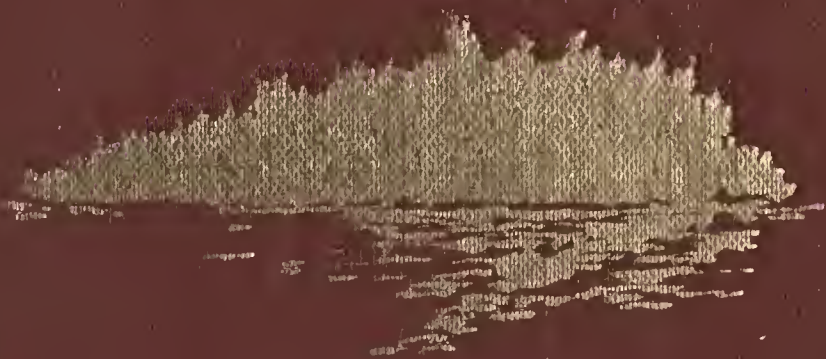


Two  
on  
an  
Island



STELLA HUTCHESON DABNEY



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# *Two On An Island*

## *A Summer Idyll*

*Having grown weary of turmoil and strife,  
They wished "Nothing but basking the rest of their life."*







THE LAKE WAS HIDDEN AWAY IN A WILDERNESS



*Two On An Island*  
*A Summer Idyll*

By

Mrs STELLA (HUTCHESON) DABNEY ✓



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DEDICATED TO  
JANE  
THE IDEAL COMPANION



# TWO ON AN ISLAND

## ARRIVING

THERE it was, a green mound rising from the blue waters of the lake, coolly aloof from all human contact!

Perhaps no foot had ever pressed its rocky soil! The birds in summer and the deer crossing the frozen lake in winter were perhaps its only visitors till our coming, for the lake was hidden away in a wilderness and the island lay untamed on its bosom. For us, a fantastic dream had come true. We, who could neither swim, row nor canoe, had become the owners of this Island; a virgin island in a wild Canadian lake and his Majesty's Government had honored our application for it and accepted our modest cheque. It was called a "summer resort parcel" and the patent was withheld till we had proved our good faith by building on it, but this did not minimize the joy of possession.

It had been bought sight unseen by two, who

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to the polite disapproval of their friends, determined to go wild for a season, and I, the first of the pair to arrive, was now at the end of a long and arduous journey across the continent to its shores. Starting out two thousand miles away, seven changes had brought me to a remote junction on the C. P. R., where I transferred to the K. & P. Railroad, locally called by the Scotch settlers, the Keek and Poosh, which well describes its speed and manner of locomotion. It consisted of an engine, a baggage car and a day coach, and it jerked along from station to station as if in a state of feeble indecision whether to advance, retreat or give up. It seemed to hope, vainly, that each station was its last and when prodded to further effort, it rocked and groaned immoderately in violent protest.

Inside, everything was easy and sociable. The portly conductor, well known up and down the line, greeted his friends as they got on and off, chatted with everybody, introduced those who didn't know each other, and, in his role of host, forgot to take up the tickets.

Passengers ascended and descended frequently, two stations apparently being the limit

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of the average journey for the natives of the region.

The Keek and Poosh seemed to be utilized chiefly for neighborhood visits. To carry a setting of eggs, a fresh apple pie, or a watermelon a piece up the road it was invaluable. Its jerks when in motion and its bucks when starting and stopping were as good for the liver as a game of golf or a Swedish masseur and kept the travelling public fit and active.

The conductor, seeing I was ticketed for a distant station, asked me why I was going so far into the wilderness, into a place that was so "lonesome." "That's why," I replied. He looked puzzled, for he was a mixer and decided that I was either a misanthrope or a fugitive from justice.

At last my station was called. The train was slowing up and the conductor, thoughtfully, came to put off my bags of which there were several. My hat box, one of those round abortions that carry odds and ends, was on the seat opposite, and, unfortunately, at the moment, unlatched. The burly Captain seized the handle with great vigor and its entire contents emptied themselves in a shower of miscellaneous objects

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on the floor. The aisle was strewn with clothing, both intimate and casual, small boxes were rolling in every direction and shoes were hopping about uncannily in perfect rhythm with the erratic motion of the Keek and Poosh.

It was an awful moment, but everybody came to the rescue. As the brakes gave their last despairing shriek, as the train came to a stop, everything was scooped up, soot and all, and jammed into the hat box, all but my bath powder which remained in a pallid reproachful mound under my seat and would have to be dealt with later by an angry car cleaner.

Murmuring profuse thanks to everybody, I was out and on the platform. The conductor waved me a cheery farewell and the Keek and Poosh went on its panting, asthmatic way.

I looked about me and saw the usual three buildings, station, blacksmith shop and general store and Post Office. I was going sixteen miles further into the wilderness and I had been told that a bus met the train on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. This was Tuesday but I saw no bus. I observed that a woman with four children who had gotten off my train was also looking about.



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A covered truck was being loaded from the freight platform. Beside it was standing a sal-low woman with two children, a boy and a girl. I went up to her.

“Do you know anything about a bus that goes from here to Prestons?” I asked.

“This is hit,” she replied tersely, and just then the driver emerged from somewhere in the interior where he was storing things.

“Were you expecting me?” I inquired after due explanation.

“Well, yes, I were but I weren’t expecting so much truck,” he said, indicating a pile of railroad irons, fence posts, sacks of lime and cement, in addition to two trunks and a coop of chickens.

“How many passengers are there?” he called.

The two women with their six children stepped up, a young man suddenly appeared out of nowhere, and I modestly put in my claim.

There was one *regular* seat in the truck up beside the driver and a bench in the enclosed freight section that would hold three—uncomfortably. There were ten passengers to go and this was the only conveyance for two days!

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"I guess I'll have to leave some of the truck here," cheerfully said Mr. Coster, piling in the two trunks, the chicken coop and five suitcases. "The children can set on them," he said, with an explanatory gesture.

I looked wistfully at the seat beside the driver and hoped, being a stranger, it would be offered to me. Far from it! The thin sallow woman edged up to Mr. Coster and said stolidly, "I guess I'll have to set by you becus if I sets inside I'm liable to vomit any minute."

That settled that issue, and her little boy having, according to her, a tendency to the same liability, was hoisted up beside her.

This left the inside bench to be divided between the other mother, five children and myself, the young man having volunteered to sit on a trunk. The mother took the youngest, a year old, in her lap and the next two sat on one side of her and I on the other. The two remaining children were poised one on a suitcase and one on a keg of nails.

We started off, packed like sardines. The seat went lengthwise of the truck and the general merchandise was stored from our knees outward. If the cargo shifted we might be crushed

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or, at best, lamed for life. At the first hill, the nail keg slipped and threw the little boy on top of the little girl, whose feelings were deeply hurt and she cried quietly for some time. Her mother being aloft and we in the steerage, the fact that she could not communicate the indignity, increased the pain. We righted the little boy who was consoled by his mother and we sat him on another suitcase against my feet.

As it began to rain the curtains were fastened down and the truck lumbered on.

The air became so heavy that the children dropped off to sleep, one by one. The tired mother followed suit and the young man, trying to keep his equilibrium on a bouncing trunk, and I, were the only ones awake. The baby's head sank lower and lower and finally came to rest on my shoulder where it grew heavier and heavier as the mother relaxed. The little girl on the suitcase had nodded several times. Finally deciding to forget her wrongs she laid her head confidingly in my lap and she, too, slept. I was answering all the requirements of a Pullman berth, sleeping accommodations for two passengers and storage space for luggage of all sorts under and around me. I had

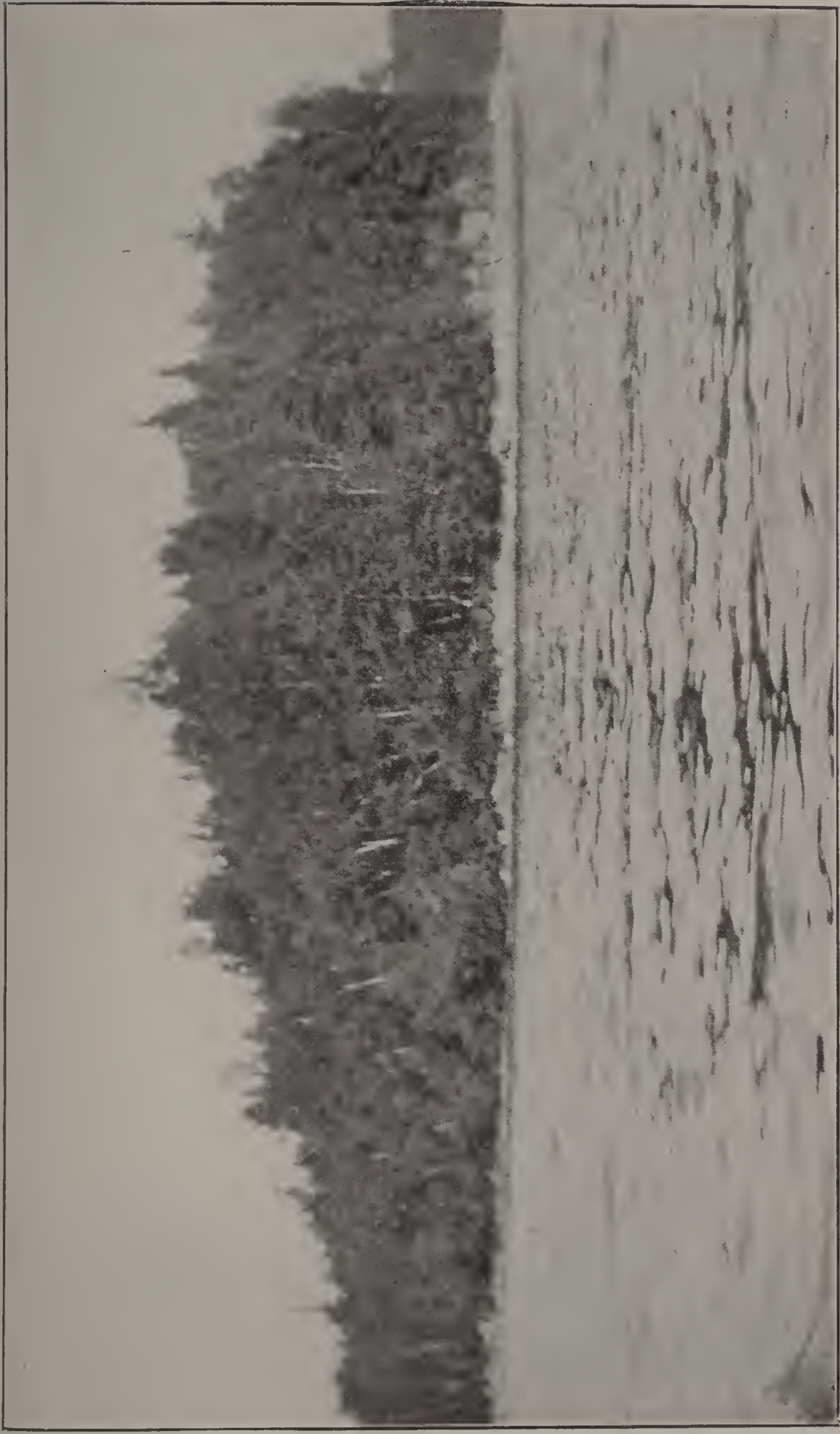
## TWO ON AN ISLAND

come two thousand miles for this! But I was too tired, too compressed to resist.

