night late in the winter.

“Rain!” exclaimed Priscilla. “Why, it’s still winter.”

However, Jack proved to be a good weather prophet; for when they woke up the following morning, rain was falling steadily, and the snow looked soft and dirty. That was the beginning of the break-up of winter. Each day the sun rose higher and its rays became warmer; and each day more of the snow melted, softening the ground and filling streams, large and small, to the very brim.

The winds were softer and warmer; the birds returned and began looking for home sites; and the air was alive with their calls. From the new green of the marshes came the continuous croaking of frogs. Then the first wild flowers slipped quietly into bloom; the fruit trees pushed out bud after bud until they were covered with fragrant blossoms. Nova Scotia had come to active life again after the hard winter.

The day Priscilla brought in a cluster of arbutus, there was a general rejoicing. The delicate pink blossom is greatly prized by the people of Nova Scotia, and has been made the national flower.

“The darlings!” cried Desiré, holding the tiny flowers close to her nose in order to inhale their dainty fragrance.

“Up in the woods of Prince Edward Island the Indians will be very busy now that the Mayflower—for that is the other name for arbutus—has come,” observed Jack.

“Why?” asked Priscilla, putting her bouquet carefully in water.

“As soon as the flowers appear, the young Indian braves search carefully for the finest specimens they can find to throw at the woman they want to marry. It is one of their regular customs; so you can imagine how excited the maidens are at this time of the year.”

“What a pretty custom,” said Desiré; but the practical, unromantic Priscilla thought it very funny, and so expressed herself as she placed the vase in the center of the table.

“And where are the Indians?” demanded René.

“Nowhere near here; so don’t go looking for them,” ordered his brother.

René looked very serious for a moment, and said that he wouldn’t. Apparently he had some none too pleasant recollections of one escapade in following Indians.

The apple orchards around Wolfville had begun to drop their sweet pink and white petals, and the countryside was streaked here and everywhere with the deep blue of the iris, the fleur-de-lys of France, when Jack commented to Desiré one night that they’d better take old Simon’s wagon back to him.

She laughed. “You *did* say *we* this time. When do you want to start?”

“Could you manage it by Monday?”

“This is Friday. Why, yes, I could. What will you do about your job while you’re gone?”

“It goes back to its regular owner,” replied Jack, trying to speak lightly; adding, as Desiré looked puzzled, “The old man can manage well enough in pleasant weather. I was only a helper for the winter months, you know. When we come back for the summer, if we decide to stay here, I’ll have to look for something else. I can probably get something either here or at Windsor. We’ll talk it over on the road.”

“Shall we take the children, or leave them with Madam Lovemore? When I mentioned one day our having to go to Yarmouth, she offered to keep them if we

wished.”

“It would seem too much like imposing,” objected Jack; “she has been so very kind to us.”

“Yes,” admitted Desiré; “and yet I know she’s very willing.”

“One thing,” said Jack thoughtfully, “I hate to have Priscilla miss so many days of school, and she would have to if we took her. How would it do if we left her and took René? Do you think that would be a good idea?”

“Yes; I think that would be fine, and it would even things up better. Prissy can be quite a help to Madam Lovemore, while René always bears watching. I suppose Prissy won’t like being left behind, though.”

“Probably not; and it will seem queer to leave her. It will be the first time we’ve been separated since—”

“Yes,” said Desiré hurriedly, as Jack’s voice faltered; “but we know that she will be well cared for; and after we’re once gone, she’ll soon get used to the new conditions.”

So it was settled, and although at first Priscilla was inclined to feel injured, by the time Monday came she was quite resigned.

“I’ll have lots of automobile rides, I suppose,” they overheard her saying importantly to René.

“And I’ll see old Simon again!” boasted the small boy; “and go on a big boat—and—and—everything,” determined not to be outdone.

The older ones smiled as they went about closing up the cabin. They walked as far as the judge’s; and although there was no one to see her, Priscilla felt very important carrying the suitcase which held her wardrobe. There was no chance for prolonged farewells; for when they reached their destination it was so nearly time for school that Priscilla could give them only a hasty hug and kiss apiece, before dashing down a side road toward the schoolhouse.

CHAPTER XXIV

BACK TO YARMOUTH

“I meant to give her a few directions,” said Jack, picking up the suitcase she had dropped at his feet, and gazing after the child.

“We had a long talk last night after I went to bed,” replied Desiré; “and I think she will do just as we should like to have her. Prissy is growing up a bit, Jack; she really tried to be brave and generous about being left behind on this trip.”

When they were ready to start, the judge and his housekeeper stood on the steps to bid them goodbye and good luck.

“Don’t feel that you’ve got to hurry back,” called Judge Herbine as the horses started. “We’ll take good care of the little girl, and keep an eye on the cabin. Won’t hurt you to have a bit of a vacation.”

“I’ve gotten awfully fond of him; haven’t you, Jack?” asked Desiré, looking back to wave her hand at the judge.

“Yes; he’s a fine old fellow.”

After they had been riding an hour or two, René demanded suddenly—“When are we goin’ to sell somethin’?”

“Not going to,” replied Jack briefly.

“You see,” explained Desiré, “if we stopped every little while it would take too long to get to Yarmouth; and Jack is in a hurry.”

“I really should have started before, I suppose,” remarked her brother; “but I was

afraid the roads might be in poor condition. Besides, it would have been too cool and damp for camping, and I didn't want to give up the job until I had to."

"You'n me goin' to sleep in the tent again?" inquired René, poking the roll of canvas.

"Yes."

"I'm glad. I like tents better'n houses."

