





SIDNEY: HER SUMMER ON
THE ST. LAWRENCE



“**S**IDNEY drew a long breath of relief and fell to pondering the situation.” Frontispiece. See page 8.

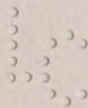
SIDNEY: HER SUMMER ON THE ST. LAWRENCE

BY

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"URSULA'S FRESHMAN," "NATHALIE'S SISTER,"
"BY THE GOOD SAINTE ANNE," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY
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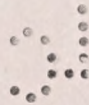
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SIDNEY: HER SUMMER ON THE ST. LAWRENCE

CHAPTER ONE

WITH a sudden snap, as of a testy Junebug, Bungay straightened himself with his head in Sidney's lap, and waved one plump leg out of the open window of the sleeping-car.

"Good-by, everybody. We're going to Auntie Jack's house, and I've tored a nawful hole in my new stocking."

Then the train moved out of the station, and an unfeeling porter closed the window, to the manifest disapproval of Bungay, who liked the fumes of the tunnel.

"We shall smother ourselves," he explained. "It's going to be night pretty soon, too, and I always sleep with my window open."

The porter in his turn sought to explain.

"But you don't want all that black smoke inside the car, sonny."

"I ain't sonny, and I don't see why you should mind black smoke," he retorted curtly.

Sidney interposed.

"Bungay!" she said warningly.

“Yes, I know; but it won’t show any on him.” Then hastily Bungay changed the subject. “And now let’s talk about what we’ll do when we get to Auntie Jack’s.”

Nevertheless, the porter bore no malice. He had met irrepressible four-year-olds before in the course of his travels. Moreover, his palm had been crossed with silver by Bungay’s father. It was still early in the season and passengers were few. He lingered beside Bungay’s section.

“Where does yo’ Auntie Jack live, suh?” he queried.

The accent of respect mollified Bungay, who promptly braced his knee against Sidney’s ribs and pried himself about to face his questioner.

“She lives in Canada now, and she’s got three children and a half.”

“What’s tuk off the rest of him?” the porter asked sympathetically.

“Nothing has n’t. He’s all there. You see, Ruth’s her whole child and so’s Paul, and he’s their half-brother,” Bungay made elaborate explanation. “Then he’s her half-child, of course. He is n’t very well, thank you, and my mamma has bought Auntie Jack a blue silk petti — ”

Once more Sidney felt herself moved to interpose. This time, moreover, she did so with consummate tact.

“Bungay,” she asked abruptly; “do you happen to remember where we put that box of biscuits?”

Bungay did happen to remember, and forthwith he subsided into a crumbly and contented silence, while his sister drew a sigh of relief. She approved children who answered when they were spoken to, without waiting for the coy inquiry as to whether they had lost their tongues. Nevertheless, now and then, she found herself wishing that Bungay had a few reservations. Bungay, she told herself, fairly revelled in prolixity of detail.

Half an hour later, Bungay was again smiling up into the porter's face.

“My name is Maurice Dalhousie Bungay Stayre, and this is my sister, Sidney Stayre; but they call me Bungay for short.”

The porter smiled deprecatingly, for he read disapproval in Sidney's face.

“What makes them call you Bungay?” he asked.

“Because. And we are going to spend two months with Auntie Jack. She asked us, and mamma said I might go, if I would n't tease for a second help of salad. She says it is n't good for my 'gestion to eat so much salad. Sidney may eat all she wants. I s'pose that's because she does n't have any 'gestion.”

“Bungay, don't you want another biscuit?” Sidney queried hurriedly.

But Bungay cast upon her a chiding glance.

"It's only goops that interrupt," he admonished her. "You told me that, your own self, just this morning." Then he faced the porter once more. "Where's the bed?" he asked.

"The bed?"

"Yes, the bed you make up out of the wall. My papa told me how you did it. He said you turned a knob and let down a bed and there 't'was, all a pretty little bedroom with two pillows and a 'lectric light."

"That will come by and by, suh."

"When?"

"After dark."

"But I want it now. I'm ercustomed to go to bed before dark, and I want to see the bedroom," Bungay observed with dignity. "I'd like the bedroom now, please, and then I'll put my pajamas on, and Sidney will put—"

But the porter was a man of discretion; he realized that his duty called him to the rear platform. Aloud and at length Bungay bemoaned his departure.

"What for did he go, Sidney? I was just talking to him, and I wish he had n't goed."

"Talk to me instead, dear."

"No; I'd rather talk to him, his mouth looks so funny when he talks back. Your mouth

does n't look funny any; but maybe it would, if the rest of your face was black. What do you suppose his name is?"

But Sidney was busy with the discarded biscuit box.

"Sambo," she said, with absent-minded conviction.

Bungay looked up alertly.

"When did he tell you 'bout that?"

"He did n't tell me."

"Then how did you know?"

And Sidney made answer, as she tugged at a string which was just too short to reach around the box, —

"Oh, I could n't help knowing it."

There was a short silence while Sidney wrestled with the string and Bungay wrestled with a wholly new idea.

"I should n't wonder if you were a very smart girl," he observed at length. "What do you suppose Auntie Jack is doing now?"

Sidney made a swift mental calculation. It was now five o'clock. They were due at their journey's end at three, the next afternoon. Twenty-two hours of Bungay's society, and, on an average, Bungay could demand, and receive, the answers to eleven questions a minute. Eleven times sixty times twenty-two! And Sidney was just sixteen,

and this was her first long journey. Even the possible delights of a summer in Canada lost something of their charm, as she contemplated the intervening period. In the matter of interrogation points, the Westminster Catechism was as nothing in comparison with Maurice Dalhousie Stayre.

Nevertheless, in spite of her misgivings, Sidney had given alert assent to the question as to whether her aunt's invitation should be accepted. The Stayres were quite too numerous for the paternal income to provide summer journeyings for them all. They extended in a long flight from sixteen-year-old Sidney down to four-year-old Maurice, and Mr. Stayre, who made up in cleverness for what he lacked in business ability, was assistant editor of a daily paper. His wife, meanwhile, lived upon the glory of his potential reputation, taught her seven children to tell the truth and keep their elbows off the table, and devoted to mending their clothes such time and energy as was left to her after mending their morals and their manners.

According to the Blue Book of her home city, Auntie Jack was Mrs. John Addison, born Stayre, wife of a lawyer famous in criminal cases the State over. According to the same authority, her summer home was in the Berkshire hills;

nevertheless, it was to Canada that she had bidden her young niece and nephew, and it was to Canada now that niece and nephew were hastening as fast as the express train could carry them.

“Don’t fail to let me have Bungay,” Auntie Jack had written to Mrs. Stayre. “Ruth needs somebody to play with, and it is no more to take care of two children than one. And I am longing to have Judith and Sidney know each other. So near of an age and cousins, they can’t fail to be good friends. As for Wade, you don’t need to worry about him, for the doctors say that he cannot possibly be a source of danger to any one. My love to the children, and tell Sidney to start as soon as possible after the twenty-eighth.”

It was now the thirtieth. The great trunk had been packed and strapped and borne away by the expressman, and, almost before she realized it, Sidney herself was being borne away by the north-bound train. She would have liked time to realize the fact of her departure; but there had been the answering the babel of farewells from her father and mother and the five intermediate Stayres, and there had been the need of suppressing Bungay who, his sentimental good-bys said, was rioting among the hand luggage in a vain search for his flannel elephant. Then the porter had claimed his attention, and there had been the

need of a second suppression. By the time that had been accomplished, Sidney was ready to sink back at her ease, while she counted over the tale of her hand luggage to see that nothing had escaped her. In planning for the journey, she had determined to limit her belongings to her umbrella and one small bag. Unfortunately, she had taken no account of the belongings of Bungay. They increased the list by a box of biscuits, another box of miscellaneous lunch, and a lop-eared Boston bag whence protruded the corner of a book, the flannel trunk of his elephant and the end of his xylophone. Bungay had laid especial stress upon the need of having the xylophone within easy reach.

“We wants it to bemuse Jumbo, if he does n’t sleep good in the bedroom car,” he insisted, and Sidney had yielded, merely because the xylophone would be far less discordant than Bungay himself, in case he discovered its absence.

But even the excitement of a journey is bound to have its reaction. The questions ceased, and Bungay dropped into an open-mouthed doze, his flannel Jumbo clasped in his arms, and its cracker prototype crumbled in the hollow of his pudgy fist. Then, for the first time since the arrival of her aunt’s letter, Sidney drew a long breath of relief and fell to pondering the situation.

To her girlish mind, the situation was a subject meet for much pondering. Even at its dullest, life holds all things within reach of the mental grasp of a girl of just sixteen. The trivial round sends out all manner of salient angles to her who is ready to seize them, and Sidney's grasp was an eager one. Only the year before, she had been bidden to the library, one night, to be told that she was to be put into a famous uptown school. She was too elated to think of the discrepancy between even her moderate expenses as day pupil and the careful economy of the large household whose income was far too narrow to meet the demands of its social position. She calmly accepted her father's statement that she must prepare herself for the college course which he hoped one day to give her, and she plunged into her new life with the zest of a healthy girl. All winter long, she had revelled in the organized routine of work and play, making friendships and enmities which she fondly imagined were to outlast her lifetime, and, meanwhile, rapidly winning her way to a position of some prominence even among the critical circle of the boarders who were supposed to rule all things, in so far as public opinion was concerned.

The winter ended, she had been making up her mind to adapt herself to the relative monotony of

an uneventful and wholly domestic summer, when her aunt's letter had come, asking herself and Bungay to spend the summer in the cottage she had hired on the banks of the broad St. Lawrence. Auntie Jack had been unable to find a house small enough for the necessities of her immediate family. There was room to spare and, moreover, she had theories in regard to the need that cousins should know one another. It was manifestly impossible for her to add seven Stayres to her summer establishment. She contented herself with the ends of the series, and looked forward complacently to the happy weeks which must inevitably grow out of such a combination. Unfortunately, she took no heed of the fact that cousins are not always kin.

Notwithstanding certain misgivings in regard to Bungay, Sidney's anticipations were altogether rosy. Auntie Jack had made several flying visits to New York, and the girl had gained a hearty liking for the dainty little woman whose dress and manner so plainly betokened the graciousness gained from easy, care-free living. Auntie Jack was an established fact in Sidney's life. Auntie Jack's children were still matters of some uncertainty. There were four of them, five-year-old Ruth, Paul, and Judith who had escaped being her own twin by the narrow margin of a single

week. Judith had been at boarding-school, and knew the technical terms of basket-ball. Sidney was sure of her ground there. She felt some uncertainty in regard to Paul; but she looked forward to Ruth as a possible outlet for some of the superfluous vitality bottled up in Bungay. To the fourth child, or half-child, as Bungay termed him, she vouchsafed scarcely a thought. He was quite old, fully ten years older than herself. He had started to be a lawyer like his stepfather; but something had gone wrong with his health, and it was on his account that Auntie Jack had turned her back upon the place in the Berkshires and buried herself in the little French hamlet where social life was not, and where one slept, all summer long, with four blankets on one's bed and a fifth within easy reach. For the rest, Sidney was uncertain whether the eyes or the brain of Wade Winthrop were at fault; but she cherished the romantic hope that the trouble had had its origin in his having been crossed in love.

At New Haven, Bungay wakened into sudden garrulity.

"Is that man Mr. Auntie Jack?" he demanded, as a broad-shouldered, blond man followed his suitcase into the opposite section.

"Hush, dear. No," Sidney admonished him hastily.

“What for should I hush? Auntie Jack is a nice lady, and he’s got just the same kind of an umbrella handle and blue eyes. Where’s he going?”

“I don’t know.” Sidney felt her cheeks growing crimson, as she turned away from meeting the stranger’s merry eyes.

“Do you suppose he’s going to see his Auntie Jack?” Bungay pursued alertly.

“Bungay dear, look out of the window and see that pretty spotty horse.”

“I don’t care about spotty horses, and you can’t see only his legs, anyhow. What do you suppose his name is?”

“Dobbin,” Sidney suggested, with a desperate endeavour to focus Bungay’s attention upon the scene outside. “Just see that —”

But Bungay, elephant in hand, dived past her and festooned himself over the arm of the opposite seat.

“Is your name Dobbin really and truly?” he demanded of the stranger who was already drawing a magazine from his suitcase.

The stranger looked up with a smile.

“No, youngster; I am sorry to say that it is not.”

“What is it, then?”

“Duncan Ogilvie.”

Bungay edged a step nearer; but his accent took on a minor key, as if of disappointment.

“Oh, I thought it was Dobbin.”

“What made you think that?”

Bungay brandished his elephant accusingly towards his sister, although he took careful heed not to meet her warning glance.

“Sidney told me so.”

Duncan Ogilvie cast one amused look across the aisle, and saw a young girl, comely, hearty and blushing to the tips of her ears. The one look assured him that her gown was simple and becoming, that she had pretty feet and that her head, just then, was rather aggressively erect. Then his eyes dropped to the chubby face at his elbow.

“Come and help me look at these pictures, old man,” he said cordially.

And Bungay never hesitated. The stranger's manner was wholly winning; moreover, Bungay was canny enough to realize that rebuke awaited him from across the aisle. Without one backward glance, he wriggled himself up on the seat beside the stranger, pried himself into position by dint of his customary combination of his own elbow and another's ribs, and observed serenely, —

“Thank you; but I like better to talk. We're going to Auntie Jack's house to stay all summer,

and my mamma is sending Auntie Jack a blue silk petticoat. It's in the trunk, and so is Jumbo's blanket he wears in the winter. This is Jumbo. Auntie Jack made him for me. She's a lovely lady, and she's got a solid gold back tooth."

And Sidney, powerless to stem the tide of his confidences, vainly sought to bury herself in the pages of her own magazine. For a long hour, Bungay's tongue ran on, commaless. Then, as the porter passed him, he lifted up his voice.

"Sambo," he said imperiously; "it's my bedtime now, and I wish you'd turn the knob in the wall and make out my bedroom. I'd like to put Jumbo to bed, if you please, so he won't be sleepy in his eyes when he gets to Auntie Jack's."

CHAPTER TWO

SIDE by side on the bank of the chattering river, Judith Addison and Janet Leslie sat and chattered in unison with the stream at their feet. They had been sworn friends for a week now, and they had discussed and agreed upon almost every point of girlish philosophy. Nevertheless, there were a few details yet to be filled in, and, since time was finite, their tongues wagged busily. Janet's needle kept pace with her tongue; but Judith's work lay in her lap and her hands were clasped between the back of her head and the tree against which she was leaning. Twenty feet away, Ronald Leslie, huge and healthy and boyish, lay stretched at his whole long length in a hammock, deeply engrossed in his book. Beside him in a second hammock, Wade Winthrop rocked idly to and fro, and there was a heavy shadow in his eyes, as they rested on the vast and comely figure of his unconscious neighbour. Under the edge of the river bank at their feet, Ruth Addison was balancing her round little person on a round little stone, while she fished for trout with a bent

pin and two yards of demoralized blue baby ribbon.

Suddenly Judith leaned forward to look at the narrow strip of muslin in Janet's hands.

"How beautifully you do sew, Janet!" she said admiringly.

"Do you think so? They make us do it, in the convent, and we have to learn, whether we like it or not. I do like it; but it wouldn't make any difference if I didn't. Grace Blanchette hates it and shirked, and the nuns found it out and made her take out five yards of hemming and do it all over."

Judith laughed, as she looked from Janet's dots of stitches to the uneven, impressionistic scrawls she was sewing into her own square of linen.

"Don't you believe they would have a bad time with me, though?" she suggested. "I never could do that work of yours; it would give me the fidgets in my spine."

Janet threaded her needle demurely. She was a thin-faced little English girl of fourteen, and the two years between her and Judith was emphasized by the extreme difference in their dress and manner. Judith was like a sleek Persian kitten; Janet was a small gray mouse, thin and bright-eyed and alert.

"The nuns don't let us have fidgets," she

answered, as she slowly drew her thread into place.

Judith laughed again.

“That is the way my mother feels about it; but I tell her I don’t have fidgets, fidgets have me. What makes you go to a convent?”

Janet set a whole dozen of dainty, deliberate stitches.

“Really, I never stopped to think,” she replied then. “I suppose it is because there aren’t any other good schools here, and because my mother wants me to learn to speak good French.”

“You don’t have to go to a convent for that,” Judith observed, as she picked up her work once more. “In our school, we have a French teacher who comes, three days a week. I am almost through the grammar now, and, twice a month, we have to write compositions in French.”

Janet glanced up with an admiration which was wholly free from satire.

“That must be very hard.”

“It is, awful. Do you write compositions, too?”

“No; we just talk it.”

Judith shook her head.

“That’s easy. Wait till you have to write about poetry and politics and recollections of famous people, and then you’ll find out that you don’t like it any better than I do.”

Prudently Janet changed the subject.

"Where is your brother, this afternoon?"

"Over there in the hammock, beyond yours."

"No; I mean Paul."

"Fishing, of course. I never thought I should get tired of trout; but I am eating them, twice a day. Paul won't let any be thrown away, and he wants to fish all the time. He was in a shocking temper at me, to-day, because I would n't go with him."

"Why would n't you?"

"Because I hate thick shoes and to get all in a muss. Besides, I like best to stay here and talk to you."

Janet raised her brows and a mischievous dimple appeared beside her thin scarlet lips.

"You might have asked me to go, too."

"You don't fish."

"Why not?"

"Because you are too dainty and finicky. I don't believe you ever baited a hook in your life."

Janet laughed.

"I could, if I wanted to; but I don't have to."

"Why not?"

"Ronald does it."

"Ronald? But he is your brother."

"Of course," Janet assented. "That's the reason."

Then Judith, in the space of a sentence, summed up the core of her girlish philosophy.

“Yes; but I supposed it was some other girl’s brother who generally baited your hook.”

Janet smiled contentedly to herself.

“Not when Ronald is about,” she replied.

Judith, her chin on her fists, pondered the situation.

“I wish my brother were as splendid as yours,” she said slowly, as she glanced across at the nearer hammock where a thatch of wavy dark hair rested on a scarlet cushion. “I think Ronald Leslie is the best-looking man I ever saw in my life.”

“It’s only because he is so big,” Janet observed tranquilly. “Paul has six years to catch up to him.”

“I was n’t thinking of Paul then. He’s nothing but a child, anyway. It was Wade I meant.”

Janet bent her head over a refractory stitch. At heart, she was a little afraid of the thin, grave-looking man with the trouble in his eyes, and she would have preferred not to discuss him, even with his sister. Paul was more within the limits of her ken, although even his words and ways occasionally defied her comprehension.

“Well?” she said interrogatively.

But Judith suddenly turned reticent.

“Oh, nothing,” she evaded, and the chatter of the river filled in the pause of their talk.

On the narrow strip of land beyond the river, an electric train went buzzing lazily down to St. Joachim; beyond that again, the huge stream of the St. Lawrence flowed smoothly seaward along the base of the purple Laurentides. In the other direction lay the village, one single street winding along between the thatched, whitewashed barns and the long, low houses with their wide galleries and their gently curving roofs. Midway down the village street was Janet's temporary home, and next to its eastern side was the Addison house which, to Judith's unaccustomed eyes, was wholly attractive and romantic. True, it was of brick and lacked the curving roof; but it was girdled with two galleries, and the only access to its third-story rooms was by means of an outside stairway. The solitary bath-tub was on the second floor and at the back of the house; but Judith's present enthusiasm was dominant even over the seeming obstacle of gaining her morning tubbing by way of the front veranda and the kitchen staircase. The deep French casements completed her satisfaction. One, although its clumsy shutters were an incongruous frame for the brave array of ebony and ivory spread out between them, served as substitute for the toilet

table which fate had denied to the somewhat narrow limits of her room. Into the other, Judith had heaped the parti-coloured pillows which she had stuffed into the bottom of her trunk, while a dozen posters added variety to the prim rank of popes and prelates who adorned the wall.

Janet had halted, dazzled, upon the threshold, the first time that Judith had led the way to her room. Accustomed to the bare white walls of her dainty convent cell, Janet had had no previous notion of the gorgeousness of even the summer room of the modern American school-girl.

"How do you like it?" Judith had demanded imperiously.

"It's perfectly splendid; only —"

"Only?" Judith demanded again.

"Only it seems so full, as if you'd be afraid of knocking something over. Besides," Janet added practically; "what shall you do when it rains?"

"Why, let it rain, of course," Judith made prompt answer.

"Yes; only the windows —"

"Oh, I can manage that, when the time comes. It is n't raining now. When it does, we can come up here and decide what to do about it. For the present, I like it best out under the trees. Come, if you're ready."

And, as the long June days wore away, each more fair than the last had been, the girls spent an increasing number of hours on the bank of the river. Mrs. Addison, tired with a gay winter, relieved somewhat upon the score of her older son who had settled into his new surroundings with a sort of contented apathy, was giving her days to a much-needed rest before two new members should be added to her household. Paul fished without ceasing, and Ruth's chief characteristic was her resentment at any supervision of her infantine plans. As for Wade, he was busy just then in training himself to shut his teeth and smile. Under such conditions, Judith felt herself wholly free to sit on the bank of the river and chatter with Janet. Now and then Ronald joined them for an hour; and, as Judith looked up at the merry dark eyes and the proudly curving lips, she surreptitiously fluffed up her hair and straightened the folds of her skirt. It was just as she had said to Janet, Ronald Leslie was the best-looking man she had ever seen in her life. Nevertheless, those who knew Ronald Leslie best, those who had followed in detail the record of his twenty jovial years, were inclined to discount Ronald's looks entirely, in making up the total score of his personality. Ronald Leslie was by no means perfect. He was, however, good to look at, but

infinitely better to live with, and, after all, it is the living with that counts.

The chattering river had taken upon itself to fill the silence in the girls' talk; but not for long. Its monologue was interrupted by a scream and a splash. Then two fat legs waved in the air above a shallow pool, and an irate voice cleft the ether, —

“Come quick! Own fish got away, and Ruth is 'most drowned.”

Janet and Judith sprang to their feet; but already Ronald was half-way down the bank.

“Hold on to the bottom tight, Ruth, and I'll pick you off in a minute,” he shouted jovially across the torrent of shrieks which poured from the small throat. “You'll scare the fish up in Lake Ontario, if you howl like that. Now then!” And he picked her up from her pool and came leaping up the bank again, holding Ruth, dripping and at arm's length, in his sturdy grasp. “No, you don't, mademoiselle,” he added, as the child endeavoured to snuggle against his body. “I am not looking for a sponge bath at this hour of the day.”

Ruth's sodden hair drooped towards his collar.

“Ruth loves own Ronald,” she observed ingratiatingly.

“Glad you do, my lady; but there are times

and seasons when it's not best to show out all your feelings. Here, Judith, what do you propose to do with this mermaid?"

"Dry her up again, I suppose; that is, if I can find enough dry clothes to cover her. She has four complete suits hanging on the line now. Set her down, Ronald. No, Ruth; don't shake yourself all over Janet. Say thank you to Ronald, and then come with sister."

But Ruth mutinied.

"Don't want to come with sister. Ruth wants own fishline."

Judith spoke with more decision.

"Come, Ruth; you'll take cold."

Ruth hesitated and cast one yearning glance over the edge of the bank at the blue baby ribbon trailing limply across a half-submerged rock. Then the eternal feminine within her triumphed. She parted the dangling, dripping locks which hung before her face and smiled up at Ronald.

"Ruth will go and put on own best dress," she explained. "All the other ones is wet, and that is very pretty. Then she will come back and sit on Ronald's knee."

But a voice came across from the other hammock.

"Come and rock with me, Ruth, instead."

Ruth shook her head disdainfully.

"No. Ruth likes Ronald best; he's bigger."

And only Ronald saw the shadow return into Wade Winthrop's eyes, as Judith led her small sister away across the field.

"Come back as soon as you can, Judith," Janet called after her.

"That may not be very soon. The maids are busy, and mother has just gone up to town."

"To meet the cousins?"

"Yes. I shall have to dress Ruth. You'd better come with me, for there is no knowing when I shall get back again."

"Ruth can button own garters on," the child observed optimistically, as Janet folded up her work and came towards them.

Judith shook her head.

"If you had what you deserve, you would have your nightie on and be put to bed without your supper," she said severely.

But Ruth refused to be suppressed.

"Then Ruth will play soldier-tent in the bed and kill peoples in a battle, and it will make the bed very out-of-orderly," she announced, with the air of one who had suddenly mastered an intricate problem.

Ronald, meanwhile, had crossed the narrow stretch of grass and thrown himself down beside Wade's hammock.

"That's an enterprising infant," he observed.

"If she keeps on, she'll know from experience the depth of every spot in the river from the falls to the St. Lawrence. Paul would better use up some of his extra enthusiasm in fishing her out now and then."

"Did she soak you?"

"Only my cuffs." As he spoke, he unbuttoned them and slid them off over his hands. Then he surveyed them ruefully. "Look at them! And they're the first cuffs I've worn, since I came down here."

"Serve you right for wearing them at all," Wade commented unsympathetically.

"You've no business to talk. You always wear them."

The older man laughed, but without much mirth.

"I? Well, why not? It is the only thing I can do."

"It's something to be able to look artistic," Ronald answered buoyantly. "But I put on my cuffs, to-day, to do honour to your cousin."

"Maurice?"

"No; I leave him to Ruth. I mean the girl, Miss What's Her Name."

"Sidney Stayre."

Ronald whistled.

"Miss Peekaboo! What's she like?"

“I’ve never seen her. My mother says she is pretty.”

“Hm! As pretty as Judith?”

“I devoutly hope not.”

Ronald’s eyes opened wide.

“Why not?”

Wade Winthrop’s answer was uncompromising.

“Because pretty girls never have any feelings.”

“But Judith —” Ronald remonstrated.

“Oh, Judith is all right, as far as she goes. It is only that she feels sure that the world is her oyster, and now and then her oyster knife gets to pricking the rest of us. Sidney is probably just such another, pretty and sweet and absolutely heartless.”

Ronald hurled a pebble into the stream. He waited until he had heard it strike against the rock beneath. Then he hurled another. At last, he turned to Wade and, by that time, the gleam had gone out of his eyes again.

“You’re not quite fair to Judith, you know,” he said calmly. “She’s your sister, not mine; and it’s not my place to be fighting her battles. Janet is a dear; but, even if she were not, I’d not be saying things about her to another chap. But Judith —”

Rising on his elbow, Wade Winthrop stared into the alert face, stared at the tall figure whose

every line told of virile power. Then deliberately he dropped back again and folded his arms underneath his head.

"Much you know about it all, you young Goliath! Wait till your turn comes; though, in mercy to you, I hope it will be long in coming. But girls are all alike. You heard Ruth state her platform; Judith would say the same, if she dared and if it were good manners to tell the unmannerly truth. Sidney will say the same; it's girl nature."

"You don't like girls?" Ronald queried composedly.

"Not now. Not so many of them."

"Well, you appear to be in for it."

"Yes. One's sisters don't count; but I dread this other damsel. Still, I couldn't make too much of a row. Mother's heart was set on asking her, and it was up to me to give in gracefully, as long as the whole family are doing penance in the wilderness on my account."

Ronald rose to his feet and stretched himself to his full height, yawning, as he did so, until every one of his hard white teeth came into view.

"It's not too bad a wilderness," he said then. "It may be a bit monotonous, viewed from the river bank; but, once you get used to it, you'll like even that. As for the girls, don't worry.

I'll do what I can to take them off your hands." Then he bent over the hammock and surveyed its occupant with merry, but sympathetic eyes. "Keep up your pluck, man!" he advised. "There are worse things in the world than spending a summer in a hammock in the middle of a crowd of girls."

But Wade Winthrop's reply was enigmatic.

"It depends upon the length of the summer," he answered, as he rose and followed Ronald back to the house.

CHAPTER THREE

WRAPPED in her scarlet kimono, Sidney crossed the hall and tapped on Judith's door. Wrapped in her blue kimono and her feet covered with fur-topped moccasins, Judith met her on the threshold.

"There!" Sidney said, as Judith flung open the door. "Now we can talk. Let's sit on the bed and get acquainted."

Side by side, the two girls settled themselves on the bed, their backs resting against the tall footboard, and turned to face each other. Then their eyes dropped apart and, for some inscrutable reason, silence fell. The silence lengthened. Then Judith cleared her throat. Then the silence fell again.

"Hm — mm — mm!" Sidney coughed distressfully. "I —"

Judith turned to her eagerly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Oh, nothing."

There was another hushed interval.

"Are you warm enough?" Judith queried at length.

“Oh, yes; but —”

But the silence caught the rest of the phrase.

All at once Sidney began to laugh, not noisily, but with an uncontrollable nervousness which was partially the result of her strange surroundings, partially the consequence of a wholly sleepless night when she had assisted Bungay to entertain the elephant with stories instead of the much-desired xylophone. According to Bungay, the elephant had fallen asleep in the gray dawn; but Bungay was by that time too intent upon getting his first glimpse of their opposite neighbour to make Sidney feel that safety lay in sleep. Just once she had dropped into a doze. She had wakened in time to catch the tail of Bungay's toga, as it was vanishing between the curtains of the section across the aisle. After that, she determined to leave nothing to chance. She had risen and dressed herself and Bungay with a careful discrimination which kept them at corresponding sets of buttons and buttonholes.

Afterwards, day had followed night; but day had ended in Auntie Jack's welcoming arms. However, Auntie Jack had been followed by Auntie Jack's family. Sidney had found the dinner, that night, a trying ordeal, and she had assented gladly to Judith's suggestion that they should go to their rooms and make ready for a

good-night talk. Now, however, that they had made ready, the talk failed to come. Unhappily, Sidney's sense of humour was quicker than that of Judith, who asked shortly, —

“Well, what are you laughing at?”

“At us,” Sidney gasped. “Don't look so solemn about it, Judith; it's very funny.”

“What is?”

“Us,” Sidney said again, as she made an heroic effort to stifle the mirth which so plainly irritated her cousin. “Here we are, knowing it is our bounden duty to get acquainted, and we've neither one of us the least idea how to go about it. That's the worst of being cousins; one can't ever pick for herself.”

The figure in the blue kimono stiffened slightly.

“I am sorry you feel that way about it.”

Sidney sat up, in a swift wave of exasperation.

“Don't get sarcastic, Judith; it always makes me cross,” she said hotly. Then she settled back again. “What I said, sounded ruder than what I really meant,” she explained laboriously. “It is only that cousins have to be friends first and get to know each other afterwards. But, of course, we'd be friends for Auntie Jack's sake. I just love your mother.”

“I am glad you do.” For the life of her, Judith could not keep a certain dryness out of her

tone. She had rather liked Sidney at the start; nevertheless, she had resented the stranger's free and easy adoption of them all as cousins and consequent friends of long standing. She had resented still more the sudden wakening of her half-brother into a semblance of his old-time animation.

"Of course; everybody does," Sidney reiterated, with a mischievous satisfaction in her cousin's displeasure. "At our house, we all think she made the world, and we always say 'That's what Auntie Jack says, anyway,' when we're in a tight place in an argument. What is your father like?"

"Like himself. I never saw anybody else just like him. Haven't you ever seen him?"

"No; I never saw any of you till to-night, except Auntie Jack."

Judith pondered, her momentary irritation quite forgotten.

"He's tall and blond and quiet. Most people are afraid of him."

Sidney heaved a sigh of decorous regret.

"Oh, dear! I shouldn't be. I'm never afraid of people."

Without lifting her head from the footboard, Judith turned her eyes rebukingly upon her cousin.

"That sounds rather —"

She hesitated. Sidney supplied the word unflinchingly.

"Conceited? Well, it is n't. It is only that I get so interested in watching to see what they'll do next that I forget all about being afraid of them. It may not be good manners; but it is a great saving on the joints of one's elbows and feet. They say scary people are always trying to bend them out of sight. Won't your father come up here, this summer?"

"Probably not. But some people think Wade is a good deal like him."

"But he is n't his son," Sidney objected.

"I don't mean that; but in making people afraid of him."

Sidney folded her arms inside her sleeves, and knitted her brows.

"Afraid of Cousin Wade?" she asked.

"Yes."

"But I'm not."

"People generally are. Janet always runs when she sees him coming."

"Who is Janet?"

"Janet Leslie. My chum."

"From home?"

"No; up here."

The corners of Sidney's mouth curled slowly.

"How long have you been here?" she inquired.

Again Judith felt herself forced upon the defensive.

“Two weeks.”

Sidney addressed the headboard of the bed.

“Two weeks; and already she has accumulated a chum!” Then she rolled over on her side.

“Oh, Judith Addison, I do think you are the dearest girl.”

“I don’t see why,” Judith answered shortly.

“Neither do I; that’s just it. But I’m so glad I’m here. I do get so tired of people, and you are n’t a bit like anybody I’ve ever known. Has Janet any family?”

“A mother and a sister who is coming, next week.”

“Where is she now?”

“Down the river, somewhere. She is older and engaged.”

“Anybody else?” Sidney demanded.

“Yes, a brother.”

“A little one?”

“He is six feet and two inches tall.”

“Goodness me! I hope he is careful where he steps.”

With an odd, self-conscious little smile, Judith smoothed out her soft blue folds.

“He is. But, really, he is —”

“Monstrous,” Sidney said, as once more Judith

hesitated for the right word. "Well, what do you think of Bungay?"

Judith recalled herself with a jerk. She would have preferred to linger upon the subject of Ronald Leslie. Obviously, however, Sidney was in a mood of wishing to range at will over the entire horizon. As hostess, it was incumbent upon her to follow Sidney's mental meanderings.

"I think he is going to be a little darling," she responded, with a dutiful forgetfulness of certain details of the little darling's etiquette at table.

Sidney laughed.

"I am glad you do. You must have a hopeful disposition. I confess that I am wondering what will come out of a union of Ruth and Bungay. Still, the river is shallow, you say, and the gallery rails are moderately high."

"So is the poplar tree in the front yard; but Ruth has been at the top of it," Judith reassured her sleepily. "She came down by way of the upper gallery posts, too. Mother nearly fainted; but Wade just laughed and told Ruth to hold on tight. It was all Paul's fault."

"What did Paul have to do with it?"

"He was playing Captain Crockett, and Ruth was the coon. Paul is an awful boy."

Sidney laughed again, this time quite unfeelingly.

“Apparently you don’t approve of your brothers, Judith.”

Judith had been on the very verge of going to sleep. Now she opened her eyes and blinked up at Sidney in drowsy negation.

“Yes, I do. What should make you think I don’t?”

“Nothing. I only imagined it. There comes Paul now.”

Judith sat up and rubbed her sleepy eyes.

“Yes, and he’ll want to come in. He always does.”

“Well, why not?”

“Because he gets his shoes on the bed.”

“Make him take them off,” Sidney suggested practically.

Judith drew a tragical sigh.

“Wait till you have a brother!” she warned her cousin.

“I have now, three of them. I’m used to boys.”

Judith shook her head.

“I’m not. I’m afraid I never shall be.”

Sidney’s eyes swept the dainty figure from head to heel.

“No,” she agreed; “you won’t. You’re a born old maid. The worst of it is, you don’t care one bit if you are. Come in, Paul,” she added, as a

boyish fist smote upon the door. "Judith and I were just wishing you would drop in to say good night."

The door swung open, and Paul, broad-shouldered, freckle-faced, merry-eyed, appeared upon the threshold.

"Hullo, Tiddles! You here, too?" he said jovially.

"Yes. Come in."

Swiftly he deposited himself, cross-legged, on the floor.

"Don't dare. Judy won't let me."

"Why not?"

"She's afraid I'll muss up some of her didoes. For my part, I can't see any sense in putting a three-foot frill into a two-foot room, and then standing outside to see how pretty it looks. You have n't been into my room yet; have you, Tiddles?"

"Paul!" Judith remonstrated. "That's not a polite way to speak to your cousin."

"Polite be hanged! Tiddles and I understand each other. We settled that, on the way up from the station. If you'd been there, we'd have settled you, too, Judy; but you were mooning around with Janet and Ronald. When are you coming to see my den, Tids?"

"When I get an invitation."

“Come now.”

“Can’t. It’s too late. I’ll come, in the morning.”

“Mean of you to beg off, when you’d only just begged on. It’s a peachey place: three windows, a bed, and a scarlet chair that crocks the back of my coats into barber poles. You won’t see any frills, though, nothing but rods and flies and empty biscuit tins. Is Bungay asleep?”

“Yes. Do be careful you don’t wake him, though. He took his xylophone to bed with him, in case Jumbo cried in the night.”

“How jolly! We’ll have a concert on this floor. Judith brought a watchman’s rattle, and Ruth left her flute on my bed. Let’s go at it and start Wade to raging.”

“Paul, you mustn’t!” Judith said hastily, as Paul rose to his feet. “You know mother said, if we had this floor to ourselves, that we mustn’t make a racket up here. If you get too noisy, you’ll be moved down-stairs into the room back of Wade, and you know you’d hate that.”

“You bet I would! Wade won’t even let a fellow turn his pillow over, without kicking up a row,” Paul observed a little resentfully.

Then Sidney asked the question which had been trembling on her tongue, ever since her arrival at the house.

“What is the matter with Wade?” she inquired.

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

“Plain cranky.” Then he relented, and a kindly light came into his gray eyes, a ring of real regret into his honest voice. “I don’t know, Tiddles. Mother would n’t tell us; but I imagine it is something rather bad. It was one night in the night, and there were three doctors; and then, all at once, she decided to come up here.”

“And has n’t Wade told you?” the girl asked wonderingly for, in the Stayre home, it was all share and share alike in anxiety and in happiness, and she found it hard to understand a family where reticence and reservations were the order of the day.

“Not a word.”

“Have you asked him?”

“Not I. One does n’t ask questions of Wade Winthrop.”

Sidney pondered.

“I shall,” she observed calmly at length.

“Much good may it do you!”

“I’m not going to do it for my good; I’m not so curious as all that. But, when something is very wrong, it’s a comfort to be asked what’s the matter, even if you have made up your mind you won’t tell. At least, there’s a certain satisfaction in making people understand that it is none

of their business," Sidney explained a little hotly.

"Exactly," Paul agreed, with perfect composure. "Resolved by the resolution committee that Cousin Tiddles is speaking the truth. And now, if you please, what do you propose to do next?"

Sidney rose from her seat on the edge of the bed.

"I propose to go to bed," she said tranquilly. "What's more, when I get there, I propose to go to sleep."

Nevertheless, Sidney failed to hold to the second half of her resolution. She had gone through the later stages of her undressing with an elaborate care not to disturb Wade who, she knew, occupied the room beneath her own. Then, her undressing ended and her light out, she stood for a moment, looking into the silvery shadows of the poplar tree just outside her casement, before she tucked herself into bed to wait for the sleep which would not come. Instead of sleep, Wade Winthrop's face seemed to be staring out at her from all the corners of the room at once, and the face seemed to be assuring her that something was very wrong indeed.