As long as we went up hill, it wasn't so bad. The load of merchandise slid toward the back and left a small space for our feet. But suddenly we began to descend a long steep hill and the cargo took another turn and was bearing down upon us. The two trunks came first, followed by the chicken coop. The keg of nails joined in the assault and charged down upon our assembled extremities. The children woke up and cried. Something had to be done, so the driver reluctantly climbed down from his seat, roped off the baggage section from the passenger section and we proceeded on our way.

The mother with four children got out at a farm house a mile from my destination and the nice smile she gave me repaid me for my numb shoulder and knee in which the circulation had all but stopped.

Soon we drew up at the Fisherman's Luck Hotel and there, for the first time, I saw McDonald the carpenter, and Dunston, his assistant. They were waiting to take me to see the Island which Jane, in Rome, and I, in Texas, had bought on faith. Jane was still in Rome,



IT LOOKED IMPENETRABLY GREEN



## TWO ON AN ISLAND

unavoidably detained for three weeks, and I must get first impressions for us both.

A ride in a bouncing Ford, a row across the lake, and the Island lay before me!

Its dense green wall rebuffed intrusion and no vestige of a trail led inward from its shore.

We went round and round it in our row boat to find a place to land. It looked impenetrably green. Sweet fern at the edge of the lake, many pronged alder bushes and pussy willows drooping over, cedars standing upright and above them spruce, balsam, birch and pine rising tier on tier to the center of the Island. Here and there a feathery tamarac towered over all the rest. The Island had been burned over fifty years ago and the growth was young and dense. The trunks of small trees formed a thicket so matted that only a rabbit could penetrate it without puncturing his hide on the sharp little lower limbs which had died for lack of sunlight and felt spiteful about it. Finally, we found a tiny bay, choked with the débris of thousands of years and here, on a water-soaked log, we landed, hatchets in hand. We cut a trail inward from the shore and climbed to the top of a big gray boulder to spread out our plans

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and talk about the building of the camp. McDonald, the head carpenter and I had been in correspondence for months, but this was our first meeting. He looked at me solemnly, appraisingly with his one good eye and thought I was too small to count. He was a tall, spare, hard-bitten Scotchman, a bachelor of some fifty summers and couldn't be bothered with women's whims. He had had the lumber for the house and the stone for the chimney hauled over the ice during the winter and piled at the water's edge. He looked at my plan soberly, suspiciously, a little superciliously. He had never used one before.

"I don't know that a 'plon' is necessary," he said. "It may be a gude thing in the States, but here in the 'boosh' we juist decide on the measurements and go to work."

"But," I asked, "how about the details?"

With great deliberation he removed his pipe, looked at me with an expression of patient forbearance and said, "We juist take them up when we come to them."

When I explained that I was going back to New York, shortly, and would leave the "plon" with him, he looked relieved. The Scotch





“CLIMBED TO THE TOP OF A BIG GREY BOULDER”



## TWO ON AN ISLAND

Canadian has a firm belief that a woman's place is on the solid plane of domestic routine; he thinks she is out of her element in figures and when she concerns herself with strains and elevations, he wavers between kind-hearted fear and malicious hope that she will be hurled to the fall that her unwomanly stand deserves.

I intended to stay a week, then leave the sound of incessant hammering behind me and return to a finished camp, but it was not to be. I found that building on an island made the usual hazards and aggravations of building seem like play. Material lacking had to be ordered first by mail, then begged for by telegram, then pleaded for by long distance telephone and finally sent for by truck and personally conducted to the island after days, weeks and even months of delay. Scotch Canadians in the rural districts do not hurry and no amount of American push and energy moves them except to a firmer immovability; tomorrow is as good as today and next week is better still. Life is long in the "boosh"—why hurry?

We were stopping at Fisherman's Luck Hotel, McDonald, Dunston, Mickleham and I.

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The Inn was a dingy little place kept for the benefit of transient fishermen, who did not mind lumpy beds, poor food and general disorder, if the fish were biting. If the fish weren't biting, the fishermen went home. But we couldn't go home, the workmen and I. We were signed up for the duration of the building and every morning we rose at six, breakfasted at six-thirty, got our lunch boxes and started for the island. Dunston's Ford took us to the "sugar bush," a forest of superb old sugar maples and from there an old tub conveyed us to the Island.

Our choice of boats was limited, as the guides and fishermen kept the good ones in constant use, but Dunn, the farmer at the head of the lake offered us one of his homemade flat-bottomed craft. There were three to choose from, three in various stages of senile decay, but all boasting brave names, cut in their prows with a pocket-knife. They were the Lily, the Bull Frog and the Trout. The Lily, if you were quick enough and bailed fast enough, would make the crossing with water only to your ankles. The Bull Frog was so constructed that you had to sit with your head thrown back and your knees against your chest, to prevent the

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oars from striking you on their inward stroke. It required skill with a single-handed, alternate stroke to manipulate the Bull Frog without cursing. The Trout, true to its name, stayed under water consistently and could only be used in a bathing suit. So we chose the Lily and bailed unremittingly, for we were a heavy crew. McDonald, tall, spare and cranky; Dunston, a World War soldier, grave and sedate; and Mickleham, weighing over two hundred pounds but agile as a frog, when it came to step dancing at night in the hydro-camps.

The selection of a site for the camp made the first day of building a painful one for us all. Every time I decided on a spot, I would see a lovely pine, balsam, or spruce that would have to be sacrificed and we would move the building site ten feet one way, twenty feet another. We went back and forth, back and forth over the ground. Once, by many moves, we had it almost in the lake. Then we moved it back till we straddled a large boulder in a manner impossible for a carpenter to cope with. Finally, with a supreme effort at renunciation, I selected a spot, told the patient and weary workmen to clear a space thirty-six feet square and hew to

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the line. I realized, alas, that the wall of a house couldn't be made scalloped shaped to fit the trees that I wanted to save.

How thrilling were those first June days on the almost impenetrable Island! Leaving the workmen to struggle with the plan, I would take young Willie Murchison and go exploring. I had been round the Island in a boat several times and had a general idea of its shape and size, but once on it, it seemed as large as a continent. As a matter of fact, it only contained four or five acres, but on account of its dense growth and the impossibility of seeing more than a few feet in front, it seemed a vast and impenetrable forest. Using our hatchets to cut the lower branches of the trees and Willie's strong arm to push over the dead saplings, we climbed to the center of the Island. Here, thirty feet higher than the water's edge, we found a ridge of rock, a sort of backbone, which extended the length of the Island and in places broadened out to make a wide stone pathway. We called it the Boulevard. Later, in honor of the Roman road, on the Sussex Downs, we dignified it by the name of Stane Street.

Down by the water, the cedars and the sweet

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fern formed a green border under which the waves lapped. The pussywillows leaned over and dipped their blooming sprays in the shallow water of our little bay, from which some of the driftwood that choked it, had been cleared. A hermit thrush was singing somewhere in the thicket. I saw a loon rise and, going to the spot, found her nest with two big brown eggs. She resented the invasion of her island by human beings and soon deserted her nest and eggs.

The loon is a strange bird of the wilderness, entirely given up to self-expression. Devoid of restraining self-consciousness, she gives way to her eerie cry, her mad laughter or her valkyrie call to the wind, as suits her mood. She is the weather prophet of the wilderness and is, I am sure, only a mother by chance. She makes no pretense of preparing a home for her young, lets her eggs fall where they may and lie in the mud close to the water till they are damply and miserably hatched. Young loons, like fishing worms, may like that sort of thing, but it seems a "dull, demned, damp" sort of start in life. Loons, I fear, are a vanishing race, for, in spite of the Canadian laws that protect these wild

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creatures, civilization is driving them further and further off the map, and wilful vandals are shooting them for target practice. These great black birds, with their gray-white breasts and their long white ringed necks, on which their heads turn almost completely around, are one of the characteristic sights of these regions. They dive under the water in protest to approach or familiarity, and it is a good gambling game to bet how far or in what direction a loon will come up. When he comes to the surface (always having lost you your bet), he gives his ironic cackle as if to say, "What of it and who cares?"

His cry of loneliness at night belies his cackle, for it is a call to his mate and is one of the strangest, most yearning sounds in nature.

As long as the weather was fine, it was a lark to spend the day on the Island roaming about, picknicking, reading under the trees and watching the walls of the camp go up. At noon the workmen would build a fire on a rock down by the bay—never on the turf, for it is against the law in Canada, where the dread of forest fires never sleeps. Here they would make their tea, bringing me mine, thoughtfully, in its incipiency, before it had attained the black



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richness from boiling that their British tastes required.

Long before the roof was on, we had places of refuge from the sudden heavy showers which often came; hastily contrived sheds of loose lumber under which we sat and swapped American and Canadian humor, while the rain beat on the leaves and ran in rivulets down the steep path to the bay.

Near the close of the working hours, after one of these sudden rains, the loons began to give their prophetic wind cry and the answering winds began to blow. The lake became suddenly very rough. We were half a mile from shore and it was better to start at once than to wait. McDonald and Dunston got in the Lily first to steady her, I followed and the stone mason came last.

Mickleham was a ponderous man, strong as an ox with a big head and beady eyes. He looked like the frog in LaFontaine's fable just before his final bloat. Mickleham didn't like islands and he conveyed his disapproval by his deep and constant gloom. As he stepped heavily into the boat it went down from his weight almost to the water's edge.

"I hope, folks," he said gloomily, "you have

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all made your wills for it is a far piece to that shore in this leaky boat.”

“You can swim, can’t you?” asked McDonald.

“Not a stroke,” said Mickleham.

“Well,” came grimly from McDonald, “unless you expect to float, you had better put your strength into that pair of oars and pull.”

I couldn’t swim either but I was ashamed to confess, that one who had no aquatic accomplishments had chosen to summer on an island, so I put on a bold front and hoped I looked like a swimmer. We started out rocking badly and shipping lots of water. We couldn’t make headway against the wind and the heavily laden boat was laboring. Mickleham was pulling until the cold sweat ran down his cheeks, but the wind was against us and we had only one pair of oars.

“Keep out of the trough,” called McDonald, while he and Dunston bailed furiously, to little avail.

After great struggles we had rounded the point of the Island, but the wind was driving us back against the rocks. What if we had to spend the night on the Island, marooned in our

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wet clothes and no shelter? I confess that pioneering on an island in a wild Canadian lake lost much of its native charm at that moment, but just as things began to look serious, a lone fisherman hove in sight. McDonald hailed him and he came to the rescue. He had a sound row boat with two pairs of oars and we greeted him with fulsome enthusiasm for he had come none too soon. The Lily, half-filled with water, was in a dangerous condition, not to speak of the state of her non-swimming passengers.