"You wouldn't in the winter," laughed Desiré. "I'll miss Prissy. The wagon will seem big for me after last year."

"Are we goin' to give Simon the horses and wagon?" inquired René in alarm, a new thought suddenly occurring to him.

"We're going to give them *back* to him," said Jack. "They belong to him, you know. He only lent them to us."

"Oh! Oh! But I never can walk all the way back again," he wailed.

"Stop crying," ordered Jack; "and you won't have to walk all the way back. You cry altogether too much. You're getting to be too big a boy to act like a baby; you must learn to act like a man."

"We're going back on the train, darling," said Desiré softly. Somehow she liked to think of René as a baby rather than as a "man."

"On a train!" squealed René. "I'm awful glad I came."

The weather stayed pleasant, and no accidents of any kind befell the Wistmores on their journey to Yarmouth; it seemed strangely uneventful by contrast with the trip up the preceding summer. They had decided that it was best to forego the pleasure of calling on old friends, even those in Sissiboo, and get on to Yarmouth just as quickly as possible. It was after dark when they passed their old home. René was asleep, and Jack and Desiré gazed at the familiar outlines in silence. The windows showed squares of yellow light, and a few sparks floated out of the chimney. Those were the only signs of life about the place; in fact the whole town was deserted. All the people seemed to have withdrawn to their homes for

the night.

Shortly before noon one warm day they stopped in front of Mrs. Chaisson's house in Yarmouth. Before they had a chance to get out, old Simon himself came hurrying out from the back yard.

"I knew it!" he exclaimed triumphantly, throwing open the gate. "As soon as ever I heard hoofs on the street, I says to myself, 'There's Dolly and Dapple.' How are ye all?"

He stopped to speak affectionately to the horses, who responded in their own fashion to his advances; and then he called his daughter.

"Matty!" he shouted. "Here's the Wistmores."

Mrs. Chaisson hurried out and greeted them warmly, inquiring for Priscilla whom she missed at once.

After embraces and explanations, Mrs. Chaisson invited them all to "come right in to dinner," adding that she must have felt they were on the way, for she cooked more than usual.

After several days of camp fare, the meal tasted delicious to the hungry travelers, and they spent a long time at the table.

"You'll stay here, of course, while you're in town," said Mrs. Chaisson decidedly.

"It's most awfully kind of you," began Jack, "but it really seems too much—"

"Nonsense! There were four of you last time, and we had lots of fun. Didn't we, René? And now we've got a dog for you to play with. Run out in the back yard and make friends with Rex."

The child departed joyfully; old Simon and Jack withdrew to the porch to talk over the year's sales, and Desiré helped with the dinner work.

That evening after René had been put to bed—Mrs. Chaisson had decreed the season too early for sleeping on the porch, and had placed a cot in one corner of

old Simon's room for the little boy—the rest of them gathered around the air tight stove in the sitting room. The evenings were likely to be cool, and even Rex crept in to lie at their feet and enjoy the welcome heat of a wood fire.

“Matty,” began her father, “I was tellin’ the young feller,” laying his hand on Jack’s knee as he spoke, “he’d better stay on here until after the lobsters are in.”

“A good idea, if he doesn’t need to hurry back,” agreed Mrs. Chaisson, picking up her sewing.

“You see,” went on the old man, turning to Desiré, “there’s quite a bit of profit in lobsters, and the boy says he has nothin’ in sight for the present; so why not pick up a few dollars?”

She did not know how to reply on the spur of the moment, and looked at Jack for inspiration.

“I don’t know a thing about the business,” said the boy slowly.

“Huh! I can teach ye all ye need to know in half a day,” declared the old man.

“Yes, indeed. Father’s a good hand at it, or was before he got the rheumatism,” said his daughter, biting off her thread.

“Now I’ll tell ye just what I thought,” said Simon. “I’ve an old hut down on the shore toward Lower Woods Harbor way, and pots and markers enough for you. Many of them need mending, but I’ll show you how to do that; and I thought mebbe you’d take the outfit, if this girl don’t mind roughing it a bit—”

“But—” began Jack.

“Let her stay here,” suggested Mrs. Chaisson. “I’m lonesome after you go on the road.”

“Oh, you are very kind,” said Desiré quickly, “but I really couldn’t leave Jack.”

“But,” began Jack again, “I couldn’t deprive you of the lobster catching, Simon. It was bad enough taking your store for a year, without—”

“Takin’ nothing!” interrupted the old man vehemently. “Didn’t you keep my

horses from eating their heads off all year, and keep my trade from goin' to some one else fer good? Besides, I can't catch lobsters any more. Doc says that messin' in the water's bad for my rheumatiz. Goin' to give up the hut after this year anyway; so if you want to stay and take it, you're more'n welcome."

They discussed the matter all the evening, until Simon got up to go to bed, and his daughter withdrew to her room which Desiré was to share. To Jack fell the big sofa in the living room. He and Desiré sat on beside the fire for a few minutes after they were left alone.

"What do you think of it, Dissy? Shall I take it or not?"

"I hardly know what to say; but there's no reason I can think of why you shouldn't, if it looks good to you."

"Of course I have no other immediate prospects; but it would be rough and lonesome for you, I'm afraid—"

"Lonesome, with you around? As for being rough, it will be fun to try a different way of living for a few weeks."

Secretly Desiré rather longed for the coziness of the Godet house, but she thought Jack felt he should make the most of every opportunity for earning money, and she wanted to make things as easy for him as possible.