It had been quite as a matter of course, at dinner, that Sidney had been given a seat at Wade Winthrop's right hand. Absorbed in her

flurry of greeting to so many new cousins, and in the need for piloting Bungay through his greetings with some semblance of decorum, Sidney had paid no especial heed to Wade until she had found herself seated at his elbow and answering to his courteous questions about her journey and about the family she had left at home. Then, of a sudden, she discovered that twenty-seven was not such a great age, after all. Up to that time, she had regarded Wade Winthrop as belonging to quite another epoch from her own. Now she began to suspect that his presence might add something to the interest of her summer surroundings. True, twenty-seven was remote from sixteen, and it possessed vastly other interests. Nevertheless, something in the dark eyes attracted Sidney. They were frank and full of kindly humour; yet they suggested to her mind the fact that their owner did not tell all his thoughts to every one whom he chanced to meet. Sidney looked into his eyes frankly and with a humour which was kin to his own; but she too held something in reserve. That something was a deliberate resolution to worm her way into the shell of her cousin, to find out what lay beneath and then, if possible, to get on cousinly terms with him at the earliest possible moment.

For the rest and apart from his eyes, she saw a

grave-looking man, spare and sinewy and dark, with a few white threads in his brown hair, two vertical creases between his straight brows, and lips that drooped a little, when his face relaxed from its kindly, welcoming smile.

All this passed before her as she lay, wide-eyed, staring into the silvery shadow of the poplar tree. And then, all at once, it faded away into a blank which lasted until she opened her eyes to face the growing dawn while, from the next room, a voice came clearly to her ears, —

“Now, Jumbo, lie still and be a good effalunt, and I’ll play you a little song on the xylophone.”

The next instant, she had leaped out of bed and dashed to the door leading into Bungay’s room; but she was too late. Already a fearful clash smote upon the morning air, followed by Bungay’s voice, lustily shouting a limerick which she herself had taught him, —

“There was a good auntie named Jack,
Of children she had a great lack.
She opened her door,
And called in two more,
This generous Aunt — ”

Shivering in the chilly dawn, Sidney paused upon the threshold.

“Oh, Bungay!” she said reproachfully.

The xylophone gave another smashing wail

under Bungay's violent smiting. Then Bungay looked up with a smile.

“Hullo, Sidney! I was just singing Jumbo to sleep again, so 's he should n't cry and wake up Cousin Wade.”

CHAPTER FOUR

THE morning train had come and gone; and, out on the vine-covered gallery of his house, the old postmaster shaded his eyes with his hand and peered anxiously down the road in search of the missing urchin whose duty it was to bring up the post-bag. Inside the office, the fat fox terrier was snoring on his doll bedstead, totally regardless of the disparaging comments of Bungay. Bungay, elephant in hand, sat enthroned on the wide old sofa where the postmaster was wont to sort the mail, while, across the room, Sidney and Judith were staring into the two great cases filled with the best of classic French literature. Beyond them, an open door showed a huge four-poster bed with a scarlet valance, and the spotless floor of both rooms was painted in a gay counterfeit of oilcloth.

Both girls turned about sharply, as the screen door swung open and Paul appeared.

“Howdy?” he observed, as affably as if they had not parted from him, ten minutes before. “Seen Wade anywhere?”

“Not since breakfast.”

“I thought I saw him coming up this way.”

“Perhaps. We’ve not seen him, though. What do you want of him?”

“Ronald was looking for him. I don’t know what he wanted; but he seemed in an everlasting hurry. Here he comes now. Look out, Goliath, or you’ll fetch loose the lintels of the door-posts,” he added, as Ronald pulled open the screen, ducked his head to enter, and then, dodging back, held the door open for the old postmaster.

Sidney saw the act and liked it. She liked Ronald, too. Judith had prepared her to expect an elegant young man; this tall stripling was as boyish and simple as Paul himself, as frankly off-hand.

“Find Wade?” he queried, with youthful economy of words.

“No.”

“Queer! I’ve hunted through all his haunts, and he has turned up missing in them all. No matter; it was nothing in particular. What are you going to do, this morning?”

“Fish,” Paul replied laconically.

“Of course. Tell us something we don’t know. And the rest of you?”

“We’re going to watch him do it,” Judith

answered. "Sidney has n't seen the dam yet, and she says she does n't know anything at all about trouting. We are going to educate her."

Paul bent over the desk where, under the post-master's direction, he was plying the stamp.

"Educate your grandmother!" he objected. "I'm not going to have you girls round in the way. You can't keep still to save your necks, and your light clothes would scare off the fish, anyhow."

But Janet slid forward from her place in the lee of her brother's elbow.

"Judith can do as she chooses," she replied audaciously; "but I am going to fish. The dam is large enough for two."

Paul stamped the last letter and tossed the little pile over to the sofa. Then he looked up.

"You here, Janet? Well, fish, if you want. I've bait enough for us both, I suppose. Still, if you come, you must keep quiet."

Janet's small chin rose in the air.

"I have fished at the dam for the last five summers," she observed, with crushing dignity. "I not only can bait my own hook, but I also know that trout flies aren't usually sold alive in blue bottles."

Paul's eyes snapped; then he threw back his head and shouted with laughter.

“That’s one on me, Janet,” he said, as soon as he could speak. “Who gave it away?”

She dropped a mincing courtesy.

“I never tell tales. Now will you let me come?”

“It’s the only safe thing to do. You’re too dangerous to fight with. Come along.” And Paul swept up the letters marked *Addison*, nodded to the postmaster and led the way out of the office, with Janet following close at his heels.

“Don’t mind. We will go, even if Paul does make a fuss about it,” Judith said. “You’ll come, Ronald?”

“Sure.”

“And fish, or talk to us?” she added, with a smile up into the dark eyes so far above her own.

“Both at once, of course. My accents will coax the fish nearer. They always come, when I call. We’ll show Miss Peekaboo the sight of her life.”

“Not yet, though,” Sidney objected. “You can go on; I’ll follow you as soon as I can. I really must write a letter to my mother.”

“Oh, Sidney, what a bore!” Judith protested. “Let the letter wait.”

Paul whirled about on his heel and halted, completely blocking the narrow board walk.

“Oh, lettest thou thy mother let her letter wait,” he proclaimed. “Come along, Tiddles, and let the letter go hang.”

“I can’t. I have the New England conscience with the New York rush added on to it,” she responded, while, seizing her cousin by his shoulders, she swung him around and started him on his way once more. “It won’t take me but a few minutes; then I’ll mail it, to get it off my mind, and I’ll be at the dam before you’ve caught your first fish.”

“You’ll lose your way,” Paul predicted gloomily.

“Then I’ll find it again. You aren’t very polite to me, anyway. I heard you telling Wade, this morning, that it was a straight trail and any dunce could find it.”

But Paul faced about again promptly.

“That’s just it, you are no dunce,” he replied. “Still, if you are so set upon the idea, go and make merry with your inkpot and your conscience, and Janet and I will go and catch some fishes.”

“What about us?” Ronald queried.

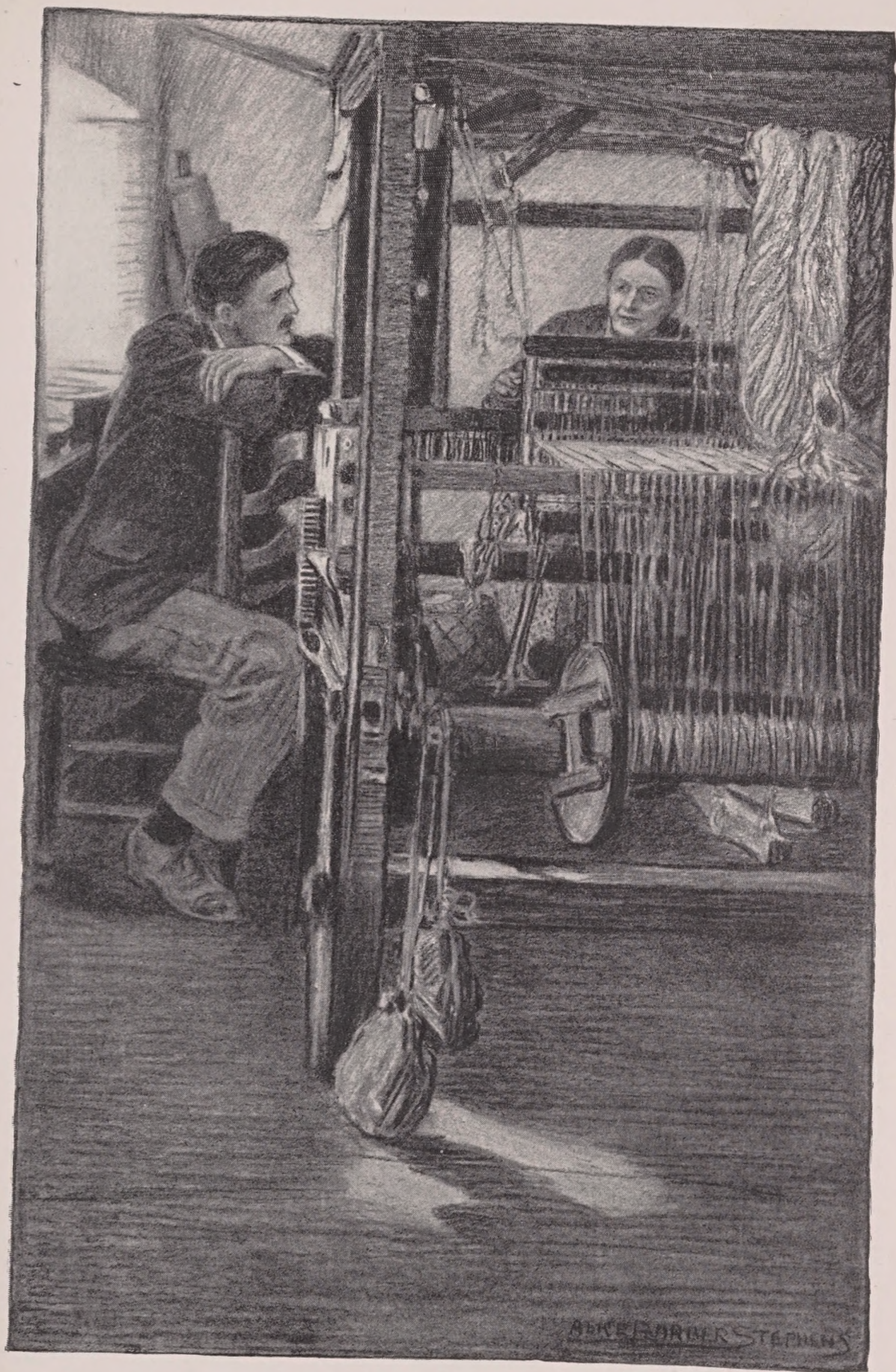
Paul looked up at him, not all at once, but by painful degrees which were intended to suggest that he considered Ronald unduly tall. Then he lowered his eyes again by the same series of angles which included Ronald’s hat, his eyes, his

tie and lastly his belt. That done, he glanced at his sister, pretty and dainty and far too fluffy for the rest of the group who were dressed in the rough and ready clothing suited to the mountains around them.

“Oh, you can sit on a smooth, dry log, and play cat’s-cradle,” he replied disdainfully. “Mind the knots in the string, though, for fear they might hurt your fingers.”

Wade, meanwhile, was learning to weave catalun.

The post-office was on the first floor of the cottage. Beneath it and a step down from the level of the sidewalk was a low, square room where the postmaster’s wife sat, day after day, throwing her shuttle to and fro, while the heavy loom clattered beneath her shifting feet. The room was dark and the rafters hung low above it; but the side windows looked out upon such a garden as was rare even in the land of the flower-loving French Canadian. Scarlet poppies and crimson phlox jostled each other for root-room, petunias and pansies carpeted the borders, and tall tiger-lilies flaunted their gaudy blossoms around the half-dozen little shrines whose white posts dotted the flowery enclosure. At dawn and at dusk, Madame might have been seen working among the blossoms. At other hours, she sat on



“WADE developed the habit of dropping in now and then to spend an hour with Madame.” Page 51.

her oaken chest and plied her loom, while her tongue flew in unison with her flying shuttle.

All sorts and ages of callers came to Madame's room. It was a natural stopping-place for those who were waiting for a letter. Moreover, it was a headquarters for village gossip and a rostrum where, his morning mail once sorted, Monsieur mounted his rocking-chair and his hobby and, tilting gently back and forth, discoursed of politics and literature to all who would listen. And, among the listeners, none was more courteously attentive than Wade Winthrop.

Wade had discovered the place quite by chance, the day after his arrival at the village. Pausing on the threshold, he had begged permission to enter, and Madame, after one swift glance in his direction, had granted the permission most graciously. From that time onward, Wade developed the habit of dropping in now and then, to spend an hour with Madame, sitting astride a wooden chair to watch the busy shuttle and, meanwhile, listening to Madame's placid stream of talk. Madame spoke no English; but Wade had passed two or three summers in the south of France, and, moreover, Madame's gestures left little to the imagination.

Wade liked Madame. According to the fate of too many men, he had been cloyed with feminine

attentions. Her outspoken simplicity pleased him; her loosely-knit figure in its homespun petticoat and brown calico sack was an interesting contrast to the trim society girls with whom, for the most part, his lot had been cast, while her head, invariably encased in its black woollen hood, held a shrewd sense which made her no mean adversary in an argument, as Wade had occasionally discovered to his cost. This morning, however, Madame discarded argument in favour of more personal details.

“You have been here since two weeks now?” she said interrogatively, while, with a flip of her thumb, she freed the empty bobbin from her shuttle and, bending over the basket beside her, made leisurely choice of a full bobbin to replace it.

“Yes.”

“And you like it much?”

“Yes.”

“The *yes* comes heavily,” Madame observed, as she fitted the second bobbin to position. “Is it weighted with some doubt, perhaps?”

Wade, astride his accustomed chair, his arms on the chairback and his chin on his arms, shook his head.

“What should make you think so?”

“The look in your eyes, my son,” Madame

responded unexpectedly. "Only those whose lives are hungry look upon life with hungry eyes."

Wade reddened. Then he laughed.

"By Jove, Madame, you've hit the bull's eye!" he said in English.

"Pardon?"

Swiftly he paraphrased his words; but the paraphrase omitted the meaning.

"Madame speaks with directness."

Madame's shuttle had been poised for the cast. Now she stayed her hand, laid the shuttle down on the strings of warp, and took out her snuff-box.

"Will you use it?" she asked courteously.

Even in his sombre mood, Wade was conscious of a sudden wayward desire to try the experiment; but he hated sneezing and prudently he desisted.

"Not to-day."

Madame tapped the box gently, gently put the dust to one nostril and then to the other, then gently applied herself to her kerchief, fashioned from the superfluous material of her dark brown calico sack.

"Perhaps it is better. You are young. I am old; and, besides, I have a rheum in my head. It is for that, and that only, that I take it." She

pocketed her box, and took up her shuttle once more. Then she returned to the charge. "Why did you come to this village?" she asked quietly.

Wade's answer was evasive.

"We always go out of town in summer."

Madame threw her shuttle, shifted the loom, threw the shuttle again.

"I have seen Americans before," she said dispassionately. "The men do not, without reason, come here to walk in the street, or to lie in a hammock. They are very energetic, the American men; they tramp for many miles over the hills to catch the trout."

Wade laughed.

"My young brother must be a true American, then."

"Perhaps. Perhaps you, too," Madame assented.

Again Wade had recourse to English.

"I fear that I don't quite catch your meaning."

"Eh?"

Wade returned to French.

"Madame has said?" he repeated interrogatively.

Thrice, four times the shuttle flew across the web. Then Madame, bending forward, rolled the web backward to give more room for the play of her shuttle.

“Sometimes it is one’s body; sometimes it is one’s brain; sometimes it is one’s heart,” she said at length, without lifting her eyes.

There was a silence, while Wade sat with his own eyes bent thoughtfully upon the wide white web before him.

“Madame speaks the truth,” he said slowly. “And sometimes it is all the three.”

Madame paused irresolutely. Then she stretched out one wrinkled hand and rested it on the web, close to his own.

“In that case, the burden is three times as heavy. If one can carry it without a cry, so much the better. But remember this, my son, when the cry forces itself to come, it is safe to make it in this room. The noise of the loom can cover all other sounds, and Madame grows very deaf and forgetful. As long as the sun shines, it is best to stay on the river bank; but, when the clouds come, there is always the chair waiting here beside the loom. And now tell me about the cousins.”

Wade smiled up into the dark little eyes beneath the knitted hood. From the start, he had suspected that he and Madame understood each other. Now he knew it. He had been quick to recognize the instinct of motherhood, quick to respond to its appeal. Furthermore, he felt no

reticence in speaking out to Madame. His own mother was too near; his bad times would be a personal sorrow to her, and Wade was far too loyal to his brave little mother to be willing to add one iota to the care which he knew she was already bearing. It was bad enough for her to be forced to face the invalidism of her first-born son, without the additional knowledge of that son's rebellion. The least he could do, was to shut his teeth and swallow his dose like a man. Now and then, however, he had been conscious of an overpowering desire to talk. Talking never mended matters; but at least it clarified one's mental point of view. Just once, he had tried to talk to Judith. He never had repeated the experiment. Judith had been sympathetic; but it had been a decorous sympathy and superior withal.

"Thank you, Madame," he said, with quiet directness. "Some day, if you will allow me, I may talk to you about myself. There is not much to tell; it is only that I am having my bad times now, and I do not like them."

"We must take them as they come," Madame reminded him.

"Exactly. That is what I am finding out. My objection is that they appear so suddenly that they take our breath away."

A second empty bobbin dropped into the basket on the floor at Madame's side.

"If I could foresee the knots in my warp, I should constantly be seeking to avoid them, and so my web would be less smooth," she answered quaintly. "It is so with life. The shadows are annoying; but, if we face the sun, we shall not see them until they cover us completely."

"Hang it! That's just it," Wade burst in impatiently.

"Eh?"

The young fellow lifted his head and drew one deep, quick breath.

"Yes," he said. "And then —?"

Madame looked up and started to answer. Then she held her peace. From the stairs which led up past her window to the post-office above, there came the noise of stubbing, childish steps, and then a gay, girlish laugh, so rollicking and infectious that Wade laughed too, in sympathy. Madame's face brightened.

"And, even after the cloud, the sunshine comes again," she said with cheery optimism, as once more she fell to plying her shuttle.

The steps passed on their way, then returned again, and with them came the girlish laugh.

"Now, Bungay, do remember that you're not to dust down the steps with Jumbo."

"Why not? He is n't dusty any, 'cept where he sits down on it, and effalunts live in the desert where it's always dusty, so he's used to it."

"But Auntie Jack won't want you to take Jumbo into your nice clean bed."

"Then he can sleep in Auntie Jack's bed. Sidney, if Jumbo died and went to heaven, do you s'pose then he'd have a little nangel just like me to lead him about?"

"Perhaps."

"What would that nangel's name be?"

Then Sidney started abruptly, as Wade came leaping into the conversation.

"Noah, of course."

Turning, the girl glanced in at the low window.

"Wade! Where have you been, all the morning?"

"Here."

"But we have been looking everywhere for you," she said, with a swift appropriation of a pronoun which by rights should have been in the third person.

Without his realizing it in the least, Wade's face lighted. As a rule, the gay bevy of young people had gone on their way and allowed him to go on his. Moreover, he liked this hearty, healthy girl cousin far better than he had intended to do.

“I was here. Come in and see Madame.”

Sidney halted irresolutely.

“I would; only the others are waiting.”

“Let them wait,” he advised her composedly.

“I assure you, Madame is well worth the seeing.”

Sidney took her resolution.

“I’ll come, if you will go back with me and make my peace.”

“For what?”

“For stopping to play by the way, when I promised I’d be right up there. Besides, you’ll have to come. I don’t know the way to the dam.”

“Neither do I.”

She laughed down at him saucily, yet there was no sting in her manner.

“You ought to; and men never get lost. There may be bears in the woods, too.”

Bungay added his quota to the talk.

“And tigers and rangatangs,” he suggested hopefully. “And they’ll come crawling, crawling out of the woods to eat Sidney and me, and Cousin Wade will shoot ’em bang dead.”

Wade laughed. Then he picked up his cap.

“I had supposed my days of usefulness were ended,” he said; “but there’s no escaping that appeal.” Then he turned to Madame. “My cousin has brought the sunshine with her,” he

added in French. "I will go and play in it as long as it lasts. However, — I shall return."

But Madame nodded cheerfully up at him from above her wide white web.

"The sun is always shining somewhere. It is our place to follow it as it moves along. Go now; but, next time, bring in your cousin to make sunlight for me. I need it also, myself, for my own day is dropping to the sunset." And, with a second nod, she sent Wade out to join his cousin.

From afar, Paul saw them coming. Forgetful of the trout flapping in the air above his head, he turned and apostrophized Janet.

"Jove Mehercule! That Tiddles beats the record! She's coaxed the hermit crab out of his shell, and I'll be doddered if he does n't look as if he liked the prospect."

CHAPTER FIVE

IF I can't drive, I won't ride," Sidney observed dispassionately.

With careful deliberation, Paul clambered over her feet and seated himself at her side.

"That is the most characteristic remark you have offered up, since your arrival, Tiddles. Nevertheless, in this instance, you get yourself left."

"Oh, no," she said; "I am right here."

P'tit, sitting on the tail of the forward buckboard, flashed back at her an appreciative grin. In the past week, P'tit had formed the habit of grinning appreciatively at each and every remark made by Sidney, not that he understood English; but merely as a token of his whole-souled allegiance.

Paul spoke again.

"Cousin Tiddles, it is foolish to make puns. It is also foolish for you to think you can drive. It is a man's work to drive, and you are merely a girl."

Sidney rose, set her foot on the aged lines and put her hat away in the box underneath the seat.

“When the man shows himself, I’ll give up the reins to him.” Then she turned suddenly and beckoned to Wade who had just appeared on the gallery. “Wade, come here. I want a grown-up man.”

“You generally do,” Paul reminded her. “That’s why I have to dance attendance on you, the whole blessed time.”

“You!” The accent was wholly disdainful. Then she turned back to Wade who had sauntered across the narrow lawn and halted at her side. “Wade,” she said a little imperiously; “I want you to come with us and drive this horse.”

“But I never go on picnics,” he objected.

“This isn’t a picnic. It is a tour of discovery. The drive won’t hurt you, and, if you don’t want to go down the mountain, you can take a rug and have a nap at the top of the trail. Come.”

“What’s the use?” he demurred.

“What’s the use of not?”

“Too far for me.”

“Not a bit. You may as well be driving as lying around in that hammock, all day long,” Sidney said undauntedly, for she had had a talk with Auntie Jack, only that morning, and she was sure of her ground. “Besides,” she added, with a swift flash of mischief; “if you stay still

here so much of the time, you'll grow fat, and it's horridly unbecoming for a man of your age to be fat."

"Oh, Sidney!" Judith protested, from the back seat where she sat waiting for the discussion to end itself.

"Oh, Judith! But you know it is. I don't like a man who lets his muscle get all soft. Are you coming, Wade?"

"No. I don't think I care about it." But his accent lacked resolution.

Sidney pointed her finger at him in mock derision.

"Like every other man, you are waiting to be urged; but you need n't think I am going to urge you. Wade Winthrop, get in here, this instant. Don't you see that we're waiting for you?"

"I had n't observed it."

"Well, observe it now. Come."

"Where?" he queried meekly.

"Here, beside me. Else I shall drive, and I shall probably upset the buckboard down a ravine."

"What about Paul?"

"I am afraid to trust him. He can go and drive Janet."

"Well, I like that," Janet said explosively.

"So do I. I'd much rather have Wade. He

talks about things that are interesting. Ronald, are you going to take care of your sister, or will you come in with us?"

Ronald rose deliberately from his seat on the edge of the board walk.

"Thanks; I value my life, so I'll stay behind with Judith. I have seen Paul drive before now, and I prefer to be at a safe distance."

"Did you ever see anything like the way Sidney hustles Wade around?" Judith asked, under cover of the shower of compliments flying back and forth between Paul and his cousin. "For my part, I don't see how she dares do it. I would n't."

Sidney, delivering herself of a final thrust, was deaf to her words; but Wade, as he gathered up the lines which Sidney had dutifully made over to him, heard. As he heard, he acknowledged to himself that he shared Judith's wonder. Nobody else ever had hustled him around in this summary fashion. Through school and college and his first years of social life, his brains and his money, coupled with his family position, had caused Wade Winthrop to be regarded as a species of petty god. Then, when the sudden check had come to his active life, he had turned his back upon his outside friends, only to be set upon a domestic pedestal and treated with the admiring gentleness which one bestows upon a fragile

ornament. To do him justice, this new attitude bored him absolutely. Nevertheless, he was too much absorbed, just then, in solving certain of his own problems to have any leisure to attack that of his wholesome relation to his family. For the rest, he was so much older than the others that it had occurred to no one of them that he would find pleasure in being included in their plans.

They had been at Grande Rivière for more than two weeks now. For the first fourteen days of that time, Wade Winthrop had divided his hours rather evenly between the gallery, the hammock and Madame's straight-backed chair. The others, alert and hilarious, had gone on their somewhat erratic way, now on foot and in the rubber-soled shoes which betokened a day of hard climbing, now in one of the rickety buckboards whose joints were always on the eve of parting company with one another. The two Leslies and the two young Addisons made a jovial quartette. Wade watched them go and come with grave, but un-enchanted eyes. For many of their expeditions, he lacked the energy; it never once seemed to strike him that he could find pleasure in the others. Wade Winthrop was by nature no milk-sop; nevertheless, in his saner moments, he admitted to himself that he was coming to accept

the general attitude of chastened disregard of himself as a personality to be reckoned with. It was a good deal as Ruth had said, —

“Not now, Wade. You’re good for rainy days, when Ruth can’t have any fun.”

Together with the others, he had laughed at the childish frankness; but, when the laugh was ended, he bit his lower lip.

And then Sidney had come. Fresh, breezy, enthusiastic, she had swept into their home like a draft of chilly air. She had no especial manners; she was cocksure and self-assertive, as befitted the oldest of seven children and the president of her school dramatic society. In the intervals of adoring her aunt and of disciplining Bungay for his constant sins of commission, she rollicked with Paul and did her best to jostle Judith out of her complacent attitude towards all things. The residue of her time, and, from day to day, that residue was increasing, she devoted to Wade for whose society she appeared to have taken a sudden and inordinate liking. No chastened respect marked her manner to him, however. She cajoled him and bullied him by turns and made not the least pretence of handling him with mittens. Wade protested; he even rebelled a little, now and then; but it was in vain. Sidney merely shifted her weapon for a

better grasp and then returned to the charge. It was all merry, all apparently the result of random jollity. Only Wade himself had ever seen the little irresolute curve of Sidney's lips, had ever noted the little scarlet spot that came into her cheeks occasionally, when his own answering shot had carried home. But Wade himself did see and notice and, in the long hours between bedtime and dawn, he sometimes wondered whether Sidney's jollity were as random as it seemed.

"It is nine miles there and ten miles back again, and I hate these horses that can't speak English," she observed tranquilly, as she settled back on the lumpy seat at Wade's elbow.

"What do they speak?"

"French, of course. Haven't you found that out?"

He shook his head.

"I've not been doing much driving."

"Neither have I. My one trip with Judith, yesterday, was quite enough, though. Our animal tried to walk into a barnyard, over the top of a baby. I attempted to make him back; but he could n't understand English, and my French forsook me in such a crisis, so I had to resort to Volapuk."

"And?" he said interrogatively.

"And he understood, of course," she responded.

"Yes; but what was the Volapuk?"

"Running around in front of him and shaking my skirts in his face. If that's not the universal language, I don't know what is. Still, it is a great comfort to have a linguist here who can commune with him in his own tongue."

Wade pointed to the whip.

"Does that come into your universal language?" he queried.

She shook her head.

"I never beat things."

"What then?"

Roguishly she cocked the whites of her eyes up at him.

"I merely cajole them," she replied quietly.

"Oh. As you cajoled me to come?"

"Yes, exactly."

There came a little silence between them. With the reins lying idly on his knees and his head thrown back, Wade was staring up into the greenery of maple and tamarack above them. At his side, Sidney watched him askance and complimented herself upon the success of her cajolery. Wade's eyes were full of dreamy content; his lips were shaped to a noiseless whistling. Not since her first meeting with him, four days before, had she seen him so much at peace

with the world. For a time, she watched him without speaking, loath to break in upon his mood. She even indicated their way by a silent gesture of her hand. Then, as the horse scrambled up a sharp incline and turned eastward out from the shadow of the woods, she pointed backward to the huge river, lying sapphire blue beneath a sapphire sky. The tide was flowing outward past the long line of the Island, and, far to the westward, the tower of the parliament building marked the crest of the city more than twenty miles away.

Sidney gave a little impetuous sigh of sheer happiness.

“Oh, I do just love things like that!” she burst out abruptly. “Now aren’t you glad you came with us, Cousin Wade?”

Turning, he stared, not at the distant landscape, but at her eager face.

“Very. It only remains to be seen what you are going to do with me.”

“Make you useful, of course.”

His answering laugh was bitter.

“Precisely. But there is a limit to my usefulness.”

Her colour came, as it never failed to do when Wade’s tone took on that little cutting accent. The young Stayres, as a family, were prone to

settle their disagreements by straight blows, not by pricks, and Sidney took none too kindly to the new process. For an instant, she eyed Wade with disfavour. Then she controlled her voice.

“Very likely,” she responded, with perfect outward calm, as she reached over and took the reins from his listless grasp. “It merely happens that I’ve not discovered it yet.”

Three hours later, the hush of contentment and repletion lay over the group. P’tit, the only alert member of the company, was busy clearing off the fern-bordered table and packing away the slender remnants of their feast. Paul and Janet had strayed off to the bank of the river and were already engrossed in their lines and bait. Judith, dainty and unruffled, was comfortably settled with her back against a tree, with Ronald at her feet. Sidney, her blouse dotted with scraps of lichen and her shoes coated with clay, surveyed her cousin with some disgust.

“How do you do it, Judith?” she demanded, as, chip in hand, she essayed to scrape the mud from her shoes.

Judith untucked one slender brown shoe from the folds of her skirt and eyed it distrustfully.

“I don’t have to do it,” she answered. “There is n’t anything there.”

Sidney sat up and brushed the hair from her eyes.

“That’s what I mean. You look as cool and as tidy as if you hadn’t swung yourself down over the side of a mountain. How do you contrive to do it?”

“I don’t know,” Judith made languid response, as she once more tucked her foot out of sight and settled her skirt anew.

Ronald glanced up from the basket which he was deftly shaping from the sheets of pale birch bark by his side. He did know. In the intervals of instructing Judith just where to place each foot, he had found time to cast occasional admiring glances towards Sidney who, scorning all help, went scrambling down the almost perpendicular wall of the forest, swinging herself from branch to branch, clambering over fallen, moss-covered logs and sliding in the shifting sand of the pathway. P’tit himself, trained guide and woodsman that he was, had had hard work to keep her off from his very heels. He had guided many girls before now. Most of them squealed and sat down, when they came to a hard place in the trail. This girl was of a new type to him. His little dark eyes had sparkled with enthusiasm, as he had watched her while, intrepid and disdainful of all help, she had taken the final headlong plunge at which most of his followers had balked.

Ronald had been long upon the descent. His time had been well-employed, however, and he breathed a sigh of satisfaction when he landed Judith, unscathed in person and in clothing, beside her rosy and dishevelled cousin. As for Janet, she had scorned a guide entirely, and had brought Paul to the bottom by a route devious and safe and known to herself alone. It was slowly dawning upon Paul, in the past few days, that Janet's character belied her demure exterior.

The hush came again, following naturally upon the languid cadence of Judith's speech. It was Judith herself who broke it.

"I wonder what Wade is doing."

Ronald glanced up again.

"Poor chap!" he said gravely. "It's mighty hard lines."

"Do you suppose he cares?" Judith said slowly.

With a swift gesture, Ronald slashed his basket in two.

"Cares! To be treated like that!" he said.

"Oh, Ronald! That pretty basket!" Judith reproached him.

Ronald sat staring at the flimsy pieces with frowning intentness.

"It's about the way of it, Judith," he said. "Wade does n't talk much; when he does, I generally know what he means, though."

“What has he told you?” Judith asked, while she bent forward, picked up the broken sheet of birch and fell to tearing it into shreds.

“Precious little. That he intended to make himself a record; that he studied law, started out fairly well, had things as he wanted them for a year or two; and then—”

“And then?” Sidney echoed, as she sat up suddenly and cast aside her chip.

“That is all.”

The girl turned herself about sharply and faced him.

“No; it is n’t all,” she contradicted. “Nothing ever is. If it is n’t one thing, it is another.”

“But he can’t go on with his profession,” Judith urged.

“Then let him go on with something else,” Sidney retorted.

For the space of an instant, Ronald reflected that there were other things in life besides rushing headlong over obstacles. Sidney was treating Wade’s limitations, just then, a good deal as she had treated the logs in her path.

“Are n’t you a bit hard on him?” he asked, with simple directness.

And Sidney answered just as directly, —

“No; or, if I am, it is just to keep him from being hard on himself. It is no fun for a man to

be left to sit alone and watch us going off to do things; but, unless he wakes up and finds something he can do, himself, it won't be long before he settles down and takes it as a matter of course."

Judith's answer held a ring of discouragement.

"Well, is n't it a matter of course?"

Sidney rose to her feet and faced about undauntedly.

"No. If Wade Winthrop can't do law and athletics, this summer, he can do something else. I don't know what that something is; but I am going to make it my business to find out. Meanwhile —"

"What now?" Ronald inquired, as he shifted his ground and reflected that, after all, a headlong rush was not so bad, as long as the person rushing dragged some one else along in her train.

"Meanwhile, I am going up now to play with Wade."

Judith sat up, aghast.

"Sidney! You can't!"

"Why not?"

"You don't know the trail."

"Of course I do. I've just come down."

"But you have n't even seen the falls."

Sidney's smile faded.

"I know, Judith. I'd like to; but they must wait. Some day, we can come again."

Judith spoke with some impatience.

"Don't be silly and sentimental about Wade, Sidney. He is all right. And we have delayed coming here, until you could come with us. You've not seen a thing yet. You must stay. And, just because I spoke of Wade's being lonesome, it's not fair of you to turn conscientious and go dashing off to stay with him."

But Sidney lifted her chin proudly.

"Don't worry, Judith. You didn't start my New England conscience to working, this time. I didn't invite Wade to come with us, just for the sake of spending the whole day alone with the horse."

"But you'll spoil everything, if you don't go up the ravine, when the whole day was planned on your account." Judith's tone was rebuking.

Sidney spoke more quietly.

"I'd love to go; you don't know how I want it. But I was the one who asked Wade to come, and I intend to see to it that he wants to come again."

Then Judith interposed her last barrier.

"But he does n't want you," she said calmly.

"How do you know?" Sidney demanded.

“Because,” Judith made tranquil answer;
“Wade does n’t care for girls.”

For an instant Sidney hesitated.

“Well, I’ll risk it,” she said then, as she
turned towards the foot of the trail.

CHAPTER SIX

SHE found Wade stretched out on his rug, asleep in the sun. One slim brown hand was under his head, the other lay open by his side. Fifty feet away, the horses were munching contentedly in the shade of a habitant's barn; and, across the narrow road, the habitant's wife came out of the house, her arms full of unbaked loaves, and crossed the dooryard towards her out-door oven. Sidney halted for a moment at Wade's side. Her first impulse was to wake him up and laugh at him for his drowsiness. Then, as she studied the thin, dark face, sorrowful even in its sleep, she resolved not to disturb him, and walked softly away in the direction of the house where the habitant's wife, setting her pans in a row on the ground, was busy raking the ashes out from the middle of the oven.

"Mademoiselle has perhaps returned from the falls?" she asked, as Sidney paused at her side.

The accent was courteous and friendly; but, in her absorption in her ashes, the speaker let the last words end with a falling cadence. The

words, spoken rapidly and in the country patois, defied Sidney's ear. Not so the cadence; that was unmistakable.

"No," she answered unhesitatingly.

The woman, stooping to pick up her tins of bread, paused with her broad back half bent, and stared at the girl in surprise.

"Mademoiselle does not understand the French?" she queried.

"Yes," Sidney replied optimistically.

With her straightened hand, the woman imprinted a deep cleft in each of the loaves, then slid the loaves into the oven.

"The young man in the field, is he your driver?" she asked.

"Yes," Sidney said again.

"But he takes no care of the horses at all. My goodman found them eating the grain which had been set aside for the hogs. When he explained it, the driver only laughed; but perhaps he does not speak the French as you do. Many of the people who come here do not. Many people come here in order to see the falls. They leave their horses here and, when they return, they often ask me to prepare a supper for them. Is it your wish that I prepare supper for your friends?"

Sidney gasped, as she received this volley of language which so plainly ended with a question.

Then she rallied. Her past responses, albeit offered at random, had appeared to fulfil her social duty. She would apply the same method yet once again. What matter if it were a bit malapropos? The woman might interpret it after the light of her understanding. Happily, however, Sidney's reply was not malapropos in the least.

"Yes," she answered calmly; "yes, Madame; it is well."

The woman received her longer utterance with such obvious satisfaction that Sidney's inherent distrust of her own French vanished. Now she would start some conversation upon her own account. Resting her elbow on the whitewashed boards which roofed in the oven, she ransacked her mind for an appropriate vocabulary. To her annoyance, it seemed to her that her past training had dealt exclusively with paper and pens and ink, with the very long tail of the kitten of the yellow cat and with the new rake of wood of the good gardener's wife. Sidney knitted her brows; then her face cleared.

"Is it that Madame has roasted her bread in the fire, all the days of the week?" she asked slowly and with an inflection which betokened the profoundest interest.

The woman jerked the last loaf into the oven with a wholly unnecessary emphasis.

"My bread is of the best," she said shortly.

Sidney saw that something was wrong. She hastened to apply a plaster.

"Perhaps," she said soothingly.

"Without doubt." The answer was still uncompromising. Nevertheless, Sidney, in her pleasure at understanding the crisp phrase, paid no heed to its import. She merely pursued the subject farther.

"During how many days, days of the week, will this bread be eaten?" she questioned.

The woman stared at her uncomprehendingly. Sidney sought to explain.

"Eaten. Eaten with the teeth." She drew back her lips and wagged her jaw suggestively. "If Madame does not roast the bread in the fire, all the days of the week, how long will the roasted bread remain to be eaten with the teeth since — since — I mean before —"

The woman looked at her, jerked open the oven door, looked in, jerked together the oven door and looked at Sidney again. Moreover, the expression in her eyes suggested her possible belief that Sidney was demented. Once more Sidney sought to explain, although, for some reason, no part of her vocabulary appeared to lend itself to the discussion.

"The son of Madame, and the daughter of

Madame, also the — the — the man of Madame, do they eat well?" she queried, with seeming discursiveness.

Madame rubbed her nose with her homespun pinafore.

"But yes," she granted grudgingly.

"Do they eat the roasted bread?"

"But yes. How otherwise?"

Then Sidney rose to a triumphant climax.

"How many days do they eat the roasted bread?"

"Eh?"

"How many days of the week do the daughter of Madame and the son of Madame and the man of Madame eat the roasted bread?"

The girl spoke rapidly and with an assurance which led her to forget her hard-learned lesson of swallowing half her consonants and uttering the other half of them by the transforming medium of her nose. The woman looked at her inquiringly, uncomprehendingly. Then her left shoulder mounted towards the lobe of her ear, and she shook her head in a cornerwise fashion which was as exasperating as were her next words.

"No und-stan' English," she said, with careful emphasis, and Sidney suddenly bethought herself that it was time for Wade to be awake.