Transferring from one rocking boat to another in a howling windstorm was another adventure for a novice, but the transfer was made and with the oars managed skilfully by McDonald and the fisherman, we were soon safe at the "sugar bush" with the half-sunken Lily in tow. There we climbed into our waiting Ford and arrived drenched, but triumphant, at the Fisherman's Luck, where four week-end fishermen were swapping stories on the porch and the strains of "Little Brown Jug" came unceasingly from a cracked gramophone inside. But any port in a storm seems cozy and I went to sleep lulled by the sound of the rain outside.

## THE CHIMNEY

THE most important thing in the building of the camp was the chimney. It was to be of stone, nine feet wide with a five-foot opening for logs. Mickleham was to build it exactly according to the "plon" which had been carefully drawn, showing details of smoke shelf, fire back, chimney throat, etc. I discovered later that Mickleham hadn't the faintest idea what it was all about. In that severe latitude where the roar of burning logs would bring the greatest cheer in their glacial winters, the inhabitants know and desire only flues and stoves. Chimney building is a lost art and Mickleham had neither the will nor the intelligence to acquire it. His idea of building a chimney was to square up the stones in chunks, stack them one upon another in an unpleasantly dirty white mortar, leave a hole in the center for the smoke to escape and if it didn't work as a chimney, "tant pis," at least it was a sturdy pile of stones. The beautiful gray stones that had been gathered for the face of the chimney meant noth-

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

ing to him, but so much material to break up into chunks and fit into crannies. Many a time I saw his sledge hammer lifted for a smashing blow on one of my treasured stones. I would give a cry, Mickleham would drop his hammer, his mouth would fly open and he would stare at me with an expression of hopeless vacuity, thinking me quite mad. We never really communicated, for I couldn't understand him nor he me. When I said anything, he always said vacantly, "Hey?" This he repeated till finally a blank "Oh" indicated that he had at last caught a glimmer of my meaning; but it was only a glimmer and that spark of understanding he soon lost.

The chimney was a monster that consumed stone by the ton. The great quantity collected the previous winter was soon gone. Two men were set to gathering more around the shores while two more went back and forth, back and forth to the mainland in the Lily for sand and gravel. Mr. Pête mixed the mortar and Mickleham set the great stones which his straining, sweating helpers brought. He called his force of five helpers "the lads" though one was in his late seventies and quite toothless. It was get-

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ting hard to find stone in the water around the shore and I had only to turn my back to find the "lads" assiduously breaking up boulders around the house.

Once I went over to the mainland for an hour and returned to find them busy with hammer and crow bars disemboweling a section of my cherished Stane Street. Even though I appeared a second Pharoah telling the "lads" to make brick without straw and to build a pyramid without material, I would not yield an island boulder for the maw of that chimney. Strict commands were issued that not even a pebble was to be taken from the Island. The mainland was teeming with rocks and stone—white rocks, gray rocks, green rocks, black rocks. Breaking off from the cliffs, they had rolled down to the water's edge and lay in masses. This is part of the great Laurentian range, one of the oldest and most interesting geologic formations in the world, and with this wealth of detached stone at our command, why tear out the vitals of our Island? By dint of the Boss and super-Boss system, Mickleham watching the "lads," and I watching Mickleham, standing between him and my stone like

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

a lioness—or a mother mocking bird—we got the chimney up as far as the fireplace opening on a Friday afternoon, the afternoon of the windstorm. Saturday morning I opened my eyes to a pouring rain—a steady drenching rain that was going to last—and Sunday was to follow.

My back ached from the hard bed, my small window was only half-screened and thirsty Canada mosquitoes were in season. Downstairs I heard the gramophone grinding out “Little Brown Jug, Don’t I love thee.” I had heard that tune constantly for five days. I felt an immediate urge to smash the gramophone. I thought of a comfortable home in the vicinity of New York; I thought of a bath tub and other conveniences. The tri-weekly stage was leaving in an hour for the nearest railroad station, sixteen miles off. I took it—and that’s why my chimney smokes.

Emancipated as I thought I was from downy ease, my ten days in the wilds gave me a keener appreciation of breakfast trays and candles and I overstayed my allotted time in New York. When I returned my heart was palpitating with eagerness to see my chimney. To save three

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

hours, I telegraphed Mr. Beljean Pête, who was called Bill John Peet by the Scotch and Bill by his familiars, to meet me on the main line, forty miles away from the island at the crack of dawn. I expected to arrive at the hotel for breakfast, but with the best intentions, Mr. Pête couldn't always depend on his Ford, though he was perfectly loyal to it in thought, word and deed. I tumbled sleepily out of the train at five a. m. and waited breakfastless for two hours for Bill John. At seven-thirty, I found a queer little lunch room open and breakfasted on a queer cup of coffee and a suspicious looking slice of bread. My host insisted on adding bananas, but I was firm. And there, to reward me, was Mr. Pête, outside the door.

“What was the trouble?” I asked.

“Well,” said Bill John, who personifies all inanimate objects, “narthing in particular—he (with a jerk of the thumb towards the Ford) is just a leetle contrary this morning. He didn't want to come, but I coaxed him along and he's all right now.”

I knew what the coaxing meant, but as there was Bill John and there was the Ford, I could do nothing but get in. We went very well for a while, but the ominous sputtering and cough-



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ing of a tired machine began to develop, and in the middle of one steep hill, "he" not only refused to go further but began to back down the hill. The brake being weak, we landed, in due time, at the foot. Bill John got out, lifted up the hood and addressing the engine's disembodied spirit said coaxingly, "Well, what's the matter with you now? You've got another one of them spells, have you? Well, *I'll* fix you."

Like a skilled physician, he probed for the affected part, extracted it and put in a new one and wiping the grease from his hands on his pants, he climbed to his seat again, apologizing like a father for a wayward son. "He's a mite cranky but he never dies on me *ontirely*, and by Gorry! I've never had to walk home *yet*. When I put a new part in him he picks up fine. Now you'll see he's better than he ever was."

The old Ford started with amazing pep, scrambling up and down the hills for a couple of miles, then a rumble and a cough and "he" began to slide down another hill.

"He don't like them hills," said Bill John in an aside to me when we reached the foot, "he's lazy this morning—but *I'll* fix him."

Patiently he got out, opened the hood,

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squinted at the goblin within and mocked him thus:

“You’ve got a dirty plug again, have you? Well, that won’t get you off from travelling,” turning to me he explained, “I’ve got a box full of odd parts that they was throwing away at a gayrage and, well sir, if I hain’t used pretty near ever one of ’em on this car and he’s wore ’em all out. He’s a great one! not so good to look at,” he said, chuckling, “but he’s reliable—when he’s fixed up.”

A spare part here and a spare part there, administered every few miles, enabled us finally to arrive at the shore of the lake. The little motor boat had just been delivered from Peterboro, and the measured hum of its engine was a relief after the Ford’s fitful spurts of energy. She skimmed the water so lightly in her coat of white paint that we christened her *The Gull*.

As I approached the Island, I noticed that the shores near the camp looked bare and ragged, the low growing cedars, alders, and sweet fern had been cut and great holes appeared where rocks had been taken out. I knew what had happened. Mickleham and the chimney had devoured them!—the cannibals! I was indignant but silent. As I climbed the hill, I saw

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

Mickleham on the roof scaffolding, laying the last rounds of stones, which two of the elderly lads were passing up to him. The chimney looked just as I wanted it, but over-poweringly big. I contemplated its rugged grayness, its generous proportions, with a glow of warmth that I expected it, later, to shed on me. Well, it was done and except for the pilfered rock, my going away hadn't mattered so much after all. The carpenters were progressing nicely and now the masons had finished and had begun to take the heavy scaffolding down. Mickleham came down and stood in front of the chimney. I saw him begin to shake his head and frown.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "it *may* stand up and it may not."

"You don't mean it's going to fall—that huge mass of stone?"

"It's powerful heavy," he said, "and somehow the opening appears to be too big for the iron supports I put in."

A long pause and much head shaking.

"It *may* cave in, in the middle."

"What do you suggest?" I said with agonized dismay.

"Hey?"

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

I repeated my question.

“Hey?” again with a still more vacant expression.

“What do you intend to do with that chimney?”

“Well, now,” he said, “a stout iron upright bar in the middle to hold up the arch might help it.”

“But,” I ventured, “you couldn’t build a fire behind an iron bar.”

“No, that’s right,” he said meditatively, “no, you couldn’t build a fire in it, but,” he added reluctantly, “it would be—er—safer.

“Any other suggestion?” I asked, preparing to leap at the first sign of crumbling.

“No,” he said, “no, I reckon not, unless you want to close up the opening and use a nice stove.”

When we came to examine the inside of the chimney, we found it was innocent of any architect’s plan. The flue, which was to open in my room, came out under the stairs in a closet on the opposite side of the house. There was no smoke shelf, no chimney throat, no slope to the fireplace back. Mickleham only looked blank when I asked him *why* he had not fol-

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lowed the carefully drawn plans. He hadn't the faintest conception of what they meant and it was too late to do anything but make the best of the chimney or dynamite it.

Without more ado, I paid Mickleham and bade him a lasting farewell. Then I sent for Mr. Pête. Though no trained mason, he had the glimmer of intelligence that the other lacked; not a glimmer, but a gleam that shone round him like a halo. The Ford was requisitioned and a hurried trip made to the station to get railroad irons which were put across the opening and supported by six inches of cement on each side. The flue, being quite useless and an additional smoke producer, was closed up. The inside of the fireplace was doctored and remedied all that was possible, with the result that five days out of six, my fireplace glows with a cheer and warmth that radiates the character of Bill John. But when the north wind blows, the ghost of Mickleham enters in a cloud of smoke, every time the door is opened, and no amount of incantation will lay that unwelcome spectre with his froglike expression and his vacant monosyllable "hey?"

## THE CHRISTENING

ON the afternoon of the day that I returned from New York, Jane arrived from Rome. Her cable notifying me of her coming had been at Prestons for a week. Mr. Betts, the postmaster, explained that he hadn't forwarded it because "there was nothing serious in it," which meant that it was not a death message.

Only telegrams that told of calamity were treated with any respect. I received a telegram of birthday greetings from my children, once, three days late because Mr. Betts had passed on it and considered it too trivial to bother with. He handed it to me and to allay any forebodings on my part, he said kindly, "It's not important—just something about 'love from Elizabeth, Barbara and Joan.'"

I was glad to leave my chimney troubles on the Island and hastened to meet Jane at the Fisherman's Luck, where we were to stop till at least one of our camps could house us.

As the stage drew up in front of the hotel,

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I rejoiced to see that Jane had captured the seat beside the driver. There were no other passengers, which was lucky, because the van was filled with the oddest assortment of luggage imaginable. Jane had spent all her spare moments in Italy collecting furnishings for her camp. She would not trust these precious possessions to freight shipping hazards and had brought them by hand, assisted by a swarm of porters, from Rome to Montreal. The friendly conductor on the K. & P. was her last assistant and now she was descending from the stage with a box of china and glass which had been her personal responsibility from Rome on. This had to be carefully deposited, right side up, before we could exchange greetings and I could tell her how overjoyed I was to have her to pioneer with me. Jane insists that I was so preoccupied with chimney troubles that I hardly spoke to her, but this probably is one of Jane's frequent exaggerations. Out of the bus poured packages and bundles of odd sizes, unwieldy shapes and surprising contents which must have caused much fumbling and cursing from the many porters who had tried to grasp and carry them. A bundle of rugs from Sicily, an assort-

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ment of copper pots and jars from Sienna, a heavy wrought-iron door knocker and lantern bracket from Rome, linen from Assisi, a box of pictures and etchings, a Japanese dwarf pine in a pink majolica jar and two bottles of Italian liqueur. A long, neat looking bundle had a smart canvas cover and handles. I thought it was a sketching outfit, only Jane didn't sketch and I saw that Mr. Coster was straining under its weight.