The next morning, with a big basket of lunch in the back of the wagon, they all drove down to the hut, René wild with excitement. An hour's drive brought them to the bleak, deserted coast. Nothing but sand, jagged rocks, coarse grass, and scattered huts met their eyes. They left the team just off the road beside a clump of juniper, and crossed the sand to the hut. When Simon unlocked the door, the interior seemed to be a jumble of lumber.

"Get all these pots out in a jiffy," he said, picking up a couple of crate-like objects and depositing them outside.

They all helped, and soon the pots were piled up beside the hut.

The rooms were tiny, only two in number, a bedroom and a general room; and the furniture was scanty.

“You can’t possibly live here, Dissy,” whispered Jack.

“Go on and learn how to catch the beasts, and I’ll attend to the house,” she replied with forced cheeriness.

So Mrs. Chaisson and Desiré cleaned and set in perfect order the tiny wooden building, while Simon taught Jack how to make and repair lobster pots. They look like oblong crates, and are made of narrow strips of wood bent into a semi-circle and nailed onto a board. A couple of holes are left for the lobsters to crawl in, and the whole is lined with coarse net, and weighted with heavy stones.

At noon they spread the lunch on a huge flat boulder on the beach.

“Lots nicer than an old table,” René pronounced it.

“You’ll have no trouble in roughing it as far as he’s concerned,” laughed Mrs. Chaisson.

“No; he’s usually satisfied with what he has,” replied Desiré.

“No, I ain’t,” contradicted the child.

“Why, Renny,” said Jack in surprise.

“Well, Dissy said I was satisfied, and I ain’t. I want a dog.”

“Maybe when we go home you can have one,” said Jack, adding to Desiré, “It wouldn’t be a bad plan at all, if we stay in Wolfville.”

René, as happy as if the desired pet were to be forthcoming on the morrow, returned to his play in the sand.

“Now,” said Simon, when all traces of lunch had been cleared up, “we’ll all paint markers.”

The long stakes with big wooden knobs on the top were weather beaten, and their bands of orange and green were dim. Each fisherman has a different kind of marker, and sets one up beside each pot after it is sunk beneath the water. They serve two purposes: mark the place where the pot is located, and notify other fishermen of their ownership. It is a serious matter for anyone to touch lobsters

guarded by the markers of another person. It is interesting to note the numberless varieties of color combinations, styles of banding, and shapes of knobs.

It was a tired crowd of workers that returned to Yarmouth that evening; for although everything was ready in the hut for the new occupants, Mrs. Chaisson insisted upon their going back for “one more really comfortable sleep” as she expressed it.

“How do we get back and forth from the huts?” inquired Desiré, the following morning.

“I’ll take ye out,” answered Simon, “and when you want to come in, you’ll have to walk until you meet somebody who’s goin’ your way and who will give you a lift.”

Jack wrote to the judge, telling him of their plans and probable delay; both he and Desiré wrote short notes to Priscilla; and before noon they were settled in their temporary home, Desiré helping Jack get the lobster pots ready to sink, while René lay at full length in the sand poking at a jellyfish. None of them saw a figure walk along the road, stop, watch for a while, then move silently across the grass and along the sand until it stood directly back of the workers.

CHAPTER XXV

LOBSTER POTS

“What are you doing with those?” demanded a rough voice so suddenly that Desiré dropped the marker she held, and gave a little scream, while René rolled over and lay with his head on the unfortunate jellyfish. Jack, the only cool person of the group, replied quietly, “Getting them ready to sink.”

“You get yourself ready to go along with me. These belong to Simon Denard, and you’ve no right to touch ’em. So come along.”

The man laid a heavy hand on Jack’s arm, and attempted to jerk him off somewhere.

“I know they belong to Simon,” replied Jack. “We’re friends of his, and he has lent us the place for a few weeks. We’re going to live here, my sister and I.” Jack gazed calmly into the dark, determined face and keen black eyes confronting him.

Desiré was too frightened to utter a word, and stood at her brother’s other side, holding fast to his coat. René suddenly recovered his voice and began to cry.

“Hush your noise!” ordered the man, without turning his head; and so great was the child’s astonishment that he really *did* stop.

“There’s no need of getting excited about this,” said Jack. “You can easily prove that I’m telling the truth if you’ll ask Mrs. Chaisson, Simon’s daughter, and—”

“I’ve no time to be running to Yarmouth; and it’s a likely story anyway,” answered the man shortly.

None of them saw René get up and run toward the road, where he saw a man passing by; so when he now hurried across the sand as fast as his short legs could move, dragging his captive by the arm, they all looked up in astonishment.

“Hullo!” cried the newcomer, “what’s the matter here, Marvine?”

“The young fellow claims old Simon lent him the outfit. Did you ever hear—”

“Maybe he did,” interrupted the other man indifferently, his blue eyes roaming from one face to another. “Saw all these folks here yesterday with the old man and his daughter.”

“Did, eh? Well, maybe it’s as he says then,” letting go of Jack’s arm as he spoke. “How’d you happen to be stopping here?”

“The kid dragged me off the road saying someone was going to carry away his brother.”

“Well,” said the man called Marvine, turning to Jack and Desiré, “sorry to have bothered you. No harm meant. Was only looking out for Simon’s things.”

“Quite all right,” replied Jack. “I suppose you do have to be careful.”

The two strangers strode out to the road again without further farewell, and were soon lost to sight. Desiré sank down on the sand as if she could not stand another minute.

“I’m most awfully sorry you were so frightened, dear,” said Jack, sitting down beside her and taking her hand in his, while René piled on top of his brother, crying exultantly, “I saved you, Jack; didn’t I?”