His back was towards her, as she came softly to

him over the thick, tall grass. His arms folded on his knees, he sat looking down upon the valley at his feet, a peaceful, open valley of tilled fields and grazing cattle, and marked with the white stripe of a distant village which wound up the slope to the great gray stone church whose shining roof caught the full glare of the noontide sun. Beyond it rose the purple Laurentides, peak upon peak, their softly-rounded crests bearing witness to the fact that they were old when all the rest of the earth was but newly risen from the seas. Close at his feet, a long, wavering line of woodland covered the deep gash which the Grande Rivière had cut through the fertile valley, and shut away from his thoughtful eyes every hint of the glorious falls beneath. For one swift instant, Sidney wondered how it would seem to be, like Wade just then, on the edge of things, but not in them. Then, as she came closer to his side, she spoke his name.

He turned about sharply and faced her.

“Sidney! What are you doing here?”

Deliberately she straightened out the corner of the rug.

“Preparing to sit down beside you,” she answered then.

“Where are the others?”

Following the example of her late companion,

she too sought to rub her shoulder against the lobe of her ear. Failing that, she raised her brows and shook her head.

"Down there, somewhere," she replied vaguely; "that is, unless they have come up again."

"Why are n't you with them?"

"Because I am unable to be in two places at once," she responded. "Being here, I naturally am not there."

He looked her over in obvious amusement. She grew restive under his scrutiny.

"Well?" she demanded.

"Have you been squabbling with Judith?"

"I never squabble," she replied a little loftily.

"Perhaps not. I grieve to say that Judith does, though."

But Sidney corrected him.

"Oh, no. Judith never would squabble," she observed dispassionately. "Squabbling would be too hasty for her; she might perhaps disagree. Still, it takes two to make a disagreement."

"And you never disagree?"

"Not for long," she answered, half laughing, half in aggressiveness. "When I do, I make the other one give in and agree with me, or else I let him alone. I wouldn't fight with Judith, anyway; she is too tranquil. It would be like pounding a feather bolster."

“How about me?” he suggested.

She eyed him mockingly.

“You’ll do better. I think I will begin on you now.”

But he put up his arm, as if in self-defence.

“Oh, don’t!” he urged, and there was a ring of earnestness underneath the mockery of his tone.

“I’m not in good fighting trim now, Tiddles.”

She looked up at him sharply; but her keen gray eyes softened at his use of Paul’s name for her.

“Why not?” she asked, with steady directness.

For a moment, his eyes met hers. Then he answered steadily,—

“Because it is taking all my nerve to fight another battle.”

“What is it?”

Again came the little pause, before he said,—

“It’s not manners to talk about one’s self, and it never improves a bad matter to discuss it. Still, do you know, Tiddles, I don’t seem to mind saying it to you. I’ve a notion you’ll understand, and I know you won’t repeat. It’s only that, at twenty-seven—it’s not so easy to face the end of things.”

Sidney drew in her breath. Then her left hand shut over the closed fingers of her right. It would be so easy to say the wrong thing, so easy and so cruel.

“You mean?” she asked slowly.

“That my father had consumption, and that, last May, I found things weren’t any too right with my own lungs.” Then Wade’s mouth shut to a stiff line; but the line curved down at the ends.

For an instant, the colour dropped out of Sidney’s face. So this was the cause of the trouble in her cousin’s eyes. And now and then, during the past four days, she had mentally reproached him with being indolent and a bit morose.

“What do they say about it?” she questioned steadily.

Wade laughed.

“The usual thing, I suppose. No disease yet, only the chance that it may come later. Living out-doors, no work, no athletics, no excitement. I may live to be ninety-seven years and nine months old; I must live like a caterpillar in the sun, though.”

Sidney sought about her for consoling words.

“But the sun is bright,” she suggested.

“Naturally. However, that doesn’t signify that the caterpillar is also bright. Sidney, I don’t mean to make a fuss; but, after all, it isn’t an inspiring prospect.”

For her only answer, she moved a trifle nearer to his side and put her hand on his, as it absently

twisted the fringe of the rug. Something in the gesture pleased him, and he gave her hand a hearty grip. Then he straightened up and threw back his shoulders.

“Don’t worry, Tiddles,” he said then. “I’ve made my moan. It’s the first time I’ve done it, and I imagine it will be the last. I’m rather ashamed of myself; and yet, though you may not suspect it, it’s been rather a comforting process. You’ll keep still about it, though?”

“Of course.”

“You’d better. I don’t want Judith wailing over me. She’s a dear child; but her sympathy would be a little like the bunches of violets they send to convicts,” he said whimsically. “I’d a general notion you wouldn’t get tearful.”

Sidney gave a hasty gulp.

“I’m not,” she said valiantly. “It’s horrid, Wade; it makes me sick. I knew something was wrong; but you were so quiet and plucky that I never supposed it was as bad as this, and—” Her voice broke.

Wade laughed a little, as he watched her; but his laugh was free from any taint of bitterness. Instead of his cousin’s consoling him, it plainly was his duty to console his cousin. And yet, strange to say, her girlish woe was the best tonic he could have had just then. Under the present



“SIDNEY sat with her thoughtful eyes fixed upon the valley at her feet.” Page 87.

conditions, he had not expected to win the regard of a healthy, energetic young thing like Sidney, and it was good to find that, after so short an acquaintance, she really did like him to the point of caring for his bitter disappointment.

"It is rather bad," he said then. "It's not so much the disease itself. That may never show up. But I hate the idea of being put on my honour to sit down and rust out of life. I liked my profession; I liked to work, and I was just getting to where my work was beginning to show. And now —"

The pause lengthened. Wade was frowning down at the rug; Sidney sat with her thoughtful eyes fixed upon the valley at her feet. At length she spoke, gently, but with an accent of finality which acted like a spur upon the man at her side.

"It is about as bad as it can be, Wade; but it might be even a little worse. Your plans are broken all to pieces."

"Yes," he assented. "All to pieces."

She turned to face him and, for the moment, her girlish face took on the lines of womanhood.

"Yes. And now the next thing for us to do, is to pick up the pieces and fit them together into something else."

"Us?" he questioned.

"Yes, us. Don't leave me out of it, Wade. It

is never half so easy to work alone. Besides, we girls like to feel we count for something. I don't want to go home and have nothing to show for my summer."

"But you came up here to have a good time," he objected.

"Certainly. I intend to have it," she replied conclusively.

He shook his head.

"Not if you dodder around with me."

"I know that," she agreed with him rather unexpectedly. "Therefore I intend that you shall not dodder."

"But it is the law," he reminded her.

"Don't be too sure of that." Then her intonation changed swiftly. "Wade, I don't want to be too horrid. Please don't be cross at me. It is only that, if I were in your place, I should go mad without something to do."

"Precisely," he assented. "That is what is the matter with me."

Her elbows on her knees and her chin on her fists, Sidney stared at him with frowning intentness.

"Just exactly how much can you do?" she demanded.

"Just exactly nothing."

Sidney frowned still more intently.

“That’s nonsense,” she said slowly. “You do things, every day.”

“Precious little, Sidney.” Then he sat up and counted off the details on his fingers. “I must not study. I must not spend needless time in the house. I must not take any violent exercise. Above all,” he wagged his thumb at her in bitter derision; “above all, I must not worry about myself, and I must not allow myself to be depressed.”

Sidney bit her lip for a moment. Then she lifted her outspread hand.

“And you must walk a little, every day. You must explore all the drives within twenty miles. You must teach me to play chess in the evenings. You must bait my hook, when I go fishing. Above all,” she wagged her own thumb back at him gayly; “above all, when you feel an attack of the blues coming on, you must promise to hunt me up, and we’ll mingle our tears together and compare the flavour of the salt.” She laughed a little, as she spoke. Then she held out her hand. “Is it a bargain, Cousin Wade?” she asked blithely.

And, quite contrary to all of his previous intentions, Wade Winthrop took the outstretched hand.

“Yes,” he assented. “It is a bargain.”

She gave his hand a vigorous squeeze. Then

hastily she let it drop again. Over Wade's shoulder, she had caught sight of the others coming towards her from across the fields, and she was shrewd enough to suspect that her cousin would not care to be caught in any demonstration whatsoever.

"Thank you," she said. "I'm glad you told me about it. It is better, once in a while, to talk things over. I never tell tales; and, besides, I may find some more ways in which you can be made useful." Then she looked up unconcernedly to meet Judith who swept down upon her like an accusing spirit.

"Sidney, did you order supper over at that house?" she demanded.

Sidney faced her with an expression of blank and wholly innocent amazement.

"I? Of course not."

"But she says you did."

"Who is *she*?"

"The woman who lives there. She has the tables all set for us."

Paul licked his lips hungrily.

"Yes, there are gallons of berries and whole bushels of cream," he urged. "Let's go and eat them, quick."

"But I didn't say anything to her about supper," Sidney protested.

“She says you told her to get supper ready for us, when we came up from the falls,” Judith reiterated.

Deliberately Wade rose to his feet, and turned to offer his hand to his cousin.

“Then, as Paul says, we ’d best go and eat it,” he advised them.

But, disregarding his outstretched hand, Sidney sat staring up at him with merry eyes in which there lingered no trace of her emotion of a few moments before.

“Cousin Wade,” she said gayly; “I think I would suggest that you add to your other spheres of usefulness the extra duty of teaching me to understand a little more French.”

Bending down, he clinched his hands in hers, as if to lift her to her feet. She anticipated his effort, however; but not so quickly as to lose his low words, —

“Never mind the French, Tiddles. You understood me, and that’s much more to the purpose.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

RUTH was counting out. Her best doll, her second-best doll, Jumbo and Bungay were ranged in line before her, and her fat pink finger kept time to her words.

*“Un, deux, trois, quatre,
P’tit vache a mal aux pattes.
Tira le par le queue,
Se le rendra mieux.”*

“P’huh!” Bungay snorted disdainfully. “What does that mean, Ruth?”

Ruth translated rapidly.

“Own calf has a lame foot, and if Ruth pulls his tail, he’ll feel better.”

Bungay pondered.

“Then why did n’t you say so?”

“Ruth did.”

“You did n’t, too. You said a lot of grunts and things.”

“Ruth said it in French,” she explained loftily. Bungay eyed her with manifest hostility.

“Show-off cat!” he observed.

“Am not.”

“Yes, you are. Sidney says so.”

Ruth stood her ground.

“Don’t care what Sidney says.”

“And Paul — ”

With infinite dignity, Ruth interrupted Bungay who was carried quite out of his usual limits of truth by the need of driving home his point.

“Paul is own brother,” she said conclusively.

“I know that. So is Sidney my sister, and she’s older than Paul,” Bungay protested.

But again Ruth asserted herself.

“Paul’s feet are lots bigger, anyhow.”

To the maturer mind, the last words would have sounded irrelevant. However, they silenced Bungay on that score, and swiftly he changed the subject back to the original issue.

“You are a show-off cat and a goop, too,” he shouted, with full-lunged opposition.

“What is a goop?” Ruth demanded.

“It’s a thing, and its name is Ruth Addison.”

Ruth retaliated.

“So’re you a thing, and your name is Goop.”

“’Tis not. What do you suppose I do with Jumbo, when he shows off?”

Like a true woman, Ruth found herself unable to withstand her own curiosity.

"What?" she demanded.

"I slap him, and so," Bungay faced about swiftly; "I'm going to slap you."

However, Ruth was too quick for him. Dodging his out-thrust arm, she sprang to one side. The next instant, two pink fists were half-buried in Bungay's yellow hair. Bungay's heel swept backward once and yet again, and two high-pitched shrieks mingled in an irate duet.

Instantly two remonstrant voices came down from the gallery above, turning the duet to the likeness of a fugue.

"Bungay, stop being so naughty to Ruth."

"Come off from that, Ruth! You'll kill him."

The duet arose once more.

"He slapped me!"

"She pulled my hair!"

"He was teasing me!"

"She was showing off!"

"You're a bomerable boy, Bungay Stayre!"

"You're a tattle-tale, Ruth Addison!"

"Stop!"

"Let go!"

But a third element appeared upon the field of battle. This was Ronald Leslie who, ruddy and hilarious, swept Ruth up into the curve of one arm, and dangled Bungay by his patent leather belt from the other hand.

“Shut up, youngsters! What’s the matter with you?” he said, as he deposited them both in the same hammock, and then bundled the hammock into a closed bag.

The duet began again.

“He teases me!”

“She bothers me!”

“I wish he ’d go home!”

“I hate girls!”

But the victory fell to Ruth. With a deftly-aimed squirm, she stuck her head out of the hammock and smiled up at Ronald ingratiatingly.

“Ruth loves own Ronald,” she observed.

“I don’t love you,” Bungay commented vindictively.

Ruth turned a deaf ear to the mutterings at her elbow.

“Ruth will kiss own Ronald,” she pursued.

With a laugh, Ronald stooped to receive the caress; but Ruth drew back.

“Ruth can’t kiss nicely, when she ’s all bundled up in a heap,” she objected.

Ronald flapped the edge of the hammock over her head again.

“Do you want to get out?”

“Yes.”

“Will you be good?”

“Yes.”

“And not hurt Bungay?”

“Huh! She could n't hurt me; she's nothing but a girl. Anyhow, I hurt her first and a whole lot the most,” Bungay protested suddenly.

“Did not. Ruth pulled hair, and some of it is on own fingers now.”

The argument was unanswerable, save by physical force. With a wail, Bungay cast himself upon Ruth, and they prepared to fight it out sociably within the narrow limits of the hammock. For a moment, Ronald eyed them mirthfully. Then, reversing his former tactics, he opened out the hammock and, with a swift turn, emptied both children out upon the thick, soft grass.

“There!” he advised them. “Fight it out, if you must. The sooner that peace is declared, the better for all parties.”

But Bungay had a theory of his own. Scrambling to his feet, he seized Jumbo by the trunk, smote Ruth over the shoulders and then fled, shrieking, to bury his head in Judith's lap.

However, Ruth still held the victory.

“That did n't hurt any,” she proclaimed, after an interval of silent tongue-wagging at her quondam foe. “Ruth does n't care to play with little boys now. She is going out to walk with own Ronald and Judith.”

This time, it was Ronald's turn to protest.

"No; you're not, young woman."

"Why not?"

"Because we don't want you."

Ruth fingered a fold of her pink skirt.

"Ruth wants Ronald."

"Then Ruth doesn't always get her wants. You are going to stay at home and play with Bungay."

Ruth's face fell. Child though she was, she realized the finality in Ronald's tone.

"Ruth wants to go with own Ronald," she iterated slowly. Then she steadied her quivering lips. "What shall Ruth play?"

And Ronald made answer, with a rashness of which he was swift to repent,—

"I think, if I were in your place, I would play Noah and the ark."

The idea appealed to Ruth, and promptly she forgot her recent animosity.

"Goody good!" she cried. "Come, Bungay, come quick. Own Ronald says let's play be Noah and the ark. Hurry up, and bring Jumbo. I'll be Noah."

Bungay lifted his head and wiped his eyes on Jumbo's flank.

"Who'll be I?" he demanded.

But Ruth was ready for him.

“You can be one of Noah’s little boys, and own best doll can be the other. Own second-best doll can be a rangatang, and the new little cats will do for bears. Hurry up and get ’em all loaded, before it rains.” And together they departed in the direction of the barn.

Sidney, on the upper gallery, was busy tying flies under the direction of Paul and Janet. Now she paused from her work and, bending over the rail, looked after the children.

“Bungay has met his match,” she observed, and there was an accent of satisfaction in her voice.

“Is it something new?” Janet inquired, as she deftly wrapped a coil of scarlet silk about two gray feathers and a fishhook.

“It is the first time in his life.”

“Really?” Janet’s tone expressed her wonder. “Does n’t he ever mind?”

“Oh, yes; he minds well enough, as a general thing, only he does n’t stay minded. That is,” Sidney added hastily, as she recalled certain recent episodes with her small brother; “he minds my father and mother. But that’s another matter. It is one thing to obey the powers; it is another to be downed in a fair fight.”

Paul sighed a little ostentatiously.

“Obviously,” he said.

Her head on one side, Janet considered the poise of her fly. Then, satisfied with the scrutiny, she leaned forward and placed it with the other flies on the rail.

"I don't believe you know much about it," she remarked thoughtfully.

"Me? I always have to knock under," he protested.

"I don't mean you, Paul. Your bark is worse than your bite, every time. I found that out, days ago. But I meant Sidney."

Sidney pursed out her lips and meditated aloud.

"I don't know. Yes. No. I am not so sure that I do. My fights mostly are n't fair ones, anyway. I'd rather fight a bigger man than myself; then I don't feel so mean, when I come out on top."

"Nor when he comes out on top of you," Paul added shrewdly.

She laughed.

"No; I don't, Paul. That is a fact. But, do you know, he usually does n't come out on top. As a rule, if I make up my mind to anything, it goes to work and does itself."

Janet's tone was still thoughtful.

"You're a very managing sort of girl, Sidney." Sidney's colour came a little hotly.

"What do you mean by that?" she asked.

Janet settled her chin on her shut fists and spoke at the gallery railing. There was no rancour in her voice, no criticism. It was merely that she seemed to be stating an indisputable truth.

“Why, you like to try to manage people, and get them to do things they don’t want to, and make their plans for them,” she said slowly.

Sidney sat up straight.

“Janet Leslie, I don’t do any such thing.”

“Yes, you do. It’s all right, and I suppose you help them along a great deal. It is only I don’t see how you dare do it.”

“But I don’t do it.” Sidney’s tone was as contradictory as Bungay’s had been.

“Yes, you do.”

“Who do I manage?” Sidney asked, in wrathful disregard of her accusative case.

“Well, Mr. Winthrop, for one.”

“Wade Winthrop! What an idea!”

Paul looked up from his own fly.

“Fact, Tiddles, and you may just as well admit it. Since you tackled him, Wade doesn’t dare say his soul is his own. I don’t think he minds it, not as I should. He seems to take it all as rather a joke.”

“But — I don’t,” Sidney protested lamely. “Besides, I hate managing women.”

Paul's next words, albeit jovial, nevertheless struck home.

"So much the better. Then you won't get a fit of swelled head. Where are you going, Tiddles?"

"Up-stairs."

"What for?"

"To —" She laughed a little, by way of steadying her voice. All the gentler side of her nature, in those last days, had been giving itself wholly to Wade Winthrop, and Paul's random criticism had hurt her to the quick. "To — think things over."

Paul stared after her a little uneasily.

"You don't suppose she's cross; do you, Janet?"

And Janet made serene answer, —

"Oh, no. Sidney is never cross."

Nevertheless, fifteen minutes later, Paul suddenly discovered that he had left his favourite knife on the table in his room. On the way to his room, his fist smote upon Sidney's closed door.

"Oh, Tiddles, do hurry up and come down," he called through the keyhole. "Our flies are all in a boggle, and we want you to help unboggle them."

Meanwhile, a laden procession of two was has-

tening from the barn to the river bank. Ruth led the way, as was befitting for one who sought to pose as Noah. Her two dolls, best and second-best, were under one arm, one hand clutched the hem of her skirt where an irate hen was struggling fiercely to escape from the folds which muffled her protesting squawks, and from the other hand trailed an aged umbrella. Bungay followed, his fat arms full of kittens which squirmed blindly to and fro, ever and anon freeing themselves from his clasp and dropping with a soft thud to the ground at his feet. Jumbo, with a bit of rope attached to his long-suffering trunk, followed after the procession, though no self-respecting elephant would have claimed kinship with the cloth effigy which ploughed along on its back with its legs stiffly supporting the débris which they had gathered up in their course. Then, as one yellow and scaly leg clove Ruth's front breadth in twain, she halted for an instant and glanced up at the azure sky.

"Hurry up, Ham! It's going to rain," she admonished her companion.

But Bungay was still in the ranks of the opposition, and, opposition-wise, felt it his duty to contradict the government.

"I ain't Ham; I'm Shem."

Ruth stamped her foot impatiently.

“Well, Shem, then. Do hurry up.”

Bungay felt it was time he scored.

“The ostricks has tored your clothes in two, and Auntie Jack will smack you,” he announced triumphantly.

Ruth looked at him dubiously.

“Do you s’pose she will? She does n’t generally, ’cept at bedtime.”

Bungay explained.

“I don’t mean smack with her mouth; I mean smack with a stick.”

Ruth turned discursive.

“Noah must hurry into own ark. It is going to rain, and rain, and rain for forty years and forty weeks, and it will cover up all the land and all the water and all the mountains —”

Bungay interrupted.

“’T won’t, too. It will run off.”

“And all the whole earth,” Ruth resumed; “and Ste. Anne’s Mountain and Beacon Hill and by and by the Bunker Hill monument.”

Bungay became interested.

“And the ’Quarium and the Hendryk Hudson,” he added, as he made a clutch at a spotty white kitten which was seeking to escape from his embrace.

“Stick her in your shirt,” Ruth suggested practically. “What’s the Hendryk Hudson?”

"It's our house, and it's twenty-'leven stories high."

"It is not. It would tip over. You'll get punished, if you tell lies," Ruth admonished him. "Ruth had to have own nightgown on in the daytime."

Again Bungay scored.

"That's 'cause you're a girl," he said scornfully. "Boys don't wear nightgowns; they wear pajamas."

"What's pajamas?"

"They tie on with a string," Bungay explained lucidly.

Ruth returned to the charge.

"Well, it's going to rain, and we shall get wet, if we don't hurry. Besides, the ostricks is biting own stomach."

And the procession hastened forward on its way to the ark.

Just to the east of the village, a hill rose sharply from the river bank. Seen from its top, the valley lay spread out, stretching away for mile on mile up the mighty St. Lawrence, past the long point of land jutting out at L'Ange Gardien, past the westernmost end of the Isle of Orleans and on to the bend in the river where the gray old citadel with its scarlet dot was silhouetted sharply against the noonday sky. Ron-

ald and Judith, sitting at the top of the grassy slope, looked out upon the beauty of the summer noon and, as they looked, even their careless talk dropped away into silence. At last Judith's eyes fell to the long stripe of the village at her feet, and then moved even nearer to the wide basin where Grande Rivière loiters for a moment, after its mad plunges down the mountains, before it slides onward to lose itself in the St. Lawrence, a quarter of a mile away.

"That poor old boat never seems to get any rest," she said idly.

"Who has it now?"

"I don't know. Wade, probably. He is the only one of us who would take to an umbrella."

"Perhaps it is your mother," Ronald suggested, as he opened his knife and assaulted the turf at his feet.

"She never goes there. She is afraid of the logs."

"Well she may be. They are tricky things, until you get used to them. Janet was nearly drowned there once. Where is the boat? I don't see it."

"Over there, just going behind the point of the island."

Ronald dropped his knife and shielded his eyes with his hands. Then he scrambled to his feet.

“Can Wade swim?” he asked abruptly.

“I don’t know. I suppose so. Why?”

“Because he is getting dangerously near the little dam. If the current catches him, he’ll get nearer still, before he’s out of it. I believe I’ll go down there.”

“What good can you do?” Judith asked placidly. “I know Wade can swim, and it’s not so very deep.”

“Deeper than the top of my head; and Wade is in no sort of trim for a tussle with that current. It cuts through there like a millrace.” And, disdaining the roundabout path, Ronald went slipping and sliding down the sheer face of the hill towards the river at his very feet.

Judith watched him, half in amusement at his needless fear, half in admiration for his lithe, alert figure. Then suddenly she sprang to her feet, for she had seen the umbrella swerve to one side and she had seen, as well, what was beneath it.

“Ronald! Ronald! Hurry!” she cried, and there was a note of terror in her usually placid voice. “Hurry fast! It isn’t Wade at all; it is those children.”

And Ronald, by this time on the very brink of the river, waved his hand in token that he heard. Then he tore off his coat, kicked away his shoes and sprang forward into the stream.

From her seat in the bow, Ruth watched him, as he came swimming towards her. The smooth current was cut sharply into two long, V-shaped ripples beneath his powerful strokes and, above the ripples, his face showed white and set. Already the current had caught the boat, and the little dam was hardly fifty feet away. Ronald was strong and in perfect training. Nevertheless, the river was the stronger, and he felt his own strength going fast. Unless he could reach the boat, scramble in and seize the oars that lay in the bottom, the river would claim its own. He drew a long breath, made a mighty effort, touched the stern and felt it slide away from his outstretched hand. Once again he pulled together his scant remainder of physical and nervous force, and swept forward once again. This time, his hand closed on the edge of the boat.

Ruth eyed him with dispassionate interest.

“Hang on to the ostricks tight, Ham,” she admonished her companion. “The water is ’most over Beacon Hill now, and here comes the dove to pull us out.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

AT least three quarters of Mrs. Addison's influence over the young people about her lay in her ready and respectful interest in their demands upon her time. When Sidney came into the room, she was writing to her husband, and the letter was an important one. Nevertheless, she laid down her pen and looked at her niece with care-free, smiling eyes, as the girl said a little abruptly, —

“Auntie Jack, do you know it is a perfect day? Don't you want to come for a walk?”

For a short instant, Mrs. Addison hesitated. She was no pedestrian, and she knew that Sidney's tireless energy had proved too much for even Paul. Then she fancied she saw trouble in the girl's gray eyes, and she decided to abandon her letter.

“Are you sure you want the old lady?” she asked, as she rose.

“Certain sure. Else I should n't invite you.”

“I will be ready in five minutes,” Mrs. Addison promised.

Sidney looked her over with some disapproval.

“What ready do you need?”

“My hat, and some thicker shoes.”

But Sidney demurred.

“We aren’t going where it is rough, and you don’t want a hat.”

“I always wear a hat.”

“What’s the use? It is mere vanity, because you think your pink and white complexion is becoming. So it is; but a skin like yours never shows sunburn. Come.”

Wade’s face appeared outside the open window.

“Don’t you want me to come, too?” he inquired.

Sidney shook her head.

“Not this time,” she said obdurately. “We’re going too far for you, and we want to talk girl-talk, too. You’d best save up your energy till this afternoon.”

“What’s this afternoon?”

“We all are going for a long drive.”

But he persisted.

“I’d rather go to walk with you.”

The girl’s face fell. It was none too easy for her to refuse Wade, when he spoke in that tone and with that look in his eyes. Neither was it easy for her, nowadays, to adopt the prevailing

method of leaving him to amuse himself alone. However, she hardened her heart, but not her voice, as she answered, —

“I’m sorry, Wade; but the honest fact is that I don’t want you. I’ve a chilly weight on my conscience, and I want to thaw it out by a good, long talk with your mother.”

He laughed.

“Sure it is n’t indigestion, Tiddles?” he asked quizzically. “Soft-shell crabs always turn me testy.”

“Then so much the more reason you should keep out of my way, till I get over it,” she retorted. “Sorry, Wade. You are a good old thing; but this time, truly, I don’t want you.”

“Then I shall go and play with Madame,” he returned philosophically. “Strange as it may seem, she always wants me.”

And Sidney, as she stood looking after his trim, well-knit figure, decided that, in one respect at least, Madame was the possessor of sound common sense. Then her aunt joined her, and together they left the house and started towards the hills at the north of the village.

Now that her wish was granted, and she had her aunt’s society quite to herself, the girl was strangely silent while they were climbing the sandy road under the pine trees. In fact, she

had been strangely silent for three days now, ever since the morning when she had left Paul and Janet on the gallery and gone up to her own room. They all had noticed the change, had wondered at it, had even talked of it among themselves. Up to that time, Sidney, alert, enthusiastic, gay, had been the very life of the house. Now, all at once, she had lost her sparkle. Paul was loudest in his mourning over the change in his boon comrade; but in reality it was on Wade that the loss fell most heavily. He missed Sidney's overflowing spirits, missed her jovial laugh, missed her teasing. Now and then, even, it seemed to him that she was trying to avoid him. She still kept up her evening game of chess with him; but by day, instead of loitering about at his side, she spent long hours with Judith and Ronald by the river, or sat on Janet's gallery, talking with her and with Freda Leslie who had just returned from Rivière du Loup.

And Wade looked after her with sombre eyes. She too was growing tired of him. Small wonder! Under some conditions and into some combinations he would have followed her; but he and Judith never were able to hit it off well, and his one meeting with Freda Leslie had convinced him that no pleasure for him lay in the society of this

taciturn English girl, so plainly absorbed in the glitter of her own engagement ring. Besides, Freda was a social factor, and must be treated accordingly. Sidney was nothing but a jolly little cousin who possessed the happy knack of fitting her personality into his somewhat aggressive needs. So much the worse for him, now that she had grown tired of him just as he had learned to depend upon her! Then he yawned and rolled over in the hammock, smiling at himself in a swift wave of self-disgust. His mental fibre was growing as flabby as his physical one, if he had reached the point where he, Wade Winthrop, all-round honour man of his Harvard class, could depend for amusement upon the society of a sixteen-year-old school-girl. He wondered impatiently if those three girls would never stop chattering about their best clothes, and allow him to have a little sleep.

This had been the state of affairs, up to that very morning. And then, when the chatter had stopped, Wade had rolled out of his hammock and followed Sidney back to the house, only to be told that she had no desire for his proffered company. He chewed savagely at his mustache, all the way up the street to Madame's house.

Mrs. Addison was a little breathless with her climb, by the time she reached the top of the

hill, and she dropped down on the bank by the roadside, to rest and to look at the wonderful panorama of river and mountain which met them on every hand, as soon as they rose above the level of the village street. At her side Sidney, meanwhile, had picked up a bit of stick and was busily engaged in punching holes in the turf. Mrs. Addison broke the silence.

“Wade has seemed like another man, these last two weeks,” she said thoughtfully, although with no idea how closely she was coming to the cause of her niece’s absorption.

Sidney looked up sharply.

“How do you mean?”

“That he seems better, more wide awake, more like his old self. Your coming has stirred him up wonderfully, Sidney.”

Sidney punched another hole, buried a pebble in the hole and punched the earth down over the pebble.

“I am very glad.”

Mrs. Addison continued her quiet monologue. It was plain that something was troubling the girl at her side; but she knew from past experience that, if she were to be of any real help, she must wait for her niece to speak out, of her own free will. The memory of her own girlhood led Mrs. Addison to distrust the value of forced confidences.

Meanwhile, she would take the opportunity to say out her own say to the end.

“Yes,” she went on; “Wade seems like a different person, since you came. I am glad, too, for I was afraid you would n’t get acquainted with him at all, nor have the least idea what he really is like. I think your being here has been the best thing in the world for him.”

“I don’t see why,” Sidney said briefly. All at once, now that Mrs. Addison had gone straight to the theme of her wished-for talk, a certain dumbness had fallen upon the girl, and she found it impossible to speak freely, even to Auntie Jack.

Mrs. Addison laughed a little.

“I don’t, myself,” she confessed. “Wade has never had anything to do with young girls until now.”

“What about Judith?”

Quite involuntarily Mrs. Addison sighed. All unknown to herself, Sidney had touched upon the one rough spot in the general smoothness of the Addison household. Judith and her half-brother never really clashed; it was merely that they had a mutual talent for getting upon each other’s nerves. Wade was critical, outspoken and, just now, a little sensitive on every point of his mental anatomy. Judith was dainty and precise and

rather too conscientious for the complete comfort of her family. She fully intended to do just right in every particular; and it rarely occurred to her mind that she might have fallen below the level of her own intentions. This resulted in a slightly superior attitude towards all men, an attitude at which Paul openly railed, but which Wade resented exceedingly. As consequence, for the most part Wade Winthrop and Judith Addison went their separate ways. And they both were their mother's children, and, seeing the faults of each, she yet found it impossible to judge between them. She was conscious, however, that when they met and parted, it was always Judith who bore away with her the sense of superiority. In the mere matter of poise, Wade Winthrop was no match for his young half-sister.

However, with all this in her mind, Mrs. Addison was able to evade the real spirit of Sidney's question.

"Judith is so busy with Janet," she answered; "and besides, this summer, she is helping me in the care of Ruth."

"Yes, I know; but —" Then the girl cast aside her stick, and looked up at her aunt with anxious eyes. "Then you are n't altogether sorry I came?" she asked abruptly.

"Sorry, child? Of course not. Why?"

With a despairing gesture, Sidney plumped her chin into her folded hands.

"Because everything is going wrong, deadly wrong, and I can't seem to help it."

Mrs. Addison stared at her niece in sudden consternation.

"My dear child, what is the matter? Are you homesick?"

"I—" Sidney caught her breath; "I rather guess so. That, or else I have gone idiotic."

Mrs. Addison slipped her hand under the quivering chin, and, turning the face about, looked steadily into the wet gray eyes.

"Tell me all about it, dear," she said.

"That's just it; there is n't anything to tell," Sidney burst out. "It's only something wrong in the air that makes me feel a misfit, like Bungay's best shoes. They pinch, and they squeak; but they don't fit. That's what is the matter with me."

"But you do fit, dear; and we love to have you with us. And, even if the rest of us did n't care, look at the good times you are having with Wade."

"Yes, that's the very worst of the trouble," Sidney responded unexpectedly.

"The trouble? Wade?" Mrs. Addison queried blankly.

"Yes. You asked me here to get acquainted

with Judith. I can't. I think she is a dear, and nice and sweet and refined and all the things I ought to be and am not. But, if I lived in the house with her forty millions of years, I never could be chums with her, nor she with me. I wish I could; but I can't. It's not her fault. I like her; but we're born different. You asked me to come here to be with her. Instead of that, we let each other alone, and she goes off with Janet and Ronald, and I sit around with Wade." Sidney drew a long, sobbing breath, as she finished her outburst of woful confession.

Over the top of the girl's head, Mrs. Addison smiled ever so slightly. She had not been altogether blind, during those past two weeks.

"And it all makes me feel as if I were here under false pretences," Sidney went on, after a little pause. "Of course, I like Judith; but I like Wade a great deal better. Still, I was n't invited here to play with Wade."

Mrs. Addison interrupted her.

"No; because he is so much older, and so blue, this summer, that it never once occurred to me that he would play with you. But, Sidney —"

"Well?"

"Even if there were n't any Judith, I should be glad to have you here just for the sake of the good you're doing him."

But Sidney suddenly turned wayward.

"I'm not even doing him good; I'm just managing him," she said, with scathing emphasis on the quoted word.

In spite of herself, Mrs. Addison laughed at the tone.

"What makes you think so?"

"Paul said so, and Janet."

"When?"

"One day, when we were on the gallery."

Mrs. Addison's face cleared. All at once, she thought she saw the cause of Sidney's sudden shifting of her loyalty to Wade. This shifting had been the real reason of her talk, that morning. Now she congratulated herself upon her choice of subject. The cloud between the two cousins was not merely a fiction of her imagination; nevertheless, touched, it could not fail to vanish.

"Well," she asked tranquilly; "what if you are?"

Sidney reiterated the statement which, three days before, she had made to Janet and Paul.

"But I hate managing women," she said a little aggressively.

"Doesn't it depend somewhat upon the way they do it?" her aunt inquired.

"Not one bit; not one little bit of a bit. It's

all horrid; and Paul said —” The words caught in her throat.

“What did Paul say?”

“That Wade does n’t dare say his soul is his own, since I tackled him,” Sidney quoted, in hot indignation. Then her accent changed and became appealing. “Do you think that is quite fair, Auntie Jack?”

“No; it is as unfair as it was rude.”

“Don’t tell Paul I told you,” Sidney interrupted hastily. “We both of us hate telltales, and he’d never forgive me. I oughtn’t to have said anything; but, truly, Auntie Jack, it — it hurt.”

“I’m sorry, dear. Paul loves to tease, and then he is too young to realize.”

“He realizes that I am managing Wade, as he calls it.” Sidney’s laugh was slightly bitter.

“Yes; but he does n’t realize how much Wade needed managing,” Mrs. Addison answered quickly. “He is so strong, himself, that he has n’t the least notion of what it means to have to give up and drop out of things. Wade had n’t, until a few weeks ago. When he came up here, he was so depressed that I was afraid he would never pull up again.”

Sidney sat with her eyes fixed upon the distant river.

"But honestly, Auntie Jack, what is there for him to pull up for?"

"Everything. The doctors say that everything depends upon this summer. If he can be out of doors, idle and happy, he will gain fast. There is no real trouble yet, nothing developed; it may never come. Only —" Mrs. Addison's voice broke a little; "only it may come, just as it came to his father. But, meanwhile, just as he is making the beginning of a brilliant record, he must give up all his profession and all of his social life."

"Poor old Wade!" the girl commented slowly. "No wonder he is blue!"

"No wonder!" his mother echoed; "especially when it came to him all in an hour. And the pitiless part of it is, he is forbidden to be blue. And," she laid her hand on Sidney's fingers; "and there is where you have come in, my dear child. Paul is right, even if he isn't very mannerly. You have been managing Wade and managing him well. You've a trick of laughing at him and coddling him as none of the rest of us can do. If Judith tried it, he would go away and shut himself up in his room. With you he grumbles; but he rather likes it, after all."

Sidney shook her head in thoughtful negation.

"But I don't want to bully Cousin Wade," she

observed pensively. "He may put up with it now, while the novelty lasts; but by and by he will flop around and hate me, and then where will I be?"

"Very much where you are now."

Sidney bounced about and faced her aunt sharply.

"You don't mean he hates me now?" she demanded.

An amused smile played around the corners of Mrs. Addison's mouth.

"Not in the least. My big boy is very fond of you. In fact, Judith came into my room, almost in tears, yesterday, because Wade cares so much more for you than he does for her."

Sidney settled back again with a disconsolate sigh.

"There you are again!" she lamented. "Don't you see for yourself, Auntie Jack, whatever I do, I am bound to get into hot water?"

"No; I don't see."

"Why, first Janet and Paul scold me for trying to manage Wade, and tell me he does n't dare say his soul is his own; and then Judith gets mad because he likes me best," Sidney enumerated patiently. "Now, if Ronald will put in his word, and you will put in yours, I shall know about where I stand."

“Not until Wade puts in his,” Mrs. Addison suggested.

Sidney sniffed, with reminiscent disdain of Paul and Janet.

“I suppose he won’t dare,” she said, in brief finality.

There was a short silence. Then Mrs. Addison spoke again.

“Sidney dear, I would rather you did n’t speak like that,” she said gently. “I don’t wonder you were hurt; but it’s not like you to be bitter. It’s not like you, either, to have turned the cold shoulder to Wade, as you’ve been doing, this last day or two. Paul was rude; and yet I think I shall not say anything to him about it now. There is a little excuse for him. Neither he nor Judith know what is really the matter with Wade. He asked especially that they should not be told, until there was something definite to tell. We hope that that time may never come. They think he just is n’t quite well, and is needlessly blue and cross about it. Until a day or two ago, I supposed you thought so, too. Then Wade told me about the talk you had together, up at St. Ferréol. I was surprised; but I was glad of it. Wade is n’t the same man he was when you came. His voice shows it, and his walk, and the very look in his eyes.” Then Mrs. Addison turned

and rested her arm across the girl's shoulders. "Sidney, my dear child, I am very grateful to you for managing my big boy. Keep on with the managing; keep him happy; make him exercise up to the limit of his strength, and you will do more than a dozen doctors to bring about his perfect cure."

The girl's lip quivered. Mrs. Addison's words were earnest, and her niece accepted them as she would have accepted a solemn charge.

