

ALLEN WILLIS BOYD

GULF AND GLACIER; OR,
THE PERCIVALS IN ALASKA

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The Percivals in Alaska**

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CHAPTER I.

NORTHERN BOUND

“All aboard!”

It was a bright July morning, and its gladness was reflected in the faces of the throng that hurried to and fro, like an army of particularly busy ants, in the Boston and Lowell Depot.

Way trains puffed in and out, discharging their loads of out-of-town people, who poured through the doorway in an almost continuous stream, carrying baskets of lunch, bunches of pond lilies and the small parcels that tell of every-day trips to the city.

On the opposite side of the station stood a Canadian Pacific train. The massive trucks and heavy English build of the tawny cars distinguished them from the stock required for local traffic. This was the train which was to take a hundred or more passengers, without change, across the broad American Continent. From the windows of those very cars, the travelers were to look out upon the rolling Western prairies, the ravines and snowy summits of the Rocky Mountains, and at last, the blue waters of the Pacific. No wonder the people on this side of the station, those departing, as well as those to be left behind, wore a more serious and anxious look upon their faces than the light-hearted suburbans who chatted gaily on their brief daily trip of a dozen miles.

How curiously the hundred tourists looked into one another's eyes? “Will he prove a delightful companion, I wonder?” they said to themselves. “Is she to be a life-long friend, dating from this moment when our paths meet for the first time?”

“All aboard!” shouts the conductor again.

It has been well said that a railway station is a fit emblem of human life, with its brief merriment and grief, its greetings and good-bys, its clamor of coming and going.

Be this as it may, it is probable that of the half a thousand people in the Lowell Depot that morning, but few abandoned themselves to moral reflections. Certainly Tom Percival was not occupied with philosophical meditation, as he stood on the lowest step of the car “Kamloops,” looking out eagerly over the crowd that surged to and fro on the platform beside the train.

“Halloo, Ran!” he shouted suddenly, waving his hat and beckoning to a young man of about his own age, who was making his way toward the car, valise in hand.

“All right, Tom,” responded the other. “Come along, Fred,” he added to a companion at his side. “Here's the ‘old cabin home’ for the next week or so, I suppose.”

The three young fellows – or boys, as it is easier to call them, once for all – shook hands all round, and then, standing on the car platform, turned to the crowd again as the train started and slowly moved out of the station.

“Good-by! good-by!”

“Be sure to write!”

“Bring me a totem pole from Alaska!”

“Hurrah! hurrah!”

And amid a medley of shouts and frantic wavings of handkerchiefs the long train rumbled away, northward bound.

Randolph Burton made his way into the car, followed by his cousin Tom and their chum Fred Seacomb. Randolph had just passed his Sophomore examination successfully at Harvard, while Tom was rejoicing over his admission to the Freshman class, with only one condition. Fred was a pupil in a

scientific school at Philadelphia. He was as dignified and scrupulously neat as ever, and his eyeglasses twinkled as of old.

“Where are the girls?” inquired Randolph, turning to Tom.

The car was filled with passengers, all talking at once, and besieging the porter with questions.

“In our ‘drawing-room,’ at the other end of the car,” replied Tom. “You know father and mother have a jolly little room all to themselves, but we shall use it as headquarters, the whole way to Vancouver.”

“Thomas alludes to Vancouver as if it were East Somerville or Braintree,” remarked Fred, eying that young man calmly. “How many times did you say you had crossed the Continent?”

“Don’t you concern yourself about me,” rejoined Tom. “If you’d ground up on this trip as I have, perhaps you’d feel on familiar terms with Assiniboia and Saskatchewan and” —

“Oh! here he comes, talking Indian as usual,” interrupted a merry voice. “Randolph and Fred are with him.”

“Glad to see you, Miss Sibley!” said Fred, with his most elegant bow.

“Oh! please,” laughed the sunny-haired girl, “I’m going to be just ‘Pet’ on this trip, any way. I sha’n’t be seventeen till November, you know.”

The boys seemed relieved at this declaration, and, perching on the arms of the car seats, entered into lively conversation with Pet, as well as Tom’s sisters, Kittie and Bess.

The whole party, it may now be explained, had started on a journey to Alaska. The young people had worked hard at their studies during the winter, and Mr. Percival, being a man of ample means, as well as of good sense and thoroughly kind heart, had included in his invitation Pet Sibley and Fred Seacomb, both of whom are familiar to the readers of the earlier volumes of this series.