"Those are my andirons," said Jane, in a matter-of-fact way. "Signorita made the cover for them."

I had never seen a lady travel with a pair of andirons before, but Jane was original as well as thrifty and she believed that an import in the hand was worth ten in the Custom House. She had profited by my heart-rending experience. We had been in Sicily together a year before, and I had bought copper jars and rustic chairs for the proposed camp, for almost nothing. I had also bought andirons and rugs in Spain, but by the time I paid packing, carting, shipping, storing, clearing and delivery, in addition to duty in both America and Canada, I could have bought, for the same price, museum pieces



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of furniture and Sheffield plated andirons. Jane had passed unscathed through Canadian Customs and the formidable tariff wall of our native land had no terrors for her now. Having deposited her collection, she could, in the Fall, go over the top at Rouse's Point, without a tremor.

The landlady of the Fisherman's Luck Hotel looked at Jane and her parcels and shook her head. (Jane's height in contrast to mine caused us to be known in the region as the Big one and the Little one.) The hotel was full, Mrs. Sims said, and she couldn't possibly put her up, so Jane began her first night of pioneering in my tiny room, piled to the ceiling with European spoils. Having installed ourselves as best we could, we could wait no longer for Jane's first glimpse of the Island.

It was late afternoon. The one advantage of the Keek and Poosh Railroad is that it brings all visitors to us at the lovely hour of five-thirty, when the sun is getting low over the western cliff and reflections in the lake form an unforgettable picture.

The five islands of the upper lake rose green as emeralds and every tree and shrub was re-

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flected in the quiet water below. A group of seven loons were disporting themselves on the water, laughing, screaming, diving, and coming up yards away. The echo of their mad laughter came repeatedly from the opposite cliff and no other sound broke the stillness of the wilderness about us. Jane had a faraway look as the boat neared the Island. I didn't speak to her for fear of marring her first impression. Jane is literary and I thought she was, perhaps, composing a poem.

"Virginia," she said presently, "have you thought about fire?"

"No," I said, "mercifully I have not."

"I always think of fire," she said, as if it were a virtue, "and especially in a place like this. I have been reading about precautions and the first thing to do is to select a shallow place in the water to sit while the Island is burning." She added with determination and a touch of dignity, "I shall select mine, tomorrow."

Neither of us can swim and I suppose Jane's idea was that, if one sat immersed up to the neck and kept a wet towel on the head, one couldn't scorch beyond recognition before a

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rescuing party arrived. Feeling hurt by her first reaction, I suggested that she sink an easy chair at some safe spot in the lake and put a bell on it to lead her to safety but she scorned my levity and refused to joke. Jane has a keen sense of humor which does not include fire or any of its possible causes. Kerosene, gasoline, cigarettes, matches were all on her black list and when Mr. Dunn told her that quicklime sometimes got so hot that it set dry leaves on fire, she felt surrounded by danger on all sides. She resolved to use nothing but candles in her camp and to enter my half-finished habitation seemed to her a dire peril, for she claimed that I kept a gasoline tank under one corner, a kerosene tank under another, a barrel of quicklime under a third and a keg of dynamite under the fourth. As I was using all these things in building, I couldn't deny it, but my surroundings seemed to me far less perilous than hers when, later, she kept a six-shooter in her camp and let it be understood that at any suspicious noise she would shoot. I always called to her, or rather shouted, at a distance of one hundred feet, to establish my identity beyond a peradventure of a doubt.

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Jane once said to John McPherson, "If you ever hear a shot, John, will you please come over to my rescue?"

"I'll be glad to, Miss Jane," he said politely, "after I've heard *six* shots."

Once landed, Jane forgot all such unpleasant things as fire hazards and fell completely under the thrall of our Robinson Crusoe Island. She loved the curve of its shores, its dipping petticoats of green and the shimmer of its white birches through the dense thicket. But above all, she loved the towering tamaracs—two that stood like sentinels at the bay—two at each end of the Island, waving their feathery plumes and russet red cones aloft, and here and there young ones struggling to emerge from the dense shade about. With a sudden harmonious decision, we named our kingdom. We poured a libation of pure lake water on its shore and christened it Tamarac Island.

## MOVING IN

EVERY Saturday night Fisherman's Luck Hotel held a step dancing tournament for the lumber company workers, which rocked the building and lasted till dawn. Jane and I had enjoyed immensely one of these exhibitions in which the French Canadians excell, but after five wakeful nights in cramped quarters we dreaded the noise and tumult of another, and the following morning's strain of "Ramona" and "Little Brown Jug." We made a sudden decision. We would move into the camp, unfinished as it was. The roof was on, the floors were in, the chimney undergoing reconstruction, but there were no partitions, no doors and twelve yawning spaces where the windows were to be.

The fever of pioneering was in our blood and we could not wait. I had had cots and an oil stove sent out from Toronto. For a week's camping what more could we need? So we moved into quarters open to the world and to the winds of heaven but we felt perfectly secure on our Island, in the midst of our peace-

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ful secluded lake, where only the cry of the loon and the whip-poor-will broke the stillness of the night. When the carpenters left, shaking their heads, over two queer city women, we bade them good-bye serenely. And serenely we placed our cots side by side in the west corner of the building where, later on, a bedroom would be. The house consisted of a long living room in front and two bed rooms and a kitchen behind. We went to sleep lulled by the croaking of the frogs in our bay and the sound of the waves lapping on the shore.

All the next day we congratulated ourselves on our daring and hardihood. We boasted about it to each other, reminding ourselves vaingloriously, how few of our friends would have the courage to do as we had done. The buying of the Island had been a cause for scoffing amongst them and if they had known of our present situation, they would have thought us hopelessly mad.

But we gloated over our emancipation. We roamed around the Island with our hatchets all day and in the first glow of possession found new charms in every tree and bush. We planted for-get-me-nots and ferns along the shore of

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our little bay and felt the tremendous exaltation of pioneers, self-sustaining and sufficient unto themselves. In our pride, we failed to remember that Mrs. Dunn, the farmer's wife, had that morning sent over milk, eggs and a baked chicken on which our independence rested.

As the afternoon wore on, the wind began to rise and it was manifest that the absence of doors and windows was a drawback under some circumstances. We drew our sweaters closely around us, looking pensively at the yawning fireplace whose supporting pillars of cement were still drying.

Jane didn't feel able to cope with the draughts nor the mosquitoes and anointing herself with citronella, she decided to go to bed at dark, which is nearly nine in that northern latitude. I took our only oil lamp into the kitchen, which was more free from draughts than the other corners of the camp, and started to write a letter. I was so soothed by the quiet about me, so lulled by the peace and solitude that it was hard for me to concentrate. I started a description of our heavenly, peaceful day and then sank into a semi-conscious state of pleasant

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reverie, a breath-taking enjoyment of solitude. The wind was rising. The skeleton house was full of creaks and strange noises and the wind had rather a banshee sound as it whistled in and out of our windowless openings. The whip-poor-will gave its mournful cry and the loon's yearning call to its mate sounded now and then above the wind. There was no rain, but it was getting to be a wild night and I was enjoying it as a child loves a story of the Bogie man from the security of its mother's lap. Presently, added to these wild cries of nature, I heard a human foostep. Not outside but in the camp, not thirty feet away and coming toward me slowly and stealthily.

But it was impossible! There had been no sound of oars, no lantern light on the water. I shook myself. It was Jane, of course, but why the stealthy tiptoeing and what did she have on her feet? The heavy muffled tread came nearer and nearer down the long living room. I called out, "Jane, is there anything the matter?" There was no answer and, looking up from my letter, I turned and saw a man standing quietly behind me. His face was very red and he had a wild strange look when his eyes



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met mine. Either a lunatic or a drunkard, I thought. Through my mind rushed bitter thoughts of the retribution that had overtaken me for coming to Canada, to escape the tiresome discussion of prohibition, but summoning my courage, I managed to stammer, "What do you want?"

"I came to see Greeta Stringer," he said huskily.

"But Greeta Stringer doesn't live here, she lives on the McPherson Island."

"Well," he said, shifting from one foot to another and eying me closely (perhaps to decide how best to attack), "this was the only light I saw on the lake."

With that, a gust of wind blew out the only light on the lake and left me standing in the dark with the stealthy intruder-murderer high-jacker-lunatic or whatever he was. My mind flashingly canvassed all these possibilities, keeping on the alert for any movement on his part. I fumbled for matches behind me while he explained that he thought there was only one inhabited island in the lake (quite true till yesterday), and that he was looking for Greeta, Mrs. McPherson's young cook.

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Skeptical, I struck a match and escorted him to the wide open door frame and pointed dramatically in the direction of the McPherson's Island. With a queer backward look, he disappeared down the trail in the underbrush.

"Don't believe him," said Jane, who had mutely heard the whole conversation buried under three blankets and a pillow and digging deeper every minute. "Go down to the shore and see if he got away." Obediently, and I marvel why, I took our only flashlight and started alone down the path.

Possessed by some demon of wickedness, the flashlight suddenly went out and left me in the dark surrounded by I knew not what terrors. I beat a hasty retreat back to the house, not knowing whether the marauder got away or was lurking in the bushes somewhere. We huddled into the corner where Jane was dug in and took counsel.

There was nothing to do but go to bed and since the light attracted visitors, and we had no doors to keep them out, we put out the light. We drew our cots even closer together and tried to go to sleep. It was useless. After a while

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I saw Jane get up quietly and go into the living room.

“What is it now?”

“A light in the woods,” she said, “a mysterious strange light that flashed for a moment on the birches. Someone coming to the Island again!”

We threw on our dressing gowns and waited, a defenceless pair. But there was nothing more. Our nerves were jumping. Together we went again down the path to the shore preferring to face our danger rather than have it come up behind us. Our flashlight was useless but there was a strange visibility all about and the birches looked sinister and ghostly in its weird light.

Why had we come to a lonely island and would we ever see home again? There seemed to be no sign of a boat, nor glimmer of light on the lake, so we went back to the house and lay awake for a long time, bolstering up each other's courage. We tried counting sheep, saying the twenty-third Psalm, and other comforting things, but nothing brought sleep to our excited brains. Hours passed and we had begun to persuade each other that perhaps our

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danger was over when a fearful crash was heard, a heavy body falling, then silence. This was too much! With chattering teeth we rose, dressed and waited for the dawn.

The returning day brought our friends, the carpenters, and they discovered that a heavy ladder had fallen from the roof to the ground which accounted for the ominous crash we heard. They were told to spend that day in making one room secure, partitions, windows, doors and bolts. We found we were not the intrepid adventurers we thought we were and a bolt seemed a priceless possession to us. The story of our sleepless night went up and down the lake and through the neighborhood.