"I'll try, Auntie Jack," she said slowly. "I am fond of Wade; I'd do anything in this world to help him; only —"

And Mrs. Addison understood.

"Never mind, dear. Just forget about the *only*."

And Sidney made brave answer, —

"Auntie Jack, I'll try."

CHAPTER NINE

WITH a bump and a bounce, Paul dived towards the wide couch in the family living-room, kicked the pillows to one side and buried his head in Sidney's lap.

"I must insist upon it, Tiddles," he proclaimed in accents which were muffled in the golf jacket she was knitting; "I must insist upon it that you don't aboozle me."

Wade came to the rescue.

"Save your cousin, Paul!" he protested.

But Paul retorted placidly,—

"Shut up, Wade! She does n't belong to you." Then he nuzzled his head deeper into the jacket and clasped his hands protectingly above his thatch of hair.

"She won't belong to anybody before long," Wade objected. "Sidney, don't let him hurt you."

But already Sidney had answered to the implied challenge. The knitting was cast aside, and the largest of the pillows descended, plaster-wise, across Paul's open mouth. Paul wriggled out

from beneath the pillow, caught Sidney's left hand, then fell back again before the might of her disengaged arm. The next instant, he had reversed his position and stretched himself out at full length with his moccasins in Sidney's lap, while the girl bent above him, struggling and breathless.

This time, Wade spoke more sharply.

"Paul, take your feet out of Sidney's lap."

Without stirring otherwise, Paul lifted his head and smiled derisively at his half-brother.

"Whose feet are they, I'd like to know."

"The feet of a hoodlum, apparently. I had supposed you were a gentleman." Wade's tone was dry.

Paul waved one moccasin on the tip of his toe. Then, with a well-aimed thrust of his foot, he sent the moccasin flying at Wade's head.

"If I'm a hoodlum, you're a hoodle-bug," he chanted. "Cousin Sidney, I will not have you tickle my toes." And, with a second bounce, he reversed the position of his head and feet.

Wade spoke even more sharply.

"Paul!"

"Huh?" Paul queried placidly.

"I wish you would sit up."

"But I don't feel able to sit up. Let my hair alone, Cousin Tiddles!"

“Sit up and stop this confounded racket.”

“Pain in your feelings somewhere, Wade?” Paul inquired.

Unfortunately, just then, it was Wade's mood to take himself absolutely in earnest. He had spent the morning with Madame who, for the first time, had rubbed his nerves the wrong way. By afternoon, he was in a frame of mind which led him to retaliate for Sidney's refusal to allow him to go to walk with her, by refusing to go to drive with the rest of the young people. An afternoon of solitary meditation had proved too much for his poise, and Paul's noisy appropriation of his cousin completed the ruin of his temper. Wade Winthrop was entirely human; as a natural result of his humanity, he had occasional moments when he was entirely cross. And Paul, after the fashion of unregenerate fourteen, not only recognized these moments, but took a merciless pleasure in prolonging them. Because Wade went through his penitence by himself, Paul optimistically assumed that he never had any.

Now Wade's retort was curt.

“No; I've a pain in my head. I can't stand this noise, Paul.”

“Sit it, then.” And a cushion, hurled with unerring aim, suddenly flattened Wade's irate head against the back of his chair.

The cushion fell to the floor and Wade rose. A scarlet spot was in either cheek; otherwise his face was so white that Sidney, looking up at him, was frightened. Paul, however, eyed him imperturbably.

“Come down off your dignity, Wadeikins,” he advised him cheerily; “and we’ll shake hands and make up.”

But Wade was already crossing the floor. At the door, he turned and looked back.

“I am not aware that I have anything to make up,” he said stiffly. “When you choose to apologize, I am ready to listen.” The next moment, his steps sounded on the stairs.

Rising on his elbow, Paul stared after him.

“Jiminy; but isn’t he in a temper!” he observed dispassionately.

And Sidney, who had never seen her cousin angry until then, was forced to agree with Paul. Up to that time, it had not occurred to her that Wade was a person to be dreaded. Now she began to wonder. She would have wondered still more, could she have known that Wade’s bad temper was the result of her apparent neglect of him, during the past few days. Knowing that, she would have modified her swift resolution to keep out of his way with scrupulous care. Wade Winthrop, angry, was rather a formidable person, so

formidable that he completely destroyed, for the time being, the effect of the morning's talk. Although his anger had been specifically aimed at Paul, the girl resented it keenly. She had been by no means a silent partner in the merry tussle which was one of an apparently endless series. In intention, if not in word, the rebuke had been for them both; and Sidney, accustomed as she was to the rioting of a large family of children, told herself that the rebuke was wholly unmerited.

"But I never dreamed Wade could get so cross," she said meditatively, the next afternoon.

Paul was baiting a hook. At her words, he looked up, while the worm dangled limply from his fingers.

"Then you've got some more dreaming to do, before you've covered the subject," he observed.

"Evidently. Still, I wish he had n't."

Paul examined his hook with critical eyes, lifted his rod and swung it about his head, preparatory to a cast.

"So do I," he responded, when his fly was once more skimming the still surface of the pool at the very base of the dam. "I hate thunder in the air. Wade is n't a sixteenth part of a jiffy in getting on his dignity; but it takes him any amount of time to come off again."

Sidney nodded slowly, as if in comprehension.

"I know how it is," she said then. "He gets cranky before he realizes it; but he hates to get over it too soon, for fear people will see what a little thing it was that set him off. I've been there, myself. But I can't see how we were to blame, Paul."

Paul's arm jerked upwards; a bright-coloured trout flashed through the air and fell, flapping, almost in the girl's lap. With a laugh, she threw it over to Paul who swiftly ended its discomfort and tossed it into a little heap of fish which lay on the bank back of him. Then Sidney picked up her own rod, with a sigh.

"I really don't see how we were to blame," she iterated.

Paul dodged to one side.

"You'll be to blame, if you gouge out my eyes with your blasted hook," he protested. "Oh, for the love of —"

"Wade," she supplied, with gloomy promptness.

"Well, Wade, if you wish it. But, for the love of anybody, do try to cast like a fisherman. There! That's a little better. You would do better yet, if you would only remember that you are casting for trout, not slapping at mosquitoes. About our being to blame," he added honestly; "I suppose it was rather muckerish to chuck the

pillow at him, when he was three quarters in a rage. Didn't it flatten him out, though? But I would have apologized there and then, if he'd given me time, instead of stamping off to his room."

"He didn't go to bed, though," Sidney added. "I heard him, after I was in my room, moving around. Once I thought I heard him kick something over."

"He's nothing but a great big kid, when he loses his temper," Paul commented irreverently.

"Does he often do it?"

"Yes, especially this summer. Still, I suppose the poor old chap isn't well, and, only this morning before she went up to town, mother was telling me I must hold on to my temper and not mind anything he says."

Sidney sighed a little, as the memory of her own talk with her aunt swept across her mind. Only the day before! And then her great trouble had been the fear lest she was too officious in her loyalty to Wade; and now already they seemed miles apart. The girl was fond of Wade; she hated family dissensions. Nevertheless, she felt that she was in honour bound to maintain her dignity. Wade had been chilly in the afternoon, hot at night; but, in both the temperatures, he had contrived to make her feel that she was at

fault. Since then, they had met only at breakfast and at lunch. Wade had been quiet; but Sidney had been silent. Lunch over, Mrs. Addison had started for town, and Judith and her embroidery had joined Ronald and his magazine on the river bank. Ten minutes later, Sidney had tramped out of the yard at Paul's side. Their rods were over their shoulders, and neither one of them vouchsafed a backward glance at the lonesome figure on the upper gallery of the cottage. As they had left the table, that noon, Paul had faced his half-brother in perfect good faith.

"I say, old fellow, I'm sorry I knocked the nose off you, last night," he said affably.

Wade hesitated. Paul's face showed his honest regret, Paul's hand was outstretched in token of amity. Then Wade saw the laugh in Sidney's eyes, and his hesitation vanished, for, in his present mood, he could not grasp the fact that the laugh was not at him, but merely at the remarkable phrasing of Paul's apology.

"I am very glad you are sorry," he answered rather truculently. "Perhaps, next time, you will remember to be a little more of a gentleman."

Paul's eyes blazed, and the colour rushed to his face. Then he met his mother's eye, and he turned away without a word, while Wade departed,

to pace the upper gallery and strive to maintain a proper balance between his indignation, his dignity and his remorse. Mrs. Addison, meanwhile, sighed a little, as she went to her own room in search of her hat and gloves. Pity Wade as she would and did, she yet could not blind herself to the fact that he was a bit of a problem to deal with now and then. She came down the stairs again to find Sidney sitting disconsolately in the deserted dining-room.

“Why don’t you go fishing with Paul, this afternoon, dear?” she suggested. “It is too good a day for you to stay here in the house, and Paul always loves to have you at his heels.”

And so it chanced that now Sidney was standing on a rock close in the lee of the dam, making futile efforts to cast without imperilling the safety of her comrade.

“Don’t use so much line at first,” Paul advised her. “Now swing it around your head a little, gently, not as if you were going to spank the fishes. There! That’s better. Now keep your fly on top of the water. Flies aren’t like submarine torpedo boats as a general thing. The trout come up to them; they don’t go down to the trout.”

“But mine does. Oh, Paul, I’ve got him!” Sidney shrieked, her fisherman spirit all afire.

“See my line wobble. I know there’s a fish on it.”

“Well, yank him out, then, and hurry up about it, or he ’ll be off.”

Sidney gave a violent jerk, the fish flew through the air, bounded off against the bank and then, with a flash and a wiggle, was back in the stream once more.

“Oh, great goodness, Tiddles! Why didn’t you land him?” Paul protested.

“I did land him, only he didn’t stay landed. Maybe he ’ll bite again,” she answered hopefully.

“Not much. More likely he will go away and tell the other fish to keep off. Anyhow, we’ve all we can eat. Come on.”

“Where?”

“Up in the woods to roast them.”

Forgetful of her lost fish, Sidney waved her rod in ecstasy.

“Paul! What fun! A real fire?”

Paul was already unjointing his rod.

“If we can make it burn. A sham one wouldn’t make much execution on these big fellows. Here, catch hold of my rod, Tiddles, while I dress them. Three, four, six, and this huge fellow. He ’ll count for two.” And, sitting down on the rock, he opened his knife and fell to work.

"But we never can eat all those," Sidney said, as she settled herself at his side. "We really need another hungry mouth to feed."

Paul nodded. He knew whose hungry mouth the girl had in mind; he agreed with her unspoken wish that Wade were there with them. However, he saw no need of depressing himself by wishing for the impossible, and discreetly he changed the subject.

"Mighty disconcerting to be fed the ruins of your own grandfather," he observed, as he tossed the head of the largest trout into the pool at his feet. "Salome was nothing in comparison." Then he paused, with his knife raised in his hand. "Just look at the logs coming over the dam, Tiddles! Some day, I'm going to ride down on them."

"What's the use? I know you would upset yourself," she remonstrated.

Paul picked up a second fish.

"Not much. These men do it, every day, and I'm as smart as they are."

"Yes; but you weren't born to it," she said absently.

Directly above their heads, the great dam rose for a sheer hundred feet in the air. At its nearer end, a tiny stream trickled through the planking of the sluiceway. Farther across the stream, a

thin sheet of water poured over the top of the dam, carrying in its course the huge yellow logs which had come down from miles up in the mountains, only to find their way into the sawmill at the river's mouth. Above, in the still, deep water at the head of the dam, they floated smoothly onward, poised themselves for an instant at the brink as if loath to take the plunge, then went leaping over the edge to go thundering down upon the rocks beneath, where they lay for another instant, rolling as if in pain, before sliding away down through the rapids beyond. On the other side of the river, the hill rose sharply, wooded for the most part; but in one spot the rock thrust out its naked tilted strata into the very edge of the stream. And above the dam and across a stretch of level valley, Ste. Anne's Mountain lifted its back skyward, and, just then, its back was striped here and there with banners of soft white cloud.

"It is all too lovely to leave," Sidney said regretfully, as she rose to her feet.

However, she followed her cousin willingly enough. This was her first outing alone with him, and she was enjoying it all keenly, sharing his enthusiasm to the full. She had had good times with Wade; nevertheless, although her conscience smote her for the admission, she told

herself that it was far more interesting to spend an afternoon in the real woods than it was to loiter through the village, or sit on the bench at Madame's side, smiling a mute assent to a conversation which she was unable to understand. Wade treated her like a woman of his own age. There was a certain satisfaction in settling back again and, for the hour, in becoming a child once more in company with Paul.

The building of the fire and the feeding it with scraps of bark occupied her completely for a time. Then, as she took the forked stick Paul offered her and impaled her trout upon it, she drew a sigh of absolute content. Above her head, the trees rustled softly; five hundred feet away, the noise of the dam sank to a muffled roar; at her elbow, the blazing fire scorched her cheeks and her trout in unison. Paul, on the opposite side of the fire, was stretched out at his ease, one hand under his head, the other holding his fish to the blaze, and his merry round face reflected the contentment in that of his cousin. And, meanwhile, the banners of cloud dropped ever lower upon Ste. Anne's Mountain.

Wade, from the corner of the gallery, watched them uneasily. During his long hours with Madame, he had accumulated much of the lore of the region; he knew what those long banners of

cloud portended. Judith had gone home with Janet; Bungay and Ruth were in the barn, and Mrs. Addison would not be at home until evening. As for Paul, he was a boy and not a fit subject for worry; but Wade was manifestly uneasy, as he thought of Sidney. From the few words which had floated back to him as they left the house, he had learned that she and Paul were bound for the dam. Once only had he walked so far; but that once had impressed upon his mind the long stretches of open road. And Sidney was, as usual, bareheaded, and her linen frock was no fit protection for a girl caught out in one of the fierce mountain storms. Would those crazy children never see the coming shower and turn their faces towards home!

Impatiently he went to the other corner of the gallery, stared up at the mountain, now almost shut out from view; then he tramped back again to his former post whence he could see far up the road to the beginning of the trail leading to the dam. No one was in sight. Already the clouds were scurrying low over the wind-swept sky and, across the field, the river was chattering angrily at the stones in its bed. He went down to the kitchen in search of the maids; but the maids were celebrating the absence of their mistress by taking an afternoon out. And Sidney had not

looked well, at noon. He had scarcely spoken to her, to be sure; but, from over his plate, he had noticed her downcast face. And now, if he had only treated her a bit more cordially, she probably would have been there in the gallery with him, not tramping the woods with his careless young brother.

Wade was wholly unreasonable and lacking in logic. However, he was far from well; he had spent a sleepless night, and disease and insomnia can warp the most logical conscience. By way of undoing an imaginary sin, he determined upon an actual one.

In his haste, Sidney's room, on the floor above, seemed too far away, and he fell to rummaging his mother's closet, in search of a raincoat and a pair of overshoes. In the course of his rummaging, he upset the box containing her best hat, and shook down from its hooks her brand-new tailor frock; but he left them lying on the floor. Time enough to pick them up again, when Sidney was safely under cover. Then, with the coat over his arm and the shoes in his pocket, he seized the nearest umbrella, pulled his cap over his eyes and, regardless of the orders of a trio of specialists, he started out into the very teeth of the coming storm.

Just then, Sidney raised her head from above the final trout.

“See how dark it is getting!” she said. “Do you suppose it is going to rain?”

Paul crammed the last morsel into his mouth and ran out to reconnoitre. Then he ran back again.

“We’re in for a heavy shower, Tiddles. It will be on us inside of five minutes. Will you go up to the shack by the dam, or will you make a rush for home?”

Sidney sprang to her feet with the alertness which never failed to win her cousin’s admiration.

“Home,” she said briefly. “There is no knowing how long we’d have to wait, and the shack will be full of men and fuller of tobacco. Come.” And she started running lightly down the path.

For the first five minutes, the path led through the forest, and the heavy trees shut out all sight of the threatening shower. Then, just as the two cousins came out to the open road, the storm swept down upon them, twisting the treetops into mere wisps of leaves and driving the rain in long, leaden lines across the lead-coloured air.

“Can you stand it, Tids?” Paul gasped, as he ran at her side.

She shook her rain-lashed hair back from her face.

“I must,” she answered pluckily; “therefore I can. But isn’t it a wet rain? I am soaked to

the very inside lining of my skin." But there was no minor cadence to her voice, and she still ran on as lightly as if her linen skirt were not clinging fast to her knees and to the tops of her shoes where the water was squelching between her toes.

Without slackening his pace, Paul rolled down the sleeves of his flannel shirt and turned up the collar.

"I wish you had this, Tiddles," he panted. "It isn't so beastly as your clothes. Oh, by Jove!" And he whirled about sharply and clasped his arms above his head, to cut off at least a part of the force of the hail.

It came upon them, full in their faces, hard and stinging as metal bullets and infinitely more cold. It cut their faces and their hands. When they bowed their heads to meet it, it rolled down across the napes of their necks and slid out of sight beneath their clothing. It lodged in their hair and in the tops of their shoes. And, meanwhile, the trees beside them were still twisting and writhing in the fury of the gale. It was out of the question now to run. They could only plod slowly forward, turning now and then to catch their breath, then bravely facing forward once more. And home seemed farther away than it had done at the start.

"Are you good for it, Tiddles?" Paul asked

soberly, as they stood still for an instant with their backs to the wind.

Her teeth were chattering; but her answer was undaunted.

“Of course I am. I shall take my cold bath like an Englishman and pretend that I love it. Anyway, it won't be so bad, when we round the turn, for we shall get the wind at our backs. Are you ready?”

She gathered together all her courage and, with a laugh that the gale blew back against her shut teeth, she faced about and went running forward at full speed, determined now to reach the turn at any cost.

She did reach it and, with Paul close behind her, she rounded the sharp angle in the road and came into a few feet of comparative shelter. Then, raising her head, she gave a swift exclamation of surprise. Struggling towards her, the coat over his arm blown backward into a narrow banner, his umbrella bent and his cap awry, Wade faced her, breathless and rather pale.

“Wade Winthrop, are you insane?” she demanded sharply, for she was swift to realize the risk he had run.

Panting, he halted in the shelter by her side.

“No,” he said quietly; “only a little tired and a good deal worried about you.”

She started to answer. Then silently she took the overshoes and dragged them on over her sodden shoes, too much alarmed about her cousin to heed the incongruity of the action. That done, she looked up into his face.

“Wade, how could you?” was all she said.

CHAPTER TEN

BUNGAY, with Jumbo's brief tail clasped in one chubby red fist, assisted himself up the post-office steps by means of his other hand. On the gallery outside the door, he halted, laid down Jumbo and started on a tour of discovery through his brace of pockets. His face, meanwhile, expressed every shade of anxiety, doubt, alarm, reassurance and final pleasure. That last shade accompanied the drawing forth of two Canadian coppers, one from each pocket where they had been placed in literal obedience to Paul's mocking suggestion that he would tip over, if he carried such a weight all on one side. Then, coppers in hand, he picked up Jumbo once more and elevated his small voice.

"Mr. Postmaster."

There was no reply, and Bungay spoke again. This time, it seemed that his own father in New York might have heard him.

The screen door guarding the entrance to Madame's spinning-room opened slightly, and the postmaster put out his venerable white head.

“Did some one call?” he asked.

Deliberately Bungay turned himself about and went stubbing down the steps.

“I called,” he replied, when he and the postmaster stood face to face. “Here’s two cents, and I’d like a letter, please.”

“What name?”

Bungay eyed him askance, clutching the coppers, the while, as if he suspected the postmaster of sinister and fraudulent practices.

“My name is Maurice Bungay Dalhousie Stayre,” he said severely; “but I don’t see what for you want to know.”

“Yes, yes. But there are no letters for Mrs. Stayre.”

“My mamma does n’t get her letters here; she gets ’em in New York. It’s me that wants it.”

“I know; but there are n’t any letters for you, either,” the postmaster explained patiently.

“Why not?” Bungay queried.

“Because nobody has written any.”

“When will there be some?”

“When the mail comes in, to-night, perhaps.”

“All right. Save one for me, and here’s your two cents.”

“Did you wish a stamp, also?” the postmaster asked, somewhat at a loss to account for the pennies.

“No; I don’t want a stamp. I want a letter. The pennies are to pay for it.”

“Yes, yes, yes, yes. But you do not need to pay for the letter. The person must pay it who writes to you,” the old man explained again.

“But I don’t want it writed to me.”

“Then to whom should it be written?”

“To my cousin.”

“What cousin?”

“The sick-abled one.”

The old postmaster frowned thoughtfully.

“Truly, you are a remarkable child,” he observed, half to himself.

“I ain’t, too; I’m Bungay Stayre,” Bungay contradicted promptly.

“And your cousin?”

Bungay waved his hand, Jumbo and all, towards the farther end of the village.

“He’s down there, sick-abled, and I thought he’d feel better, maybe, if I got him a letter. My papa always feels better when he gets a letter, only when they’re big, thick ones with printing on the corner and a little slip of paper stuck in with all the big sheets. Then he gets mad and throws them,” he said alertly.

However, the postmaster was not interested in family details, and he brought Bungay back to the main issue.

“What is your cousin’s name?” he asked.

“Wade Winthrop.”

“Oh, is it he? He comes often here to see my wife. I know him well. Is he your cousin?”

“Yes, he is. And now won’t you sell me a letter for him?”

The old man laid his hand on Bungay’s shoulder.

“I will give you one gladly,” he said; “but you must wait till it comes.”

“But he’s awful sick-abad,” Bungay persisted.

“That is sad. How long since he was seized?”

Bungay misunderstood the final word.

“He sneezed himself, last night,” he answered promptly; “and he’s been sneezing himself, all day to-day. I heard him, right up through the floor into Sidney’s room. Sidney is my sister. She sneezed herself, too, only she didn’t sneeze herself sick-abad.”

“Yes, yes. Your cousin has a cold?”

“Yes, and his head aches itself, and his back aches itself, and Ruth says he’s very cross,” Bungay continued, with unabated cheerfulness. “Everybody is cross at our house, to-day, except just me. Judith’s cross, and Paul’s cross, and Sidney’s cross, and Ruth’s the crossest of them all. See where she scratched me on my nose.”

And Bungay turned that snubby member upward for the postmaster's inspection.

The old man smiled down at him benignly.

"That is bad, my son; but what had you said, to make her wish to scratch you?"

"I didn't say a thing."

"Or do?" the postmaster added, for he read guilt in Bungay's countenance.

Bungay hesitated. Then, of a sudden, he determined to make a clean breast of the matter.

"This," he responded briefly, and, laying Jumbo carefully at his feet, he hooked his little fingers into the outer corners of his eyes, his thumbs into the outer corners of his lips, and waggled his tongue into the benign old face above him.

The transformation was so sudden, the whole effect so unlike anything the old man had seen before, that he started backwards and devoutly crossed himself.

"Saint Anne protect us!" he exclaimed. "Small wonder that she scratched you, my son."

Bungay shook his head, while he rolled up his eyes until only the whites were visible.

"Saint Anne didn't scratch me; 't was Ruth," he explained, when the demonstration was ended. "My brother Percy showed me how to do that. If you want, some day, I'll teach it to you. Now won't you give me a letter?"

“To-night, perhaps.”

Bungay shook his head again, this time in grave rebuke.

“I think you’re very unercommodating,” he observed. “The next time you sneeze yourself sick-abed, I shall tell Wade how you behaved, and then maybe he won’t come and see your wife some more.” Then, chin in air and Jumbo clutched in his arms like a breastplate, Bungay turned on his heel.

At the garden gate, however, he paused.

“Perhaps, if you really have n’t any letters, you could send my cousin some flowers,” he suggested.

The old man’s face lighted. With bent brows, the acknowledged autocrat and aristocrat of the village had been seeking to adjust himself to the displeasure of a small boy and, meanwhile, thanking the providence which had ordained, some sixty years ago, that his own small boys should be bid-dable little Frenchmen, not Americans like this precocious babe who sought to terrorize him with words and with distortions of the countenance. Now he rallied and regained some measure of his cheerfulness at the thought of doing a good turn to some one in need.

“Yes, yes. I will call my wife. She will cut them for you, and you may take them to him with our best wishes.”

He stepped inside the doorway to speak to Madame, and she followed him out to the garden, armed, like a fate, with a vast pair of shears. Bungay and Jumbo formed the tail of the procession, moving up and down on the heels of Madame, as she wandered to and fro amid the tangle of blossoms, snipping and slashing as she went. Bungay watched the growing bunch of gaudy flowers. Then he pointed to a stalk of tall lilies beside the central shrine.

"I'd like that, please," he said calmly.

Madame shook her head.

"It is the only one."

"Huh?"

The old postmaster translated.

"I've got some money. Besides, he's awful sick-abled. I should n't wonder if he did n't get up for a month, and he could n't have any breakfast, only chicken broth," Bungay explained severely.

The old man looked anxious. He, too, like his wife, was aware that all was not well with Wade Winthrop.

"Has he had a doctor?"

"No; Auntie Jack doctored him out of a book, and then he ate some pills."

"And he is very ill?"

"Awful," Bungay responded with conviction. "That's what makes him so cross, I guess."

Madame asked a few brief questions, nodded in answer to her husband's replies, then, stretching out her arm, decapitated her stalk of lilies, the pride and glory of her entire garden.

"Give them to Monsieur with our love, and say that Madame weeps for his trouble," she said in French, and again her husband translated.

Bungay eyed her askance.

"No; you aren't weeping, too. Your nose isn't red and your eyes isn't wet any. I'm sorry you feel bad, and here's your pennies. No matter now about the letter. This will do most as well, I guess." And Bungay, deftly dropping his two coppers into Madame's hand, outstretched in farewell, shouldered Jumbo and the flowers and started for home, as fast as his sturdy legs would carry him.

Bungay had spoken the literal truth. Wade was ill, "awful ill." He had reached home, the afternoon before, chilled to the marrow of his bones, exhausted to a state of collapse. Even Paul admitted that he himself was worn out by the struggle with the storm. Wade wasted no strength in admission. He merely went away to his own room. Sidney looked after him anxiously, and wished with all her might that her aunt were at home, or even Judith. A little later, in bath robe and raincoat, she braved the outer staircase

and went to Wade's door with a glass of hot lemonade and a word of inquiry. His answering voice through the doorcrack allayed the worst of her fears. Nevertheless, when he finally came down to dinner, she was thoroughly alarmed at his hoarseness and at the feverish glitter of his eyes. By morning, Wade was in the early stages of a violent attack of bronchitis.

For the next four days, a shadow hung over the house, and its inmates went about softly and spoke only in hushed voices. Judith spent much of the time with the Leslies, for Freda Leslie had developed extraordinary gifts in keeping Bungay and Ruth quiet and content, and Judith felt it wise to remain within hearing of any possible mutiny on their part. Mrs. Addison was wholly devoted to her son, and Sidney and Paul spent endless hours sitting on the gallery outside his windows, ready to be of use in case of need. They talked less than they read, and they read, on an average, half a page an hour. For the time being, their whole minds were centered in Wade.

"Honestly, I never supposed I cared so much for the old boy," Paul said soberly, at the end of the second evening. "I'll tell you what, Tiddles, it would be just beastly, if anything should happen to take Wade off."

However, on the sixth morning, Wade appeared

on the upper gallery, coughing still and the ghost of his former self; but obviously on the road to recovery, and wholly rebellious at Sidney's efforts to tuck him up in a heavy rug.

"I'm no walking hospital now, Sidney," he objected. "In fact, I am none too sure that I deserved any too much sympathy from the start. I did an idiotic thing, and had my come-uppance. Now it is for me to take my medicine like a man."

"Even if it's nothing but sugar pills?" she queried, with a laugh which sought to give the lie to the anxious light in her eyes.

"Sugar pills are n't so bad," he responded, with an echo of her laugh. "I find them rather reassuring, Tiddles. Mother always turns allopathic, when we are really ill."

"But you were really ill, this time, Wade."

"Mayhap. Anyway, it is over now, except this small coughlet that tickles my ribs now and then. You've combed your hair, ma'am, since I beheld you last."

"Torn it, you'd better say, over you," she retorted, as she balanced herself on the rail at his side.

He looked up at her keenly.

"Did you honestly care so much, Tiddles?"

Her colour came, though she tried to laugh again.

“Care! When I was plucking out my hair in token of my anxiety!” Then she grew grave. “Yes, Wade, I did care,” she added.

But her gravity dispelled his own.

“Glad of it,” he replied coolly, as he settled back again in his steamer chair. “It is good for you to get on your nerves occasionally. And then, for a day or two, it had seemed as if we were pulling different ways. You’ve anchored yourself to a block, this summer, Sidney; and now I decline to let you cut the cable.”

Her chin on her hands, she studied him silently and long. His short, sharp illness had pulled him down to a degree that shocked her, but his accent was alert, the lines of his face supremely content. Furthermore, as he lay stretched out there in the noon sunshine, she told herself that, enforced idler that he was, nevertheless Wade Winthrop was very much a man. At length, she roused herself and answered his last words.

“When the cable is cut, Wade, the knife will be in your hands.”

“It will fray itself out into a good old age, then,” he answered contentedly. “And now, Tiddles, be a good soul and tell me all the news.”

“But I don’t know any.”

“Whom have you seen?”

“Not a soul.”

“Where have you been?”

She laughed.

“Here, mostly.”

“Silly child! Did you think I would run away?”

“I knew you could n’t, if you tried,” she answered saucily. “A man that’s rolled up in a blanket and eats nothing but broth and sugar pills is n’t going to go very far.”

“Where are the others?”

“Your mother is asleep. Paul is —”

“Fishing,” he interpolated gravely. “I might have known.”

“Well, it’s for your dinner,” she flashed sharply. “Paul heard you say you’d like a good fat trout, and he swallowed his breakfast whole and rushed off. He has n’t budged from the house before, since you were ill.”

Turning, Wade stared up at his cousin keenly.

“Sidney, I did n’t know — Was I as ill as all that?” he asked.

She bit her lip.

“Yes, Wade, you were.”

“Hm! Sorry I scared you, all for nothing,” he answered. “You might have known I’d come out all right in the end. Next time, don’t waste your worry. Where is Judith?”

“Over at the Leslies’.”

"Did she worry, too?" her half-brother queried flippantly.

"Of course. We all did. Judith is so reserved, though, that you can never tell half she thinks," Sidney replied, in swift defence of her absent cousin.

"Sure. That's where she scores. Did she mingle her tears with yours and Paul's on the gallery floor?" Wade persisted, with the bitter accent which never failed to antagonize his cousin.

"No," she answered a little shortly. "She was more practical. She took the children over to the Leslie's, and kept them there for hours at a time."

"Hard lines on the Leslie's! Was Ronald there, too?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask. I know Miss Leslie was there, though, for Bungay came home, loud in her praise."

"Freda Leslie?"

"Yes. She must have been devoted to them. That's what I call practical mission work," Sidney said, as she deftly tucked in the loosened corner of the rug. "I like Miss Freda, anyway."

"So do I, when I can live up to her."

"She's not so bad."

"So good, you mean," Wade corrected her lan-

guidly. "Miss Leslie's one fault is that she has too many points of perfection. Now that is a fault you'll never get, Tiddles."

"You might have left that for me to say," she protested. "But I am forgetting one item of news."

"And that?"

"And that is that the man Miss Leslie is engaged to, is coming here, next Tuesday."

"Who is he?"

Sidney wrinkled her brows, while she searched the corners of her memory.

"Do you know, I really believe I have never heard his name," she said slowly. "He is a Harvard man, and does something at Yale, unless it is the other way about."

"An American?"

"I suppose so."

Wade heaved a deep sigh.

"Poor soul!" he observed somewhat enigmatically.

But Sidney was allowed no chance for a reply. A step on the walk beneath made her turn and look down over the rail.

"Wade Winthrop, here comes Madame!" she said, in a whisper which rose with her increasing astonishment.

Wade sat up eagerly.

“Good old Madame!”

“But do you feel able to see her?” the girl queried a little anxiously.

“Of course. Bring her up here, if you don’t mind. Madame is a tonic to my soul and a joy to my eyes. Hurry up, Sidney, and don’t keep her waiting, for I suspect she’s not used to making many calls.”

Madame appeared in a moment, following close on the heels of Sidney. As Wade had surmised, making calls was a rare function in her experience, and she had prepared for the occasion by exchanging her brown calico sack for a fitted bodice of black brocaded velvet which she wore above her same short homespun skirt. The inevitable black knitted hood still surrounded her wrinkled face; but it was surmounted with a straw sailor hat, rusty black like the bodice and worn rakishly askew. Wade never cared for these details, however. He only saw Madame’s smile and the kindly light in her eyes, as she came quickly forward and, with an abrupt gesture, prevented his getting on his feet to greet her.

“It will be time for the chivalry later on, my son,” she said, as she took his hand. “Just now, it is your duty and our pleasure that you take the best possible care of yourself.”

Sidney brought a chair for Madame, assured

herself that both Wade and his guest were comfortable, and then stole away so quietly that neither one of them noted her absence until Wade found his sudden question to her falling upon the empty air. Then he smiled up at Madame.

“Madame spoke truly,” he said. “My young cousin carries the sunshine with her; in her absence, I miss the glow.”

Madame rose.

“And I also spoke truly, my son, when I told you to follow the sunshine. Already even now you are the better for it. Your little cousin is a good comrade for you; you are happy with her, and you no longer look on life with the dreary eyes. Nevertheless, remember this. If the clouds do come, and come they must, there is always the chair beside the loom and Madame’s welcome waiting to greet you. But she has missed you sadly, these last days. My good man and I have learned to watch for your visits, and we sorrowed for your illness.” Then she smiled broadly down into his face. “But the sun has followed you, even in your illness; and it will follow you still, in the new health which is sure to come to you in the end.”

Wade smiled back at her; but there was a wishful light in his eyes, as he asked, —

“Are you a prophet, Madame?”

Again she nodded.

“They say that I am, my son. And the best of it all is, I prophesy only good things.”

Then she went away and left him alone.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

O H, Judith!"

"Yes."

"Come, we're ready."

"Go on, then."

"But we're waiting for you."

"I'm not coming."

"Oh, why not?" It was Janet who spoke, and her voice was protesting.

"Because I think I'd better not. Don't tease, Janet, for really it's no use."

Janet flushed at the accent of finality in Judith's tone, just such a tone as she might have used to Ruth or to Bungay.

Ronald took his turn.

"What's the matter, Judith?"

"Nothing."

"It's not so very warm."

"I know that."

"And it's not so very far."

"I know that."

Then Paul put in his contribution, impertinently, after the fashion of young brothers.

“And it’s an open road, Judy. You can walk there and back without getting your stockings dusty.”

“Paul! Please don’t forget you are a gentleman,” Judith said, in the same tone she had used to Janet; and, in his turn, Paul subsided.

“Do you suppose she isn’t feeling well?” Ronald asked, as he started down the road at Sidney’s side.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” the girl answered doubtfully. “She seemed all right at lunch; but Judith is so quiet you can’t always tell.”

“Most likely she has an attack of conscience,” Paul suggested over his shoulder. “She gets one, now and then. You can generally tell when it’s coming, by the way she slaps her hair tight down over her ears.”

“It is very unbecoming, too,” Janet added. “Does it usually last long, Paul?”

“Depends on circumstances. She has n’t had one now for a good while, so this may be a bad attack.”

“How does it take her?” Ronald queried, with a flippancy which Sidney vaguely resented. In the intervals of her absorption in Wade, she had been accustomed to regard the long Canadian as being exclusively the comrade of Judith.

“In her voice mostly,” Paul responded. “It

gets meek and sort of sorrowful. Sometimes her temper gets it, too, and things rub her the wrong way. Generally, though, she's just plain meek, and takes no end of pains to do things that nobody cares two pins about, after she's done them. Then she flops down on her bed, with her feet in the pillows, and cries."

"Take warning, Janet," Ronald advised his young sister, while he brought her to a standstill by laying a detaining hand upon her pigtail; "don't on any account whatsoever develop the habit of having a conscience."

With a jerk, she pulled her hair away, leaving only the ribbon in his fingers.

"I have one now, brother," she said saucily. "It is very busy, too, for it always troubles me when you do the wrong thing."

But Sidney interposed. For some reason, she always felt moved to defend Judith, perhaps because at heart she realized her own lack of sympathy with her cousin and sought to cover it from the eyes of others. To her mind, there was a certain disgrace in the fact that, brought together for the express purpose of becoming intimate, two girl cousins of exactly the same age and of approximately the same training should go their own ways in mutual disregard. The fact remained, however, that, since the very first night of their

meeting, the two girls had rarely sought each other's society. They were enemies in no sense; it was merely that they were not friends.

"You're not a bit fair to Judith," she said now. "It is only that we none of us understand her. Judith always means to do just the very right thing."

Paul sighed ostentatiously.

"That's just the nubbin of the trouble, Tiddles. She not only means mortally well; but she is mortally afraid that the rest of us won't know how much trouble it is for her to carry out her good intentions."

Ronald, his cap over his nose and his hands in his pockets, pondered aloud.

"When all's said and done, you've brought it around to a charge of being well-meaning," he observed; "and for my part, I'd rather be accused of stealing hens. It may not be so honest; but it's a long ways less disagreeable."

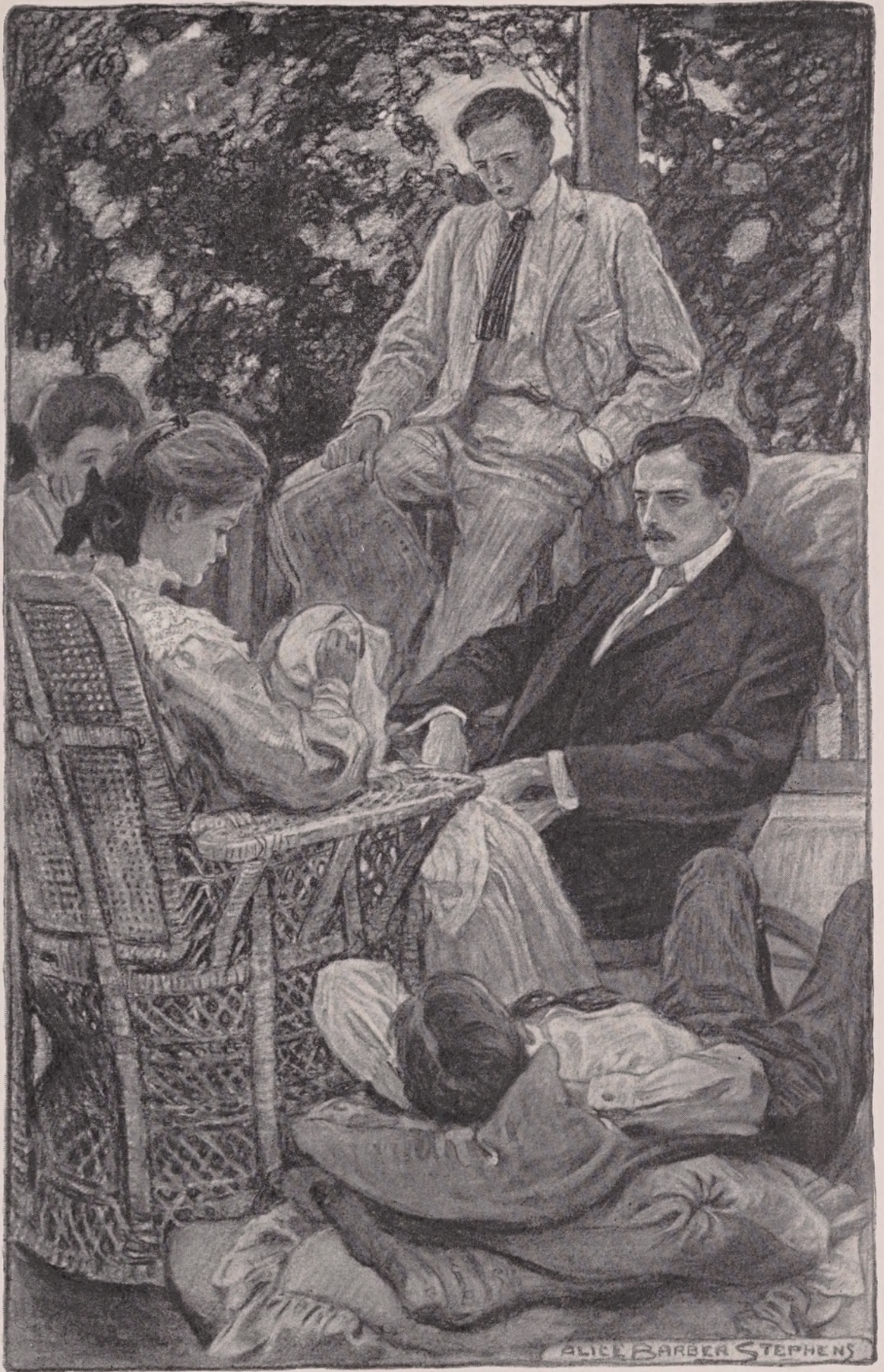
Sidney faced him hotly.