Desiré soon recovered her composure and got up to continue her work; but although he did not comment on the fact, Jack saw that her hands were still a bit shaky. Presently he suggested—“Hadn’t you better go in and start supper, Dissy? René can help me finish here.”

“Sure,” agreed the small boy importantly. “I can help Jack.”

Desiré went in, and the two boys sank the pots and set the markers, Jack of course doing most of the work, but René fully convinced that his brother could

never have managed without his aid.

“There are some other pots right next to where Simon told me to put ours,” observed Jack, as they were finishing supper.

René was so sleepy that he had left the table and curled himself up in an old rocker to take a nap.

“Oh, I do hope that they don’t belong to either of those awful men who were here this afternoon,” said Desiré with a shudder.

“They’re rough, of course, but they weren’t really so bad, Desiré. They have to protect their interests, and of course were looking after Simon’s. I hardly think, though, that either of them is our next-door neighbor. The hut beyond here looks deserted, but the pots and markers are there all right.”

Desiré took the tiny bedroom, and the boys had a couple of cots in the other room. Everybody was tired out with the unaccustomed work and excitement, and slept heavily until far later than usual. Jack, who was the first to waken, looked across at the other cot to see if René was still asleep, and was astonished to see that the cot was empty.

“Now where is that rascal?” he thought, crossing the room to the outside door, which was ajar.

He glanced out and saw his brother calmly playing in the sand a short distance from the hut.

“Don’t go any farther away, Renny,” he called softly, hoping not to disturb Desiré.

“No,” replied the child, vigorously slapping the sand into shape.

“What’s the matter?” called Desiré, who had wakened instantly at the sound of his voice.

“Nothing at all. Renny got up ahead of us and went out to play in the sand. He’s quite all right.”

“But what time is it?”

“You’d never guess. It’s eight o’clock.”

“Why, Jack, how dreadful!”

“Not at all; it’s quite all right. There’s nothing to hurry us here. Take your time. I’ll set the coffee on.”

“We’re certainly fashionable folk this morning,” laughed Desiré when, half an hour later, the three sat down to breakfast. “Renny, your feet are all wet,” as the child’s foot touched her under the table. “Let me see.”

“No!”

“René,” ordered Jack, “turn and stick your feet out.”

Slowly, most reluctantly, the boy obeyed; and Desiré exclaimed with dismay. He was wet to the waist. Their backs had been turned when he came in, and he had slid into his place at the table with all possible haste.

“How did you get like that?” asked Jack, but René only hung his head.

“Answer me, Renny.”

“Went in the water.”

“But haven’t I told you *never* to go into the water alone?”

The child nodded.

“You’ll have to go back to bed,” decreed his brother sternly, getting up from the table. “Sit still,” he directed Desiré. “I’ll attend to him.”

“Hadn’t you better put him in my room?” she asked.

“If you don’t mind,” replied Jack, leading the reluctant youngster from the room.

After a short interval he returned to resume his interrupted breakfast, saying as he sat down, “After we finish I’ll take him something. It will do him no harm to wait a while. He’s certainly always getting into difficulties.”

“But it’s quite a while now since he has done anything really bad,” objected

Desiré; “and he loves the water so, it must be quite a temptation.”

“I know, but his going in like this by himself might result in serious consequences; and I intend to keep him in bed most of the day. But you don’t need to stay in the house all the time. He’s perfectly safe here alone, and I’m sure he won’t get up without permission. I laid heavy penalties on such a procedure.”

At this point there was a sharp knock at the door, and when Jack opened it, a short, grey-bearded man stood before them. Not liking the look in the stranger’s eyes, Desiré crossed the room and stood beside her brother. Were all the people they were to meet on this venture undesirable? How she wished they had never heard of the lobster business!

CHAPTER XXVI

HANDS OFF!

“Good morning,” said Jack pleasantly, but looking questioningly at their caller.

“I’ve a serious charge to make,” answered the newcomer, without returning the greeting. “You’ve been trying to steal my lobsters. You know the penalty for that trick!”

“I most certainly have not done any such thing,” said Jack decidedly, while Desiré twisted her hands in dismay.

“No use denying it; I can prove it. Mine are right next to yours, and some of my markers have been pulled up and yours put in. Come out and see for yourself.”

Jack and Desiré followed the man quickly across the sand to the water.

“See? Here are five of my markers hidden under this old crate on your property, and five of your markers replacing those near-shore pots of mine. Facts don’t lie if folks do.”

“My brother never lies!” cried Desiré angrily. Jack had never heard her speak like that.

“Easy, Dissy,” he said softly.

“I certainly admit that it looks bad,” he said to the man; “but since I know the rules governing these things, I should hardly have been fool enough to do such a thing even if I had been so lacking in principle; and—”

“Jack!” interrupted Desiré. “René! Could a small boy have done this?” she

asked, facing their neighbor eagerly.

“Might; early in the morning, before the tide came in so far.”

“Jack, go and get him and we’ll see if he knows anything about it.”

While Jack was gone, Desiré explained to the man their presence in old Simon’s hut, and her reasons for suspecting that her younger brother had been responsible for the morning’s difficulties. Soon Jack returned, and led René directly to the man, who regarded him gravely.

“Tell this man, René,” directed his brother, “just exactly what you did when you were out here alone on the beach early this morning.”

“Pulled up dirty old markers and hid ’em, and pushed down nice ones we painted.”

René was obviously rather proud of his achievement, and quite puzzled as to the serious manner of his elders.

“Why did you do that?” asked the man, the suggestion of a twinkle appearing in his blue eyes.

“Wanted Jack’s lobster bed to look nice.”