They had been undecided where to go for the summer, when a friend of Mrs. Percival’s told her of this grand “Excursion,” which was to take its patrons from sea to sea, up the coast of Alaska, and back by way of Yellowstone Park, all within the space of seven weeks. Careful inquiries satisfied Mr. Percival and his wife that this was just the trip they were looking for; places were secured, and the start was now fairly made, as we have seen.

“Well, boys,” remarked Mr. Percival, coming up at this moment, “have you found your berths yet?”

“Not yet, father,” said Tom, throwing his arm lovingly over the man’s broad shoulder. They were very near to each other, these two, and the companionship of this long journey was destined to bring them together more closely than ever before.

“Randolph, you and Tom are next to our drawing-room, on the ‘starboard’ side. Fred comes next, taking the upper berth at night. Some gentlemen in the party will probably occupy the lower one. Kittie and Bess are directly opposite, and Miss Pet will come next.”

“How nice! Then we’re all together, right in this end of the car!”

“O, dear! I wish we had Bert and Sue Martin with us this year!” lamented Kittie. “They would just fill those two odd berths, one on each side.”

“Can’t have ‘em, Kit,” replied her brother. “The whole family have gone out to Portland, Oregon, with their married sister. You know she and her husband are going to live there, where he is in business, and that left Bert and Sue here with only their grandmother.”

“We pass through Portland, I believe,” added Mr. Percival, “on our return trip. We’ll drop in on them if we can, for a short call.”

By this time the train was running at full speed, and the young people began to explore their surroundings. The country through which they were passing was so familiar that they found more objects of interest within the car than without.

There were a dozen other passengers in the “Kamloops,” all chattering briskly and settling themselves into the cosy quarters they were to call home for the next ten days.

Fred Seacomb, as usual, began making acquaintances at once. Before they reached Lowell he had raised an obstinate window for one of his nearest neighbors, had found a missing pair of spectacles for a sweet-faced old lady not far away, and had pointed out various objects of interest (though he knew less of them than any other member of his party) to a bashful boy and girl of about ten and twelve respectively, in the front seats.

People began to glance to the Percival end of the car, and their faces relaxed into genial smiles as Tom struck up “Annie Rooney,” the rest chiming in melodiously. Before long their company was increased by the two occupants of the vacant berths. They introduced themselves as Rev. Rossiter Selborne and his sister, Miss Adelaide Selborne. The young clergyman could not have been over thirty; his sister, a tall, pale, timid girl, was apparently of about Kittie’s age. The new-comers were evidently painfully conscious of the questioning glances with which they were greeted, and were anxious not to intrude; Adelaide, in particular, looking very shy and almost ready to cry when she saw what a large party she and her brother had unintentionally joined, and how thoroughly the others all knew one another.

Mrs. Percival soon broke the ice, however, by inviting Mr. Selborne and his sister into her drawing-room for a call, and in another fifteen minutes they were swept into the current of song. The young minister proved to have a fine baritone voice, and his sister soon won popularity by remembering second verses which everybody else had forgotten.

“Weirs! Weirs!” shouted the conductor. And out flew the young folks to the platform, only to be hustled back again, barely in time to miss being left behind. The train was special, and took no passengers beyond the favored hundred who constituted the Excursion.

The shores of fair Winnepesaukee were soon left behind, and the train drew up at the Pemigewasset House, in Plymouth.

Up the long flight of steps they scrambled, “Tom leading the way, as usual,” remarked dignified Fred, peering through his eyeglasses at the other’s heels, far in advance.

Down again to the train – how familiar and home-like the old “Kamloops” looks, already! “All aboard!” Hurrah! Off we go again! Singing once more – this time the “Soldier’s Farewell”; Tom striking it a third too high, and going all to pieces on the second “Farewell” – on and on and on, faster and faster and faster, up the beautiful Passumpsic Valley, along the shores of Memphremagog.

“Look!” cries Bess. “There’s a shower on the hills!”

The clouds hang, black and sullen, along the mountain-tops. Dash! comes the rain in long exclamation points all over the window-panes. A glittering flash of lightning, trees bowing in the wind, rain pouring in torrents.

Suddenly a brilliant light strikes again through the windows, resting on Pet’s golden hair – not lightning this time, but the blessed sunshine, in long, slanting rays from the west. Even the boys catch their breath with delight and something like awe as they see the clouds rolling away over the mountains.