"You don't mean that Judith is disagreeable?"

"No, Mamzelle Peekaboo; I do not. At her best, Judith Addison is one of the most charming girls I have ever known. There, does that satisfy you?" he queried blandly, as he looked down into her flushed face, congratulating himself, the while, upon the rhetorical twist which had allowed

him to include at least one other girl in his superlative.

Later on in the afternoon, he congratulated himself yet again, and upon the score of the good time he was having. From the hour of their meeting, he had admired Sidney exceedingly. Her straightforward ways, unconscious as the ways of a healthy boy, had been wholly new to him; her piquant face with its steady gray eyes and its merry mouth had attracted him; he had delighted in her fun, in her unvarying good temper and even, now and then, in her outspoken disapproval which was tempestuous, but rarely unjust. Nevertheless, much as he admired her, he had seen surprisingly little of her. When the young people were all together, it was Judith who had monopolized him completely. He had yielded to her monopoly with a certain satisfaction in being singled out by this pretty, dainty girl who obviously wished to have about her nothing but what she considered the very best. However, in the midst of her placid conversation, he was accustomed now and then to cast longing, furtive glances towards the hilarious group which centered in Sidney Stayre. He would have liked it better if Judith had elected to join that group; but neither chivalry nor common courtesy would permit his suggesting to her that he was slightly



“FOR the past week the steamer chair had been the focal point of the young people.” Page 165.

bored by her talk. Half a dozen times in the past three weeks, he had strolled over and settled himself beside Wade's scarlet hammock, and Wade, who possessed infinite leisure to think things over, promptly discovered that Ronald's desire for his society developed at the hours when Sidney was settled on the other side of the hammock, and that the talk flowed just as smoothly, whether he himself spoke, or whether he kept still.

Wade, meanwhile, had come out on the gallery to find Judith seated, with her sewing in her hands, close beside his steamer chair. For the past week, the steamer chair had been the focal point of the young people. Sidney had assumed as her own the seat beside it, Ronald had occupied the rail and Paul had sprawled on a pile of cushions on the floor at their feet. The others went and came, to be sure; but Sidney stuck to her post, shirking all other responsibilities, while she gossiped with her cousin of all things, past, present and yet to be. Wade appreciated it vaguely, enjoyed it exceedingly and accepted it quite as a matter of course, until a chance word from his mother, that morning, brought to him a swift realization that his young cousin was giving up all things else, for the sake of lightening the tedium of his convalescence. Then he

had asserted himself promptly, with the result that an afternoon in the woods was adopted, as the plan best executed on a two-hour notice. Sidney had gone with the others, merely to keep the peace. She had enjoyed Wade's society thoroughly, during these last days; but his will was strong, his arguments specious. She had yielded to them both because she had discovered that, for some reason, Wade's heart was set upon being left alone.

And Wade, invisible behind the angle of his deep casement, had watched them go. As he watched them and by way of cheering his own prospective loneliness, he had whistled a few bars of Chopin's Funeral March. He had choked over his own music, however, and, leaving the window, he had taken himself to the gallery.

"Well, Judith, how came you here?" he asked, in some surprise.

She looked up at him gravely.

"I thought it would be rather lonely for you, this afternoon, so I told the others I wouldn't go."

Wade looked a trifle annoyed. It was one thing to accept the off-hand, irresponsible attentions of Sidney; it was quite another matter to be the recipient of his sister's benevolent care. All at once, he felt himself relegated to the position of

invalid spoil-sport, and the consciousness rendered him a trifle testy. Like all men, he liked coddling only so long as the coddling appeared to be the result of accident rather than of design.

“Too bad you missed it,” he said curtly. “They looked as if they were off for a good time.”

She drew one long, bright strand out from the snarl of silk in her lap and threaded it into her needle, while Wade idly watched her pretty white hands and contrasted them with the lithe brown ones whose every motion had become so familiar to him.

“There are more good times coming,” she said then, and her accent irresistibly reminded Wade of a phrase from a copy-book.

“Doubtless,” he responded. “Still, it is well to take them as they come.”

Judith smiled at her work. Wade had seen that smile before. It showed her dimples and, as a rule, it was directed at Ronald Leslie. Wade felt that he ought to be grateful that it was now turned upon him; but his gratitude, like his sense of humour, had suddenly failed him. He was only conscious of an utter irritation, as Judith said serenely, —

“That depends.”

“Depends on what? Do speak up and finish

your sentences, Judith. Your riddles are too much for my weak brain."

Judith rebuked him gently.

"Now, Wade, please don't be so snappish. I thought we could have such a pleasant afternoon together."

Wade raised his brows.

"Thank you, Judith; you are very good. Is there any especial form of entertainment that I can offer?"

She smiled again. Really, she was a very pretty girl, with her fluffy golden head rising above her pale blue linen frock.

"That is for you to say," she responded graciously. "This afternoon is for you, Wade."

Wade eyed her, half in amusement, half in despair.

"Oh, thunder! Don't be so strenuous, Judith," he said.

Her voice showed that he had injured her feelings.

"I'm not strenuous, Wade. It is just that you are so hard to suit. I thought you'd be glad to have me give up going, this afternoon, and stay at home with you."

"Well, I'm not."

"But you like to have Sidney here."

"She likes to be here."

“So should I like to be here, if you would only be as polite to me as you are to Sidney. One would think you would prefer your sister to your cousin.” Then, with an obvious effort, she dismissed the minor key from her voice and became sprightly. “Now what shall we do to amuse ourselves?” she asked, with precisely the intonation she would have used to Ruth.

Wade’s answer was concise.

“Oh, go hang!” he said.

Judith undertook to remonstrate with him.

“Don’t be cross to me, dear. I know it is hard to be shut up here by yourself; but you will be better soon.”

Wade grunted.

“Let’s hope so.”

Judith rested her hand on his sleeve. It was her right hand, and it wore a tiny diamond. Wade noticed it for the first time, and it roused in him a certain resentment, for it was the ring which his own father had given to his child wife on the day when they plighted their troth. There was no real reason that Judith should not have worn the ring; nevertheless, Wade would have preferred it otherwise. Judith was in the likeness of Mr. Addison, and Wade’s own father was still the hero of his son whom he had left an orphan at the age of seven. Wade gave his loy-

alty but rarely. Given, it was enduring. But Judith's answer was in his ears, gracious and empty of meaning.

"We all hope so, Wade. We all are so sorry for you. That is why I stayed with you, this afternoon; I knew you would hate to have us all go off to leave you."

"But I would n't."

Judith stared at him; but his eyes were fixed upon the poplar trees outside the gallery rail, and the vertical lines between his brows were deeper even than it was their wont to be. Judith's voice became sprightly once more.

"Now what would you like best to do?"

"Smoke," Wade replied laconically.

"But the doctor said that would be the very worst thing you could possibly do," she reminded him.

"Exactly. That is why I wish to do it."

Judith's violet-blue eyes opened wider.

"Why, Wade!" she said, and her accent was not interrogative.

Wade's eyes turned towards the tree again; but he made no effort to focus them upon anything within his field of vision. He was merely wondering impatiently if all girls were alike, like this pretty, self-sufficient damsel at his elbow who, not content with the contemplation of her own

good deeds, persisted in calling his attention to them, to the end that he might be fully aware of his own gratitude. It was good of Judith to stay at home with a dull fellow like himself. He appreciated it all fully. Nevertheless, he devoutly wished that she had gone with the others.

“Are n't you feeling as well, to-day, Wade?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Because you are so quiet.”

For an instant, Wade seriously contemplated the effect of letting off one resounding yell. Then he curbed the wayward impulse, as being unworthy of his years.

“Am I usually so noisy?”

“Not noisy, exactly; but you and Sidney are never so quiet as this.”

“No?”

“No. You always seem to have enough to say to her.”

Wade faced his sister again, and a sudden twinkle came into his dark eyes.

“Jealous of Sidney, Judith?”

And Judith smiled once more, as once more she threaded her needle.

“Oh, no. Why should I be?” she said serenely.

Then the pause lengthened, widened, and became unbreakable. Under her placid exterior,

Judith was thoroughly disgusted with her half-brother and with herself. She had chanced to be in her own room, three days before, and had overheard the talk between Wade and Sidney, had overheard Wade's slighting reference to herself and Sidney's attempted championship. With all the strenuousness of her years, she had promptly taken herself to task for her neglect of her older brother, and since then she had been on the lookout for an opportunity to make amends for past neglect by present devotion. That afternoon had offered the opportunity; she had accepted the opportunity and offered the devotion. Now, to her mortification, she found Wade in no humour to be grateful. His manner seemed to her to be flippant and tinged with sarcasm, and she resented it accordingly. In her resentment, however, she took no heed of the fact that her own manner had been sanctimonious and tinged with superiority. She only sat and sewed and wondered why it was that she and Wade never seemed able to get on together. But this time, at least, it was not her fault. She could fancy the others, making merry in the woods. She had voluntarily turned her back upon them, for the sake of Wade. And now Wade, his hands in his trouser pockets, was pacing the gallery in a moody silence while she sat in the corner and sewed embroidery. Her

silk knotted, then broke under her fingers, and one large tear slid down the ridgepole of her nose. She brushed it off hastily, and spoke before her voice could grow husky. It was a part of Judith Addison's creed that no one should ever see her cry.

"There is Miss Freda," she said listlessly. "I wonder who is with her."

With equal listlessness, Wade glanced over his shoulder. Then his figure stiffened into energy.

"Oh, Dunc!"

At the hail, the man glanced up at the gallery.

"Winthrop, by Jove! Where did you come from?"

"Boston, a few æons ago. Good afternoon, Miss Leslie. Won't you both come up?"

"Who is it?" Judith asked.

"Duncan Ogilvie. My class at Harvard. Fine fellow, too." Wade's last words floated back from the head of the stairs leading down from the gallery.

And Judith ran her fingers through her fluffy hair and straightened the ribbon at her belt.

It was left for Bungay, however, to supply the final missing link in the acquaintance. Hearing the calls of greeting exchanged between the two men, he abandoned Ruth to her dolls and appeared on the gallery, just as a broad-shouldered, blond

man came dashing up the stairs and grasped the hand Wade held out to welcome him.

“Why, hullo, Mr. Dobbin!” he said blandly. “Did you come all this way up here to see me and Jumbo?”

CHAPTER TWELVE

WELL, Mamzelle Peekaboo," Ronald observed, the next day; "how does it seem to have your nose out of joint?"

"As how?" she inquired placidly.

For his only answer, Ronald pointed to the river bank, where Wade Winthrop and Duncan Ogilvie were absorbed in low-voiced conversation.

Sidney laughed.

"Perhaps you would better ask your sister," she suggested. "She is in a worse plight than I am."

"Not she. Freda is writing to seven of her best friends, giving each one of them a seven-page description of the pin Dunc brought her. Mere possession is n't enough; she's bound to hold it over the others who don't own a Duncan and a new pearl pin. Where did Dunc and Wade get acquainted?"

"At Harvard. They were Hasty Pudding men, both of them. Wade will enjoy having Mr. Ogilvie here."

Ronald eyed her keenly.

“Shall you?” he asked.

“Yes, with reservations,” she answered honestly. “My common sense teaches me that Wade needs to talk man-talk now and then; and I like him well enough so I want him to have what he needs. And yet—”

“After all, it lets you out of some things,” Ronald said thoughtfully.

But she faced him.

“Don’t be too sure I want to be let out,” she said proudly. “You know I am very fond of Wade.”

Ronald liked her spirit.

“I do know, worse luck! None of the rest of us stand any show, when he is about. It was for that I spoke. Now it is our turn. Let Dunc look out for Wade, and you come and play with me.”

“Now?” she questioned smilingly.

“Yes. Instanter. I want to walk to St. Joachim, this morning, and I am not going to walk alone.”

“Where is Judith?” Sidney queried, not maliciously, but quite as a matter of course.

Ronald’s dark brows met in a sudden frown. Little by little, he was coming to resent the general assumption that he was the constant attendant of Judith alone. Judith was not the only girl within reach; and, since the nooning at the foot

of the falls, he was by no means sure that she was the most likable. His afternoon in the woods, the day before, had gone far to strengthen the impression. Ronald Leslie owned an unusual allowance of chivalry. Nevertheless, he found it good to have a feminine comrade who could not only climb a fence, unassisted, but also could balance herself on the top rail long enough to laugh at him for his vain attempts to take it at a running jump. Sidney Stayre possessed the instinct, denied to most women, which taught her to accept a little occasional assistance as if it were sorely needed; but otherwise to shift for herself. Because her boy companions were willing to help her, she saw no reason that she should inertly accept their ministrations in details which she was fully able to accomplish for herself. Boys, to Sidney's independent mind, were chums and comrades, not hard-working slaves. Other girls, if they wished, could look pretty, and be dainty, and squeal when their feet slipped on the mountain trail. For her part, she would shut her teeth and dig in her heels and go ahead. Independence and exceeding jollity were the proper attributes for her to whom beauty was denied. Strange to say, it never once occurred to the girl that she was outwardly attractive. Brown hair, gray eyes and a clear skin were items that counted

for little, and her mirror only showed her face when it was at rest. Ronald and Wade and even Paul who scoffed at the idea of being a judge of beauty, thought otherwise; but wisely they held their peace. And now Duncan Ogilvie was phrasing their unspoken opinion.

“That’s a charming young cousin of yours, Winthrop,” he said.

“So I think. Where had you met her before?”

“I saw her in the train, coming up here. I made friends with that infant terrible of a Bungay. The girl didn’t say much; but I watched her, whenever I could get a chance without her seeing what I was at. She’s not exactly pretty; but she is very taking.”

“Wait till you know her,” Wade advised him.

“I’m not likely to get the chance. I’m only to be here for three weeks, and Miss Leslie assures me that the girl is your shadow.”

Wade shook his head whimsically.

“It’s quite the other way about, Dunc. She’s the sunshine; I’m the shadow — in every sense of the word.”

The other man stretched himself out on the ground, and clasped his hands under his head.

“Now you’ve given me the chance, old man — I don’t want to be too inquisitive, you know — what’s wrong with you?”

"Lungs," Wade responded tersely.

"No! Not really?"

"That's just where you tell the truth," Wade answered grimly. "Not really, else they'd not let me be here with all these youngsters. My end isn't in sight; it is only that it is waiting for me around the corner, and so I am bound to keep a straight road, to prevent its catching me."

"Beastly, too. And I heard you were just thinking about getting famous."

"Dreaming about it, you'd better say. However, that's all up."

"Who says so?"

"Helmer and Ericsson. Besides, my father went the same way."

"That makes it possible, but not a fact, by any means. Have you seen Cromwell?"

"What's the use?"

"This: that one of my aunts had her undertaker engaged, as you might say. Helmer gave her six months to live, Ericsson three. Then she went down to New York, and put herself into the hands of Cromwell."

"Well?" In spite of himself, Wade's tone betrayed his impatience.

"Well, that was ten years ago. Last summer, she climbed Pike's Peak."

Wade smiled thoughtfully.

“Good old Dunc! We’re fools by nature, and we do like to hear such fables.”

“No fable at all. Ask her.”

“And the moral is — ”

And Duncan Ogilvie gave it to him.

“Keep up your pluck and, when one specialist tells you an unsavoury truth, turn him down and go in search of another. You’re not the fellow to knock under, Winthrop.”

Wade’s reply was slightly bitter.

“I know that. But what’s the use of holding on to life, unless you can make it count for something?”

“None.”

“Well, then!”

Duncan Ogilvie sat up again. His blond face was frowning and intent.

“Winthrop, you’re talking for the sake of saying something,” he observed dispassionately. “Your life isn’t bound up in calf and stowed away in a law office.”

“No; nor anywhere else. Much you know about it, man. From your own showing, you’re a success in your work, and you say, yourself, that you are engaged to the sweetest girl, this side the Atlantic.”

The young man rose and stood looking down at

his friend with blue eyes which suddenly had grown very clear and tender.

"I am," he said reverently; "and it is more than I deserve, much more. However, there are a few other things in life, and one of them is the whole-souled loyalty of a girl like your young cousin."

Wade's face softened.

"Yes," he said slowly; "I know that." Then he held out his hand. "Thank you, Dunc," he added. "Somehow or other, you've braced me up. I don't know how or why; but I am glad you are here."

And so, in all truth, was Ronald Leslie. He was shrewd enough to know that, had Wade been less obviously occupied with Duncan Ogilvie, Sidney would never have consented to abandon him. Now, however, they were tramping along the St. Joachim road in the single file made necessary by the three-plank-wide walk. Sidney was ahead and, as Ronald stared down at her, he told himself that she was good to watch. Her bare brown head, ruffled by the breeze, caught the sunlight and turned to ruddy gold. Her rough brown skirt was short enough to show a pair of trim ankles and a pair of stout brown shoes, and her blouse of soft undyed pongee was held at the throat with a great knot of yellow ribbon. The

girls whom Ronald had always known, were prone to appear in dainty pink and blue, and their characters harmonized with the colours.

Already the double bend in the road had shut Grande Rivière from sight. St. Joachim lay before them, clustered around its parish church, and, beyond the village, the rounded dome of Cap Tourmente lifted its blue bulk against the paler sky. On their right hand, the ribbon-like farms stretched away to the river. On the other side of the road, the long line of whitewashed cottages nestled beneath the sheltering bluff. As they passed them by, Sidney peered in with eager eyes, and in each cottage some new sight awaited her. Here, a woman sat spinning in the door of the great living-room where a row of beds at one side divided the honours with the stove at the other. There, a woman was kneading biscuits in the open front door, and placing them, three in a tin, in a straight row up and down the railless stairs. Again, the hum of a busy wheel called attention to a trio of placid old dames, hooded and petticoated, who sat knitting and gossiping in a group around the spinner; or a vast mongrel dog escorted its mistress across the road to the oven of whitewashed stones, and inspected the burly loaves, as she slid them under the arching roof and banged together the square iron door. Out in the fields

beyond the low thatched barns, women in flapping hats and abbreviated petticoats made hay, side by side with the men, while, on the gallery at home, the children minded the baby and, meanwhile, shelled countless peas into the gayly decorated bowls which are part and parcel of habitant life. Beside them sat the house dog, brindled and unseemly of outline, his eyes fixed steadily on the yoked and sedate pig who waddled to and fro over the roadway, and on the procession of geese who came trudging out from behind the house in search of the richer feeding-ground in the farmland across the way. Everywhere was thrift, everywhere energy, almost everywhere cleanliness.

“And yet,” Sidney said abruptly; “think of living here!”

“Why not?” Ronald argued. “It’s not so bad: no university examinations, no best haberdashery; it’s a tranquil sort of life.”

Turning, she surveyed him from head to heel.

“Yes, you would love it,” she said then. “You would enjoy giving up your good clothes and your university, and settling down here to raise cabbages and sheep.”

“It would depend somewhat on my neighbours.”

She laughed.

“I can fancy it all: you shearing sheep and

Janet spinning the wool, and both of you clothed in homespun made by her own hands. In the winters, you both would take to knitting, by way of passing the time. It would be an enlivening prospect, almost as much so as the one that is facing Wade."

"Mamzelle Peekaboo!"

"Well?"

Ronald's tone was grave.

"What's the fellow going to do with himself?"

At the imminent hazard of walking backwards off the narrow planks, Sidney turned and faced him.

"Ronald Leslie, I don't know."

Ronald knitted his brows.

"Let's sit down here, a minute. I don't want you breaking your neck. But really, I want to know what's going to happen to Wade. Is it truly all up with his law?"

Sidney nodded slowly.

"I suppose it is. Auntie Jack says that the doctors told her it would be years before he could stand regular hours, if he ever could stand them at all."

Quite deliberately Ronald whistled *Canada* from end to end and then began on *The Marseillaise*. In the second phrase, however, he broke off.

"Selah!" he said. "But the fellow must be

about something, or he'll either go wild, or else lose his grip entirely."

"If he is strong enough," Sidney suggested.

"He is; at least, for some things. In spite of this last set-back, he is ever so much better than he was, when he came. I see the difference, if you don't." Ronald bent down and plucked up a handful of grass from the turf at his feet. His merry eyes, meanwhile, looked troubled, and the colour stood high in his cheeks. "Mamzelle Peekaboo," he said abruptly; "will you get in a temper, if I say things to you?"

She laughed at his phrase.

"I like your nickname for me; it is so very Chinese," she responded. "But what sort of things?"

"About Wade," the young fellow answered, with simple directness. "It's none of my business, I know; but aren't you trying to coddle him to death? He likes it. I should, if I were in his place, and there's no doubt that the poor chap needs all the good times you're giving him. But —" Ronald hesitated.

"Go on," Sidney told him quietly.

He attacked a fresh handful of turf.

"Oh, I say, don't get cranky," he blurted out. "It's not that I'm envious, or anything of that sort. It is only that I've taken a liking to Wade,

and I hate to see him chuck up the game. It's not as if it were necessary, either. He's a long way better than he was at first. He does more things without getting tired out; he acts more alive, less like a sawdust doll, wet, soggy sawdust, too. I don't mean to be hard-hearted. It is only that, even in my own class, I've watched men lose their grip on things, and I don't want it to happen to Wade."

"But it won't," Sidney protested. "And I don't think I know what you mean, anyway."

Patiently Ronald set himself to explain.

"It's this way: a man gets down on his luck, is ill, or gets short of money, or something else goes wrong. Somebody starts to help him out of the hole, or else to pad it up, so he won't be quite so uncomfortable. Instead of taking the help and using it to climb out of his hole on, he just sits down on his heels and waits for the other fellow to do it all."

Sidney frowned; not at Ronald, however, but at the new idea.

"But that's not Wade," she said slowly.

"Not now. What's more, it must n't ever be. But the question is, Miss Peekaboo, are n't you making his invalidism too comfortable for him? When he came up here, he was restless and trying to think of something to do, something he could

do. Now he seems absolutely content to do nothing, and it's not a healthy frame of mind."

Sidney faced him a little aggressively.

"How much are we any of us doing, I'd like to know?"

"Not one identical thing," Ronald answered flatly. "However, we all know we've got to go home again and work like dogs. That's the one thing that adds zest to shirking, the prospective grind that is bound to follow. But Wade has n't any grind."

"Poor old Wade!"

"Yes; but that isn't the point," Ronald persisted. "It's all right for him to loaf through the summer; but he's got to make up his mind that, when fall comes, he'll go to work with the rest of us. It's what you said, yourself, a month ago. In fact, it was you who put the idea into my head. Since then, I've been watching Wade. The honest fact is, Mamzelle Peekaboo, the fellow's moral muscle is growing soft, or will grow soft, if we don't look out for it, and, once it does get soft, it will be all up with him."

"I don't see why," Sidney said thoughtfully.

Ronald rose and stood facing her.

"Because he is a man and, as long as he lives in the world, he's got something to do about it. I'm not hard on Wade; it's only because I like

him too well to enjoy seeing him sit down and take things as they come."

"Yes," Sidney assented.

"And, besides that," he went on steadily; "you and I are the only people here, this summer, that will try to put things right. The rest of them either spoil him, or let him alone. It's up to us to set him to work again, even if we have to put on the spur. It sounds a bit beastly, I know; but really is n't it the kindest thing in the end?"

"But what is there that he can do?" the girl asked a little listlessly.

And Ronald's cadence matched her own, as he answered, —

"I'm sure I don't know."

In silence, Sidney pondered the situation.

"We are a good deal like a council of doctors," she said at length. "We have diagnosed the disease to perfection; and now we neither of us know how to go to work to cure it."

Ronald's face brightened, and of a sudden the cloud came out of his eyes.

"Then you agree with me?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," she said slowly; "I do. I have been thinking it for a good long time; but I hated to give in and admit it, even to myself."

"And you're not cross at me?" he urged, as he held out his hand to assist her to her feet.

Without stirring otherwise, she took the proffered hand.

“Not so long as you stand by me, and help to cure the disease,” she answered, with a steady gravity he had not seen in her before. “It may be that we neither one of us can manage it alone. In that case, our best chance is to fight it out together.”

And, over their clasped hands, their eyes met and sealed their compact.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SLOWLY the buckboard lifted itself upon two wheels, paused for an instant with the other two wheels balanced in mid air, then turned itself over like a gigantic griddlecake. The horse, meanwhile, although somewhat annoyed to find one of the shafts under his body and the other one tickling the apex of his spine, paused too, with his forefeet braced on the edge of the road, his head hanging indolently forward over a sheer precipice of some hundreds of feet. So deliberately had the whole event occurred that Janet, alone in the buckboard, had had ample time to step out on the ground and move backward from the immediate scene of action. The others surrounded her, laughing, excited, breathless.

“What happened?”

“What turned him?”

“What made you do it?”

“Me do it?” Janet echoed in disgust. “I didn’t do it; it was that booby of a horse.”

But Sidney stepped to the horse’s head, and began rather ostentatiously to pat his aged Roman nose.

“Did she call you a booby?” she queried. “Well, it’s a shame. Not many horses would have stopped.”

Paul interposed.

“Tiddles, did you ever drive that horse?”

“No.”

“Then don’t display your ignorance by talking about him. He’d stop on top of a bonfire, if you would let him. But what did you do, Janet? Did you cross the reins?”

“Of course not.” Janet’s tone was indignant.

“What did you do, then?” her brother asked, while he busied himself with straps and buckles.

“I didn’t do anything, I keep telling you. The beast tried to walk into that opening across the road, and I pulled him out. Then he changed his mind and decided to commit suicide down the bank; but he turned lazy on the way and compromised on murder, instead.”

Ronald, meanwhile, had freed the horse from the buckboard, and Paul and Duncan Ogilvie had restored it to its normal position once more.

“Nothing broken,” Paul reported then. “I dare you to try it again, Janet. You might do it six times running, and not come out like this, one single time.”

“All right,” she said undauntedly; “I’m willing to try it, if you’ll pay the bills. I’d like to

see just how great an idiot this horse can make of himself."

"His brains equal minus infinity plus thirteen," Ronald observed. "And, speaking of brains, do somebody go after Wade and stop him. He is in a pensive mood, this afternoon, and he will get to meditating and go on indefinitely, unless some one holds him up. Hurry, Paul, and catch him. I came for a drive, and I don't want to walk all the way to St. Tite."

"Judging by our horseflesh, you will, though," Paul said over his shoulder, as he went hurrying forward up the path with Janet, lithe as a squirrel, keeping step at his side.

Paul had spoken wisely and from the depths of his two-hour experience. Theoretically, they were driving up into the mountains, twelve miles, to the tiny village of St. Tite des Caps. As an actual fact, they were making a large part of the journey on foot, with occasional intervals when the horses allowed them to ride over a short stretch of level road. At the foot of the first slope, there had been a difference of opinion, brief, but pronounced. With drooping heads and melancholy faces turned back towards the buckboards, the horses had manifested a settled determination not to budge until their load had lightened itself. The contest might have been

prolonged indefinitely; but Judith's timidity, overpowering her inertia, had carried the day. She had absolutely refused to trust her life to such shambling legs upon such a slope, and she had dismounted in haste and by means of the rim of the wheel. A hurried consultation had followed. As result, Janet as the lightest and Wade as the least vigorous had been detailed to drive the two buckboards, and the others had strolled along in their leisurely wake, talking idly and stopping often to rest.

Of the eight faces, that noon, six had worn wide smiles of content, as the two buckboards had driven away from the Addisons' gate. The other two were slightly downcast.

"I don't wish to seem selfish, but —" Sidney had said, and she had completed her sentence by climbing into the front seat of the less reputable buckboard.

And Ronald had added placidly, —

"Neither do I, but —" as he had taken his place at her side.

The other buckboard, with Janet and Paul wrangling merrily over the reins and Freda Leslie and Duncan Ogilvie on the back seat, was already nearing the bridge at the turn of the road. There was nothing, then, for Wade and Judith to do but to put themselves under

the diminutive chaise-top which covered the back seat of the remaining buckboard. They did so, however, with none too good a grace. Wade missed Sidney at his elbow on general principles. Judith's objection was wholly specific, and concerned itself with Ronald's apparent defection. The pair on the front seat, however, looked out upon the world with good-natured eyes, wholly oblivious of the hopes they had set at naught. To Sidney's unsentimental mind, it mattered not one whit whether Wade was at her side or slightly in the rear. Granted he was within easy hail, she was quite content. As for Ronald, he and Janet were the best possible chums, and it would never have occurred to him that a fellow could object to sitting with his sister now and then. However, the conversation was left almost entirely to the occupants of the forward seat.

Frequently at first, then more seldom as it dawned upon her that she was calling forth only monosyllabic replies, Sidney turned to include Wade in the talk. Then, as they left the main road and came under the shadow of the ancient forest, she gave up the attempt. Wade was undeniably a dear; it was undeniably good to have him able to go out with them once more. Nevertheless, if he chose to be silent, it was not

her place to talk for two. The girl had spent a morning of bright anticipations of the trip; she had hailed with delight Wade's decision that he felt strong enough to undertake it with them, and now she resolutely declined to have her good time spoiled by the taciturn pair in the rear. She liked Ronald well, more even than ever, since she had had time to think over their conversation of three days before. Nevertheless, it made small difference to her whether the seat at her side was occupied by Ronald, or Wade, Paul or Duncan Ogilvie. She was off for a good time in the mountains, and she meant to have it at any cost.

Wade, meanwhile, was dividing his time between irresistible enjoyment of the views at his feet, annoyance at the chaise-top above him which gave forth sundry snaps and crackings, each time the buckboard lurched over a hummock in the road, and exasperated contemplation of the broad back of his neighbour in front. The exasperation was wholly dominant, however, by the time it was decided that he should drive on alone, leaving the others to follow in a merry group. Judith, on the contrary, hailed the new plan with outward enthusiasm. Experience had taught her that all things lay in the grasp of her whose shoestrings refused to stay tied. Never-

theless, when the party stood together at the top of the long, steep slope, the two disaffected members were still left in the lurch. Wade showed no inclination to move out of his place on the front seat, and accordingly Ronald, with a merry glance at Sidney, promptly bundled her into the rear and took his place at her side.

“You won’t get too tired, driving, Wade?” Sidney asked a little anxiously.

And Wade made answer, —

“Not at all. I like it.” But, for the life of him, he could not bring his voice to its usual tone.

Two hours later, they sat around the table in the quaint French inn at St. Tite. The journey thither had accomplished itself by deliberate stages. When the horses were not stopping to rest, their drivers were halting them to admire the view which swept away, peak on peak, and peak on peak again, up and up for many a mile into the very heart of the blue Laurentides. Once the trailing banners of mist had swiftly gathered themselves together and come sweeping towards them, driving them to seek shelter in a mountain cottage where the good wife received them with a cordiality born of the long and lonesome days when no one crossed her threshold.

And Sidney, as they stood in the doorway,

watching the storm beat around them, while the sun lay yellow over the valley of St. Ferréol at their feet, pushed her hand through the hollow of Wade's elbow.

"Do you know what it reminds me of?" she asked, too low for the others to hear.

"No."

His tone was kindly, though it betrayed neither curiosity nor interest.

She persisted.

"It's like your summer here."

"I don't see why."

Unconsciously she adopted Madame's metaphor.

"Clouds, you know, and storm; but the sunshine beyond."

Then she flushed at his answer, for it was curt.

"All but the sunshine," he said.

Later, seated at the table between Janet and Freda Leslie, his mood still sat in the chair with him. Judith, with Ronald at her side, was devouring mountain strawberries and cream with contentment and a hearty appetite. Paul and Sidney were squabbling over the golden-brown pancakes, and Duncan Ogilvie, at the foot of the table, was chattering bad French to the buxom hostess who had just appeared with a fresh supply of omelettes and steaming coffee. Freda turned to Wade with a smile.

"It is very good to have you with us, Mr. Winthrop," she said, in her level English voice.

He smiled in dutiful acquiescence.

"It certainly is a beautiful place to be."

"And we are beautiful people to be with," Paul interpolated, from across the table. "Smile, Wadeikins, and look as if you meant it."

"How can you smile, when you're eating pancakes?" Janet objected suddenly. "They demand all your attention. It's the custom of the country to roll them up, like the paper jumpers Ronald used to make in school; but, unless you look out, they unroll again just at the critical moment."

"When is the critical moment?" Duncan Ogilvie asked.

And it was Sidney who answered, —

"Before you've tasted them, of course. Afterwards, it becomes impossible to criticise."

Paul leaned back in his chair.

"Likewise, there comes a time when it is impossible to eat any more. Janet, I'll race you to the church and back, for the sake of getting up some more appetite."

Sidney rose.

"All right. Wade and I will be judges at the turn. Come, Wade. Shall we take possession of the announcement box?" And she led the way

out to the road, with Paul and Janet frisking and giggling at her heels.

“Wade Winthrop, what is the matter, to-day?” she asked fearlessly, as they walked away down the road together.

He stared moodily out at the distant hills. Then he made moody answer, —

“Is anything?”

“Yes.”

“What?”

“That’s what I was asking you,” she reminded him.

“I believe,” he said slowly; “that I am rather cross.”

In spite of herself, the girl laughed at this deliberate, judicial statement of a self-evident fact.

“I not only believe it; I know it,” she answered.

Turning, he stared at her in mingled wonder and annoyance.

“Do you mean that I show it?” he asked.

And Sidney made unhesitating answer, —

“I should rather say you did.”

“I’m sorry,” he replied.

“So am I. It shows something has gone wrong. Besides, it’s not like you, Wade.” Then she hesitated. “Of course, I know I’ve no business to be lecturing you,” she added.

"Really, it is very rude of me, Wade, and very uppish."

"I don't see why," he observed thoughtfully.

"For one reason because I happen to be a little younger," she suggested, while she led the way across the open square in front of the church and mounted the stairs leading to the little platform whence the parish announcements were wont to be made, after the Sunday morning mass was over.

"Yes, a few hundred years. And yet," he gave her a whimsical smile, as he seated himself on the step at her feet; "there are times when I feel a mere babe in your hands."

With her chin on her fists, she surveyed him intently. The old frown had come back between his brows, but with a difference. Where it had formerly been a token of listless depression, it now showed restless discontent. Had Sidney been older, she would have welcomed the change, as marking the renewal of his old-time energy for which Ronald had been so ardently hoping. Now she told herself merely that, without the frown, her cousin would have been a good-looking man, and, obeying some sudden impulse, she bent down and rubbed her hand across his wrinkled forehead.

"What's that for?" he asked quickly.

"Smoothing out your scowl," she assured him composedly.

But he shook his head.

"You 'll have to go deeper than that, Sidney."

"I 'll begin with that, though. It 's not becoming to you to scowl like that, anyway, and I don't see any reason you should."

"You don't?"

Abruptly he threw the question at her. Boldly she caught it and tossed it back again.

"No; I don't. Why should you?"

"Look at Dunc," he said briefly.

Sidney's face betrayed her remoteness from his meaning.

"But I can't. He 's not in sight."

"I 'm not joking," he said impatiently. "There is all the difference in the world between us."

"Of course," Sidney answered, with intentional literalness. "Anybody can see that. He is big and blond; you are little and dark."

"That 's not what I mean. He is doing something."

"So are you."

"What?"

"Worrying the life out of your cousin," Sidney responded unexpectedly.

Wade turned sharply and looked up at her. A blow in the face could scarcely have surprised him more.

"Worrying, Sidney? You?"

“Yes.”

“About me?”

“Yes.”

“But what’s the use?”

One hand shut on the fingers of the other, and the flesh of the fingers grew white under the pressure.

“Because things aren’t going right with you, Wade, and I don’t know what’s the matter,” she answered quietly. “I’ve been here a month, today. When I came, you just lay around in a hammock; you didn’t exercise at all; you didn’t talk to any of us; you acted as if you’d like to shut yourself up inside a gigantic eggshell and spend your days watching the walls. Now, in spite of your horrid bronchitis, you really are beginning to be a good deal alive. And yet—”

“I am crosser than ever?” he queried, with a smile.

Sidney hesitated, her eyes fixed upon the distant road where a pair of oxen shuffled along in front of their heavily laden cart.

“Well, yes; that is just about it,” she replied slowly. “*Cross* isn’t quite the right word, though. Something is rubbing you the wrong way, and I can’t understand it, when we all can see that you’re growing stronger, every single week. Of course, it may have been there, all

the time; only I did n't know you well enough, at first, to notice it. What is wrong, really, Wade?"

For a long time, he was silent, so long, in fact, that the girl feared he might be angry at her insistence. When he spoke, however, his voice had its old hearty ring.

"After all, Tiddles, I think the best name for it all would be mental growing-pains," he suggested, with the whimsical fun which Sidney had learned to recognize as the prophet of his best moods.

Bending over, she took his head in her hands and tilted it backward until she could look down into his eyes.

"Cousin Wade, do you think I am a very unmannerly young person?" she asked.

"Surely. Why?"

"Because I forget that I am ten years younger than you; because I lecture you and try to give you good advice; because I keep putting my forefinger into your mental pie? I know it is bad manners. I make up my mind, over and over again, that I won't do it. I'm nothing but a girl, and I know I don't understand man things. I should n't blame you a bit if you lost your temper at me. Only —"

"Only?" he echoed, as she paused.

“Only nobody else does it, except Auntie Jack. Judith would, only she does n’t dare. And when you go into your shell and glower out at us — why, then it makes me want to know what’s the matter, and what I can do about it all,” she concluded rather tempestuously.

“What a nuisance I am to you, Sidney!”

“No; you’re not a nuisance, either,” she contradicted. “You know that as well as I do. It is only just this: if there is something really wrong, I want to go to work to make it better. If there is n’t, then I want you to stop being pensive, and get a little good out of life as you go along. It is n’t for me; it’s for you. And it is n’t for you only; it is partly for your mother. When you have an off day, she has an off night, and she comes down to breakfast with her eyes looking like saucers.”