It turned out that the marauder was in truth a young farmer, the affianced beau of Greeta Stringer. He was planning a pleasant surprise for her. He saw the light of our camp from the lake and made a noiseless landing. As he came up the hill he saw a woman sitting beside the light, her back to the door. Above her head hung pots and pans. It was Greeta, of course, and so still he thought she was asleep. Stealing upon her, as well as he could with his heavy boots, he planned to put his hands over



*Top— OUR FRIENDS THE CARPENTERS  
Bottom— ARTISANS AND ARTISTS OF ALL  
SORTS*

*Top— THE CHIMNEY  
Bottom— FELLING TREES*



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her eyes and say, "Guess who!" If he had, I should have gone into a permanent coma, but mercifully, I turned in time, and he, seeing a perfectly strange woman staring wildly at him, was almost as frightened as I was, probably thinking me a banshee that had ridden in on the wind.

The flickering light Jane saw in the trees was the Northern Lights. We saw them many times afterwards, a blue effulgence that lit the horizon and sometimes made a broad pathway of silver across the sky. We saw it afterwards with a feeling of awe at its beauty instead of the terror it first inspired.

The fright of that night of terror remained with us for several days. Bold in the daytime we would smile at our fears. We would put our cots in separate rooms and plan an exclusive privacy that we both preferred; but as night came on, one or the other of us would be caught dragging her cot to a place of comforting companionship beside the other.

After several uneventful nights, our confidence, founded on locks and bolts, returned, and peace and security once more enveloped us.

## FURNISHING AND PROVISIONING

THE camp grew more livable day by day. Our kitchen was in working order. Greta Stringer's sister was installed as cook and we were beginning to think of mild luxuries; something beyond the hard bench to sit on and the improvised boxes that had served as dressing tables. The bench, our first piece of furniture, we kept as a souvenir of pioneer days and used it for fireside chats. We called it the "ducking stool" for its two legs were too close to the center and many a time, later, a guest, warming herself, landed on the floor if she sat too far to one side. If, by any chance, two were sitting on it and one rose suddenly, the other was lucky if she fell into the wood box instead of the fire. But even bruised members and hurt feelings did not shake our loyalty to the bench. It was our eldest born. Chairs and rough couches began to arrive by freight from Toronto. These, however, did not satisfy our creative urge. We had always planned to have country made furniture and



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the McPhersons, who had camped on their island three summers before we came, had told us that the carpenters liked making these odd tables and stands. They consider it the cream of the job, and the head carpenter reserves to himself the privilege of doing all the furniture making. McDonald had strong feelings on the subject as I found later to my cost. As the summer wore on, we realized that McDonald didn't like Mr. Pête. It was one of his idiosyncrasies for everybody else did. He was the handy man of the whole region. Bill John, as he was called by his familiars, was of mixed descent but he had enough French blood to give him a certain Gallic charm. He always wore in his hat a jaunty green feather which was an index to his debonair character. I think McDonald's dour Scotch nature resented the green feather, for one thing. Then, too, McDonald was uncompromising. I asked him, after he had set the four big beams in my ceiling, if he would please take a hatchet and hack them here and there to make them look hand hewn. He was so indignant at the idea that I withdrew the request. Mr. Pête, to please me, would have gladly hacked them to pieces. He

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had a soft voice and gentle ways and this, combined with a shrewd knack of being able to turn his hand to anything, made him invaluable to the community. Bill John was not a specialist, though his chief interest was in machinery. His old Ford was his dearest possession and he was constantly taking it apart down to its bare bones and patching it together again. A Johnson machine was his next love and we often used ours as a decoy to get Mr. Pête over on the island and then we would lead him tactfully up to the real emergency that needed his shrewd observation, native wit and capable hand. But with all his natural gifts, Mr. Pête suffered the handicap of being able neither to read nor to write. He conducted his correspondence through Mrs. Dunn, who was his staunch friend, guardian and adviser. He had lived with the Dunns for a number of years and had made himself indispensable in the household. Mr. Dunn's chief source of pride was his gifted and versatile boarder and to the boys, he was a model to be copied with sedulous care. Mrs. McPherson had told us that Mr. Pête could make odd pieces of furniture but after having seen him, I realized that there

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were limits to his capacity. Jane, however, had not seen him. In making her memorandum for camp needs, while in Rome, she had put down: Item I. Furniture. To be made by Mr. Pête. Jane is an Italian enthusiast. She has spent several years in Italy and in Rome, last winter, she got an Italian Renaissance slant that she longed to introduce into her Canadian camp.

She had artistic sketches made of benches, writing desks and dressing table, but the chef d'oeuvres were to be an Italian Renaissance library table, and a screen to be covered with hand-blocked linen from Assisi. During the winter, she sent the sketches to Mr. Pête along with a cheque to buy the necessary lumber.

When Jane returned from Europe, I was in the white heat of construction problems and so absorbed in roof pitch, chimney draught and closet space that I had not thought of furniture yet. Living as we were, in my partly finished camp, in the utter confusion of building and provided with only the most elemental needs, the department of interior decorating had not yet brushed my consciousness. But in the intervals between discussions with the carpenter,

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of the relative merits of a straight and crooked angle for the windows, and the importance of making the doors fit the frames, I saw that Jane was troubled about something. One noon hour, while the carpenters were eating their bully beef sandwiches and drinking their strong black tea on the hillside, and Jane and I were lying on our blankets under the trees, she said musingly:

“I can’t understand, Virginia, why Mr. Pête didn’t make my furniture during the winter as I asked him to.”

“What furniture?” I inquired, looking past Jane at a cedar wax wing swinging in the tip-top of a tamarac tree.

“Why, all my furniture,” she said, “I sent him sketches from Rome of Italian tables and benches and asked him to have them ready for me when I came. He did nothing of the kind. He kept my cheque all those months and returned it to me the other day.”

“Why did he do that?” I asked, still absorbed in the cedar wax wing.

“He said he didn’t think he could make the furniture. He returned the sketches too. Here they are. Don’t you think he acted strangely?”

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I looked at the sketches. One was a refectory table of massive proportions and original design. The other was a copy of a lovely museum piece with carved pedestal from which branched four feet ending in lion's paws. Instead of being simple curved legs like a Duncan-Pfyff, they were intricately twisted and turned, like a writhing serpent, delicate yet strong, the masterpiece of some Italian furniture maker of the early sixteenth century. I looked at the drawing and then I looked at Bill John, the handy man, and I was moved to a horrid mirth. I rolled on the ground. I almost rolled into the lake.

"Jane, how could you?" I gasped.

"Well, you told me he could make furniture and I see *no* use in making ugly things!"

"But if he could make things like that, he wouldn't be here in the wilderness, working ten hours a day for thirty cents an hour, mixing mortar and dragging lumber up the hill."

Jane thought a moment and then she joined in the mirth. "Poor little man," she said, "that's why he looks so worried everytime he sees me."

Poor little man, indeed! I thought how those

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table legs had lain heavy on his chest all winter and how those claw feet must have ravaged his peaceful dreams. The cheque had no doubt been a misery to him, for he needed the money, but he didn't want to get involved with those intricate legs. Poor Bill John, so kindly, so anxious to please!

After a few minutes, Jane said meditatively, "Perhaps I *did* expect too much, but if he couldn't make the tables he could at least have made the screen frame. You can see from the sketch that the design is perfectly simple."

I looked at the sketch. Three neat little panels—very simple, indeed. "Did you send him the dimensions, Jane?"

"Dimensions?" Her face fell. "No, I forgot that."

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After a second short stay in New York, as a respite from building, I returned with a guest, expecting to find everything finished and in order in the camp. But not at all. The frontier Scotch are almost as procrastinating as the Spanish. My guest was ushered into a room bare of everything but a bed. There were no

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shelves, no washstand, no table for lamp or toilet articles. McDonald, who was to have made these things in my absence had failed to do so and was now working temporarily on Jane's cottage, leaving me only Mr. Pête, who was struggling along with the unfinished bathroom.

As I have said, McDonald didn't like Bill John. Why, I could never quite fathom. Bill John was so obliging that he was a favorite with everybody and I think McDonald was jealous of his popularity. Jane once heard him muttering to himself, "I never hear anything around here but Mr. Peet—Mr. Peet—Mr. Peet.

As head carpenter, he gave all the unpleasant jobs to Mr. Pête because he said he was not a *regular* carpenter. If there was an outhouse or a rough back porch to build, Bill John was given some worthless odds and ends of lumber and told to do it. He always longed to be on the main job with the real carpenters, but he never complained and accepted his lot as helper with cheerful acquiescence.

Finding him the only worker left at the camp, I put him to work at once to make tables and benches. He was in his element. He darted

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about in his faun-like way, putting up his bench, collecting his lumber and his tools. Unfortunately, he needed a plane. Having none, he borrowed one, at my suggestion, from Mr. McDonald's tool chest and set happily to work. He was getting on famously. We were all working—the guest as hard as anybody, driving nails with Mr. McDonald's hammer, to hang her clothes on, I using his rule to measure for shelves. McDonald came in on an errand and surveyed the workers all busy with his tools which were his pride. He said nothing to me, but told Bill John, in passing, that he wanted a few words with him.

Soon Bill John came back pale and trembling. "I'll be goin'," he said, "I don't want to make trouble, I'll just be goin'."

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"McDonald's awful mad, and he says if I touch the furniture, he'll quit the job. He says that's his work."

"But," I said, "that's unreasonable. He left me no one but you and I have to have these things."

"Well," he said, balancing from one foot to the other in his wild wood way, "if I don't go,



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he will. He's awful mad and I don't want to make trouble."

"Wait a moment," I said, "wait till I talk to Mr. McDonald." But the efficient faun was gone. A moment later I heard the dip of his oars and he was far out on the lake making for the farm and Tamarac Island saw him no more for a season.

I went up to Jane's camp, which was in the stage of windows and doors, and asked McDonald why he had taken so unreasonable a position.

"I've put up with scab labor as long as I've a mind to," he said. (His dignity would not allow him to mention the tools or the furniture.) "I should have left the first time Bill John drove a nail. If an inspector came by, I'd have been put square out of the union."

I thought how improbable an inspector's visit would be to this remote wilderness but I only said, "I didn't know that union rules were observed in the Bush. You've never mentioned it before. However, since Mr. Pête has gone home now for good, there is no other course but for you to return and finish your job yourself."

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This he did, somewhat acidly at first, but, during the week that he spent happily making furniture that was both useful and artistic, he forgot his ire against Bill John. Though he couldn't achieve Renaissance pieces, McDonald had a real knack for making built-in desks, tables, odd benches and stands that were just the things for camp. My guest and I painted and stained busily, willow green, tamarac red, weathered oak, according to the room being furnished, and though we, too, were scab labor, no further mention of the union was made. As an issue, the union was dead and buried and nobody wanted to resurrect such an unpleasant spectre. When the refectory table, made of heavy pine, was finished, it was stained a weathered oak and was christened, thanks to foreign residence, with a gay ceremony, a libation of sparkling Burgundy, toasts and speeches.