At about sunset, the principal “conductor” of the Excursion, whom we will call Mr. Houghton – a jolly, good-natured gentleman, who won first the confidence and then the regard of his hundred charges, at the very outset – came through the car announcing that at about half-past eight they would be in Montreal, where the train would wait for them forty-eight hours, the next day being Sunday.

In due time the cars thundered over the long steel bridge between Caughnawaga and Lachine, the lights of Montreal twinkled out of the darkness, and our friends were soon on their way to the Windsor, where they were to spend the next two days.

Sunday was as fair as the most exacting traveler could wish. The large party scattered during the forenoon, most of them going to church. Randolph and Tom, with the girls, left the hotel early and walked for a mile or more through the streets of the city.

There were many French inhabitants, as the shop signs showed. In a little common, they saw the sign, “*N’allez pas sur le gazon*” – a polite way of putting our familiar “Keep off the grass.” The

names of the streets carried them back to old times, when the whole province was held by France – “*Ste. Monique*,” “*Ste. Genevieve*,” etc. Funny little milk carts went bobbing along over the rough pavements, and funny little babies toddled along the uneven board sidewalks.

Their walk soon brought them to a lofty granite building with two square towers – the cathedral of Notre Dame.

People were flocking in at the doors, and the young Americans went with them.

It was like entering a great, dimly-lighted cavern. All the walls and pillars and ceiling were glowing with soft, dark crimson and golden colors. The church was crowded with worshipers, not only on the main floor, but in two immense galleries, one above the other. At the further end was the high altar and the figure of the crucified Saviour, beneath which the priests were conducting the service of the Roman Catholic Church. One could just hear their deep voices, mingling with the music of the choir and organ.

In front of the travelers was a swarthy Indian, with long, glossy black hair. Little children knelt on the marble pavement in the midst of the crowd. Members of wealthy French families passed down the aisle to their pews. All around were poor people, many of them following the service with their prayer-books.

Leaving Notre Dame, the Percivals turned their steps to St. George’s Church near the hotel, where there was an Episcopal service, and a good sermon by a bluff, hearty Scotchman, one of whose phrases clung to Tom’s memory for many a day.

“If you know of anything you ought to do,” said the good rector, “don’t sit down and think about it, but do ut!”

“Do ut!” repeated Tom to himself as he left the church with the rest. “That’s a good motto for me, any way. ‘Do ut!’”

A quiet drive around Mount Royal – giving them a glorious view of Montreal – filled the afternoon.

As they looked down on the multitude of roofs and steeples, Mr. Percival reminded them that it was the chief city of Canada, with a population about half as large as that of Boston. In 1535 it was a little Indian village called Hochelaga, which was in that year visited by Jacques Cartier. Two hundred and fifty years ago, the French established a trading-post here, and its business has grown, until to-day its docks are lined with warehouses, its river front shows the black hulls of great ocean steamers, and railroads converge from east, west and south.

We will close this first chapter with an extract from Kittie’s letter to Susie Martin, written late Monday afternoon.

Montreal, July 21, 18 —.

Dear Sue:

Bess has written you about our starting away from Boston day before yesterday, and the splendid ride we had, and the showers, and everything. We are getting to like that quiet Mr. Selborne a good deal. His sister is dreadfully afraid of everything, and keeps saying, “O, Ross!” whenever he does anything out of the primmest kind of behavior. I guess we girls shock her awfully; but perhaps she needs electricity treatment; she isn’t strong, you know, poor thing.

This afternoon we all went out to Lachine in a queer little train of cars, and then went on board a big steamer for the return trip down the river. Such a scramble for good places! It was really wonderful, dear, going down those rapids. You felt the great ship settle under your feet, and once we headed so straight for a rock in the middle of the river that I said “Ow!” right out loud. The other passengers didn’t laugh much, either, and even Tom, poor fellow, really looked white.

Well, we have repacked our trunks which we sha'n't open again until we reach some sort of a queer place called Banff, next Saturday. We go on board our train again at half-past seven. Bess and I are expecting lots of fun in our compartment. I do hope we shall see you in Portland...

Affectionately,

Kittie M. Percival.

CHAPTER II. FOREST AND PRAIRIE

It was a merry party that assembled in the Windsor Station, Monday evening. No sooner had they found their places in the “Kamloops” than out they jumped again, and began promenading up and down the long platform.