Turning, he stared directly up into her earnest face and, as he stared, the trouble came back into his eyes.

“Sidney,” he asked; “tell me honestly: am I getting selfish?”

“Not exactly; not in anything you do,” she replied with some reluctance, for Wade’s gaze was compelling her to speak, yet she shrank from hurting this cousin of whom she had grown so fond.

“What then?” he questioned steadily.

“You don’t mean it, anyway, Wade,” she parried. “It is n’t what you do; it is only what you don’t do.”

Older man that he was, and with so much excuse lurking in his invalidism, he yet took the rebuke without flinching or seeking to turn it to one side.

“I am sorry,” he said. “I had n’t noticed it. I am glad you told me, Sidney. It was n’t easy; but I hope it will do me some good.”

He rose, as he spoke, for Janet and Paul were below their perch, clamouring for their judgment in the race. The next morning, however, he was waiting on the gallery when Sidney came down to breakfast.

“Slept much, Tiddles?” he asked composedly.

“Not much,” she confessed.

“Why not?”

“Conscience. I let my tongue run away with me. I was horrid and rude and altogether too cocky, and I lay awake to repent of my sins.”

“But don’t,” he advised her briefly. “You’re the first person who has had the nerve to tell me the truth, and I mean to make it do a little good.” And, arm in arm, the cousins strolled in to breakfast.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ALL alone, Judith?"

The girl looked over her shoulder, as Mrs. Addison stepped out on the gallery.

"Yes."

"Where are the others?"

"Up on Sundown Rock."

"All of them?"

"Yes. The others started first, and Wade and Mr. Ogilvie went after them, just a little while ago."

Mrs. Addison came forward, took one chair and established her darning basket in another.

"I am glad you did n't go, too," she said then. "It's much more cosy to have you to talk to me, while I darn the stockings."

"Shall I do some of them?" Judith asked dutifully.

"Not to-day, thank you, dear. I have nothing else to do, and, when I'm not busy, I rather like the work."

"How can you?" Judith said, with an accent

of languid surprise at her mother's taste. "Paul does make such horrid holes."

Mrs. Addison laughed.

"And he does have such a good time making them," she added.

"Yes, only it does seem as if he might remember to change, as soon as the little holes come. But boys are so careless." And Judith sighed, as if in needless sympathy with Mrs. Addison who was darning away busily, with the blithest of smiles on her face.

"You said Wade had gone up with Mr. Ogilvie?" Mrs. Addison asked, after an interval.

"Yes. They were down by the river for ever so long. Then, all of a sudden, they started up the hill."

"What good times they do have together!" Mrs. Addison said, as she threaded her needle. "It has been so pleasant for Wade, their running across each other, and I think Mr. Ogilvie has enjoyed it, too."

"It seems to me he leaves Miss Freda alone a great deal," Judith observed.

Her mother laughed.

"But, my dear child, they must give each other time to breathe."

"Yes; but he was here, half the morning, and Wade asked him to come back, this afternoon.

Really, it did seem a little selfish of Wade; but I suppose he didn't think," Judith remarked virtuously.

"Perhaps not. And I suppose he does enjoy talking to a man now and then."

Judith looked up.

"Ronald is very manly," she said.

"For his age, yes. Still, he is much younger than Wade."

"Do you know what I think is Ronald's worst fault?" Judith inquired, after a pause.

"No." Mrs. Addison spoke deliberately, with her eyes fixed upon the needle she was weaving over and under a row of threads.

The pause came again.

"Apparently you don't want to know," Judith said then.

Mrs. Addison lifted her eyes.

"No, dear; I am sure I do not."

"But I thought you liked Ronald," Judith suggested.

"So I do.

"Then why don't you like to talk about him?"

"I do. That doesn't signify, though," Mrs. Addison's voice was very gentle; "that doesn't signify that I like to talk about his faults."

"But nobody is perfect."

"Possibly not."

Judith faced her mother directly.

“Do you think that Ronald Leslie is perfect?”

Mrs. Addison shook her head.

“No, dear; he is something vastly better,” she said, with a smile.

Again conscious virtue was manifest in Judith’s tone.

“What can be better than to be perfect?” she inquired.

Her mother’s reply was unexpected.

“To be a healthy, faulty boy who is trying hard to get over his faults.”

The girl considered the situation.

“Oh, then Paul ought to suit you; that is, if he is,” she answered a little enigmatically.

And Mrs. Addison made enigmatic answer, —

“He is, and he does.”

“Perhaps,” Judith responded doubtfully. “But what do you think really is Ronald’s worst fault?”

Again Mrs. Addison’s reply was unexpected.

“His best virtue is his jolly unselfishness.”

And again Judith responded doubtfully, —

“Perhaps so. But I asked about his fault.”

Quite quietly Mrs. Addison let her stocking fall into her lap.

“Judith dear, what is the use of talking over people’s faults?” she asked. “Isn’t it a good

deal like scolding about stormy weather? That just makes us discontented, and does n't do one bit of good."

"Not the weather. But, unless we talk about the faults, how can we help people to correct them?" Judith demurred.

"By correcting our own," her mother answered tersely.

"I don't see how." This time, the girl's tone threatened to become sullen.

Mrs. Addison picked up her stocking once more.

"Judith dear, you know I hate to preach, for preaching is prosy work. This time, you have driven me into it. Half of other people's faults exist only in our own notion; the other half are mostly caused by our rubbing people the wrong way. If we get too busy, either to imagine things or to rub people cornerwise, what is going to become of the faults?"

"But suppose people rub us?" Judith queried.

"Don't pay any attention."

"Then they'll rub us all the harder."

"Not if they find you're not feeling the rubs. Laugh at them, and you spoil all their fun."

"But I'd never dare laugh at Wade and Paul," Judith observed thoughtfully; "and, if I laughed at Sidney, she'd never stand it in this world. She is a very queer sort of girl, mother."

Again Mrs. Addison threaded her needle. Then she drew a fresh sock over her darning ball.

"Don't you think so, yourself?" Judith persisted again.

Laying down the stocking with the ball half falling through the vast hole in the heel, Mrs. Addison counted on her fingers.

"Paul careless, Wade selfish, Ronald faulty, Sidney queer. The thumb is left for Judith. What of her?"

The girl flushed to the roots of her yellow hair.

"I didn't mean to be critical," she said, in swift defence.

"No; but you were."

"I don't think so. Of course, when I am here alone, I keep thinking about them, and it is so easy to say things to you." Her accent was meditative.

Mrs. Addison laid her hand on that of her daughter.

"I am glad it is, dear. I hope it always will be. But why do you stay here alone?"

"I—like it better," the girl answered, loath to confess that the others, strolling away by twos and threes, had neglected to suggest that she should go with them.

"And yet, after all, you didn't come here for

the sake of sitting on the gallery," Mrs. Addison replied as carelessly as if, for days, she had not been watching with uneasy eyes Judith's increasing tendency to be outside the group.

Judith's evasion came swiftly.

"You know I did n't care to come here, in the first place."

"No, dear. We all came here for Wade's sake. We ought n't to mind anything else, now he is so much stronger. But I thought you liked it at first."

"So I did. Now there does n't seem much to do."

"Was there any more, then?"

"N—no; only we've seen it all once, and it does n't seem worth while to go to the same places over and over again."

"What has become of the book you and Janet were reading?"

"She got sick of it, and she said she hated to sit still, out of doors."

"But you used to read in your room, on rainy afternoons."

"Only twice. Janet would insist on sitting on the bed, and she mussed it up too much."

"What about the window-seat?"

And Judith made answer, with perfect unconsciousness, —

“Oh, that is altogether too narrow for two.” Then her tone changed and became a bit censorious. “And, anyway, Janet does n’t seem to care for anything, nowadays, but to climb hills and fish with Paul. They stick together, just as Ronald sticks to Sidney. I can’t understand that at all. It never seemed to me he liked to go tumbling along over logs and things. Only yesterday, she took him through a most frightful bog, and they came home, muddy to the knees. You were busy with Ruth and did n’t know it; but Sidney had to borrow a skirt from me, for her brown one had n’t dried out since she slipped on the logs, yesterday.”

This time, Mrs. Addison looked up sharply.

“What was Sidney doing on the logs?”

“Walking on them. She and Paul do it, half the time. They think it is fun; but I can’t see the fun of getting soaking wet up to your waist.”

“If they will stop at their waists, I don’t so much mind,” Mrs. Addison responded, with restored tranquillity. “Now and then, Judith, I wish you cared more for such things.”

Judith glanced downward at her crisp and spotless frock.

“Oh, mamma! You would n’t have me walk those dirty logs?” she remonstrated.

“Not the logs, perhaps; but —”

Judith interrupted her.

“Or be a tomboy like Sidney and Janet?”

“Better be a tomboy than a prig, dear,” her mother answered gently. “You are growing entirely too finical. I was a tomboy, myself, and I am not a bit ashamed of the day Uncle Maurice and I climbed on the cupola of the barn and nailed an American flag to the little post in the middle. We had to be rescued with a ladder, and I tore out most of my front breadth; but I had helped to celebrate the Fourth of July, and I had had the satisfaction of being in the thick of the fun.”

“I never seem to be that,” Judith said slowly, and, for the first time that day, there came into her voice the little accent of regret for which her mother had been wishing.

“No, dear; perhaps not. There is only one way to do that.”

“How?”

Mrs. Addison rolled up her last pair of stockings. Then she rose to her feet.

“Just by forgetting what you want to do, and going in for the general good time,” she said. “The same thing that made Janet sew seams and read books with you, and fish with Paul, and go out rowing at sunrise with Ronald, can make you the most popular girl in Canada and The States together. Popularity is n’t anything in this world

but finding out what the next man likes to do, and then doing it with all your might. Now let's go up to Sundown Rock and see what those people are doing with themselves."

They found the rock deserted, however; but, pinned to a tree, there was a scrap of birch bark with a terse inscription by Ronald, telling whom it might concern that they had gone up the road leading to the dam. Pausing just long enough to glance up the river, stretching away to the point where, twenty-five miles up the valley, the citadel and Levis appeared to be clasping hands across the current, Mrs. Addison turned and led the way down the hill again to the road which the others had taken. Under their feet, a soft carpet of pine needles covered the rustic steps; over their heads, the sunlight sifted down upon them through the whispering treetops. At the foot of the slope, a golden-yellow collie sat by the fence, one eye upon them, the other upon the little flock of sheep munching grass in the field beyond. And then came the long stretch of open road, winding up the valley, with the river jabbering to itself, six hundred feet to the westward.

Something was jabbering besides the river, however. As Mrs. Addison and her daughter came to a sudden bend where the road drew near the stream, there arose upon their ears a chorus

of voices, mingled with the noise of clapping hands.

“Good for you, Janet!”

“Hurry up, Paul! She’s gaining on you!”

“Look out for the turn!”

“There’s another log.”

“She’ll never get past it.”

“She’s all right.”

“Oh, Paul! Rock to your left!”

“Well steered!”

“She’s on you!”

“Paul! Paul!”

“Janet! Janet!”

“What can they be doing?” Judith’s tone suggested that her wonder was not wholly approving.

“It sounds like a Yale-Harvard race,” her mother answered, laughing, as a fresh chorus of shrieks greeted her ears.

“Janet’s winning.”

“Steer for the rapids, Paul!”

“Cut off that turn, Janet!”

“Look out for the log behind! It will bump you, in a minute.”

Mrs. Addison left the road and turned in the direction of the shouts.

“Whatever it is, it sounds good fun,” she said. “Hurry, Judith. We want to see what is happening.”

But Judith pointed to the left.

"There they are, down there," she said.
"Mamma Addison, do look at that crazy child."

Mrs. Addison's eyes followed the pointing finger. Down on the bank of the river, Freda Leslie and Sidney with the three young men were gesticulating wildly in the direction of the current. Opposite them, the river, roused by its headlong plunge over the dam, tired of its placid course through the wide pool beneath, went racing along its shallow bed, twisting around the bends in its banks, swirling about the islets in its channel and fussing and fuming among the rocks. Down the current came the long yellow logs, sometimes singly, sometimes in great groups which chafed and jostled one another, leaped on one another's shoulders and fell back again until the water was churned to whitening foam. Such a group was just passing out of sight around a bend in the river, and, in the open water in its wake, there rode two giant logs. On one log stood Paul, a long slim pole in his hands. On the other log and similarly armed stood Janet. Mrs. Addison gave a little exclamation of surprise and consternation. At the sound, Sidney turned her head.

"Oh, Auntie Jack!" she called. "I'm so glad you've come. You're just in time to see the finish."

And Mrs. Addison, scrambling down the bank, made answer with a whimsical accent which reminded Sidney of her older son, —

“Yes, I should think I was in time to see their finish.”

But Duncan Ogilvie reassured her.

“I think you don’t need to worry, Mrs. Addison. The river is very shallow here. The worst that can happen to them would be a ducking, and they are used to that. Ronald says that Janet has ridden the logs for years, and Paul’s canoeing appears to have taught him how to steer.”

“But what are they doing?” Judith asked Ronald.

“Racing from the lower pool to the bridge. Steady, Janet! There comes a log.” Ronald lifted his voice suddenly.

“What possessed them to do such a crazy thing?”

No one answered, until Paul, with a deft use of his pole, had steered his way around a jutting point of rocks. Then Duncan Ogilvie replied.

“Really, it’s not at all crazy, Miss Judith. Your cousin and I are threatening to try it, next. All you need is a pair of rubber soles, a level head and a bit of knack.”

Mrs. Addison shook her head.

"You are welcome to try it; I sha'n't. But what started them?"

"Two of the lumbermen went down, while we were up on the rock. That set us to talking about it and wondering how easy it really was. In the end, Janet challenged Paul to a race, and, naturally, he had to try it."

"I don't see why," Judith said.

Turning slightly, Duncan Ogilvie stared at the girl, as if she were the type of a species hitherto unknown to him.

"Why, really, because he is a boy, you know," he answered, and Judith, listening, was conscious of a sudden sense of rebuke.

Nevertheless, she felt called upon to demur.

"But Janet always has seemed so ladylike."

And once more Duncan Ogilvie made wondering answer, —

"Yes, of course. Why not?"

But again the chorus on the bank was heard, reinforced, this time, by the voice of Mrs. Addison.

"Ah-h! Janet! Cut off that corner, and you'll get him."

"Paul! Look out!"

"Hug the bank, Paul!"

"She's going to win."

"Going to upset, you'd better say."

“Rock! Rock! Oh, rock!”

Paul caught the cry, looked up to see a great gray rock straight in his course, and, with a swift motion of his pole, he veered sharply to one side. He passed it by in safety; but the stern of his log, whirling about unexpectedly, caught Janet quite unawares. The next instant, she was sitting in a shallow pool, while her log, freed from her weight, dived forward, whirled about and promptly bowled over Paul who was presently smiling back at her from another pool, ten feet away.

Dripping and shaking themselves like a pair of water dogs, they regained the bank; but Janet disdained the applause which met them.

“Wait,” she said undauntedly. “We have n’t done it yet. It’s one thing to race, and another to capsize. Paul was ahead; but that’s no sign he would have stayed there. Some day, we’ll fight it out, Paul Addison, and then you’ll find that I can ride the logs as well as you, even if I am a girl.” And, with a saucy, defiant little gesture of farewell, she turned and scuttled off towards home.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AFTER all, it was from Madame that Wade's impulse came.

"It is not so often that I see you now, my son," she said, one morning.

"Every day," he reminded her.

"As you come for Monsieur to give you the letters, yes. But you do not sit and talk to me beside the loom."

"Perhaps not; but —"

With a gesture of her uplifted shuttle, Madame interrupted him.

"Make no apologies. It is not necessary. I like to have you by the loom; yet it is better not. When first you came here, the others went away and left you to sit alone. Rather than that, you chose to come to talk to Madame. Now you make the excursions with them. So much the better. The summer is passing; but Madame and her loom will be here when the summer is done. My son, you are better than you were."

"True. How did you know it?"

"By your lips which now curve upward; by

your eyes which now grow eager; by your tread which now rings crisply on the road."

"Madame has logic," Wade answered, laughing.

"Why not? I have seen men fall ill before. I have also seen them grow strong again. Yes, when this very chest," Madame's hand indicated the great oaken box on which she sat; "when this very chest was scant half full and my wedding robe still unbought, Monsieur fell ill with a fever. It came slowly, and it went more slowly, so slowly that I ceased to think of the chest and of the wedding robe." As she spoke, Madame slid off the chest, turned about to open it and fell to fumbling among the homespun stuff and linen inside. "This was he," she added at length, as she took out a tarnished metal case and handed it to Wade.

He pressed the spring of the case and looked down at the ancient miniature within. The face, albeit shaven and boyish, was the face of Monsieur; but the figure was brave with the trappings of war.

"A soldier?" he asked, glancing up into the eyes of Madame.

"Yes, he was a captain once. His family was good, and he was very brave. He even had a medal of bronze." Madame spoke, as she would have spoken of one long dead.

"And why did he change?"

Madame took the miniature, wiped it gently with her clumsy kerchief, then sat staring at it, as she moved it slowly back and forth as if seeking the best light possible. Then at length she looked up.

“Monsieur has said?” she said interrogatively.

“How long since he left the service?”

“Then; at that time. The fever left him weak, too weak for the life of a soldier. He must give it up. He became postmaster, instead.”

“Was he disappointed?” Wade asked half involuntarily.

Madame shrugged her shoulders, as she closed the case.

“What would you have? It was written on the cards of fate. Had he lived the soldier’s life, he might have been shot,” she returned optimistically.

“Madame takes the best view of things.”

“Perhaps. It is better like that. The best view is always the more distant.”

“That means?” Wade inquired, while she shut the chest and seated herself once more.

“That those whose sight is good can always see to a happy end.” Then her shuttle filled in the pause, before she asked, “Have you also looked to your own end, my son?”

“Yes, Madame. Also I have been forced to look away from it.”

Madame plied her shuttle industriously, rolled back her web and plied her shuttle again.

"I know," she said then. "And shall you soon look back again?"

"Never."

Madame lifted her brows.

"Never is a long time," she observed.

"So I find it. However, it is impossible."

"Then," Madame stayed her shuttle; "if the possibility comes never, then was your end not the true one. In that case, you must look for it again."

"Where?" Wade's tone was a little impatient. It is disconcerting to receive from another the advice which one has been trying reluctantly to force upon one's self.

Madame shook her head.

"I do not know. I have been told, however, that all things can be done by American men."

Wade's thoughts flashed swiftly southward to a certain luxurious office, walled in with leather-bound books and dotted with leather-backed chairs.

"Apparently not," he said, and his voice was slightly bitter.

"Not all at once, nor all by one man," Madame continued tranquilly. "For myself, when it is too dark to weave, I work in my garden. When

the dew falls there, I return to my room and knit."

In his wonted position astride the chair and his arms crossed on its back, Wade pondered her words. Suddenly he glanced up, with a laugh.

"Is it a lesson, Madame?"

"For him who wishes to be scholar," she responded.

Rising, he held out his hand.

"Then I will go away and study it," he rejoined.

"Till to-morrow, Madame, and thank you."

Twenty steps from the door, he met Ronald Leslie.

"You were going?" he queried.

And Ronald made easy answer, —

"Wherever you say."

"Then come for a walk," Wade said quietly; "unless you hate toddling along at my pace, Goliath. The fact is, I want to think something over, and I generally find I can think better, when somebody else is listening."

Ronald plunged his fists into his side pockets and fitted his stride to Wade's shorter step.

"Let her go," he advised him. "Who has been treading on your toes?"

"Nobody. Madame has merely put a bee in my bonnet."

"As to what?"

"As to what I am going to do next."

Ronald started to whistle, but broke off at the fifth bar.

"Good for Madame! Well, what are you?"

"That's just what I don't know," Wade said flatly.

"Well, fall to and think it over," Ronald admonished him. "Summer is half gone; you're more than half on your legs again, and it's high time you were deciding what to do with yourself."

Wade spoke deliberately.

"The question seems to be whether it is worth while to do anything."

Ronald turned the whole upper half of his body about and faced him.

"Being a man, yes," he answered, in much the phrase which Duncan Ogilvie had used to Judith, only the day before.

"But I don't need the money," Wade argued, and his tone was a bit impatient.

"But you do need the work," Ronald replied imperturbably. "We all do; else we lose the fun of loafing."

Wade took a dozen steps in silence. Then he laughed.

"I believe you've hit it, Goliath," he said.

"Of course. I learn a few things, even in McGill," Ronald said, with serene good temper.

“You Harvard men are slow to admit it; but you all have to knock under in the end.”

Wade took another dozen steps. Then he said, —

“Granted that I must go to work, what must I do?”

Ronald laughed.

“Oh, that! How should I know? Whatever you hate least.”

“That is law, and out of the question.” Wade’s reply came crisply.

“Poor old chap! Yes. What next?”

“I used to think I’d like to write,” Wade suggested tentatively.

“Why not? You’ve money enough, and it’s a handy trade. You can do it out-doors, or anywhere.”

“If you can do it at all. That is usually the question.”

“Oh, anybody can do it. Ink is cheap. What should you go in for? Poems?”

In spite of himself, Wade laughed. It was plain that Ronald was not the prey of the literary microbe.

“What would you suggest, Goliath?” he asked.

“Oh, I’m going in for engineering, on the heels of the pater, and I’ve never thought much about other things. I’d say something out of doors.”

“Policeman, or cabby?” Wade queried.

“Don’t laugh. I am trying to think. Why don’t you go in for newspaper work?”

“Reporter?” Wade spoke with strong disfavour, and it was plain that his disfavour was planted upon purely social grounds.

“Why not? It gives you variety and out-door hours and all that. You won’t get rich; but you just said you don’t need the money. It’s not too deadly, and, by the time you go home, you will be able to start in on short hours and see how you like it. You’ll get your baptism of printer’s ink and, in time, if we ever fight Russia, you may be graduated into a war correspondent.”

Wade pondered aloud.

“It’s not exactly aristocratic for a man of my years; neither is it too neat. Still, as you say, it’s not too deadly, Goliath, and one might do worse. I had one brief epoch of helping edit *The Lampoon*, in my younger days.”

“Before you thought of studying law?”

“Before I was sure. Why?”

Ronald laughed.

“That’s the pater’s theory. He says a man always nibbles at his real profession, gobbles something else and gets indigestion, and then goes back again to the first thing and makes a leisurely meal. It may work itself out in your case.”

“It may; but it’s not likely. I was never bitten with the editorial mania, only nibbled; and law is the only law of my being. Mm! Well. Medical law has denied it to me, and I must look out for something else. Fact is, Goliath, I’d rather do nothing in a lawyer’s office than attain glory elsewhere.”

“It’s not so healthy, though,” Ronald observed. “Moreover, as I said, it takes all the fun out of shirking. It is worth while to keep work in sight over your shoulder, just to make yourself realize what a lark it all is to be doing nothing.”

In the meantime, Bungay and Ruth were doing something and, as usual, doing it with all their might. They were running away.

The remoter causes had been gathering together for days. They consisted of an infinite number of points of injured dignity, and they concerned themselves with the hours when the owners of the injured dignity had been bidden to stay in the yard and play with Jumbo and the dolls, because mountain drives and climbs were far too strenuous for such little people. The immediate cause had occurred at breakfast, that morning, when Bungay had been rebuked for erecting a tower of breadcrust on a mound of oatmeal, and then upsetting the whole structure upon the tablecloth, in his endeavour to help Ruth to construct an oatmeal

dam across a saucer of milk. He had lifted up his voice in futile argument, futile because the effect had been marred by his putting both elbows into the débris, and thereby bringing down a second rebuke upon his already burdened head.

"Nobody does n't love us any, Ruth," he had observed sorrowfully, as soon as they were in the safe refuge of the barn.

Ruth swiftly mounted the opposition.

"Own mother loves Ruth," she avowed.

"She does not. She said you were careless."

"That was you, not Ruth."

"'T was us both, only I was n't," Bungay explained lucidly. "If you 'd had sense, you 'd have made your own dam, yourself, without being helped."

"Who told Ruth to make the dam?" she taunted him.

"Do' know."

"Do, too. 'T was you."

"It was not."

"It was. You made a lighthouse, and then you told Ruth it would be fun to make a dam."

Bungay shifted his ground.

"Well, was n't it?"

Ruth put out her lower lip.

"Look at your elbows," she said severely.

With infinite pains, Bungay twisted the sleeves of his blouse, until he could see the milky spots.

“Huh! Who cares?”

“Own mother. She scolded. Ruth does n’t like own mother to scold.”

Bungay pondered for a long time, gravely, as befitted the subject.

“People are very cross,” he announced at length. “Wade made a cross face, and Sidney scolded, and Auntie Jack scolded. I don’t see why. Oatmeal is clean stuff, because we eat it for breakfast, and I can suck my elbows.”

“Try it,” Ruth suggested practically.

However, Bungay swept on.

“And nobody does n’t love us, anyhow.”

“How do you know?” Ruth queried.

“People don’t scold people they love.”

“Own mother scolded Ruth.”

“That’s ’cause she does n’t love you.”

“She does, teither.”

“What’s *teither*?” Bungay asked disdainfully.

“The most so in the world.”

Contrary to his principles, Bungay yielded to his curiosity.

“Is it French?” he inquired.

“Don’t know. Ruth made it up.”

Again Bungay became masterful in his disdain.

“Sounds as if you did.”

"It does not, Bungay Stayre. You just said you thought it was French."

Prudently Bungay shifted the talk.

"If I was Auntie Jack, I should be sorry I was so cross," he suggested.

"Maybe she is."

"And I should be afraid we'd feel so sorry that we'd run away and get lost," he continued craftily.

Ruth became alert.

"Let's," she said.

Bungay hedged.

"Let's what?"

"Let's run away. It would be so funny, when night came and we didn't have to have own night-gowns on."

"Pajamas," Bungay corrected her.

"Well, pajamas, then. But let's."

"Huh! You'd be afraid."

"What would Ruth be afraid of?" Ruth asked.

"Oh, bears and Indians."

She hesitated. Then she gave a nod, curt and full of decision.

"Ruth is n't 'fraid cat," she retorted. "Come on."

Bungay picked up Jumbo, laid Jumbo down again on a bed of chips, and spent some moments in cramming his xylophone into the slack of his blouse. Then he picked up Jumbo once more.

“All right. Where ’ll we go?” he asked.

And Ruth, mindful of his late strictures upon her courage, made answer, —

“Oh, somewhere in the big black woods.”

With Bungay at her heels, she led the way to the gate. At the gate, Bungay called a halt.

“Say, Ruth, what ’ll we eat?” he demanded, and there was an anxious tone to the demand.

She turned to look back at him blankly.

“Ruth does n’t know.”

“But we ’ll be hungry,” Bungay protested, with a sudden pang of emptiness as he thought of his wasted breakfast.

“Indians don’t be hungry,” Ruth admonished him.

“Yes, they are, too, sometimes.”

“No; they are not. They eat berries and bear meat and —”

“Where do they get their bear meat?” Bungay demanded again.

“Shoot it. And they eat fish and spruce gum and English walnuts.”

Bungay’s reply was final.

“Well, s’pos’n they do?”

“So can we.”

“Hh! This ain’t England and we ain’t Indians. Let ’s not go.”

“’Fraid cat!” For a second time, Ruth re-

sorted to the vernacular of the public kindergarten.

"I'm not 'fraid, too. I just don't want to go and starve."

"Greedy pig!" Ruth observed discursively.

"'T is not greedy, too, to eat when you're hungry. My mother always gives me a biscuit. It's just your mother that's stingy."

Ruth put her chin in the air.

"Own mother gives Ruth cookie."

Bungay's reply came from the roomy storehouse of his imagination.

"I'd rather have biscuits. Cookie gives you a red nose."

"Own nose is n't red," Ruth said defensively.

"It is, too, and so is your hair. Some day, you'll turn into a red Indian."

"Some day, you'll turn into a rangatang, Bungay Stayre."

"Then I'll bite your feet off short at the knees," Bungay replied composedly. "Now come along."

"But Ruth is hungry."

Bungay's impatience led him to disregard the sudden shifting of Ruth's viewpoint. He merely stamped his foot and waved Jumbo in the direction of the barn.

"There's apples in the big basket," he said im-

periously. "Get one, quick, or they 'll catch us, before we 've runned away any at all. And bring me one, and Jumbo wants seven or three of them. Hurry quick, and then we 'll run away up the back hill, and Auntie Jack will cry, and Sidney will cry, and Wade will cry, and Paul will cry, and —"

Ruth cut in upon his catalogue of tears which was fast adapting itself to the forms of the Gregorian tone.

"What 'll they cry for?"

Bungay's answer was comprehensive.

"Because we 've runned away and lost ourselves and they scolded and can't find us and we don't come home in time to be put to bed."

Suddenly Ruth's face lengthened.

"Who 'll read own go-to-bedtime story to Ruth?"

And Bungay once more gave rein to his imagination.

"I will, and Jumbo will play you a song on his xylophone."

Then he tucked Jumbo under his left arm and offered his right hand to the partner of his wanderings.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LESS than an hour before luncheon of that same day, Paul came into his mother's room, looked about for a comfortable chair, then, seeing none, cast himself down at full length upon the bed.

"Oh, Paul, the mud on your shoes!" she remonstrated, with a smile.

He smiled back at her serenely.

"Much better than if it were on your bed," he reassured her, as he rolled over on his side and hung his feet into space.

"And crumbs, too?"

"Don't worry. I won't munch yet. I only brought it, in case I had a sinking within," he reassured her again.

"The biscuit is much more likely to sink within," she reminded him.

"Not this time." And, by way of keeping his word, he folded his hands, biscuit and all, underneath the back of his head.

"Did you catch many fish?" his mother inquired, as she laid aside her book and picked up her knitting.

“Only two. There’s nothing doing with the trout, to-day. Has anybody been up at the dam?”

“Have n’t you?”

“I meant anybody else.” Paul took a hasty bite at his biscuit, folded his hands under his head again and went on speaking, albeit thickly. “They’re mending the dam, all across the top, and putting in a new gate for the sluiceway. At least, it’s all made, and they’ll get it in, this afternoon. The water is running through the sluiceway now. I tell you, it is worth the seeing. The water tears down, all white foam, and does n’t stop fizzing until it is below the pool where Janet tumbled in.”

“Where you tumbled in, you’d better say,” Janet’s voice reminded him from just outside the door. “May I come in, Mrs. Addison?”

“Gladly, my dear.”

And Paul added, without stirring, —

“Charmed to see you. Will you take my chair?”

“Not unless you want it. I’d rather have your biscuit,” Janet replied, as she curled herself up in the deep window-seat.

“What’s the row? Did n’t you get up in season for breakfast?” Paul queried.

“Yes. Breakfast was so good that I’ve kept wishing I had some more of it.”

“Good, Janet! You’re coming on. In time, you’ll get to where you can try your hand at an American joke.” And Paul dropped his biscuit in order to applaud her witticism properly.

Janet made a hasty snatch at the biscuit. Then she turned demurely to Mrs. Addison.

“Where is Sidney?” she asked, as she nibbled her prize.

“Isn’t she down by the river, with Judith and the children?”

“No. Neither are the children down there. Judith is all alone.”

“Poor soul! Why didn’t you stay with her?” Paul asked indolently.

“Because I was hunting for Sidney.”

“What for?”

“To get her to teach me a queer lace-work stitch.”

Paul braced one foot against the footboard and crossed his knees.

“That’s where you get yourself left. Tiddles doesn’t know how to sew.”

“Yes, she does; better than I can.”

He wiggled his foot at her derisively.

“As well as you know how to ride the logs? Girls are always pretending they —”

Mrs. Addison glanced up.

“Chivalry, Paul,” she reminded him.

He accepted the rebuke with unimpaired good humour.

“Truth before chivalry. Still, if you’re set upon it, I won’t knock Janet off her horse, this time.”

“Nor off her log?” she reminded him saucily.

He clasped his hands on his breast.

“No fair! It’s *pax* for now, Janet. When mother gets gone, we’ll have it out. But about Tids: that girl can’t sew.”

“Why not?”

“Tell me when she’s still long enough?” he asked.

“When you aren’t around to keep her stirred up,” Janet responded calmly. “I like you, Paul; but you are worse than a Junebug in a bottle, when we girls are trying to work.”

Paul’s foot waved again.

“Oh, come off, Janet! You’re worse than Jud — Honestly, mother, I wasn’t going to say anything bad about Judy. She’s all right. The only trouble is that she is perfectly well aware of the fact.”

Janet turned the talk into a safer channel.

“Then you don’t know where Sidney is?” she reiterated.

“Where is Ronald?” Paul queried suggestively, although by this time he was quite re-

signed to the idea of sharing his cousin's society with his senior rival. To Paul's mind, girls were a necessity only in the intervals of more active pursuits. It was good fun to romp with Sidney and to take her fishing now and then. When he really started off for a day's sport, he was willing to leave her at home with Wade or Ronald. In the enforced idleness of the evenings, however, he was prone to make open rebellion at the interminable games of chess with which Wade and Sidney beguiled the hours.

"Ronald has gone for a walk with Wade. I was at the creamery when they went by; but they were so busy talking that they didn't see me at all."

"Where's your sister?"

Janet made a grimace of derision.

"Duncan has to go to Boston, to-morrow," she replied tersely.

"To stay?"

"A week. He is going out somewhere on the north shore, if you know where that is. Then he is coming back here to stay as long as we do."

"Good for him! We'll save Ste. Anne's Falls till he gets back, then," Paul said promptly, for he had registered his full approval of Duncan Ogilvie, and he gladly would have spent half his time on the heels of the young man, had not his

mother taken him apart from the others and instructed him as to the probable wishes of Freda Leslie.

Janet nodded.

“That’s a good idea, Paul. P’tit wanted us to go, day after to-morrow. I know that Duncan hated to miss it, though.”

“Is Freda good for such a tramp?” Mrs. Addison asked.

Janet counted rapidly.

“There are thirteen fences between here and the beginning of the road through the woods, and Freda climbs a fence like a cow,” she observed impersonally.

“Is she given to climbing cows?” Paul inquired.

“You know what I mean.”

Paul rolled over on his stomach and lifted his heels in the air.

“Then methinks I see Mr. Duncan Ogilvie’s day’s work cut out for him,” he remarked. “What’s the matter with taking a derrick along with us, Janet?”

Janet giggled.

“If I had Judith in the family, I would n’t talk too much,” she answered pertly. Then, as she caught the eye of Mrs. Addison, she had the grace to blush. “Scold me, if you want to,” she

added. "I know I am bad to pass remarks about people; but really and truly, Mrs. Addison, Judith is funny when she tries to get over a fence. It takes her half an hour to lift the first foot over the top rail, and half an hour more to make up her mind that it is safe to lift the other one after it. I love Judith dearly; but I must say I admire her most when she sits in a chair and looks pretty."

Paul turned meditative.

"I wonder how you would look, if you tried to do that trick, Janet."

"Like a squirrel in a teacup. Get up, lazy boy, and come and find Sidney."

"And, if you see the children," Mrs. Addison added; "please tell them it is time to come in and be put in order for lunch."

However, lunch time came and brought with it no trace of the children. From her place at the head of the table, Mrs. Addison kept casting anxious glances out across the lawn. Under any conditions, she would have been disturbed by the prolonged absence of her young daughter; but when even Bungay's voracious appetite failed to remind him that it was time to eat, Mrs. Addison felt that there was cause for serious alarm.

"Judith, do you mind going over to see if they are at the Leslies'?" she asked, as the luncheon neared its end.

And Judith went. She brought back Duncan Ogilvie and Ronald in her train. Duncan at once assumed command.

"Where have you looked?" he asked, as he came up the steps.

"Nowhere. We have supposed, every minute, that they would come."

"When have you seen them?"

There was a swift consultation. Then Sidney was able to give the latest bulletin. Immediately after breakfast, while she was writing her daily note to her mother, Bungay had demanded information as to the whereabouts of his xylophone.

"And that was nine o'clock, and it is two now. Five hours. Mrs. Addison, will you and Judith hunt through the house, and Paul and Ronald the barn? I'll go down to the river. They delight in playing under the bank."

Quarter of an hour later, they gathered on the gallery where Wade was pacing to and fro, chafing at his inability to join in any lengthy hunt. Mrs. Addison was rather white by now, and her eyes looked unnaturally large; but her voice was quite steady, as she said, —

"No news. What shall we do next, Mr. Ogilvie? I am going to throw the whole responsibility upon your shoulders."

He smiled down at her reassuringly.

"They are broad ones, Mrs. Addison, and they are quite at your service. Don't worry too much. The youngsters can't have gone far, and we'll soon overhaul them. Let me see. Paul, you were at the dam; Ronald and Wade were down the main road past the creamery. Freda and I were up the hill on the St. Ferréol road and Sidney was out beyond the bridge. We none of us met them, and that accounts for all the roads. They must have gone directly up the hills back of the house."

"The back pasture is boggy," Paul suggested.

The older man nodded approval.

"There's our salvation, too, Paul. The bog won't stop them. Bungay has a soul above bogs; but it may give us their trail."

But already Ronald had vaulted the fence and was inspecting the ground. Half-way across the pasture, he whistled shrilly, then beckoned, and the others followed in a body. They overtook him at the edge of a stagnant pool, and, in the black mud surrounding the pool, the prints of four small feet were plainly visible. The prints marked a trail for a full third of the way around the pool. Then they turned sharply to one side and led out across the pasture.

Swiftly Duncan Ogilvie divided his forces.

"Paul, you and Janet go straight up the hill.

Ronald, you and Sidney take the trail to the right. I will take the left. If any of you get track of them, start for the house at once. In any case, come back here at six o'clock."

This time, Mrs. Addison faltered. To her mind, there was something ominous in these detailed orders, for it was plain that Duncan was in no mood to view the affair lightly.

"And what shall I do?" she asked as bravely as she was able, and, as she spoke, Ronald Leslie stepped to her side and rested one arm across her shoulders, as if to give to her some share in his full boyish strength.

Duncan Ogilvie turned to her, and his face was very pitiful.

"Mrs. Addison, I have to ask you to take the hardest part of all, that of waiting patiently at home. You and Judith can keep Wade company."

But Judith spoke with quiet dignity.

"Mother shall go back. I am going with you, Mr. Ogilvie."

He glanced at the dainty girl in her pale summer frock and thin shoes.

"Are you able?" he asked dubiously.

"I shall go," she answered, with decision.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Judy, you'll only be in the way!" Paul burst out.

"I think not."

"But you can't climb a fence to save your neck, and you always squeal at a rough spot in the trail. You'll just be a drag on Mr. Ogilvie."

She looked at her brother for an instant; then she turned her eyes away.

"I should like to try, Mr. Ogilvie. The other girls are going. If I drop behind, I will come home again," she said simply.

There was no time to waste in useless discussion. For an instant, he studied her face intently. Then he said, —

"Come."

And, with the word, the hunt began.

A good two hours later, Duncan Ogilvie halted long enough to hold aside a branch for Judith to pass by. As he did so, he looked her full in the face and, looking, he was conscious of a hearty admiration for the pluck his companion had shown. It had been by no means an easy trail they had followed; but Judith had taken it manfully and without whimpering. A great zigzag rent in the back of her blouse showed where she had been caught by the low-hanging branches of a tamarack thicket, the front breadth of her erstwhile dainty skirt bore witness to the times she had fallen, her hair was sown with pine needles and her shoes were coated with black and pasty

mire. Nevertheless, all her inherent spirit had risen to meet the emergency. Quiet and determined, she had borne her full share of the hard work of the day, and now, in spite of her anxiety, she smiled bravely up into the young man's eyes.