“But those weren’t his; they were mine.”

“*Everything’s* Jack’s!”

Their neighbor smiled, and held out his hand to Jack.

“My mistake,” he said. “I didn’t know what a grasping partner you had.”

“He means well, but makes trouble sometimes. Take him back to bed; will you, Dissy?”

While Desiré put the little boy in bed again, and tried to impress upon him the seriousness of his mistake, Jack and his neighbor worked amiably side by side.

The days passed quickly, one very much like all the others which had preceded it; and at last they found themselves on the train, bound for home, with a fair

sum of money in return for several weeks of hard work.

CHAPTER XXVII

JACK'S JOBS

The summer days which followed were delightful ones. Priscilla reminded Jack of his promise to help her make a garden; so he worked hard, clearing the ground back of the cabin, and spading up beds under her directions. She planted very carefully the seeds given her by Madam Lovemore, and waited impatiently for the first bits of green to appear.

“Guess while I’m at it, I’ll make a vegetable garden too,” announced Jack, after he had finished the flower beds. “A bit late, perhaps, but we’ll get something out of it.”

“A good idea,” approved Desiré. “I’ll help you.”

She caught up the rake and followed him to the end of the property.

“I love to work out-of-doors,” she said, “and after you get a job I can attend to the vegetables while Prissy takes care of her flowers.”

“An’ I ain’t got nuthin’ to take care of,” sighed René, feeling that he had been left out of all these new plans.

“Should you like a garden, darling?” asked Desiré, her sympathy immediately aroused by his mournful tones.

“No, no old garden. Want a dog to take care of; ’n’ Jack promised me one, too.”

Desiré glanced up at her older brother who was leaning on his spade figuring out just where he would begin to dig.

“You did promise him, Jack, or practically so,” she said.

“No chance of being allowed to forget anything in this family,” he smiled. “I’ll see what I can do for you, René.”

The next day Jack went up alone to see Judge Herbine. “Don’t worry if I don’t show up for dinner,” he said to Desiré before leaving. “The judge told me yesterday that he had heard of two or three places where I might get a job, and to come up and see him today. I’ll keep going until I’ve investigated all the possibilities.”

“All right, dear; and the best of luck.”

They had had many talks on the drive to Yarmouth, and on the beach in front of the hut, as to the advisability of remaining in the Godet house.

“It’s simply living from hand to month,” Jack had said gravely; “but there seems to be nothing else in sight just now.”

“Even so, we’re certainly some better off than we should have been in Sissiboo,” Desiré said consolingly.

“But what would you do,” suggested Jack, “if somebody came along and wanted the cabin some day?”

“Let them have it, if they could prove they owned it; but Judge Herbine seems to think such a thing most unlikely. He said, you know, that they couldn’t get a clear title when that American wanted to buy it. But why, Jack, does somebody want it now?”

“No, not that I know of; but one can never tell what might happen. The bus line will run along the main road past our lane this summer, I understand; and some tourist might take a fancy to the little cabin and want to buy it. I suppose if enough money were spent on a search, it might be possible to establish the title; or someone who wanted it badly enough might be willing to take a chance. I don’t mean to worry you unduly, Desiré, but we mustn’t get so attached to the place that having to give it up sometime will come as a great shock.”

Her brother’s words came back to her mind many times that day as she went about her household tasks. Of course they mightn’t want to live right here

always. Jack must finish college, as they planned; but she wanted to go through high school; and after that, the magical trip to the States, where Jack might find his life-work. How many times they had gone over it all! At the rate money had come in so far, however, it would take many years to realize any of these day dreams, to say nothing of all of them. It seemed, no matter how careful she tried to be, to take so much money to feed and clothe them; and if somebody *should* claim the cabin—well, she'd better not think about that any more just now.

Late in the afternoon, when the lane was getting shadowy, the girls and René were sitting on the broad stone step watching for Jack. The sound of an approaching automobile broke the country stillness, and Judge Herbine's Ford presently stopped. Jack got out, followed by a big, awkward-looking brown dog. With one wild shriek, René dashed down the lane and threw his arms around the animal's neck. The judge waved to the girls, and drove away laughing.

"I've got a dog! I've got a dog!" chanted René, dragging the big beast toward the house.

"He's perfectly gentle, for all his size," said Jack in reply to Desiré's questioning look. "But René, you must be kind to the dog, and never hurt him."

"Where in the world did you get him?" demanded Priscilla, who did not like any dog very well, and especially a big one.

"The judge found him somewhere off in the country," replied Jack, sitting down on the step which was much too low for his long legs.

"He is hardly a beauty," observed Desiré, watching René mauling his new friend.

"No, but he's always been used to children, and the judge thought that a good recommendation. Of course he's awkward, and probably mischievous; for he's not yet full grown—"

"*Don't* tell me he will get bigger!" groaned Desiré. "Where shall we ever put him?"

"I'll fix a place; don't worry about that part of it," Jack promised, getting up to go into the cabin.

The evening was a riot of small boy and dog. With much difficulty they were

separated at bedtime; for René insisted upon his new pal sleeping on the foot of the bed, and wept copiously when the dog was banished. They said *he* mustn't ever hurt the dog, he moaned, and here they were hurting him by taking him away!

“If you're going to be unruly over the dog,” said Jack, “I shall take him right back, and you will never have another.”

“Jack will fix Rover up all nice somewhere,” promised Desiré, “and you'll see him again in the morning.”

Quiet was restored, and after she had gotten René to bed, Desiré went out behind the cabin where Jack was preparing a place for the new member of the family. He had turned on an end the box which had held their belongings while they were on the road, and placed a bit of old carpet in the bottom.