“Let’s see what the names of the other cars are,” said Fred; and Bess, thereupon, called them out, as they walked beside the train: “‘Calgary,’ ‘Nepigon,’ ‘Toronto,’ ‘Missanabie.’”

“What do they mean?” inquired Kittie.

“Why, they’re names of Alaskan chieftains,” replied Randolph.

“‘Kamloops’ was the old head one, then,” added Tom.

But Mr. Houghton, who was everywhere at once, superintending the embarkation, caught the words and explained that the names were those of cities and towns on the line of the Canadian Pacific.

“All aboard!” came the now familiar call, and away went the train, out into the night, bound for the far West.

The Percivals and their neighbors sang for a while, adding several new college songs to their previous repertoire, and then the head of the family announced that it was time to retire. The porter, William, had already arranged the drawing-room, and amid a chorus of “Good-nights,” Mr. and Mrs. Percival withdrew.

“Now, William,” said Randolph, “make up Number Three and Five for the ladies.”

“And Four, for the gentlemen,” added the irrepressible Tom.

Kittie and Bess soon disappeared behind their curtains, and the rest having followed suit shortly afterward, there was silence – for about three minutes. Then came the sound of a bump, and a delighted chuckle from Tom, in the upper berth.

“Coming right up through, Ran?” the girls heard him ask. “I thought the train was off the track.”

“You laugh much more, and I’ll get up there, somehow” —

“Boys, boys,” came Fred Seacomb’s voice. “Don’t quarrel.”

“Say, Fred” (from Tom), “lend me your eyeglasses, will you? I’ve lost my pillow.”

At this point Miss Adelaide became fearfully thirsty, and putting her head out between her curtains, timidly called across to her brother to “please get her a drink of water.”

The Reverend Rossiter, who was just settling himself for a nap, dressed again, and staggered off down the car, returning with the welcome draught.

“Anybody else want any?” he asked good-naturedly.

Everybody was thirsty, and the clergyman’s ministrations with his cups of cold water did not cease until he had made several journeys to the ice tank.

During the night the heavy train rumbled steadily along over two hundred and fifty miles of iron rails, and when Randolph awoke next morning, he found they were at Chalk River, a small town on the frontiers of the great forest wilderness of inner Canada, where a fifteen-minute stop was made.

Breakfast was served in the dining-car. Our friends secured seats close together, and made a jolly meal of it.

“Curious,” observed Fred, “to eat a breakfast twenty miles long!”

“That suits me!” laughed Tom, helping himself to griddle cakes.

“But it’s so pretty outside that I can’t stop to eat,” exclaimed Adelaide, with a nice little flush in her cheeks.

She had lived a very quiet, home-keeping life, the girls found. Everything was new and strange and wonderful to her.

“I should say somebody had been pretty careless with their camp-fires,” Randolph remarked, as they passed mile after mile of burned timber land, an hour or two later.

Mr. Houghton told them that thousands upon thousands of acres of forest near the railroad had been ruined in this way.

“Why,” asked Randolph, “how long has this railroad been built?”

Mr. Houghton thereupon gave them a brief account of the Canadian Pacific, one of the marvels of modern engineering.

“A railway from Canada to the Pacific,” he said, “laid all the way on British soil, was long the dream of public-spirited Canadians and Englishmen. On the confederation of the British Provinces in 1867, it became a real necessity.”

“I don’t see why,” put in Tom.

“The Queen must have a means of transporting troops, arms and ammunition from the home stores to the extremities of her dominion. Suppose her Pacific cities, existing and to be built, should be attacked by a foreign power. She can now throw fifty thousand men across the Continent in four days; or in less than a fortnight from Liverpool.”

“I should think it must have been a tough job to get through this wilderness,” said Randolph, glancing out of the window at the wild district through which they were passing.

“Much of the route lay through unexplored country. All about Lake Superior the engineers found a vast rocky region which opposed them at every step. You’ll see for yourselves to-morrow. Beyond Red River for a thousand miles stretched a great plain, known only to the Indian and fur trader; then came the mountains, range after range, in close succession, and all unexplored.”

“When did they really get to work?” asked Fred Seacomb.

“In 1875. The Government undertook the enterprise, and afterward handed it over for completion, to a private company. The explorations” —

At this point in the conductor’s story, the train began to slow up.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, rising from his seat and glancing at his watch, “this is North Bay, on Lake Nipissing. We stop here half an hour.”