"All right," she said, with a brevity which Paul might have envied. "Go on. I can follow."

"Sure you can keep this up?"

"I will. The children must be found."

"Have you any idea where they can have gone?"

She shook her head. Then she looked up.

"I've just had an idea, only it seems absurd. I heard Bungay tell Ruth, the other day, that they'd go fishing at the dam, some day, and catch more fishes than Jonah did." Her voice broke a little over the childish boast.

"The dam?" Duncan Ogilvie spoke reflectively.

"Bungay always has teased to go there," Judith added. "He has begged for it, all summer; but my mother didn't dare let him go, he is so careless and so likely to lose his head, if he finds something new to try."

"Has Ruth been there?"

"Once, just before Bungay came."

"So she might know the way?"

"Yes. She has a good bump of locality. Even

in Boston, she has put me right, over and over again." Judith's tone betrayed the pride she felt in the prowess of her small sister.

Duncan Ogilvie spoke even more thoughtfully.

"The idea is a good one; they may have gone to the dam. Only —"

"Only what?" Judith spoke impatiently, as she glanced at the lengthening shadows.

"Only Paul would have met them, and the tracks pointed the wrong way."

"Yes; but —" Suddenly the girl shut her hands together eagerly. "That is just it, Mr. Ogilvie. It proves it. Don't you see?"

He shook his head.

"I am afraid I don't."

"But it does," she persisted. "They started this way; then they thought of the dam and turned back. They probably crossed the little bridge by the bungalow and missed Paul. Come quick. The dam is over this way." And she started forward into the thicket at her right.

"But this will bring us out, the wrong side of the river," he objected.

"No matter." She flung the words back over her shoulder. "We must get there as soon as possible. If they see us coming, they'll run for home as fast as they can. If it is too late —"

And Duncan Ogilvie, as he hastened along in

the rear, felt that there was no need for her to finish the sentence. In all truth, the dam was no place for excitable little Bungay, for venturesome little Ruth.

And, meanwhile, Ruth and Bungay were squatting rapturously upon the very rock at the foot of the dam where Paul was wont to do his fishing. Bungay was playing a song to Jumbo on his xylophone to comfort himself, for Ruth had possessed herself of the one string which his pockets afforded and was trailing it along the surface of the water, with an optimistic faith that some hungry trout would be inspired to swallow the bare end of the line. The sluiceway was closed now, and the water was sliding over the top of the dam where a trio of lumbermen, weary with their hard day's work, sat idly by the edge, guiding the giant logs towards their destined leap. Facing up the river and quite absorbed in their leisurely task, the men were all unconscious of the pair of children down on the rock below.

"It's awful hard here and some slippery," Bungay protested at length.

"Sit on tighter," Ruth advised him.

"I can't. My feet keep pulling me down."

"That's 'cause they are so wet and so big," Ruth observed, as she drew her line out from under an errant log.

"Why don't you catch something?" Bungay asked.

"It is n't time yet. Sometimes it takes all day," Ruth replied sagely.

"Then let's go get some berries and bear meat. I'm awful hungry."

"Ruth wants to fish."

"So do I!" Bungay burst out mutinously. "It's my turn now."

"Not till Ruth catches something."

Bungay suddenly turned virtuous.

"Auntie Jack would be sorry to see you act just like a pig," he remarked, in a voice that rose even above the notes of the xylophone.

"Own mother does n't know."

"She will, when I tell her."

Ruth turned on him.

"You can't tell her. You've runned away."

Bungay's voice bade fair to drown out the roar of the dam.

"Then I'll go home and tell her."

"Tell-tale," Ruth said laconically, with her eyes fixed upon the trailing end of string.

Hastily Bungay gripped Jumbo with one hand, the xylophone with the other, and rose to his feet.

"Ain't, too. And you were a bad, bad, bad girl, Ruth Addison, to make me run away."

"Ruth did n't make you."

“Did, too! You said let’s run away and not have our pajamas on and go to bed! And I’ll tell Auntie Jack about it, and you’ll have to go to bed and stay six weeks and not get any breakfast, either!” Bungay’s climax ended in a bellow of furious self-assertion.

With artistic pride in her task, Ruth trailed her string up the current and down again, before she spoke.

“Then Ruth will stay here and catch own fish,” she said calmly at length.

Bungay turned on his heel to make a dignified exit. As he turned, he raised his eyes, and he uttered a note of consternation and of warning.

“Ruth! Ruth! Quick! There’s Judith and Mr. Dobbin just across the river, and if they catch us, all runned away, we’ll get spanked. Quick!”

Swiftly Ruth sprang to her feet and the two children made a dash for the sandy bank behind them. As they did so, there came an ear-splitting crack, a crash and a roar. The next minute, the water came tearing down through the sluiceway, tossing on its foaming crest the broken planking of the new gate, and swept over the rock where Ruth had just dropped her line.

Across the river, Judith clung in terror to Duncan Ogilvie’s arm, while, through her chattering

teeth, she tried to speak the words of a wholly irrelevant collect. No terror, however, assailed the hearts of Bungay and Ruth. Ten lusty toes dug into the sandy wall, ten grimy fingers clutched at the turf on the top, two shrill voices burst into a shout of ecstasy, confused at first, then dominated by Ruth's strident proclamation, —

“Hurry up, Bungay! You're the children of Israel, and I'll be Moses.”

But, the next moment, they found themselves clutched in the nervous embrace of Sidney and Ronald Leslie.

Bungay smiled up at Ronald with ingratiating frankness.

“Hullo, Ronald! We've runned away; but it was Ruth that said to do it.”

And Ruth freed herself from Sidney's hysterical kisses long enough to retort, with unfeminine energy of diction, —

“Bungay Stayre, you're a whopper!”

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WHO is going?" Janet asked.

"Everybody but Wade and mother and the other babies."

Ronald objected.

"The girls can't go."

"Why not?"

"The trail is something awful."

"P'tit says it's not so bad, unless the river is full."

"There has n't been any rain for days and days," Janet demurred.

"That must be because Sidney has been staying at home lately," Paul retorted, as he threw a sofa pillow at his cousin.

The pillow came flying back at him with unerring aim; but Paul's fist turned it aside, and it landed in Janet's lap.

"Anyway, I've been to Jean le Rose," Janet said conclusively, as she stuffed the pillow into the back of her chair; "and where I have been, Sidney can go."

“What about me?” Judith asked, from her place beside the lamp.

To her surprise, it was Paul who answered, and his answer was cordial.

“You’re all right for it, Judy. Anybody who can come down a flat wall of rock as you did with Mr. Ogilvie, last week, is good for any trail that P’tit will show us. That is one thing I like about P’tit. He keeps on the safe side, and does n’t try any tricks.”

“Check! Mate!” And then Sidney looked up from her game. “You nearly wrecked my plan with your pillow, Paul; but I finally won out. This makes us even, Wade, twenty-three games apiece. I’m so glad my father insisted on my learning to play. I hated it; but it is worth while, for the fun of seeing you look astonished, whenever I do beat. What about Jean le Rose, Ronald?”

But Paul interposed.

“Better ask me, Tiddles. Ronald wants to leave you girls behind.”

“Oh, why?” she remonstrated.

“Because it is too hard a trail for girls.”

“Nonsense!” Janet responded, with unction.

And Paul added, in an unwonted burst of chivalry, —

“No fun doing, without the girls.”

“Nice little boy!” Sidney nodded at him in token of approval. “What is the matter with the trail, Ronald?”

“Everything. It is a choice of evils.”

“Choose the less,” she advised.

“There is n’t any less. They are about even up, according to whether you prefer to break your neck or to drown.”

Wade rose, strolled across the room and sat down on the arm of Paul’s chair.

“Why not try both?” he suggested. “Then you would be in a position to judge.”

Ronald set himself to explain.

“There are two trails. One follows up the river, and you have to cross it six times. Theoretically, you cross on the stones. Practically, if the water is a bit high, you have to wade. The water is cold, too.”

“And you have to climb over perfectly huge boulders, and crawl through the tops of trees,” Janet added.

“Might I inquire?” Wade said politely.

“Oh, I mean fallen ones, that have tipped down into the gorge,” Janet explained. “The time I went, I left half a stocking and the elbow of my right sleeve in one tree, and the facing of my skirt in another. But it was such fun.”

"Sounds like it," Paul observed. "What's the other trail, Ronald?"

"The other way, we drive to St. Ferréol and go down from the top. The trail drops for three hundred feet, steeper than the big slide at Bureau's, and usually it is covered with an inch or two of dried pine needles. Really, the best way to do it is to take your courage in your lap, and sit down and slide."

"How do we get up?" Sidney inquired.

Ronald's answer was alliterative.

"By being boosted."

Judith shook her head.

"Thank you. I think mother will need me at home."

Paul remonstrated.

"Oh, Judy, don't flunk."

"Thank you," she answered, with unwonted spirit; "but I have the promise of a fur coat, this winter. I'd like to live to wear it."

And accordingly, two days later, only five people sat on the rocks beneath the fall of Jean le Rose. Four of the five people, however, were quite willing to admit that the place was worth the pilgrimage, although the pilgrimage had been accomplished at the expense of some wet feet and many scratches. P'tit was the fifth, and he looked upon the scene with indifferent eyes. The

pool below Jean le Rose was an every-day matter to him, for it was his favourite fishing ground, and he was wont to wade in before breakfast and wade out again, an hour later, burdened with a string of trout which tugged at the muscles of his shoulder long before he reached home. Rarely, however, did P'tit bring any one in with him. Few people knew of the existence of the falls; of those few, almost none were willing to trust themselves to the trail.

Only the custom of his remote babyhood could account for P'tit's name. His sixtieth birthday was in the past; his chin was tufted with a long gray beard. And yet, at heart, P'tit was still a boy. His small dark eyes twinkled with the restlessness of youth, his hand was as steady, his brain as keen as it had been, years before. Only his judgment and his woodcraft betrayed the ripeness of his years; but he bore, with apparent nonchalance, the reputation of being the best guide of all that region round about. As a rule, he paid scant heed to the people who employed him; but the quartette now gathered around their lunch basket were the exception who had proved the rule. Caution and courage were a rare combination in a boy like Paul. Janet's intrepid nerve was as grateful to P'tit as were the level head and steady foot of Sidney. As for Ronald,

P'tit had taken him to his own heart and hearthstone, long before. And Jean le Rose was accounted the worst trail of that country. P'tit smiled contentedly to himself, as he punched the strong Canayenne tobacco into the bowl of his pipe, lighted it and clapped on the perforated tin cover. The trail out was always easier by far than the trail in. He regarded his work as being as good as done. His own lunch digested and his pipe smoked to the end, he could fall to work and fish to his heart's content.

From three hundred feet above their heads, Jean le Rose came sliding towards them over a sheer wall of rock. So smooth-worn was the edge of the rock, so sheer its fall that the narrow river stretched down to them in an unbroken ribbon of silver; but the bottom of the ribbon was lost in a veil of silver spray which dashed upward high in air, forming mimic rainbows in the sun and then dropped back again over all the rocks beneath. On right hand and on left, the steep wooded slopes came to the very verge of the tiny river which, its tremendous leap once taken, went chattering away in and out through the ancient forest. Just at the base of the fall, the water splashed over a low cascade and dropped into a still, black pool deeper than any sounding-line, and peopled with huge and hungry trout. And,

above the pool, the branches of the trees on either hand mingled to form one common shade.

Under certain conditions, troutng becomes a bore. Paul faced that condition speedily.

"Oh, I say, confound the fellows!" he burst out at length. "They won't let me stop to bait up, even. That last one chewed a bare hook, and three more jumped for it and got left. P'tit, this is n't sport; it 's a fish market."

P'tit gave his accustomed grin. Whatever the words might mean, their intonation and the gesture which accompanied them were sufficiently explicit.

"Monsieur is weary?" he asked in French. "Is it enough of fish that he has?"

"*Parlez-vous qu'est-ce que c'est pourquoi mais oui,*" Paul answered glibly. "What is the dago saying, Ronald?"

"He merely inquired whether you were sick of the place and would like to move on," Ronald explained.

Paul made swift count. Then he looked at his watch.

"I expected to fish here till about five o'clock. At that rate, I should have caught two hundred and fifty-seven and a half fishes. I have already caught thirty-one. They are good little fishes; but I really think I have about all I can eat."

“Do you know,” Janet observed, from her perch on the rock above the pool; “the first summer I came here, I ate so many trout that I hate the sight of them now.”

“What becomes of those you catch?” Sidney asked.

“Either I throw them back, or else feed them to the cat,” Janet answered composedly. “I am sorry. It sounds wicked, I know; but it is the fault of the country, and my own loss. I am now in fear and terror of moving to a place where grape fruit and marshmallows grow wild in the fields.”

“And then?” Ronald asked idly.

Janet clasped her hands.

“Then I shall cultivate an appetite for shredded wheat biscuits. Paul, what shall we do next?”

“Observe the landscape.”

“I can’t. It’s all water. Besides, I am tired of sitting still.”

Sidney yawned.

“Do you know, Janet, I don’t wish to seem unappreciative; but it does appear to me that the resources of the place are small. There is no room to walk about; according to Paul, there is no sport in this fishing; we’ve eaten all the lunch, and there is a certain monotony in contemplating even the loveliest waterfall in all Canada.”

Ronald buried his hands in the basket, fumbled about and drew out one banana and a stuffed egg.

“Do eat those and keep quiet,” he begged. “We want a little rest.”

“Ronald,” Sidney’s tone was scornful; “I really believe you are tired.”

“And why not, Mamzelle Peekaboo? Have n’t we towed you and Janet across this river six mortal times, to say nothing of the extras when you slipped, going along the edge? Do let us rest.”

“It really is an awful trail,” Janet said thoughtfully. “It seemed worse to me, to-day, than it did before.”

Sidney sat up alertly.

“Janet! Boys! Let’s go home, the other way.”

“Too far,” Ronald objected languidly.

But already Janet was in full tide of argument with P’tit.

“He says it is n’t more than half as long a trail out, if we go up the mountain; and we can hire a buckboard at the top and drive home,” she reported. “I want some variety. Let’s try it.”

“And he knows the trail?” Sidney asked.

“Of course. P’tit knows every inch of the ground in these mountains. Come, sit up, lazy boys! Which shall it be?” And, scrambling to her feet, she stood looking down at the two boys

who were stretched out at full length on the rock below.

“Leave it to P’tit. He knows,” Ronald said indolently.

But already P’tit, a little smile curving the extreme corners of his mouth, was stringing the fish on a forked stick and packing the plates and cups. As Janet had said, he knew every inch of the trail up the mountain, knew it in all its worst details. Never before had he attempted to lead a girl up the almost perpendicular slope; but never before had he seen girls like Janet and Sidney, and he knew that they could be trusted to reach the top. To P’tit’s mind, no greater glory could be theirs than the glory of having followed a trail never before trodden by feminine feet. He slung the great curved basket into its wonted place between his shoulders, gave a few crisp directions to Ronald and then, facing about, led the way past the foot of the fall.

Half-way up the slope, Janet halted so abruptly that Paul, close behind, missed his footing and came down on all fours.

“Do you know,” she said quite tranquilly; “I think I am three quarters dead.”

“Well, give us warning, when you get ready to die the other quarter,” Paul remonstrated, as he picked himself up again.

She shook her head, while she glanced at the path above her.

“It won’t be so very long,” she said whimsically.

“Sorry. Meanwhile, though, do keep your eye on the tail of P’tit’s coat. Tids is treading on my heels. Resolved by the resolution committee that your halt has lasted long enough.”

At heart, Janet disagreed with him absolutely. All at once, the hardship of the trail appeared to her to be insurmountable. However, she pushed forward pluckily, though her teeth were tight shut and the top of her forehead felt strangely cold. Janet Leslie, under her demure exterior, had never been one to shrink at the minor obstacles, nor had she done so now. Up and up through the ragged old trees, the path mounted by almost upright stages, now winding this way or that to take advantage of the support gained by some jutting root, now rising sheer and straight for such a distance that only the strength of P’tit above and Paul beneath could force her to its top, now losing itself entirely among a moss-grown heap of boulders which could be mounted but slowly and upon the hands and knees. And root and earth and boulder were covered thick with rotting leaves, slippery as shifting sand and far less stable. And behind Paul was Sidney, totally new, that summer, to the ways of the mountain

trail, but taking it all as a matter of course; and behind Sidney was Ronald, and Ronald's praise was always Janet's richest reward. She gritted her teeth anew and struggled on, gaining a certain courage, whenever P'tit faced about and she could look into his twinkling, kindly eyes.

Once only he glanced down at her with some anxiety.

"It is not too hard for Mademoiselle?" he asked.

Janet hesitated. Breath and courage and strength were ebbing fast; but she heard Ronald's question from below, —

"Getting done up, Mamzelle Peekaboo?"

Heard Sidney's answer, breathless, but jovial, —

"Not a bit of it."

And, in her turn, she answered P'tit sturdily, —

"Not one bit. I am glad we tried it."

And P'tit, who never looked for hidden meanings, faced about and led the way upward.

Fifty feet farther up, he turned sharply to the left and faced her again.

"This is the last of the bad road," he said, as he slipped the basket from his shoulders. "If Mademoiselle will give me her hand? Now the other. Place your foot there. Then rest your other foot on the root at your left. It is well. Now spring upward, and you can reach the branch of the maple tree above."

Janet turned for an instant and glanced down at the trail which stretched in a zigzag line away from beneath her feet half-way to the foot of the fall. For one more instant, she shut her dizzy eyes. Then she pulled herself together, like the plucky little English girl that she was, gave one hand to P'tit, then the other, and felt herself lifted forward slowly and steadily.

“Now, Mademoiselle!”

P'tit's words cracked across her consciousness like the report of a pistol. She let go his hand, sprang forward and shut her right hand over the thick, tough bough of the maple tree. She was conscious of drawing one sharp breath of relief; then the breath snapped itself in two for, at that moment, there also snapped itself in two the root on which her weight was resting.

From his place below her, Ronald had watched the whole manœuvre with admiring eyes. He always had been proud of Janet; but never more so than at this moment when indomitable will and lithe young body had each of them shown their fibre. The next moment, pride vanished in abject terror, and, careless of his own footing, he dashed forward up the trail, white and with a world of fear in his dark eyes, but completely steady in nerve and brain.

In reality, he was scarcely fifty feet in the rear;

but the moments when his young sister hung there above the trail multiplied the fifty feet into infinity. He made no outcry, nor did she. Both instinctively were husbanding their force to meet the final need. P'tit, on the upper level, was powerless to act. He could only retrace his steps by way of the bough to which Janet was clinging, and the bough was too slender to support their combined weight. Paul was no match, in physique or woodcraft, for the emergency which faced them, and Ronald was left to meet it alone. It seemed to him that his progress up the trail was a matter of years, not of moments; but at last he halted directly beneath his sister, only so far beneath.

"Janet," he said quietly; "if you hear and understand me, nod. Don't try to speak."

She nodded once, and yet again.

"Good!" he answered. "I am here, exactly under you. You know how strong I am, how —" his breath caught — "how I used to catch you, when you were a little girl in grandfather's barn. Let's try it again. When I say *Three!* let go and drop straight down."

To his anxious, impatient mind, the phrases seemed endless, as they dropped deliberately from his tongue. Young as he was, however, he knew their need, knew how easily some involuntary

struggle could throw his young sister outward, far past the chance of his reaching and holding her back from the fearful fall below. He glanced down, measured his distances with care, and braced his feet as firmly as he might against the shifting surface. Then he glanced up again to Janet clinging there, slight and tense and still. Then he spoke once more, and his voice was absolutely level.

“Steady, Janet. You’re all right. One. Two. Three.”

And Janet dropped, swift and straight, into the lifted arms below. Her girlish reasoning was simple, and it had defied all fear. Ronald had never failed her before. What reason was there to think that he would fail her now?

But it was left for Paul to disgrace himself and provide an outlet for the strained nerves of the others. Heedless of their jibes, he sat himself down beside the trail and shed salty tears of mingled terror and relief, while Janet, at his side, jeered mercilessly at his belated woe.

“But, truly, weren’t you frightened, Janet?” Sidney asked her, when they were alone, that night.

And Janet made unhesitating answer, —

“No; not after I knew that Ronald was there.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

“Do you know,” Sidney observed, the next day, as they all sat on the bank of the river; “I think I am the lucky one.”

“Don’t brag,” Paul warned her.

And Ronald added, —

“How do you mean?”

“In our trips. Like the way Janet tried to kill herself, yesterday. Do you realize how lucky I am?”

“What about the day in the hailstorm?” Wade inquired.

“That ruined you; I was none the worse for it. Paul has fallen into the river twice; Ronald took the skin off his nose, coming up from Seven Falls, and Janet has had enough catastrophes to bankrupt an accident insurance company.”

Janet stitched away demurely. For the hour, she had revived her interest in her long-neglected hemming. There had been, earlier in the summer, a theory that she was assisting in the manufacture of her sister’s wedding frills; but the theory had passed into oblivion, together with

the epoch when she had sat on the river bank and compared her impressions of life with Judith Addison. Since then, Paul had usurped the prominent place upon her horizon, and, as a rule, her fingers had been too rough and scratched by contact with things of the forest to be wholly useful in folding hems on grass linen and plying a number eleven needle. To-day, however, even the cool galleries had succumbed to the heat of dogdays, and there had been a general move to the river bank where they were spending a languid morning over their work, while Ronald read aloud to them by fits and starts, and Paul filled in all the pauses by his idle talk.

“You would n’t think, to look at her now,” he observed; “that Janet had so much originality. You don’t expect that kind of thing from the English girls, anyhow. But Janet really has contrived to get up a whole dozen new sensations. Tiddles, I advise you to look out for the international laurels.”

Sidney glanced up from the birch-bark basket which she was embroidering with long strands of sweet grass.

“No use, Paul; I’m not original. I did my best in the hail; but it all fell through, as far as I was concerned.”

“Fell through the hole between your neck and

your collar, you mean. That was n't half bad. Now give us something else."

Janet giggled, in abrupt, but irrepressible mirth.

"Ask Judith about the shower, Tuesday afternoon," she advised.

Paul rolled over to face his sister, lost his balance and landed on his feet among the rocks below.

"Oh, I say, that was my party!" he said, as he clambered back to the grass above. "Why did n't somebody tell me not to go too near the edge? What about the shower, Judith?"

But Judith was reticent.

"Nothing; only it rained in a little," she said evasively.

Janet cast aside her hemming.

"Oh, go on and tell," she urged.

"But there's nothing to tell."

"I should rather say there was, then. I was up there, when it began to rain." Janet turned herself about, in order to include her entire audience. "You know how it swept in from the south, all in a minute. Have you seen the windows of Judith's room? No? Well, they are perfectly lovely — in fine weather. When it storms! One is filled up with sofa pillows, and the other is just like a shop window, with all sorts of little things put out in rows."

“What sort of little things, Janet?” Duncan Ogilvie asked, in some amusement.

Janet shrugged her thin little shoulders.

“I’m not an American; I don’t begin to know what they all are: scissors and knives and files and brushes and pots and pans.”

“Oh, Janet, there are n’t any pans,” Judith remonstrated.

“Yes; there are two. You put pins in one, and the other seems to be just for ornament. I don’t wonder; it is pretty enough. Still, I should hate to have to dust them all and keep them scoured.”

But Ronald brought her back from her digression.

“And the storm?” he asked.

Janet laughed. Then she picked up her sewing once more.

“Ask Judith,” she said. “We both of us went to work as fast as we could. But, before we could get the things out of the way and the windows shut, everything was soaked. The pots and pans were n’t so bad; but the pillows all ran together, the colours of them, I mean, and, besides, we threw them on the bed, and now the white catalun looks like a parody on the Union Jack.”

“What do you think Bungay said about the Union Jack, last week?” Judith asked abruptly.

"I heard him telling Ruth that it was exactly like the thing his mamma made toast on."

But Janet refused to be turned aside from her subject.

"If it does, then your bed looks like the gridiron they cooked Saint Lawrence on," she responded.

"What do they do in the winter, when they can't have their windows open?" Sidney asked. "My windows are covered over with green and yellow wall paper, and my room is pitchy dark, when it storms."

"They move down to the living-room, beds and all," Janet answered. "It saves coals, and it is much more sociable. Besides — What do you want, Ronald?"

"To get a word in, edgewise."

"Well, why not?"

"Because, when I was a little chap, I was taught not to interrupt," he replied gravely.

"Well, now is your chance. Take it."

Ronald tossed aside his book, and clasped his hands at the back of his head.

"Do you realize, my friends, that to-day is the twenty-fifth of August?" he asked.

"What of it?"

"Merely that Duncan has to go south, on the first."

“Really? How horrid!” Sidney responded, with unexpected fervour.

“That’s where you are telling the truth, Mammelle Peekaboo. If I really must have an extra brother, I’m glad Duncan is elect to be it. Sure you can’t stay for another week, Duncan?”

“Sure. I wish I could.”

Ronald pondered for a moment.

“There are any amount of things you haven’t done,” he said then; “things it is a shame for you not to do. Let’s make some plans. Keep still, Freda. You have had Duncan to yourself quite long enough. It is our turn now, and you must come and make merry with us.”

“What shall we do?” Janet asked, as, once more dropping her work, she rose, crossed the grass and curled herself up at Ronald’s elbow.

“All the best things. Let me see, six days. Ste. Anne’s Falls, to-morrow. Freda can drive up with the lunch and send back the buckboard. Then we must take him to Sept Chutes; he has n’t seen it. For a climax, we’ll do Cap Tourmente.”

Janet clasped her hands.

“Oh, Ronald, yes! I did it, last year, and it is superb. You can see for miles and miles and miles down the river.”

“And the trail?” Wade asked.

She made a little gesture of scorn.

"I'm not afraid."

"So I judge, from what I heard. Still," Wade spoke with sudden hearty conviction; "we've had such a good summer here that I'd like it to end without any tragedies."

From her place at his side, Sidney looked up at him keenly.

"Have you really enjoyed it, Wade?" she asked, under cover of the general discussion of the plans.

And there was no cloud of reservation in his eyes, as they met her own, while he answered, —

"Yes, Sidney, thanks to you."

"And Ronald," she supplemented, for she had seen the friendship which, in those later days, had been growing up between Wade and the man so much his junior.

Wade's mind swept backward over the summer weeks; his eyes rested thoughtfully upon the happy, handsome face on the opposite side of the group. Then he assented, —

"Yes, Tiddles, and Ronald, too. But, after all —"

"Well?" she prompted him.

Then she looked up in surprise at his next words, so unlike his usual reserved self.

"After all, my good times began on the night

you came. Before that, I was hating most things, myself included. Since then, you've stirred me up to take a new grip on life."

"I don't see how," she said slowly.

Wade sat silent for a moment, as if gravely considering herself and her words. Then he answered quite as slowly, —

"Don't you, Sidney? I do."

The next afternoon, he was still considering her. The result of his consideration was that, without Sidney Stayre, his summer would have been an entirely different matter. It had been Sidney who had routed him out of his hammock and his lethargy. She had coaxed him here and dragged him there. She had convinced him that he was a good deal stronger than he had supposed, and she had cajoled him into the belief that there need to be no blank hours, even in the life of a man abruptly ordered into invalidism. She had teased him and lectured him and bullied him by turns; but, throughout all the turns, she had been his loyal comrade, offering a deaf ear to the invitations of the others for the mere sake of stopping at home with a dull old fellow like himself. Ronald was a good fellow, loyal and sensible and manly. However, after all, it was Sidney —

"Wade!"

He roused himself, bent forward and looked down over the gallery rail. Ronald stood below and, as he lifted his head to speak, his face was pearly white, save for the blue ring about the mouth. Wade caught his breath, and it seemed to him he could feel his blood rush back again to his heart; but he forced himself to speak quietly.

“What has happened?”

In his turn, Ronald held himself steady, for he had need of Wade, yet he dreaded the effect on him of any sudden shock.

“One of the girls has slipped and had a little fall. Can you —?”

“Is it Sidney?” Wade asked abruptly, and, as Ronald nodded brief assent, neither man bethought himself that, of decorous right, Wade’s first anxiety should have been for Judith, his sister.

“Is it bad?” he asked again, with equal abruptness.

“No; at least, we can’t tell. If you can get a horse and drive up to the end of the wagon road, Duncan and Paul will help her out. You know the road? Perhaps P’tit is here and can go with you.”

“Why not you?”

Ronald shook his head.

“I want the doctor. If I can't find Poulin, I shall have to telephone up to town.”

“How did it happen?”

“She was walking on the logs at the edge, and one of them turned and let her down on the stones. It was a rough fall, and it knocked her up a bit; but it may not be anything serious. Freda wanted me to come down. You'll go up?”

“At once.” And Wade, by this time at the foot of the steps, hurried away in the direction of the nearest buckboard.

The old horse heaved a sigh of remonstrant curiosity, as he turned off the St. Joachim road, scrambled up the steep, sandy hill and came into the level wagon trail beneath the arching trees. They were an impatient race, those Americans, and a bit selfish withal. Never in his twenty-six years of leisurely life had he been dragged from his stall in the midst of dinner, and forced to gallop up such a hill as the one leading to Ste. Anne's Falls. And, above the clatter of the aged buckboard, he could hear the voice of his driver, urging him forward, and then talking to himself in a monotonous murmur. It was a French Canadian horse and understood no English. Even had he been a linguist, however, he might not have known that Wade was repeating aloud to himself scraps of legal lore, not for the sake of review;

but merely in order to steady himself and force his mind from the trouble which might be awaiting him.

However, it was Sidney herself who was awaiting him. Just at the point where the wagon road ended in the almost impassable trail which led to the head of the falls, she was sitting on a little heap of coats and resting against one of Duncan Ogilvie's broad shoulders. Her eyes were blazing, her cheeks bright scarlet; but she smiled bravely up into the anxious eyes of her cousin who, without waiting for the old horse to come to a halt, leaped out over the wheel and hurried forward to her side.

"Don't worry, Wade." She laughed a little nervously. "I have only been trying to outdo you all in originality."

Man-like in such an emergency, he suddenly found himself tongue-tied.

"I say, I hope you are n't hurt," he blurted out at length; but his eyes said the rest.

"Not very much." In spite of herself, however, there came a falling cadence to the phrase. "I think, though, I'd better be going home."

Quite gently Duncan Ogilvie moved away his supporting shoulder, rose and offered her his two hands. She swayed backward a little. Then she pressed her lips together and, reaching upward, took his hands.

“Now,” he said quietly. “Don’t hurry, and let me do all the lifting.”

And Wade, as he watched him and marvelled at his skill, felt maddened by a sense of his own futility. It had been left to Ronald to go for help; it was for Duncan to lift his cousin, lift her with a strength and gentleness which well-nigh defied all pain. And he, Wade Winthrop, the one who cared for her more than all the rest, could find his sole utility in goading a shambling old horse up a sandy hill, and then standing aside to look on, while the others did all the work.

And Sidney? He knew she was in bitter, rack-ing pain, knew it from the colour in her cheeks and from the way, every now and then, the colour faded and she swayed slightly to one side, as if in deadly faintness. And yet no moan escaped her; her lips never lost their plucky smile. And he, under similar conditions, had lain in a hammock and glowered out upon the world.

“Come, Wade. Shall we start?”

He pulled himself together, mounted his seat and took up the reins. Slowly and with infinite joltings, the buckboard started down the trail, followed at a little distance by the silent group whom they had left behind. Once Wade brought the old horse to a standstill, while he adjusted the rug to his liking, and then quietly passed his

arm around the girl's shoulders and held her in a steady, reassuring grasp. Then he started the old horse once more and, almost in silence, they went jogging and jolting down the trail towards home.

Ronald met them at the gate, and the doctor was by his side. Both men were smiling alertly, as they came forward to help Sidney from the buckboard; but Wade, looking down into their eyes, took their smiles exactly as he had taken the cheery voice of the doctors who had pronounced his own doom, three months before. Then, while he watched Ronald's strong young arms almost carrying the girl into the house, the sense of his own futility came back upon him in full measure. What mattered his increasing strength, if it were powerless to serve him better than this? He sat down heavily in his steamer chair and waited, in a sort of apathy, for news from within the house.

It came at last, and it came by way of Ronald. It was wholly unsatisfactory. There had been the fall, the jar to the spine, the shock to the nervous system. The doctor had given her an opiate, and would make a second examination, the next day. Meanwhile—

But Wade rose, looked vaguely into Ronald's anxious face, and, turning on his heel, went away

down the street. On the threshold of the room beneath the post-office, he stopped and spoke.

“Madame,” he said briefly; “the clouds have gathered, and I have come here to make my moan.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

WELL?" Janet asked impatiently, next day.

Paul came heavily up the steps, heavily sat down on the gallery rail.

"I don't know."

"But the doctor has just gone."

"He does n't know."

Janet's heels struck the floor with a sounding click.

"Who does?"

"Mr. Ogilvie is going up to town, at ten."

"What for?"

"To bring a doctor back with him. This man wants advice."

"Does he think it is so bad?"

"I don't know. He does n't know. Nobody knows anything, apparently, beyond the mere fact that Tiddles sat down too hard."

"How is she?"

Paul summed up the case in two words.

"Confounded plucky."

"You've seen her?"

Turning, he looked at Janet in defiant scorn.

“Of course. She asked to have me come up.”

“How did she look?”

“Blasted uncomfortable; but she wouldn't admit it. I tell you what, Janet, we're in an awful state, over at our house. Mother is worried to pieces over Tiddles; Wade is walking the house and raging at us for letting her go on the logs in the first place, and saying that she never would have thought of doing it, if we hadn't raced, that day. Judith has cried herself into a chronic cold in the head.”

Janet sniffed scornfully.

“Judith does n't care the least bit for Sidney. I don't see what she should cry for.”

“Probably because she thinks it is the decent thing to do. But you can't imagine the mess we all are in; it is simply awful.” And Paul subsided into a gloomy silence.

Janet roused him. It fretted her optimism to see her boon comrade, usually so jovial, reduced to this mood of utter despair.

“Does Wade really blame us?” she asked.

“He says we put the idea into her head. Apparently he blames everybody, though, himself included. He says, if he hadn't been ill, we never would have come here, in the first place.”

“‘If I had a baby, and it fell into the fire,’ and

so forth," Janet quoted. "Is there anything I can do, Paul?"

He shook his head.

"There's nothing for a fellow to do; that's the worst of it. Mr. Ogilvie and your sister are the only ones who seem to be of any sort of use. He is going up to town; she has walked off somewhere with Bungay and Ruth. Now, if you could only walk off with Judith and give her a piece of your mind, and Ronald would tackle Wade, there would be some sense in the situation."

Janet rose with sudden decision.

"I think I'll tackle you, as you call it, instead."

"I don't need any tackling. I'm neither walking the house nor boo-hooing in my room."

"No; but you look as if you'd lost your last friend."

"My best one," he corrected her, in a sudden outburst of woe.

But Janet rebelled.

"Nonsense, Paul! Sidney isn't killed yet. Besides, what about me?"

And Paul made steady answer, —

"You're only second-best, Janet. I like you better than any other girl I've ever known, except Tiddles; but I like Tiddles best."

"Well, you ought to," she answered, in the matter-of-fact fashion she assumed at times.

“We have been splendid chums, Paul; but Sidney is your cousin, and —”

But Paul demurred.

“It’s not the being my cousin; it’s just Tid-
dles, herself.”

And Wade, as he tramped the floor of the living-room at home, was saying the same thing to himself, saying it over and over again. His one consolation lay in the fact that it had not needed Sidney’s accident to teach him how much he cared for her. As he had told her, only two days before, her coming to the cottage had made over his life for him. Up to that time, he had felt no especial interest in any of the Stayre family. True, they were his cousins. When he remembered them at all, he thought of them with that perfunctory regard which is death to any real affection. They were entirely outside of his life and, for all he cared, they might remain so until the end of time. His sole connection with the family consisted in a dutiful note of thanks to his aunt, once a year, for the Christmas gift which, quite obviously, she sent to him for the sake of pleasing his mother. As for Sidney, he had regarded her as a child, too remote from his years to have any possible connection with his own interests. And then, one night, she had swept in upon them and changed all that so completely

that now, looking backward, he found it hard to realize his former point of view.

And, now that he had come to count upon her absolutely, there she was on her back in his mother's room, and there she might be for a wholly indefinite period! Long before she had sent for Paul, she had wanted Wade to come up. He had gone, eagerly, gladly. When he had come in sight of her, he had turned dumb, with the conscious futility of most men in the presence of illness, and, as soon as possible, he had made his escape from the sight of her bright, brave smile. And now once again there crossed his mind the contrast between them. He, faced with illness, but free from pain, had lain still in a hammock and sulked with himself. Sidney, with pain added to possible danger of lasting invalidism, had met him with a smile and railed aloud at his sombre face. Then, as Judith came into the room, he vented his own self-disgust by turning upon her and asking her what made her nose so red.

And Judith made answer, in a phrase which seemed to him slightly inadequate to his mood, —

“Oh, Wade! How can you?”

Nevertheless, between her sniffings, he succeeded in extorting from her the story of the accident: how Sidney had been walking with

Janet on the logs in the shallow edge of the river; how one of the logs had rolled over suddenly; how Sidney had fallen sharply upon the stones; how the instant of faintness had been followed by an instant of hysteria; how she swiftly had controlled herself and made light of the pain, as Ronald had sprung forward to lift her in his arms and carry her to the grassy bank above them.

Judith said nothing of herself or of Janet, and it was not until days afterward that Wade heard from Duncan Ogilvie of the quiet efficiency which both the girls had shown in the face of the first real crisis of their lives. Judith's past steadiness made full amends, to his mind, for her present futile woe, and he admitted to himself, as he listened to his friend's account of the scene, that his young sister had shown herself less useless than he would have supposed.

And, meanwhile, Judith herself was telling him the rest, with full and lugubrious detail. There had been a half hour of waiting on the bank, while they determined what to do. Then together Ronald and Duncan had lifted the girl in their locked arms and carried her out over the rough footpath to the end of the wagon road. From there, Ronald had gone dashing homeward for Wade and for the doctor, and the others had

given themselves up to an apparently endless interval of waiting.

Just such another apparently endless interval of waiting was before them now. The village doctor frankly had confessed himself baffled by the question. It might be that there was serious injury; it might be that the girl was suffering merely from the nervous shock and the inevitable pain of such a blow. In any event, he wished council, and that soon. Duncan Ogilvie had gone up to the city in search of a doctor. It was surer to go in person. He would bring some one out with him; if not the best, then the next best man that was available. However, it would be late afternoon before they could come down. The carpet of the living-room and the spring of Wade's watchcase both suffered acutely, during the interval. It was a relief when Ronald's anxious face appeared in the open doorway. At least, one could talk over the chances with Ronald, without his sniffing and wiping his eyes at every pause. Unfortunately, however, Ronald's arrival was the signal for the return of Judith, and Wade impatiently left the house and sought Madame.

"Your face is grave, my son, and your eyes look heavy and full of sorrow," she said, as she nodded invitingly towards the accustomed chair.