One day, a week later, I was glad to see the morning boat arriving with the workmen and Mr. Pête at the stern, running the Johnson motor with a beaming smile on his face. The painting was to start that day and McDonald, who had asthma, and didn't like painting, had

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swallowed his pride and asked Bill John to come back on the job.

The camp was to be painted the red of a tamarac bud and the gay color went well with Bill John's gay nature.

He hopped up and down ladders like a squirrel, balancing himself at the most impossible angles. Having no real painters' equipment, he resorted to all sorts of expedients for reaching difficult places. He tied his paint brush to a pole and daubed the peaks of the gable ends from nearby trees, and finally climbed on the roof and hung head downward to finish the white trim of the eaves. I thought he would have concussion of the brain and kept cloths saturated for instant use. But there were no casualties and when the job was finished, he folded his arms and surveyed it with pride.

"It's a nice color," he said, "'red.' It makes a fellow feel happy."

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Getting food on the Island was one of the main preoccupations of the Islanders. It seemed impossible that so much could be consumed by so few. Staples came from the general cross-

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roads store two miles away, canned goods from Toronto and meat was obtained here and there in various ways. The Stage driver brought it, if it came by express and he had a casual way of leaving it in the Sugar Bush near the boat landing where we sometimes found it and sometimes didn't. One night, when we were expecting guests, the roast was so well hidden in the woods that we couldn't find a trace of it. A searching party was sent out from the farm and together we beat the bushes for half a mile up and down the shore, but to no avail. We longed for blood hounds to put them on the trail and somebody suggested a rabbit dog, but finally one of the boarders at the Farm, who was more familiar with Mr. Coster's ways than we were, came upon the meat in a dense raspberry thicket, covered from every human eye by a large flat stone. After this, Jane didn't trust Mr. Coster to deliver her roasts. She always went to the Post Office to fetch them herself. One hot August day when the hammock and a detective story beckoned alluringly, Jane announced that a roast was expected and must be met at the Post Office. So, reluctantly, we rowed to the Sugar Bush, then walked the two long hot



THE SUGAR BUSH



## TWO ON AN ISLAND

miles, which seemed four on a sultry afternoon. Meat seemed a gross objective for such a steaming day, and I made a firm resolve to become a vegetarian, but only after I had eaten part of this roast that we were trudging the many miles to get. Partly compensated for my exertions by finding some blooming for-get-me-not plants, I was looking through Mrs. Betts' trash pile for a discarded box to carry them in, when I saw Jane emerge from the Post Office with an unusually large box under her arm.

"It's a big roast this time," she said, handing me the letters and papers, "and we'll have a feast tomorrow. Beef with onions and fresh tomatoes, no more canned salmon for a while!"

The box grew heavier and heavier as the miles lengthened, and we sat down frequently to rest on the return journey.

I was sure it was the whole hind quarter of a calf, no less, from its size, shape and weight. At last, we reached the landing. The sun was low and the crossing was cool and restful. We were footsore and weary. Our backs ached, our muscles were strained but we were content, for meat was a luxury those first weeks.

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Home again at last! Jane opened the box while I was reading my mail.

“Lovely tomatoes,” I heard her murmuring, “and such nice cucumbers.” Then after a pause, a smothered exclamation of dismay.

“What is it?” I asked, “anything wrong with the roast?”

“Come and look at it!” she said with a tragic gesture.

There, in the bottom of the box in place of the expected roast, lay one of the largest cabbages ever grown. It must have weighed nine pounds or possibly ten. Jane was speechless.

Neither Jane nor I eat cabbage. We are not neutral about it. We are not even tolerant. We abhor the sight of it. After expressing ourselves forcibly about a country butcher’s idea of a substitute for meat, we carried it to the lake, said an incantation of “Damn” three times and cast it in. It bobbed about waggishly for some time while Jane and I sat down to a supper of bread and cheese and thought about tomorrow’s menu of canned salmon and salad. But it was too much for our morale. Decadence had set in. We were no longer satisfied with canned food and country bacon had begun to pall on us.



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After supper we sat down on comparatively empty stomachs, and composed one of the most appetizing telegrams ever written. This we sent to the nearest metropolis and two days later, we were dining on filets mignons, mushrooms and chocolate cake and taking a wicked pleasure in returning to the sins of the flesh.

## NEIGHBORS

AT the head of the lake was the Dunns' farm. We often rowed the half mile across the water, beached our boats on their sandy shore, and before going through the farm gate, we passed by the pig sty where a fierce hog always grunted raucously and glowered at us from his lair. It was like biting the hand that fed him because he lived off our garbage which the workmen brought him at the close of day, and like the hatter's butter, it was the best garbage and deserved more gratitude.

I endured the hog with fortitude because he was securely enclosed, but what I could never get used to, were the cows loose and scattered all over the place. At any turn of the path, we might encounter from one to a dozen. All my life I have had a desperate fear of cows. I must have had some remote ancestor who was gored by a bull for the sight of a pair of horns fills me with terror. I don't mind dehorned cows and I can view with serenity, the idea of being gently



THE FLEET

The Gull, Mary Jane, Tippy and Taxi



## TWO ON AN ISLAND

butted to death, but to be gored or “hooked” as we called it in my youth, is the nightmare that haunts me. I always approached the farm with a big blue umbrella grasped tightly in my hand. The color was to soothe the cows and the handle to use in dire extremity, if I had courage enough not to run and vitality enough to resist. At the farm, as at Prestons, we were referred to as the “Big one and the Little one” and we met with a kindly welcome always. The best chairs were dusted for us and we rarely went home without cookies or buns from Mrs. Dunn’s well stocked larder. Sometimes with a finger to her lips a mysterious package was given us which turned out to be venison. The farm supplied us with every human need. It was the main artery of our existence and Jane’s artless remark to Mr. Dunn, one day, when he was felling trees, covered the whole case. In a burst of appreciation for some kindness, she said enthusiastically, “I declare, Mr. Dunn, I just don’t see how we could get along if you and Mrs. Dunn were to die.”

I think Mr. Dunn appreciated the compliment but the observation cast a certain gloom over the occasion, which only lifted after we

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had given him a strong cup of tea and a large piece of apple pie.

Every morning we were roused to consciousness by the sound of oars; somebody arriving with the milk and vegetables from the farm. But food and human fellowship was not all the farm furnished. Mrs. Dunn's knowledge of cookery attracted others besides the members of her family, and in the group which surrounded her, there were artizans and artists of sorts, specialists in mechanics, stone work, forestry, dredging and dynamiting. Whatever we needed in our building operations, it seemed, the Dunn's boarding house could furnish. Not that these artizans carried diplomas. They had learned their trade in the hard school of necessity, but behind their work was a sincerity and honesty that was better than the slipshod methods of the union labor of our native land. Mr. Dunn's specialty was cutting trees, but there was a ruthlessness about his method that had to be watched. Even on the Island, where growth was so dense that light could scarcely penetrate, which tree to cut was a subject of prayerful consideration with Jane and me. But we found that these hardy woodsmen had a

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

thirst for felling trees. If you took your eye off them for one moment, they had two trees down instead of one, and with a celerity and dexterity that made your head whirl. In my innocence of his tree thirsty rage, at first, I asked Mr. Dunn to clear a trail for me from one short point to another. I heard the crashing fall of timber, rushed to the spot and with a blood-curdling cry, I saved a lovely pine that had the axe at its throat. Mr. Dunn brought his swinging axe to the ground and stood in an attitude of defense against the wild creature who was rushing toward him. I apologized for the scream, explaining the emergency.

“Well,” he said, “I thought you wanted a straight path.”

“Oh, no, not at all,” I cried earnestly, “I want to go around *practically everything*.”

Mr. Dunn had no sympathy for artistic windings and no doubt thought my taste for indirectness was a flaw in my character. Mr. Dunn was not a mental prodigy, far from it, but he had rock-ribbed principles which he would not abandon. Once he told me that he had an old hen that worried him a lot, she just “set constant” and with no eggs under her, it

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was a great waste of time, he thought. Visions of my childhood in Virginia came to me and I made the homely suggestion that he might do what I had often seen the old negro mammies do in Virginia, that is, duck the setting hen in a pail of water and tie a red rag to her ankle. This would, for some occult reason, release her from the complex of setting and put her to laying again. But Mr. Dunn's principles surged up within him.

"No, missis," he said, "I couldn't do that to a hen. "It's a hen's nature to set and I couldn't go against nature."

When he told me once that his garden was "poorly" because it hadn't been "well wed," I thought he was referring to the mysteries of pollinization till he seized a weeding tool and went to work.

George Dunn's specialty was dock building and bay clearing. He was fond of the girls and spent much time in the kitchen where Anna entertained him with bucolic badinage and an occasional tidbit.

Old Mr. Rhodes was the best educated member of the group. I well remember the first time I heard his clear, deep, modulated tones. I was



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taking my ease in bed one morning when I heard the sound of voices outside my window. Mr. Pête was talking to someone with the trained voice of an actor or of a public speaker, deep, rich quiet tones that soothed the nerves. They were talking about the drains for the house and the right place to put them. Mr. Pête had told me there was a good dynamiter staying at Dunn's and now he had brought him. Mr. Rhodes was as warmly attached to dynamite as Mr. Pête was to machinery. Just let a whisper go about the country side that a well was to be dug, a pit sunk or a boulder removed and Mr. Rhodes, whose vocation still at the age of seventy was felling trees, would drop everything and arrive with dynamite, drills and fuses eager to blow up something. Jane, like I, had her pet terrors. I admired her courageous attitude toward cows and she handled a row boat in a wind in a way to put me to shame, but she had streaks of timidity that from the general independence of her nature seemed surprising and illogical.

After her camp was finished, she would stay gallantly alone for nights on her end of the Island. Then, in another mood, she would sit

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in my camp and shiver at the sound of the wind rattling a shingle, or a sighing tree scraping against the roof. She would never enter her cottage alone after sundown. The rule was that I go with her and help look for lurking burglars. Their absence being thoroughly established, she would put her unloaded pistol in easy reach and retire with perfect serenity. Jane, by this time, had established a reputation as a dare-devil shot and it had come about quite by accident. One day, when several of the working staff from the farm were on the Island, Jane was cautiously opening her ancient firearm to find out if the rust of years had rendered it entirely useless. She was surprised to have it go off suddenly in her hand. Fortunately it was not pointing upward or the verdict would have been "suicide with no apparent cause." The sound reverberated and, with the echo repeated from all the cliffs around, it sounded like a machine gun attack. Everyone came running with mouths agape.

There stood Jane holding the smoking pistol in her hand and gazing at a large hole in the floor. Realizing that this was no time for weak

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confessions she rose magnificently to the occasion and said in an offhand way, "I'm sorry if I frightened anyone. It's nothing at all. I was just practicing a little like we do in Texas. I was aiming at that knot in the floor and" she added triumphantly "I hit it." The men tiptoed away shaking their heads and Jane thinks she has been treated with an added respect ever since.

I have already spoken of Jane's fear of fire. At the mere mention of dynamite, she turned pale. I respected this fear and always gave her fair warning when Mr. Rhodes was about to light a fuse. Jane would take to her bed and put a soft pillow over her ears till the mild shower of broken rock had gone up and come down at my house, two hundred and fifty feet away. In some way, Mr. Rhodes misplaced a small nail keg full of dynamite and for two weeks, search as we might, we couldn't find it.