“Come on!” shouted Tom, as the train came to a standstill, and down he rushed toward the shore of the lake, only a few rods distant. “Now, Captain Bess, let’s see what you can do for a fire. I’ll have one going before you get your match lighted.”

Bessie evidently accepted the challenge on the spot, for although she said nothing, she began hunting about for kindling at once. There had been a light shower the night before, and every thing was damp.

Tom made a great fuss, scrambling about for chips and twigs, which he threw down in a heap on the pebbly beach, kneeling beside them, and hastily pulling a match from his pocket. It looked as though his sister was beaten.

“Just wait a bit,” remarked Mr. Percival, who was watching the contest with interest. Several passengers from the other cars also gathered about the fire-builders, applauding each in turn.

Tom’s first match spluttered, and went out.

“Ho! she’s given up,” he cried, as Bess walked away from the group.

But the girl knew what she was about. She stooped down beside a large log which had long ago drifted ashore. From its upper surface she stripped some thin shreds of birch bark, and beneath it she found a handful of chips, perfectly dry.

Back she came, and down she went on the pebbles, at a little distance from her brother.

“Hurry up, Tom!” shouted Randolph.

For Tom’s fire did not seem to progress favorably. Several matches had already been blown out by the fresh lake breeze, and the few twigs that had at last caught, now smoked feebly.

“This is the meanest wood!” labored Tom. “Wet’s water.” And he essayed another match.

All this time Bessie had worked industriously, saying nothing. She had broken and whittled her chips into small pieces, and now pulled off her pretty yachting cap, holding it closely over the bark while she struck her first match. Protected by her dress, and gathering courage in the shelter of the cap, it flared up cheerfully, catching the crisp edges of the bark in grand style.

Down goes the cap, the girl's brown hair escaping in little curly tresses that toss in the wind.

"I've almost got it!" shouts Tom, blowing at his smoking heap with all his might.

"Go in, old fellow!"

"Hurry, Bess!"

The passengers added their cheers and laughter to the cries of the others.

"There!" said Bess triumphantly, leaning back from her fire.

For fire it was, truly, with the red flames dancing upward gleefully through the twigs, and cracking in a manner that said plainly they had come to stay.

Tom generously joined in the applause that followed, and heaped all his hoarded fuel on his sister's fire, nearly extinguishing it in his zeal.

"Camp Birch!" said Mr. Percival, naming it, as they named all their camp-fires.

A few minutes later the coals were scattered, for safety; and the engine giving its preconcerted call, the passengers hurried on board once more.

"Now," said Selborne, "let's hear the rest of the railroad story, Mr. Houghton."

The latter gentleman, by no means averse to the task, accordingly continued.

"The surveys for the road made known the character of the country it had to traverse. In the wilderness about Superior, were found forests of pine and other timber, together with valuable farming land, and mineral deposits of immense value. The prairies beyond Winnipeg proved wonderfully promising for settlers; the mountains were seamed with coal, and sparkling with gold."

Mr. Houghton's face became even more radiant than usual, as he told of the wonderful riches of British Columbia.

"In 1881 the company contracted with the Government to finish the road within ten years – for which undertaking they received twenty-five million dollars, twenty-five million acres of agricultural land, and the railroad itself when complete."

"Whew!" whistled Tom. "Say, Ran, let's go to railroading."

"The end of the third year," continued the genial conductor, "found them at the summit of the Rocky Mountains; the fourth in the Selkirks, a thousand miles beyond Winnipeg. Sometimes they advanced five or six miles a day, armies of men attacking the mountains with thousands of tons of dynamite. On a certain wet morning – the seventh of November, 1885 – the last spike was driven on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway."

Mr. Houghton's eloquent peroration was followed by a round of applause, and all hands turned to the car windows once more, with new interest in this great triumph of mind over the forces of nature.

The boys were informed by Mr. Houghton in conclusion, that the country all around the lake was one of the greatest hunting districts on the continent. The forest abounded, he said, in moose, bear and caribou – all of which was extremely tantalizing to these young gentlemen, though the gentler members of the party took little interest in the conductor's description of the sport.

We must pass rapidly over the next day or two. Soon after breakfast on Wednesday morning, our travelers found themselves on the shores of Lake Superior, and all day the train kept close beside it, the road curving, rising, descending, around great promontories of red rock, at the base of high cliffs, and across broad tributaries that came sweeping down from far Northern wastes. At times there was a heavy fog, through which the passengers could see the slow waves breaking on the rocks below. Then it would lift, showing new beauties close at hand, and bright, wooded islands in the misty distance. Beside the track grew strange flowers, and against the northern sky was outlined the notched edge of the boundless evergreen forest that stretched away to the Arctic solitudes.