“Behold the kennel!” he said proudly, with a wave of the hand.

“But will he stay in it?” asked Desiré, somewhat doubtfully.

“Not without being tied, for a few nights,” replied Jack, running a rope from the dog's collar through a stout staple on the side of the box. “Then he'll be used to the place.”

“You haven't told me anything yet about your job prospects,” said Desiré rather reproachfully, as they walked around to the front door.

“How could I, in all the noise and excitement?” laughed Jack. “Let's sit out here for a while. Wait a minute; I'll get a couple of chairs.”

He brought out the rocker for his sister, and a straight chair for himself, tilting it back against the side of the house to make it more comfortable.

“It's a great night,” he commented, with a sigh of content. “Just see that moon! Doesn't it look as if it were stuck in the top of the trees?”

“Nights like this ought to make our gardens grow fast,” replied Desiré. “Now what about the job?”

“Well, I have a temporary one; will last about a week or two; and a promise of a

steady one for the rest of the summer. Isn't that great?"

"Certainly is. Where, and what doing?"

"You know we heard that there was to be a bus line through this part of the country?"

"Yes, but you can't drive a bus, Jack."

"Hardly; but it seems that the company that is to run it is sending men here from Boston who, though they know how to run busses, know nothing about the country. So I'm to ride around with them, show them the best roads, and tell them local history until they've learned the ropes. Of course that won't take very long, but it's fair pay while it lasts. They'll pick me up at the end of the lane here every day."

"Priscilla and René will be desperately envious of you, I'm afraid."

"Very likely. Maybe before the season is over I'll be able to take all of you on a little trip, over part of the route at least."

"That would be lovely, but don't mention it before the children. I feel that if we have any extra money it ought to be put away."

"I suppose you're right; but I'd like to be able to give you a little pleasure sometimes."

"I know, and I do have pleasure, Jack; and we'll just look forward to more chance for such things in the future. And about the other job?"

"Jim Rutland is going to open a kind of lunch stand in one end of his general store; for tourists, you know. He wants me to run it."

"But why does Jim need anyone? I should think he could attend to both himself."

"He has to be out of the store quite a lot. He sells everything from chickens to farm machinery, has a gas station, and I don't know what else. He thought his son would stay home and help him out this summer, as he did last; but he had a chance to go to the States, and he's going."

“Is it much of a job, Jack?” asked Desiré, rather doubtfully.

“Not so much, but there’s pretty good money in it. He is going to let me have a small commission on the tourist business, aside from a fair salary. Makes it more interesting, and it will do very well indeed until I have an opportunity at something better. It will keep us going until fall—when I can have the mail again—and I hope will give us something to add to the ‘nest egg.’”

They fell silent, Jack wondering how he could get something really worth while to do, and Desiré racking her brains to think of some way in which she could contribute to their income.

“Who’s going to do the baking for the lunch room?” she asked suddenly, “Jim hasn’t a wife or mother, has he?”

“No; but why do you want to know?”

“I thought I might do it.”

“You! You have plenty to do now.”

“Not really, dear. The work here is very easy, and Prissy is getting to be quite a help. It wouldn’t be at all hard to bake some cookies and tarts, make sandwiches, and things like that. I could make pies, using wild berries which the children could gather. Oh, if Jim Rutland is willing, say you’ll let me try, Jack. I’ll bet you’d have the most popular lunch room in Nova Scotia! And think what it would mean, with your commission!”

“I’ve no doubt of its popularity after people had once tasted the good things you can make.”

“I could spread my biscuits with jam, or serve them hot with honey; and, oh, there would be no end to the nice little things, all ready to eat, that you could sell or serve.”

Desiré’s imagination, fired by her enthusiasm, supplied her with numerous ideas to be put into practice if only Jack wouldn’t object.

“Do let me try it, Jack.”

“I’m afraid that you would overwork.”

“Nonsense. Of course I won’t. I promise to give it up if I feel that it’s too much. But I just *love* to cook.”

“Well, I’ll speak to Jim tomorrow, if I get a chance, and see what his plans are. Meanwhile, I’ve got to be ready to meet the bus at seven-thirty in the morning; so let’s go in.”

The big bus stopped at the end of the lane promptly at seven-thirty each morning for a week; then Jack announced one night that tomorrow would be his last day.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A FIND

“Sorry?” asked Desiré, looking up from the lettuce she was preparing for their supper.

“It has been pleasant,” replied her brother, selecting a radish from a dish on the table, and beginning to eat it. “George, the driver, is a nice fellow, and we’ve had some fun together; but it’s a kind of a lazy life, after all. Of course somebody has to do it, but I think I prefer more activity.”

“Have you seen Jim yet about the baked goods?”

Jack’s hours had been so arranged that he had been unable to stop at the Rutland General Store.

“Ran across him this noon. He’s tickled to death over your ideas, and says he’ll take everything you can make, starting Thursday.”

Desiré was delighted.

“You’ll just have to get rid of that horrid dog,” declared Priscilla, coming in at that moment, about ready to cry.

“Why, what’s he done now?” asked Jack.

“He went and dug up all my nasturtiums. He’s always digging somewhere. He’s a perfect pest!”

“I’ll look after him,” said her brother, going out to the garden.

He punished Rover, and, leaving Priscilla replanting the remnants of her flowers, returned to Desiré.

“I wouldn’t say it before the children,” said Desiré, when Jack reported the condition of Priscilla’s garden, “but Rover *has* a most unfortunate passion for digging; and, as if he knew that Priscilla disapproved of him, he usually selects some part of her garden. I’ve whipped him two or three times, but back he goes the next time the fancy strikes him.”