At last it was found under the corner of Jane's house, directly beneath her bed. Mr. Rhodes had placed it under a tree in the woods, but Jane's head carpenter was a thrifty soul and, seeing an unattached nail keg full of something, he supposed it was nails, stowed it away for

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

future use and forgot it. Jane had slept peacefully on top of it for two weeks. She aged perceptibly when she knew what a daring thing she had done.

There were two pits to dig, one for the grease trap and one for the bathroom, and when that was done, there were boulders to be taken out of the bay and huge rocks to be moved from one place to another, so Mr. Rhodes' rich deep tones were heard on the island for several weeks.

Besides the wisdom of age and experience, he had a great deal of general information about geology, forestry and mechanics. He had a caustic wit and the sin he most abhorred was laziness which he thought he observed in the farmers' sons about. George Dunn once had a severe attack of lumbago which kept him in bed for ten days. I asked Mr. Rhodes what he thought could cause lumbago in one so young. "I think," he said dryly, "he has worn his back out lying on it."

One day he asked me what was my son's business.

"He is a lawyer," I said.

The old man looked at me with his shrewd

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

humorous glance and said, "They make a lot of money lying, don't they?"

I explained with dignity the ethics and poverty of the profession. Being of a legal family on both sides, I felt the necessity of rising to the defense of the American Bar.

Mr. Rhodes smiled and apologized in a courtly manner. He told me that he himself had wanted to study law but had no money. An uncle, who was a clergyman had offered to send him to college on the condition that he would go into the ministry, but a clergyman's life didn't appeal to him. He told how in middle life he had taken a correspondence course from the Metropolitan College of New York and had graduated with honors.

"Yes," he said, "I answered ninety per cent of the questions they sent me but I never did get my diploma."

"How was that?" I inquired.

"Why, Madame, they wanted me to pay three dollars for a wee bit of sheepskin with just my name on it and I wouldn't do it. There's graft in everything!"

About this time the Dunns had a fire, always a terrifying thing in the Canadian woods. We

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could hear the roar of the flames from our island and in the middle of the night it looked like a serious conflagration. We went over early in the morning to see if there was anything we could do and found, to our relief, that it was a big barn and not the farm house that had burned to the ground. The barn was full of hay which of course made a tremendous fire, and Jimmy Dunn, who was sleeping in it, had a very narrow escape. The farm was almost deserted, as the whole family had left at dawn for Ottawa to collect the insurance. Only Mr. Rhodes and Jimmy were there to guard the still smouldering ruins. Jimmy showed us, with pride, his singed forelock and thoroughly enjoyed being the hero of the occasion.

Mr. Rhodes was gazing at the ruins with a pessimistic expression on his face.

By way of being cheerful, I said, "What a blessing it was insured!" Mr. Rhodes shook his head. "They won't get a cent, not a cent," he said.

"But why?" I asked.

"Did you ever see the Metropolitan Building in New York, Madame?"

I nodded a vague assent.



THE BAY





## TWO ON AN ISLAND

“People can’t build buildings like that,” he said, “and pay honest claims. There’s graft in everything!”

He was wrong that time. The Dunn’s returned happily the next day with their insurance money in their pockets and expressed their satisfaction by spending most of it on a large party to their friends. The barn was not rebuilt.

There was another Herculean task that needed Mr. Rhodes. We had found a petrified tree, or rather, a section of one. It had been taken from the bottom of the bay because it scraped the boats in low water—a quarter section of some forest monster some thousand years ago. It would make a wonderful sun dial but how to get it up on the high sunny ledge where we were planting wild flowers and ferns? Bill John was called in consultation.

“He’s a big lad,” he said, “and mabbe he’ll be a mite tricky ’count of the shape of him, but Mr. Rhodes and I will fix him.” So with the aid of crow bars and a chain and two sturdy wills behind them, the big monolith started its journey around the end of the bay and up a steep rock wall to the garden point. To the wall it seemed easy, then seven devils entered into it

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and it refused to go up the plank walk prepared for it. Heave, pull, prop as they might, it would roll up a little way, then roll down again. This happened three times. With elemental patience they walked round and round it, studying its contours, trying to find the best grip for the chain, the best angle for the crow bars, then another try. With a mighty heave, accompanied by a cry of "There he comes," the rock budged several inches.

"Hoist him again," called Mr. Rhodes, gripping the chain. Bill John's crow bar bit deep into the earth, he threw his weight upon it, both of them gave a mighty heave, but alas!—the crow bar slipped and with great force Bill John landed on his stomach on the rock. He righted himself instantly but looked a little dashed as we murmured words of sympathy and concern. This was the moment Mr. Rhodes chose to take out his pipe, light it and between cheerful puffs, he gave voice to the following inspired poem.

"Don't give way to foolish sorrow  
Let this keep you in good cheer  
Better days will come tomorrow  
If you *only* persevere."

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“If Bill hadn’t been such a pessimist,” he added, “that lad would have rolled right where he had to go.”

Bill John, always the soul of cheer and determination, took this Scotch witticism with a half smile, but he stopped ruefully rubbing his injured part, gave his trousers a yank and addressed himself doggedly to the boulder.

“What’s the matter with ye? Ye don’t want to get up there, do you? Well, we’ll see. We’ll fix you this time, me lad.”

Another method with the chain was tried, again the crow bar sunk deep, Mr. Rhodes pulled and Bill John with a superhuman “hist” rolled the boulder to the top of the wall where it paused an instant, lurched heavily and fell into the embryonic garden, burying a whole bed of forget-me-nots under it. I suppressed, but not entirely, a ladylike cry. Bill John, red in the face and sweating from every pore, looked up inquiringly. “It’s all right,” I lied, “I thought it was going to fall—on your foot.”

Bill John, from the top of the wall, looked down at the forget-me-nots, then at his foot and then at me. It was a pitiful lie and he knew it but he was too much of a gentleman to show

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

it, so we smiled at each other in mutual understanding, while the great rock was finally rolled into its place.

We made a discovery in our bay. As the summer waned, the water in the lake began to get lower and this caused the bay to shrink perceptibly, leaving a muddy beach all around it. This mud, we found to be loam and, as the water receded, this deep bed of loam was dug out by a force from the farm and used as the most excellent fertilizer for all our plants. A great find on a rocky island, almost devoid of soil. Shovelling and depositing the loam became one of our favorite outdoor sports. Bill John, Mr. Dunn and George working with big shovels and a wheel barrow, and Jane and I with our trowels depositing it around the roots of our transplanted wild flowers. Guests were expected to join in and share this diversion with us and if we found them lacking in enthusiasm, we gave them a black mark. We lost some of our friends during the summer but those who came through gallantly, would always have a warm welcome to Tamarac Island and a certificate of graduation from raking and trowelling.

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But the loam was not all we found in our bay. Under it was a stratum of gray-green clay which we found perfect for modelling. We began by making little round squat Indian jugs which we baked in the sun and then in the hot coals of the fireplace, which turned them a nice terra cotta.

Glowing with the pride of a new enterprise, we decided to make a sun dial for the petrified tree trunk. The first one, in our ignorance, we marked with only twelve hours, placed at even intervals around the disk like a clock, and we were surprised when it registered with an absolute disregard of the truth. The second one was marked with more accuracy, for I took my seat beside it, with a watch, and remained the greater part of the day to mark the hours while the clay was still soft and pliable. When noon came, we discovered it was facing, unfortunately, to the south instead of to the north, so with a batter cake turner, two bread knives and a chisel, we held our breaths and turned it around. Then, being correctly marked, we put it on a large corrugated pasteboard top and thus eased it into the fire. It came out a lovely reddish brown but, unfortunately, as the cardboard

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under it burned up, it cracked through the middle. Not to be defeated, we gave it a good application of Le Page's glue, jammed it together and set it to work.

But the autumn rains had begun. The crack widened and widened and finally, it fell apart. Like the cave man, we are learning the vicissitudes of the potter's craft and we shall try again next summer.



A MOTHER LOON CAME CLOSE TO OUR DOCK





## AUTUMN

AUTUMN on Tamarac Island was a gold and copper glory. The slim birches on the island looked like tall white candles burning with a yellow flame. The shores of the mainland were lined with copper and scarlet maples. The air was crisp and cold and in the camp a big log fire burned constantly. These were the days that we read aloud and sewed, or took long tramps through the forests to some nearby lake, or climbed a high hill for the view. The wild ducks came swimming in the early morning around the Island with their half-grown broods, perching on our rocks and diving for fish in perfect fearlessness and abandon. They are never shot at, these Saw-bills, as they live on fish and are not palatable. But the Mallard and Black-head Ducks are more rarely seen as they know their danger and stay in the wilder parts of the lake. A big mother loon with her baby on her back came close to our dock early one morning, to investigate its construction. Sud-

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denly the pump started and with a wild cry she dived and came up far out in the middle of the lake, in screaming hysterics till family relations were once more established with her child. The big Bull Frog in our bay has come to know us so well that he lets us come very near him and scratch his back with a stick. He sits all day under a log that we have provided for him and blinks and catches flies and at night he gives one or two hollow croaks to let us know he is still on guard. At first, from the strong family resemblance, we called him Mickleham, but we soon realized that it was an injustice to so amiable a friend and he has blinked and croaked to the dignified name of Col. Carter, ever since. He is so absent minded that he allows us to sit on the bottom of the bay close beside him and doesn't even see us. When he comes out of his reverie, with a galvanic movement, he is far away and looks surprised and indignant that we should have taken such a liberty. He has a droll way of raising his right forefoot to his right eye for all the world like a military salute and then he solemnly winks the left eye. He only does this for Jane and me,

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never for an outsider, which makes us think it is a greeting rather than a nervous affliction.

It was near the time of the Harvest Festival in the little English Church in the village, a pretty ceremony where sheaves of fruit, flowers and grain are brought to be blessed by the visiting Rector of the Parish. This was to be an unusually important occasion as there were to be several confirmations and the Bishop of Ontario, himself, on his annual fishing trip in the region, was to be present. Some repairs were needed in the church and Mr. Pête with his usual kindness had volunteered to make them before the great occasion. Unfortunately, Mr. Pête, with all his virtues had one great weakness—the bottle. Pay day for him meant a trip to the nearest Dominion store and for a day or two, a period of total eclipse. When he emerged, his eyes were red and his speech fumbling but even in his cups, he was kind and obliging. It happened to be after one of these periodical lapses that he came across to the Island, one day, to ask if he could get a few pieces of lumber to finish a door of the church. The kind he wanted was stored under the

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house and it required a flat abdominal crawl to reach it. I noticed that he was rocking slightly and his glance was wavering while he talked but, doggedly, he attacked the job on hand.

He wriggled painfully under the low house and out again several times, collecting his material. From the porch where I was sitting reading, I watched his movement for a few minutes and then, all noise of collecting ceasing, I thought he was through and gone. But, twenty minutes later, passing by the side of the camp, I saw two heavy boots, toes downward and parts of two khaki-clad legs sticking out from under the house. They were absolutely motionless. I was alarmed. I called. There was no answer. Jane and I consulted anxiously whether we should each take a foot and try to pull him out. We realized that we might catch him on a nail and perhaps do him great damage. Just then we heard a snore, a rhythmical crescendo, punctuated by an occasional snort. We called again and with much grunting and grumbling, Bill John began to back out from the suffocating niche where sleep had overtaken him, murmuring unconvincingly, "I can't find that dang lumber nowhere."