"Perhaps," he admitted. "But there is reason."

Madame shook her head. She had left the loom, this morning, and, seated by the open front window, she was winding her bobbins in preparation for the next day's weaving.

"It may be so. It is always hard to see a friend in pain," she assented. "It is as the knots in my web. Cover them as I will, they yet are bound to show; but still I am bound to cover them. It is so with the pain. One must take it with a smile."

"When it is one's own," Wade said gloomily.

"Truly, yes. But even more when it is the pain of another. Tell me, my son, when you too looked upon life with the eyes full of sorrow which, I trust, is gone forever, was it a help to you that your friends also should be sad? But no. You tell me that your little cousin brought you the sunshine, and that the sunshine in its turn brought you the strength. Is it not so?"

Wade merely nodded, as he sat watching her busy hands. Madame nodded back at him cheerily.

"Then, some courage, my son! It is no help to your cousin's pain that you pass all the day with the face of one with an ache in the teeth. Her face perhaps is sorrowful —"

But Wade interrupted.

"Not my cousin, Madame. Her courage is good, her bravery better than my own."

Madame looked at him keenly.

"Then why not you?"

"Because," Wade blurted out desperately; "because I love the child so much that I hate seeing her in such pain."

"Perhaps you have seen her?" Madame asked.

"Yes, of course."

"And did you also carry this sad face to her, to add its discomfort to her pain?"

"I am afraid I did."

Madame shrugged her shoulders ever so slightly.

"Fi, then, my son! I thought better things of you than that. A long face never helps the saddest hour. In my own country fashion, I have long since named your cousin Mademoiselle Sunshine. Is it in this way that you show her influence? But no. It would be unworthy of all your long days together."

"But it is not that I am crying for nothing, Madame."

"Perhaps. But do not cry at all. Mademoiselle is always laughing, with you, at you, at herself. I thought you had learned the lesson also. It is a lesson we all must learn."

Wade looked up and met her kind old eyes steadily.

"I know, Madame. I have tried to learn it; but it is not always easy."

Madame dropped her last bobbin into the basket on the floor at her side.

"I know, my son. You have made a brave effort. Over my loom, I have watched you. But the summer has not been too sorrowful. You and your cousin have had many gay hours together."

"It is true, Madame."

"And you will have many more."

"Perhaps."

"It is not *perhaps*. It also is true. I have seen the doctor, myself. He came for his mail, but an hour ago; I have spoken to him long at the window."

"And?" Wade said interrogatively.

"And your cousin will soon be strong again."

"But the doctor said he does not know," Wade objected.

"But yes, he tells the truth. He does not know, for he is young. Myself, I am old, and I know. He has told me of the fall, of the pain and of the bruises. I have seen many a fall like that. Sometimes they are very grave and bring much trouble. When the pain is as the pain of your cousin, the trouble is never so long. I am no doctor, myself. I am only an old woman, with years and with keen sight; but I tell you truly. It will be only for a short time that your cousin is ill." Then, rising, she stood beside him and

smiled down into his anxious face. "Did I not tell you also of yourself, that you too were growing stronger, towards the better health? And is it not true, as I said? Perhaps Madame is no doctor; but she knows what she knows, and her knowledge is true. Now come to the garden that I may cut the flowers for your cousin. You will take them to her with the sure word of Madame that it will not be long before she is cutting them for herself."

And Wade, as he rose and followed his hostess out into the garden, told himself that all the sunshine in the world was not in that bright little enclosure, nor yet in the presence of his blithe young cousin. Madame, too, albeit old and wrinkled and bowed with years of hard work, yet carried her own share, and, moreover, she divided it freely among all with whom she came in contact.

Madame finished her bouquet and gave it into Wade's hands. Then, with renewed courage, he went home to think the matter over. Viewed in the light of Madame's words, the truth was simple. Sidney had given him largely of her summer. His own summer he had wasted completely. He had not even learned from her the trick of meeting jovially whatever came within his way. He frowned at himself. Then he

squared his shoulders. It was not too late, even now. Law forbidden, he would take the next best thing. Girl though she was, he was conscious of a sudden longing to prove to his cousin that her efforts had not been all in vain. At least, he would make the attempt.

Late that same afternoon, Wade was inclined to place the town doctor in the same class with Madame. He was a dark, fat little Frenchman whose owl-like spectacles turned him to the likeness of a figure from a Christmas pantomime. Nevertheless, in Wade's eyes, he was altogether glorious and benignant, as he delivered himself of his final verdict.

"One week in bed; one week of keeping still on the gallery, unless one of these young gallants shall wish to take her for a brief drive; one week of gentle exercise, and then Mademoiselle may climb Cap Tourmente with the best of them."

"And you are sure there is no lasting harm done?" Wade demanded, a bit too sternly for the little doctor's liking.

"Sure? Myself? I do not speak, unless I am sure," he answered, with some testiness.

"Forgive me," Wade said hastily. "I had no idea of being rude, Monsieur. It is only that I myself know what it is to be invalided, and I dreaded it for my young cousin."

The little doctor threw back his head, and peered up into Wade's grave face.

"Monsieur does not look an invalid," he said then.

"I am better than when I came here."

"That is well. It is, perhaps, the nerves?" the little doctor suggested courteously.

Wade hesitated. Then he yielded to a sudden, inexplicable liking for the brisk little man who somehow reminded him of a chubby English sparrow.

"No; it is only that they had fear for my lungs," he replied, still in the French in which all their talk had been made.

The little doctor pursed up his lips.

"Ah, it is a strange thing, those lungs. One can never tell about them. If people have them here, they die; yet they come from afar and are cured. For me, I know less of them than of some other things. You have, in the United States, one great doctor, Monsieur Com — Crom —" He stumbled over the unfamiliar name.

"Cromwell?" Duncan Ogilvie suggested.

Instantly the little doctor faced about with a smile.

"Yes. It is he. He is to come to the Chateau, on the tenth. Why does not Monsieur go there to see him? Later, he is to be my guest. I can

perhaps arrange the matter, if Monsieur wishes. And," he turned back to Wade, with the manner of one offering a final argument; "by that day, Mademoiselle will be able to return to me in my office the visit I have made her here." And, with a crisp little nod, he left them alone.

"Well?" Duncan Ogilvie said, at length.

And Wade gave a nod, crisp and curt as the doctor's had been.

"By Jove, I'll try it, Dunc. Then, if he gives me a fighting chance, I'll go to work on a new line and make a record in something." And, turning, he went away to his room, whistling softly to himself as he went. Now that his cousin was out of all danger, he suddenly realized that his courage was fit to spur him onward to the goal which vaguely, in these later days of summer, had been placing itself before his eyes. And his courage, he was well aware, was chiefly due to his energetic, loyal young cousin.

CHAPTER TWENTY

SH-H-H-H-H!" Ruth hissed portentously.

"I will not hish, too."

"You must. Own mother said Sidney must n't be asturbed."

"Sidney is my sister, and I'll disturb her, if I want to."

"Then own mother will spank you."

Bungay's tongue came into view, waving like a battle flag.

"She dässent. She ain't my own mother."

"Don't care," Ruth said conclusively. "She knows how to spank, just the same."

"How many times have you ever been spanked?" Bungay's tone suggested the methods of scientific investigation.

"Let's see. There was the time Ruth took all the grapes, and the time Ruth ate the sugar pills, and the time Ruth put own old paper dolls' clothes down the nursery register. That's three."

"Huh! I've been spanked lots more times than that," Bungay observed with scorn.

"What for?"

"I don't amember now."

Ruth taunted him.

"It 's 'cause you 're ashamed to tell."

"It is not. I would n't tell you, anyhow."

"Why not?"

"'Cause you 're a girl."

Ruth made a face at him.

"Own Ronald does n't like little boys," she remarked.

"How do you know?"

"Ruth asked him if he did n't like little girls best, and he said he did."

Bungay suddenly put on his cloak of righteousness.

"If I should say things like that to Jumbo, then I'd be so ashamed I could n't eat any dinner," he said severely.

Ruth sniffed with disdain.

"You 'd always eat some dinner," she retorted. "You 're an awful pig. You had three helps at breakfast."

"'Spos'n' I did?"

"Then there was n't enough for Ruth."

Bungay became prudent and changed the subject.

"I say, let 's play."

"What 'll we play?"

Bungay pondered.

"Let 's play Sidney and the logs," he suggested at length.

"Ruth does n't know how to play that," she objected.

"It 's easy. You be Sidney, and I 'll be the log. I 'll roll over, and you sit down hard on the floor, and then you 'll be put to bed. Bymeby, I 'll be the doctor and come to see you."

"Ruth does n't think that 's any game."

"It is, if you sit down bang hard," Bungay argued. "You try it and see."

"Ruth does n't like to sit down bang. It hurts," she protested.

"'Course it does. That 's the fun."

"It is not fun, too, Bungay Stayre. Ruth won't do that."

"Then do something else."

"What?"

"I d' know. Oh, I 'll tell you! Jumbo shall sing you a song."

"He 'll asturb Sidney and wake her up."

"No; he 'll sing soft."

"He can't. Nelephants always bellow."

"It ain't. They 're bulls," Bungay corrected her. "Now you lis — Le' go my mouth, Ruth Addison!"

"Then sh-h-h-h-h-h!"

"I won't hish, I tell you."

Ruth burst into a wail of mingled rage and pain.

“Oh, Bungay Stayre, you’re a bad, bad, bad boy! You bited own finger.”

“Glad of it.”

“Ruth will pull hair hard,” she threatened.

However, Bungay scored a point.

“You can’t get hold; it’s too short.”

Ruth flew at him with outstretched hands. There was a shriek, a slap, a double howl, then a voice from the room within,—

“Children! What are you doing?”

Bungay and Ruth fell apart and stared at each other with terrified eyes. Ruth was the first to find her voice.

“There now! Ruth said you’d asturb Sidney.”

“You did it, your own self. Sidney is my sister and I never disturb her, so there now!”

“But Ruth heard you. You made a big noise, and she said ‘Children!’”

“Well, *children* is you, too. Besides, she was n’t asleep.”

“She was, too.”

“How do you know?” Bungay demanded.

“You can’t see people through a house wall.”

“Ruth heard her snore two snores. Now let’s go to the barn and play tea party.”

“Tea parties don’t be in barns.”

This time, Ruth was triumphant, according to the ways of woman.

“Own tea party is in barn, if Ruth says so.”

But again the voice came from the inner room.

“I’m not asleep, children. Come in and talk to me.”

However, Ruth’s mind was fixed upon her party.

“Own mother said no,” she responded promptly.

“Auntie Jack won’t care.”

“Ruth minds own mother.”

“’Cause she’ll spank you, if you don’t,” Bungay interpolated.

“So does yours.”

Bungay dismissed truth.

“No; she doesn’t, too. The cook is the spanker at our house.”

And Ruth made swift answer, —

“Ruth wishes she was here, then.”

But Sidney called, for the third time.

“Come, children. Come in here.”

Bungay’s head poked itself through the open window of the room where Sidney lay on the bed, resting from a drive with Ronald.

“I’m coming. Jumbo’s coming, too, and I’ll tell you both a story.”

Ruth’s head battered against that of Bungay.

“Ruth’s coming, too, right through window of own mother’s room.”

Bungay arrested her action by catching her by the heels and jerking them backwards. Then, Jumbo in hand, he squirmed in through the window, lost his balance and dropped, with a thud, to the floor. Ruth came on top of him; but he pried himself out from under her fat little body, rushed forward and took the most advantageous corner of the bed.

“I’m going to tell the story now,” he began breathlessly, lest Ruth should anticipate him in getting command of the floor. “Once there was a boy, and he had a fairy godmother, and she came to baptise him. All the people came, his grandpapa and his grandmamma and his uncles and his aunts and his cousins and all their cousins. Every one of them brought him a present.”

“What did they bring?” Ruth demanded, from her seat astride the footboard.

“Oh, guns and candy and paper soldiers and rubber boots and bonbons with snapper caps in them and rowboats and—and things. And he said ‘thank you’ to everybody. And then the fairy godmother came. She was awful homely, and she did n’t have a thing but just a whole lot of bottles. And she uncorked one and poured

something on the boy and told people that was beauty, so he should be awful pretty, and she uncorked another and it was knowing lots of things, and she uncorked another and it meant he should have lots and lots of money, gold and pennies and nice clean paper money not wrinkled up a bit, the kind that cracks when you wag it. And then she got all in a hurry and made a mistake and uncorked a big black jug and poured out a whole lot of bad temper all over the boy, and when he grew up, he was always cross."

Ruth pondered.

"Ruth thinks that boy must have been you," she observed at length.

But Sidney asked,—

"Where did you get that story, Bungay?"

Bungay paused in his chastisement of Ruth.

"Did n't get it anywhere. Wade told it to me, one day out in the hammock," he answered. Then he fell upon Ruth and smote her with vigour.

Ronald, meanwhile, had restored the horse and buckboard to their owner, and betaken himself to the river bank in search of Wade.

"Sidney is ever so much better, to-day," he remarked, without preface, as he dropped into the other hammock.

"Yes, she is gaining fast. That first day, though, I thought it was all up with her."

"So did we all, I fancy. Well, it's over now." And Ronald stretched out his long legs and folded his arms under his head.

"Where have you been?"

"Down the road as far as Château Richer. There was a huge pilgrimage coming in, as we passed Ste. Anne. Below there, do you know, the maples are all turning scarlet."

"I do know, worse luck! I saw them, yesterday."

"What's your grievance against the maples?" Ronald queried placidly.

"Paul's school opens, on the fifteenth."

"Of course. We'll all be going, by that time; but what's the use of mourning? There is always another summer."

"You can't always tell," Wade observed gloomily.

Without stirring otherwise, Ronald lifted his head over the edge of his hammock and stared at his companion.

"Oh, come down off your nerves, man!" he adjured him. "What have you been eating?"

In spite of himself, Wade laughed at the dispassionate tone. For the life of him, he could never lose his temper at the great, sunny-minded fellow who lectured him so roundly.

"The cud of discontent, I suspect," he replied.

"I should judge so, or something equally indigestible. What's the matter?"

Wade's answer was flat.

"I don't want to go home."

"Stop here, then. Not that I supposed you were in love with the place, though."

"It's not the place alone, though I do owe it something for the good it has done me. It is the people."

"Mayhap they've done the good," Ronald said shrewdly. "I should n't much wonder."

Wade stared thoughtfully into the treetop above him.

"Do you know, Goliath, I really hate to have the crowd break up."

Ronald nodded.

"So do I. There's no telling when we'll come together again. Still, I should n't think it would make much difference to you. You take four of them home with you, and, to my certain knowledge, you have n't said five hundred words to either Janet or Freda, this whole summer long. Therefore your regrets must be for either Sidney or me."

Wade laughed.

"You are forgetting Bungay," he suggested.

"No such luck. Bungay generally succeeds in getting himself remembered. But, I say, Wade?"

Wade brought his gaze down again from the treetops.

“Say it, then, Goliath.”

Ronald lifted himself on his elbow.

“Do you remember the day, in this very hammock, when you said you dreaded this other damsel?” he demanded.

“Yes.”

“Well, what about now?”

“Merely that I have changed my mind.”

“Girl trick!” Ronald said derisively.

“Not in the least. I never knew the damsel before.”

“You Americans never half know your relations, anyway,” Ronald observed. “If you had n’t been ordered up here, you might never have seen your cousin at all.”

“Very likely.”

“What a duffer you’d have been!” Ronald’s tone was not critical, but merely reflective.

“True, Goliath. Only,” Wade turned sharply on his side; “only, after all, I should have been better off in the long run.”

“I fail to see why.”

“Merely that she happens to be going to her home, not mine.”

“Naturally. Still, you can visit her. I only wish I were her cousin, too.”

Wade looked keenly into the eyes which were watching him from above the edge of the other hammock.

“Do you?” he asked quietly.

The scarlet blood rushed up across Ronald’s face. Then he answered, with simple, earnest frankness, —

“No; I do not. I’d rather have a free hand, unless — How do you — the men of your family, I mean — feel about the English?”

Wade held out his hand.

“We like to feel that they are our kin,” he answered, with equal simplicity. Then the subject was dropped, for they felt that, in the years to come, each was sure of the understanding and sympathy of the other.

The silence lengthened. Wade broke it.

“Talk about visiting them!” he said whimsically. “Do you realize, Goliath, that there are five larger editions of Bungay at home?”

“Unless some of them take after Sidney,” Ronald suggested.

“Sidney is unique. She is like her mother.”

“And the father?”

“Clever and erratic.”

“What does he do?”

“He is assistant editor of *The Zenith*.”

Ronald sat up alertly.

“There’s your chance, Wade!”

“I fail to see it.”

“Write to him and ask him to get you an appointment.”

Wade made a wry face.

“It has n’t quite come to that, Goliath.”

“Meaning?” Ronald queried.

“That I have to beg for work.”

“What do you expect to do?”

“Go on some paper or other. I owe you one for that idea, too. I like it — that is, if Dr. Cromwell — ”

“He will,” Ronald supplemented promptly, for he had been seeing, for days, that Wade was holding all things as conditional upon the verdict that faced him, on the tenth, and he was quick to feel the bravery which the young man showed in bearing the strain of uncertainty. “But where are you going to start?”

“I have n’t the least idea.”

“Time you had, then. There are a dozen good men for every good place. Your record in one line won’t help you in another, and you said, yourself,” Ronald felt that he was pushing his point a bit mercilessly; “that you wanted to go at something, as soon as you went home.”

“I do; but I’m not home yet.”

“You will be, next week, though. Then what are you going to do?”

Wade turned again and surveyed him with mocking eyes.

“Hang it! Don’t be so strenuous, Goliath.”

“It is n’t strenuousness; it is sense,” Ronald answered, as he sat up and brought his heels to the ground with a force which set the hammock to swinging. “You call yourself a lawyer; but you can’t see through a pane of glass, unless somebody holds up a candle on the other side. You say you want something to do. You know you don’t want to lose track of this cousin of yours. Then why in thunder don’t you write to her father and ask him to get you a place on his paper, where you can work when you like, and play with her, the rest of the time?”

Wade pondered the question. Then he spoke.

“Ronald Leslie, I am something of an idiot, myself. Thanks for the suggestion.”

“Where are you going?” Ronald asked, as his companion rose from the hammock.

Wade’s answer came back over his shoulder.

“Into the house. I am about to write to my uncle. Hold your peace, Goliath. Best say nothing, until we have heard from the doctor.”

And Ronald, as he sat staring after the firm, erect figure, muttered to himself, —

“Hang the doctor, anyhow!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

HOWEVER, it was unnecessary to hang the doctor.

Sidney waked early, on the morning of the tenth, waked, as she had slept, with the vague, dull foreboding of what the day might hold in store. By tacit consent, the subject of Wade's examination by the great specialist had been ignored in the family conversation. Nevertheless, he had spoken of it to Sidney once and yet again. She knew that he wished her, and her alone, to go with him to the city. She knew that upon Dr. Cromwell's verdict he was staking all things: courage, hope, ambition, his very manhood. Earlier in the summer, he had spent weary hours of trying to resign himself to the thought of inaction. Then, under the spur of her own energy, he had revised his ideals to include such limited action as was within his power. She had no idea in what direction his work would turn. Ronald had kept his own counsel; she had heard nothing of the suggested reporting. Meanwhile, she realized only too well, just as Ronald had done, that Wade

was drifting idly now, making no definite plans until he should know his fate. And, if that fate were evil, the girl felt instinctively that the blow would be the final one, that, condemned to invalidism, her cousin would condemn himself to apathy.

Sidney was only sixteen. Her position at the top of the line of seven Stayres, however, had taught her to know something of humanity. She loved Wade altogether; she idealized him not at all. She simply knew that her cousin was a clever man whose life had been broken sharply in two; and, all summer long, she had adhered to her sturdy determination to force him to pick up the pieces and join them as best he might. Her own illness had changed her resolution not one whit. It had taught her the discomfort of pain, the absolute boredom of being idle and, most of all, the utter devotion of which her grown-up cousin had proved himself capable. She came out from her convalescence more resolved than ever to stand by Wade, to urge him to his best development and, if possible, to give to him one tenth the loyalty and care which he had lavished upon her.

And then, all at once, she buried her head in the blanket and began to cry, not nervously, but in a quiet, lonesome fashion which was very

dreary. At best or at worst, whatever the day might bring, the summer was almost at an end. And Paul, and Janet, and Ronald, and most of all Wade had become such important parts of her life! It was a trick of Sidney Stayre's to care intensely for those people to whom she gave her liking. Now she suddenly realized that, even in the absorbing interests of home and school, there was going to be room for much loneliness in her coming winter.

The poplars, whispering outside her window, turned from gray to silver in the growing dawn, and Sidney, uncovering her head, lay staring at them, with a sense of shame for her momentary woe. At least, she had had her fun, had enjoyed it to the full, and people did not always forget, even when they were miles apart. It was possible that Auntie Jack would influence her mother to allow Ronald to write, as he had asked permission to do. As for Wade, he would come to New York now and then. Yet, even as she stoutly maintained to herself that she really was not going to care, Sidney was acutely conscious that, daily and hourly, she would miss the companionship upon which she had learned to count, during all that idle summer. Even her accident had held its bit of pleasure. Without it, her happy-go-lucky temperament would have kept her from knowing what

a loyal pair of friends she had won. With Wade at her side, and Ronald to come and go at her beck and call, the days had rushed swiftly along, and Sidney, in looking back upon her semi-invalidism, decided that it was rather good fun, now and then, to be obliged to lie up for repairs.

But, meanwhile, there was Wade and his coming interview with the specialist. As she lay looking at the silvery poplars swaying and whispering in the dawn breeze and bending near to peer in at her through the open casement, the girl told herself that it was no time for her to be selfishly bemoaning the coming separation. The thing for her to do, was to be ready to brace Wade for his trip to town, to steady him to face the possible disappointment which might be awaiting him.

“You dread it, Wade?” she had asked him, the night before.

Refusing her suggestion of their customary game of chess, he had been pacing the floor with restless strides. At her question, he glanced up; but his face was grave to the point of utter sadness.

“No, Sidney; I don’t dread it. I am deadly afraid.”

She refused to yield her mood to his depression.

"But what is the difference?" she queried, laughing.

"Dread is vague. I know what I am afraid of," he answered briefly.

"I know. But you are so much better."

Halting before her chair, he stood looking down at her with sombre eyes.

"Precisely, Tiddles. That is what has made a coward of me."

"I don't see why."

His answer was pithy.

"A baby never cries for a toy, until you dangle it in front of his eyes."

This time, Sidney's laugh came without having to be forced.

"Explain yourself, baby," she advised him.

"It explains itself. I have gained so much, this summer, Sidney, that I am beginning to wonder if those idiots of doctors knew what they were about."

"Possibly they knew so well that they have worked a complete cure," she suggested, as she sat staring up at him, contrasting the man before her with the inert semi-invalid who had met her upon her arrival.

"Not likely. It usually takes longer. But I've been so much more alive lately that I have developed the notion that I've gained a fresh lease of life."

“Hold on to the notion, then,” she advised him.

“Yes; that’s what I have been doing. I’ve even gone ahead and made some plans. And now —”

“Now?”

He walked swiftly to the farther corner of the room, then turned and walked back to her side.

“Now I may have them all knocked in the head.”

“I don’t believe it,” she said sturdily, and her words were the true phrasing of her thought.

“But I believe it is better not to know,” he said slowly.

She faced him.

“I don’t, then. Anything is better than uncertainty.”

“It depends on the certainty.”

“It does not,” she flashed. “That’s sneaky, Wade, and not a bit like you. If you know what to expect, you can make your plans to fit it. If you can’t do one thing, you can always do something else; but how are you going to find out what the something else is, unless you know what it is you can’t do?”

In spite of the trouble in his eyes, Wade laughed.

“You’re getting beyond your depth, Tiddles,” he warned her.

But her answer was intrepid.

“What if I am? I can always turn and swim ashore. And, as far as I am concerned, I’d rather drown at sea than have a wave catch me sitting up on the bank. But look here, Wade, what about your common sense? I don’t mean to be unsympathetic; but aren’t you frightened at nothing?”

“No; I’m not.”

She looked up at him with merry, rebuking eyes.

“You need n’t be testy about it,” she admonished him; “and you need n’t deny it, either, for it is true. You know you are better than you were; you know that, even at the worst, there was some fun still left in sight. You had made up your mind to that, and you were taking it as it came —”

“And it came to exactly two dollars and forty-seven cents, marked down from two-fifty,” Paul proclaimed, as he pranced into the room. “Hullo, Tiddles! What’s the matter? You look as if you were standing in the presence of a dentist.”

“Only of a depressed old cousin,” she answered, as she made room for the boy to seat himself on the arm of her chair.

Paul smirked up at his older brother.

“And what’s the matter with you, Wadeikins?”

Thinking on your sins and pondering your latter end?" he queried placidly.

"Exactly so."

"Then drop it. It's most unbecoming, for it makes your mustache sag at the corners. If your latter end is going to have this effect upon you, then try a new tack and fix your mind on the days when you were a pink and guileless baby. Tiddles, when are you going fishing?"

"Whenever you say."

"You're able, honestly? Well, let's go, tomorrow."

"Wade and I are going in town," she reminded him.

"Oh, confound it! And there are n't so many more days. We go, on the fourteenth; that's Tuesday. Can't you put off your trip in town?"

"Wade has an appointment with Dr. Cromwell, you know."

"Sure. I forgot that. And you are going to see your own powderpilly, too. Well, make it the next day."

"Why don't you ask Judith, too?" Sidney suggested.

Paul drew down his mouth and spoke sedately.

"Judith is a sweet girl and, in time, she may be good for something in the woods, if she keeps on improving. Still, I rather think I'll wait till

next year, before I take her fishing. I say, Tids?"

"By all means."

"Resolved that we make up a party of three, to-morrow, and go up to town together. You might as well take me. I may have a lurking spine in my lungs, and need treatment. Besides, I want to get some moccasins and snowshoes and things. It is September now, and there is no telling when we'll get a blizzard. What do you think, Wadeikins? Shall I go?"

And Wade, as he looked at his jovial, hearty young brother, gave a cordial assent. Paul was never in the minor key. His irresponsible chatter would keep one from thinking of things and getting on one's nerves.

However, when Wade had gone away and left them, Paul's hilarity dropped from him like the dropping of a mask.

"Poor old Wadeikins!" he said, with real regret in the ring of his honest young voice and in the look of his honest gray eyes. "It's hard lines, Tiddles, this standing on one leg, not daring to step, until things have happened to show you whether it's worth while to step at all. I'll tell you what it is, we all fuss at Wade and fuss about him; but the honest fact is, the dear old chap has shown a whole lot more pluck

than any of us have been willing to give him credit for."

He reiterated his phrase, next day, when he and Sidney were sitting together on the terrace, waiting for Wade to appear. With the apparent mercilessness of fate, there had been a long interval between the arrival of the train and the hour set for Wade's visit to Dr. Cromwell. During this interval, Paul had been an invaluable member of the party. He had dragged them here to look at moccasins, there to buy snowshoes, somewhere else to hunt for wholly mythical trout flies which, as he finally decided, did not exist. In each place, he had insisted on Wade's inspecting the entire stock and passing judgment upon it, and his eager interest had ended by catching the sluggish attention of his half-brother and rousing it until it fairly matched his own. Even Sidney had been surprised when the clock on the city hall had struck the hour, and they had been forced to hasten their steps as they sought the Chateau. Her call upon her own doctor, meanwhile, had been short and perfunctory. He had asked a dozen questions, pronounced himself satisfied and then turned to Wade.

"Ah, your American doctors are great lords of the land," he said, with an odd little shrug of his shoulders. "They come here on a vacation, and

they refuse to see any sick. For me, it was to me that your American was sent; but it was only in the midst of a drive to Lorette that I had the courage to tell him that I had spoken to you of his name. Will he then see you?"

"At twelve."

"It is well. They say, even in Paris, that his word is final. I know little of the lungs, myself. Nevertheless, I think you can have good courage."

"And he has it," Paul said thoughtfully, when he and Sidney were left alone. "I don't think I gave him much credit for it, at first. I suppose it's because I didn't know what really was the matter with him."

"Does Judith know?"

"I don't think so; she'd never ask. I never could have found it out, if I hadn't wormed it out of mother. Do you imagine —"

She put up her hand.

"Don't, Paul! Let's not look ahead."

"That's not your usual preachment," he retorted.

"Not always; but it is now. Instead, let's look back and see how Wade has gained."

"It's a whole lot, sure enough. When you came, he was mooning around in a hammock. I'll tell you what, Tids, you've done something for that fellow."

“Even if I did manage him?” she asked, laughing.

Paul reddened. Then he laughed.

“Good for him that you did. Nobody else dared to. You know you did manage him, though. I wonder how he’ll get on without it.”

“I wonder a good deal more how I shall get on without him,” she answered gravely. “It is going to be —”

But Paul had started to his feet and faced about sharply.

“By Jove, here he comes!” he burst in excitedly. “Look at him, Tiddles! Look at the way he walks, by thunder! No need to ask him what the old duffer said.”

At Paul’s side, Sidney sprang up with a little glad outcry. From far across the terrace, Wade was coming towards them, his step alert, his eyes alight, his shoulders thrown back and his head held high in the air. To those watching him, it was as if, during that past half hour, he had learned again to draw, deep and full, the breath of life itself. There was no need for words, as Paul had said. Nevertheless, while he was still at a distance from them, he spoke.

“Tiddles,” he said; “it’s all right. Now, if I’ll go slowly, I can begin to live again.”

She took an eager step forward and held out both her hands to his, outstretched to meet her. Her lashes were wet, as she lifted her eyes to his; but her words were few.

“Oh, Wade, I ’m so content.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

ON the third floor of the cottage, Judith was dismantling her room and stuffing her sofa pillows into the bottom of her trunk. Downstairs, Mrs. Addison was sorting out the miscellaneous possessions which Ruth had accumulated during the summer, while her own orderly trunks betrayed the fact that the fitting was near. It was the afternoon of the thirteenth. Early the next morning, the Americans were to start for the southward, leaving the Leslies to go back to town, the next day.

Mrs. Addison's face, as she glanced about her room, was supremely content. The summer had not been altogether an easy one. She had found it no slight test of her housewifely skill to manage her American establishment in that French community; she had now and then been a little puzzled as to the best method of facing the fact that Sidney and Judith had not settled down into the intimacy for which she had hoped. Nevertheless, she was wholly glad for what the summer had brought her, wholly glad that she had in-

cluded Sidney in forming her summer plans. For Wade's sake alone, the girl's blithe presence would have been worth the while.

Married at eighteen and a mother at twenty, Mrs. Addison loved her first-born son with a devotion which she had given to none of her other children. It was as if, when Wade's father had died, she had made over to her little son the love which she had borne his father. Later, when the other children were young, Wade had been passing through his college life, and, always mature, he had given her a sympathy and understanding like that of a younger brother.

To Mrs. Addison's mind, it had seemed the only possible course open to her that she should follow the doctor's suggestion of a summer in the cool north-land; but she had followed it with a dull foreboding that nothing could check the inevitable disease which they feared had fastened upon her son. Contrary to her expectations, however, her son had gained beyond belief. From week to week, and then almost from day to day, the change had become manifest. And Mrs. Addison, in looking backward, felt that Sidney and even Ronald had had no small share in working the good. It mattered little, then, that Judith and Sidney had failed to hit it off together. That could come later.

All day long on the tenth, Mrs. Addison had worked with a nervous fury. It seemed to her that the hours would never pass; yet she had felt, with Wade, that it was better by far that she should not go with him up to town. For the time being, her nerves had gained the upper hand; Sidney's gay presence and Paul's buoyancy were far better for Wade, just then, than even her motherly sympathy. Two days before, he had talked the matter over with her, quietly and at great length. She knew the strain he was under, was forcing himself to meet with outward calmness; and bravely she resolved to hold herself steady, and so to help him meet his crisis. To neither one of them did it occur to doubt that the verdict, that day, would be final.

She was pacing the platform of the station, a full half hour before the train was due, and Ronald and Janet were one on either side of her. Janet was excited; but Ronald talked calmly of this thing and that, forcing her to an intermittent attention which broke the edges of the strain. And at last the train had come buzzing down the track, and, as far away as she could see, Paul's hat was waving at her with a vigour which could not fail to be the token of good news.

"Yes," Wade said, as they walked away up the road together; "the worst danger is over. He

wants to keep watch of me, for a year or so, and he forbids my going into office work. That's rather bad, I know; but I can find something else to do. For the rest, I can live like a human being, start into light work of some kind or other, and begin to take a rational interest in things once more. In other words, I am well; and, if I take any sort of care of myself, I shall be strong again before I know it." Then he paused and smiled down into her happy face. "But who knows," he added; "what might have been, if you had n't made a martyr of yourself in the wilderness, this summer?"

"No martyr and no wilderness, Wade," she answered. "But, even if it had been both, it all would have been well worth the while."

And now, the summer over, she was contentedly packing her belongings and looking forward to the hour when her great, blond husband should meet them in the North Station at home.

Janet and Sidney, meanwhile, were sitting on the river bank, talking fitfully while they watched the eddying current make its way downward among the rocks in its course. Sidney's packing was done. Janet's was still to do. She had an idea that she would need its interest, in the lonely day which was bound to follow the departure of the others.

"It's all so tiresome," she burst out at last. "Three months ago, I never even heard of you. Now I am going to miss you, all the time. I never supposed I could care for Americans like this."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I supposed they were — different. I wish you were. Then I shouldn't miss you half so much."

"But Auntie Jack has asked you down for Christmas," Sidney suggested consolingly.

Janet gave her one glance, half of woe, half of rebuke.

"But it won't be you," she said.

"No; of course not. I wish it would, for I'd like to be there, too. But it will be Judith and Paul."

Janet nodded.

"Yes, Paul," she conceded grudgingly.

"And Judith. She's your chum," Sidney pursued thoughtfully.

Janet cocked her head on one side.

"Who told you so?"

"Judith."

"When?"

"Why, let me see. It must have been the night I came."

"Oh," Janet observed demurely. "Well, that

accounts." But no persuasion could tempt her to explain her phrase.

"What are you going to do, this winter?" Sidney asked, after a pause.

"Go back to the convent."

"You like it?"

"Of course. All the girls go, and the nuns are dears, except when we break the rules. What shall you do?"

"Go to school, and play basket ball, and do lessons, and give plays, and mend the family stockings," Sidney said comprehensively.

"Is that all? Then you will be so busy that you won't have any time to miss us."

"Won't I!" Sidney's sigh was a bit tragic. Then she asked abruptly, "Janet, why don't you tease your mother to let you go to college?"

Janet raised her brows.

"I don't think Canadian girls do that."

"What do they do?"

"Get married, or else go as trained nurses."

Sidney made a wry face.

"How horrid! The nursing, I mean. I'd much rather go to college."

"What's the use?" Janet demanded practically.

"Use! You learn to be something or other, and you have a perfectly glorious time while you're learning it. Try it and see. But here

come Paul and Ronald." And Sidney rose to meet them, wholly unconscious that she had dropped into Janet's mind the germ of a new idea which was destined to bear much fruit.

Paul hailed them from afar.

"Mingling your tears over your coming separation? What's the good?" he asked affably. "It's an awful waste of good time, Janet. You can cry, after we are gone. Come along up to the dam and catch some final fishes."

Janet rose alertly and turned to follow him, while Ronald dropped down on the grass at Sidney's side. His handsome, eager face was unusually grave, and his words halted a little now and then; but he sat there long, while they talked quietly of the summer, of the good times they had enjoyed together, and even of the hours they had spent there beside the river, growing better acquainted than ever before in the enforced idleness of Sidney's short convalescence.

"And it's all been good fun, Mamzelle Peekaboo," the young fellow said at length, and there was a ring of honest, earnest liking in his voice. "It is about ended now; but perhaps, if you're willing, we may see each other again sometime. And, anyhow, we've been good chums, this summer, and that is something we've got for sure, and no one can take it away."

And Sidney looked up into his clean, dark eyes gravely, but as simply as she might have looked into Janet's own.

"But, Ronald," she said slowly; "I don't think any one wants to take it away."

He started to reply. Then he checked himself, for Wade was coming towards them, an open letter in his hand.

"So there you are!" he called. "I have been hunting for you, Tiddles."

"Does that mean you'd like me to abdicate?" Ronald queried placidly, as Wade dropped down at his cousin's side.

"Of course not, Goliath. In fact, I want you, too, for I've a general notion that you will be interested in the news I have to impart. But, Tiddles, how many of you Stayres are you?"

"'We are seven,'" she quoted merrily. "You ought to know the number of your own cousins, Wade."

"So I ought. Seven! That's an awful number. Do they fill up the house rather well?"

"Cramming," Sidney said tersely. "You should see it."

"I hope to see it, some day," he answered. "Then there is n't room for any more?"

She looked up at him sharply. Then her colour came.

"That depends. What is your letter?"

"Business. Pleasure before business, Sidney. Has it ever occurred to you that you would like another brother?"

"No; I would rather have an old cousin who is a wretched tease. Give me that letter!"

Evading her snatching fingers, he tossed the letter across to Ronald.

"What do you think of that, Goliath?"

Ronald read the letter. Then he gave terse answer, —

"Did n't I tell you so?"

"Methinks you did. I was going to give you credit, when the proper time came. You're not half bad, Goliath. What's the matter, Tiddles?"

Laughing, breathless, she struggled to free her wrists from his grasp. Then she gave up the attempt.

"But that is my father's writing," she gasped.

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"Business, Sidney. Also news."

"Bad, or good?" she demanded.

He smiled whimsically down into her flushed and eager face.

"Good for me. For you, I am rather afraid you may think it is bad."

“Oh, what?” she said, with an imperiousness which was not wholly free from anxiety.

And Wade, watching her face, saw that he had parried long enough. Dropping her hands, he spoke quietly.

“It is nothing to alarm you, Tiddles. In fact, I have rather hoped you might not mind the idea. Your father has written to me, to tell me that I am to take a position on *The Zenith*, next week, and that, for the present, at least, I am to live in your home.”

Sidney caught her breath sharply. Then sharply her fingers shut on his outstretched hand.

“Oh, Wade!” she said. But Wade, looking down into her clear gray eyes felt there was no need for many words.

And Ronald, half envious, and wholly pleased at the wisdom of his own suggestion, of a sudden found it hard to break the silence. Once he attempted it, and yet again. Then the need was taken from him. Down the path from the cottage came Bungay, with Jumbo in his arms and Ruth following close at his heels. Bungay’s hair was rampant, his tone like a clarion of war.

“Sidney, I want my xylophone, quick! You packed it all up in the bag, and now I must have it to sing to Jumbo on. Ruth slapped Jumbo,

and he 's cried till he 's 'most sick, she hurt him so."

And Ruth made warlike answer, —

"Did not slap him, too, Bungay Stayre! He stepped on own best doll and made her all muddy, and Ruth 's glad you 're going home, so there!"

But Bungay faced about, laid Jumbo tenderly down on the long, soft grass and, as upon one former occasion, he hooked his little fingers into the outer corners of his eyes, his thumbs into the outer corners of his lips, and waggled his tongue derisively. Then he made final unanswerable answer, —

"Huh, goop! Auntie Jack 's asked me to come again."

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