Jack laughed. “I can imagine the kind of beatings you give him. But,” he added anxiously, “had you rather get rid of him?”

“Oh, no; he’s such a lovable animal that you can’t help being attached to him in spite of his faults; and then, too, René thinks the world of him. It wouldn’t be fair to take away his pet.”

The following morning, just as the big bus reached the lane, one of the tires exploded with a loud report; and Jack had to help the driver make repairs. The other Wistmores stood in the shade of the trees, watching; even Desiré could not resist the opportunity to see what had to be done. There were a few passengers already on board, and two or three of them got out to stroll up and down the road.

“What a darling house!” exclaimed one young lady, peering down the lane. “Come here, Dad; see!”

The grey-haired man looked in the direction of her pointing finger, then at the little group under the trees.

“You live here?” he asked.

“Oh, do you?” said the lady, before Desiré had hardly finished her affirmative reply; “then may we look at the house?”

“Certainly,” replied the girl politely, although she was far from willing to show it.

The man and woman examined the cabin both inside and out, with keen interest; even the garden was included in the inspection. Occasionally they talked together in such low tones that Desiré could not distinguish what they were

saying. She felt a queer sinking dread as she followed them around. The children had stayed near the bus, and it seemed as if she were abandoned to these odd tourists.

On the stone doorstep the man turned back, after they had gone over the place for the second time.

“Do you own this?” he asked.

“No, sir.”

“Who does?” demanded the woman.

“It doesn’t belong to anybody, really,” confessed poor Desiré reluctantly. “It’s something about a title. We just live here.”

“Oh, Dad, buy it for me. I must have it!” exclaimed the young woman.

“I’ll make inquiries, and—” the man was saying, when a loud blast from the horn summoned them to the bus. They hurried down the lane with a careless goodbye to the girl in the doorway.

“Oh, Dissy,” called Priscilla, running toward her, closely followed by René and Rover. “Why—what’s the matter?” as she noticed her sister’s pale face and unnatural manner.

“Just tired,” Desiré managed to reply, though such a storm of emotion surged within her that she felt almost overcome by it.

“Go and lie down, and I’ll do the dishes and clean up,” offered Priscilla. “René, take the dog out to the garden and stay there until I call you,” she added importantly. “Dissy’s going to take a nap.”

“Thank you, Priscilla dear,” replied the girl gratefully. “I think I shall lie down. Call me at eleven o’clock. I shan’t need anything until then.”

Desiré kissed her little sister, escaped into her room as quickly as possible, and closed the door. In the privacy and quiet which she felt she must have at all costs, she gave way to tears. What would they do now? For these rich people could get anything they set their hearts on. Jack was right in warning her not to

get too fond of the place. She thought she hadn't, but now when it was slipping slowly but surely from their grasp—Oh! and Desiré hid her face in the pillow to drown her sobs.

Presently she forced herself to grow calmer, and when Priscilla quietly put her head in at eleven o'clock Desiré, pale, but outwardly composed, was bathing her face.

"It was sweet of you to take care of things, Prissy dear," she said. "I'll get dinner now; I'm quite all right. You run out-of-doors until it's ready."

After a searching look at her sister, the child obeyed; but all the afternoon she kept making excuses to come to the front yard, where Desiré sat sewing, to see if she was all right. While her sister was getting supper, Priscilla walked down the lane to meet Jack.

"I'm afraid there's something awful the matter with Dissy, Jack," began the child, slipping her hand into his. "She's not really sick—I don't think—but she's not a bit like *her*."

"Well," replied Jack quietly, for he had heard bits of conversation on the bus that day, and they gave him an advance inkling of Desiré's trouble, "don't say anything to her, or let her know that you notice anything. I'll talk to her tonight."

"I didn't, Jack. I just helped all I could, and stayed where she could call me."

"That's a good girl; you're getting to be a great help to us," tightening his grasp on her brown, plump little hand.

Fortunately René had a silly fit at the table, and kept them all laughing in spite of themselves; so the meal passed off without any constraint or self-consciousness. After the children were in bed, and the cabin in order for the night, Jack drew Desiré out on the doorstep, and, sitting down, beside her, put his arm around her.

"Now tell me all about it," he suggested gently.

"About what, Jack?"

"Whatever's troubling you. It's not fair to keep me in the dark, you know."

Dropping her head on his broad shoulder, she related, in disjointed sentences, the history of the morning.

“I guessed as much,” he commented, as she finished. “I overheard their conversation on the bus.”

“Can’t they take it, if they don’t mind not having—having—”

“A clear title? I don’t know, dear; I’ll see what I can find out from the judge tomorrow. I should say, though, that we must not expect to keep it. We talked of that possibility; don’t you remember?”

“Yes; but—such a thing seemed so—so very improbable,” faltered Desiré. “The place had been deserted for so long.”

“If we have to give it up we can probably find something in town. There’s an old place near Judge Herbine’s, and another one on the road to the Basin. Don’t take it so to heart, Dissy; we’ll find a place somewhere, even if we have to leave this; and we may not. It’s not like you to look on the dark side of things.”

Cheered by Jack’s words and manner, Desiré began to feel that she had been foolish to let herself become so disturbed, and she made a heroic effort to resume her natural manner. She succeeded so well that by bedtime they were laughing over the discovery of Rover’s latest escapade, a hole dug beside the step on which they were sitting. Jack set his foot in it as they rose to go in, thereby nearly upsetting himself and Desiré as well.