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

Too befogged to continue his search, waveringly he started for his boat, but he couldn't remember where he had left it. He wandered around the island looking into every possible cove but no boat was to be found. Finally the prow of the Lily was discovered just visible above the water. The rest of her had sunk and was resting peacefully on the bottom of the lake. At no time very seaworthy, the Lily had not been able to bear up under the weight of a huge boulder which Mr. Pête had cast into her in his disordered state of mind to keep her from getting away from him. It took an hour to heave out this monster stone, and to bail and float the Lily after the Polyphemus missile was ejected. Mr. Pête, without the lumber for the church, but full of the pious zeal that brought him, was last seen in a state of happy intoxication, weaving all over the lake and singing lustily a variety of songs, some religious and some, alas! quite otherwise.

The days are too lovely to stay indoors. On one of our tramps following an old lumber trail, we came suddenly through a hedge of lilac bushes upon an old house built of stone, three stories high, with chimneys and cellars

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and every evidence of intended permanence. It was miles away from any habitation on a high hill, with a commanding view and its crumbling walls and its chimneys covered with Virginia creeper told a story of some English pioneer, a younger son perhaps, who in early days came to Canada with money and a dream of building an estate in this lovely region.

It was so long ago that no one knows the story now, but I imagine the cold defeated him; the long winters that start with killing frosts in September and last till the following May, when the only means of communication for months is by sleigh or snowshoes.

I can imagine the great homesickness for England's green fields after months and years of snow and ice and loneliness.

We lingered near the melancholy old house for some time, saw a snake glide noiselessly into his hole beside the former fireside, and came away with roots of lilac and Virginia creeper to plant in memory of the high hopes of some courageous spirit who built a manor house in a wilderness.

A similar story is revealed at the lower end of the lake, where there is an island called Major

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Fulton's Island. Here, many years ago, a retired English Major, his wife and two daughters, for some reason, buried themselves from the world. They built a small house hardly more than a shack on the mainland, and kept their chickens on the island safe from foxes and lynx. Whatever reverses sent them to the wilderness, it is evident that they tried to preserve some of the traditions of gentle birth. On a hill near the tumbled down house, with a lovely view of the lake, is a rustic summer house where they took their tea, and a green glade running along the shore, bordered with bracken and lime trees, was evidently the promenade of the old couple.

A fine stone ice house and a luxuriant mint bed indicate that the Major took consolation for his exile in the cup that cheers. Let us hope he did. It is said that he and his wife led a solitary life and tried to keep their daughters from mingling with the native society, but youth and nature prevailed over prejudice, and the daughters married small farmers and moved to another community.

Another story of the region is of Mrs. Dunn's aristocratic lineage. Her mother, of a proud

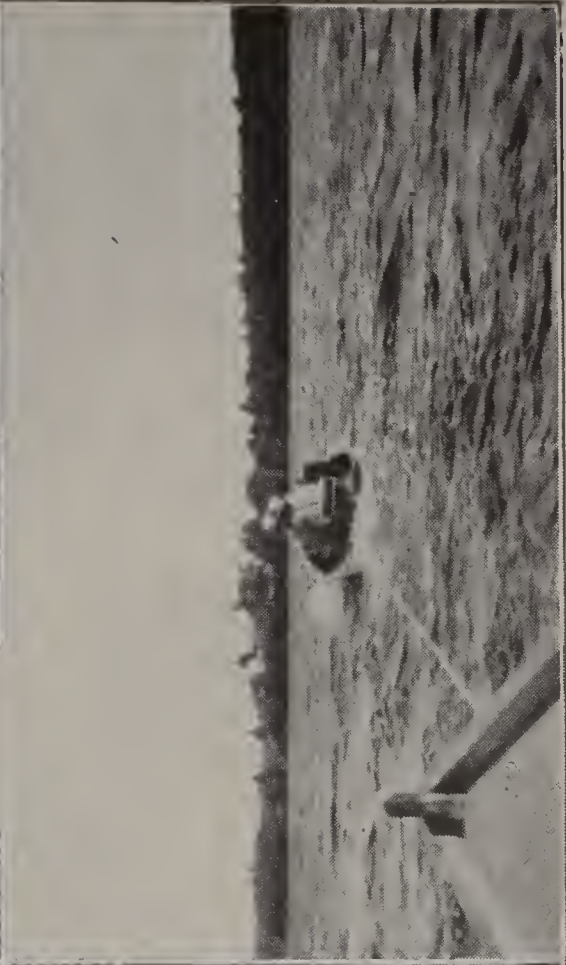
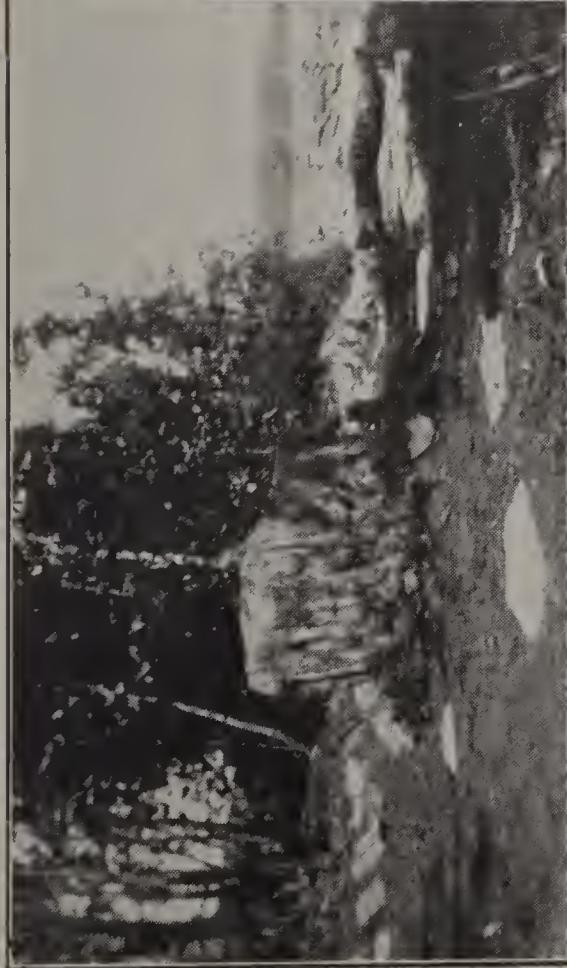
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and ancient Scotch family, so the story goes, ran away with her father's footman and came to Canada. Her family disowned her and never forgave her. She lived the hard life of a farmer's wife and Mrs. Dunn tells how, on great occasions, her mother would take from a little box a few pieces of jewelry which she showed to her children, telling them of her happy childhood.

After her mother's death, Mrs. Dunn told us that this box could not be found and she believes that her mother sent it back to her family in Scotland as a last token of her loyalty and love. I have always been haunted by the thought that someone stole the box and sold its contents for drink. I hope I'm wrong for it is a nice story of a wayward daughter returning in spirit to the family fold.

The autumn days were full of glory and we hated to leave the Island and all that it meant to us of freedom and simplicity, but the mornings were growing cold and the nights colder. The time had come to leave. Reluctantly we set a date and went through all the ceremony and labor of closing up. The bay must be closed with a heavy boom to keep out driftwood, all





THE BOOM

LEAVING

Top—

Bottom—

THE SUNDIAL

THE GULL

Top—

Bottom—



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water pipes taken down, screens stored away, storm doors and windows put up everywhere and the pumps brought into the house. Mattresses were suspended from the beams by ropes to prevent field mice from gnawing holes in them, and the chimneys were covered over to keep out snow and chimney swifts. With only one window left open for air and one door for an early morning egress, we spent our last night in camp almost as uncomfortably as our first, with conditions just reversed.

To add to our discomfort, it turned bitterly cold in the night and with no fire to moderate the temperature, we had to put on all the available sweaters and coats that we had intended to leave behind for camp use. Muffled like Esquimaux, we left early in the morning in the Gull towing behind us the big row boat Mary Jane with the trunks. Mr. Pête's car was at the farm waiting to take us to the station. The trunks were loaded in the truck and we were off!

We stopped at the store to pay our bills and to say good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. Betts who had done us many kindnesses during the summer. We lost some time there, settling accounts, and

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realized when we started again that we had hardly time to catch the one daily train going south. George Dunn was driving, for Mr. Pête, the week before, had traded his "reliable Ford" for a secondhand Chevrolet, which he had taken a violent dislike to. He was at a loss to understand its peculiarities, but George, who had had a broken down "Chev" for two years, knew all its family tricks, which Bill John was trying to learn from him. He sat beside George, looking sad and depressed.

"I don't like him," he said, indicating the "Chev." "He took me over a stone wall the first time I went out with him, and the next time he threw me in a ditch. I'm afeered he's not reliable."

George reassured him and for the first five miles of the journey we went very well. Then we heard a horn sounding repeatedly behind us. It got nearer and we saw a car in the distance honking at every yard.

"We might have left something," we said, "but we can't stop now or we'll miss the train."

So we speeded up. The honking car did likewise. It became a race and the "Chev" was winning it. But as we approached a house, a

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

woman came running out in the road waving a dish towel and shouting, "They telephoned from the store to stop you."

The honking car dashed up. Mr. Betts looking much perturbed and holding a slip of paper in his hand got out and came to me in great excitement. What he had was an American Express Cheque for a good sum which he had cashed for me from Post Office money and which I, in my haste, had neglected to sign.

Appearances were certainly against me after the race we had put up and Mr. Betts' remark made it seem worse.

"Youse told me that one of youse was going to Spain for the winter and the other one to Italy and I couldn't see how I would get my money back unless I caught you before you started."

Profound apologies and a fountain pen cleared up the awkward situation and Mr. Betts, relieved of his anxiety, waved us a smiling good-bye. We started again, but the Chev, apparently exhausted from the race, soon began to boil. As there was no house anywhere for miles, George finally got down in the road and with a tin can scooped up water and mud from

## TWO ON AN ISLAND

a puddle, which he fed to the boiling engine. The Chev swallowed it, gurgling and muttering at the indignity, Bill John meanwhile shaking his head and saying, "He's a bad lad. I don't like him."

A half mile from the station, we stopped again; the engine was too hot to go on. We looked at our numerous bags. It would be impossible to carry them so far. How exasperating! Should we give up the race now? No! Another obscure puddle was found, another mixed dose administered and the Chevrolet boiled up to the station just as the train pulled in. The obliging conductor held it while we bought tickets, checked trunks and said good-bye to Mr. Pête and George. We were aboard. The plunging started and with a sigh we realized that Tamarac Island was receding into the distance. Our backs were turned upon the cool deep blue of our lake, upon the islands, gold and copper in the autumn haze, upon the gray cliffs of the western shore, growing grayer and more rugged with the falling of the leaves, and our faces were set, resolutely, towards the glare, the clamor and the confusion that we call civilization.







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