“Oh, by the way, Dissy,” remarked Jack after they had gone into the house, “I almost forgot to tell you something. You’ll never guess whom I saw today.”

“Then tell me right away.”

“My old enemy.”

“Oh, Jack!” cried Desiré fearfully. “Where?”

“On the bus. He was on his way to work in the orchards around Annapolis. He was rather friendly, for him, and just as he was leaving the bus, he thrust these into my hand and told me to give them to you.”

Desiré peered curiously at the round, brown things which her brother pulled out of his pocket.

“What are they?”

“Some kind of bulbs. You’d better plant them tomorrow.”

“What’s the use if we’re going to lose the place?” she queried, rather bitterly.

Jack looked at her reprovingly. “That doesn’t sound a bit like my cheerful partner.”

“You’re right, Jack. I’m sorry. I’ll plant them tomorrow, and if we don’t see them bloom, perhaps they will give pleasure to someone else.”

The next morning she selected a lightly shaded spot where the soil looked rich and promising, and began to dig. Before long, her spade struck a large stone.

“Wonder if I can get that out?” she thought. “This is the best place in the yard for unknown plants; for they’ll get a mixture of sun and shade.”

Vigorously she attacked the stone, and after much exertion succeeded in getting it out. Rolling it carelessly to one side, she was busily trying to smooth out the ragged, uneven earth with the spade, when there was a sound of metal striking on metal.

“Jack,” she called to her brother, who was in the house reenforcing a shelf.

“What’s wanted?” he responded, sticking his head out of the window.

“Come here, quick!”

Throwing his long legs over the sill, he dropped onto the ground and was at her side in a moment. “What’s the matter,” he asked; “snake?”

“Something’s down there,” pointing to the hole.

Jack seized the spade and quickly uncovered an iron box. Desiré was trembling violently, and could only gaze silently at the strange object.

“What have you got?” demanded René, appearing at that moment from the front

yard. “Prissy!” he shrieked, without waiting for an answer, “come ’n’ see!”

Priscilla appeared, viewed the find calmly, and proposed taking it into the house to see what it contained.

“Do you think we had better take it over to the judge’s?” asked Desiré, finally finding her voice. “Perhaps we should not open it by ourselves.”

“I’ll go right after him,” declared Jack. “Just put some papers on the table so I can carry the box in and set it down before I go.”

CHAPTER XXIX

55

W-17 —15x12—6754

It seemed a long time before they heard the sound of the Ford, but it was in reality only about half an hour; for Jack had covered the ground at his best speed, and the judge lost no time in getting back with him.

“Well,” said Judge Herbine, darting into the room and up to the table, “lots of excitement. Got anything to open it with, Jack? It’s locked.”

With considerable difficulty they managed to force the lock, and pry up the cover. Then everyone crowded around to peer inside. The box was filled with gold and silver pieces.

“Money!” gasped Jack.

“Oh,” cried Desiré, “it must have been out there ever since the Expulsion. I read in my little blue history that some of the Acadians buried their savings in their gardens before they left the country, because they expected to come back again very soon.”

“Then it probably belonged to our ancestors,” said Jack slowly.

“Let’s tip it out,” proposed the judge. “It looks to me like a goodly sum.”

Tarnished and dull, it lay in a heap on the table; and as the judge turned the box right side up again, he caught sight of some papers in the bottom.

“Documents of some kind!” he exclaimed, loosening them carefully.

Stiff, yellow with age, the writing was dim but discernible.

“That’s a will, isn’t it?” asked Jack, catching sight of a few words at the top of the sheet, as the man unfolded it slowly.

“Exactly. ‘To my daughter, Desiré Godet and her heirs forever—’” he read. “6754-1755.”

“What?” gasped Desiré, crowding closer to look at the paper.

“This house and money; and here’s the missing deed with the will. I congratulate you—most heartily, children. This is evidently—a perfectly legal will—and the long lost deed; and since you are Godet survivors—the place and the money must belong to you.”

“Oh, Jack!” cried Desiré, throwing herself into his arms, “now you can go back to college, and nobody can ever take this house away from us. It is really our *home*, now, just as I always felt it was.” Desiré was sobbing in her delirium of joy.

“N’ is all that money ours?” demanded René, staring at it with wide eyes.

“Guess it is, my boy,” replied the judge, adding to Jack, “And some of these are doubtless rare pieces—worth much more than their intrinsic value.”

“Then we can have an automobile,” pronounced René.

Everybody laughed, and the tension was somewhat relieved.

“Look, Jack,” said Desiré, “there are two of the numbers from that slip of paper that was in Father’s box.”

“What’s that?” inquired the judge, whirling around like a top.

Desiré explained while Jack got the paper and they all examined it carefully.

“1755 is the year,” decided the judge, “and 6754 the number of the deed; but—Wait a minute; I have an idea.”

Out into the garden he hurried, followed by the whole family. With the hole as a

base, he measured and calculated, while the others watched silently.

“I have it!” he exclaimed at last. “*W* means west of the house; *15* is the depth of the hole, and *12* the distance from the edge of the lot.”

“The mystery is solved at last!” exulted Desiré.

Several weeks later the ownership of the little cabin was formally handed over to the Wistmores, under the guardianship of Judge Herbine, and their little fortune duly deposited to their credit, ready for the fall when Jack was to go to college, and Desiré to high school.

THE END

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- Preserved the copyright notice from the printed edition, although this book is in the public domain in the country of publication.
- Silently corrected a few typos (but left nonstandard spelling and dialect as is).
- Rearranged front matter to a more-logical streaming order and added a Table of Contents.
- In the text versions, delimited text in italics by underscores.
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