At the little settlement of Peninsula, Selborne called the rest to see a fine, sturdy dog with the Esquimaux showing plainly in his pointed nose and ears, and thick soft fur.

“Doesn’t he look like the pictures in Dr. Kane?” whispered Pet, leaning over Kittie’s shoulder.

Jackfish proved to be a picturesque hamlet of log huts, clustering on a rocky point of land that jutted into the lake.

The train stopped at Schreiber long enough to allow the party to dash up into the town, and make a laughable variety of purchases at the principal store. Postal cards, buttons, candy and fancy pins disappeared in the pockets of the tourists, to the delight of the proprietor, who had not had such a run of custom for many a long day. Captain Bess bought several yards of the brightest scarlet ribbon she could find – for what purpose it will be seen hereafter.

Near the station at Nepigon was seen the first encampment of Indians – Chippewas they were; half-amused, half-indignant at the curious crowd they attracted.

Port Arthur was the terminus of the Eastern Division of the “C. P. R.,” a thousand miles from Montreal, and watches were all set back one hour to meet “Central Time.” Little girls crowded up to the passengers, selling milk in broken mugs, from small pails with which they darted hither and thither along the platform. I should hardly venture to say how many mugfuls the boys bought and drank, in the kindness of their hearts.

That evening a number of new friends from the “Missanabie” and “Calgary” came back to the “Kamloops,” by special invitation, and the united chorus sang over and over all the songs they did – and did not – know. “Little Annie Rooney,” then a reigning favorite in the East, was the most popular number in the programme.

I wish I could show the gay little party to you, as I see them now, photographed so clearly upon my memory: the older people in the rear, looking on with smiles, and occasionally joining in a familiar chorus; Kittie and Pet, their faces all aglow; Randolph, Fred and Mr. Selborne singing sturdily along, or pausing when they did not know the tune; Tom, singing at the top of his voice, whether he knew the tune or not, and beating time with a vigor that would have put Carl Zerrahn to shame – ah! how it all comes before me as I write; with one dear, kindly face that was merry and thoughtful by turns, but always tender and loving and good, as the songs rang out; the face I shall see no more until I reach the end of the longest journey of all – the journey of Life!

At breakfast on the following morning, Tom, who had taken upon himself to provide the girls with nosegays on the whole trip, marched into the dining-car with a neat little breast-knot of “squirrel-tail grass” which he had picked at Rat Portage, for each young lady. It was very pretty, but before long the objectionable feature of the grass asserted itself; that is, its clinging qualities, which made it impossible for the wearers to wholly rid themselves of the tiny barbed spires for two days afterward.

Winnipeg was reached at noon. Nearly all the passengers “went ashore,” and the empty cars were trundled away for a thorough cleaning, English fashion.

In twos and threes our friends wandered off through this strange young city, the capital of Manitoba. Twenty years ago its population numbered one hundred; now it passes thirty thousand!

In the midst of all the progress and modern ideas of bustling Winnipeg, it was curious to notice many rude carts drawn by oxen, which were harnessed like horses.

At the station the “newsboys” were little girls, who plied their trade modestly and successfully.

Mr. Percival took his daughters and Pet to drive for an hour through the city and its suburbs. The only drawback to their enjoyment was the intense heat, and the abundance of grasshoppers who would get tangled up in Bessie’s hair, much to that young lady’s displeasure.

“Clouds and clouds of them,” she commented indignantly; “and the Winnipeggers don’t seem to mind them a bit!”

Next morning Tom was the first “on deck,” as usual, and out of the cars at the first stop, which was made to water the engine. Prairie, prairie, prairie, as far as the eye could reach. Tom gathered handfuls of flowers and threw them into expectant laps, only to rush out again and gather more. The

short grass was starred with blossoms of every color. Harebells, like those on Mt. Willard, grew in abundance beside the track. Then there were queer, scarlet “painted cups,” nodding yellow ox-eyes, asters, dandelions, and others.

What is that little creature, that looks something like a very large gray squirrel with no tail? Why, a “gopher,” to be sure; an animal resembling a prairie-dog, only smaller. They live in burrows all along these sandy embankments. See that little fellow! He sits up on his hind legs and hops along like a diminutive kangaroo, pulling down heads of grass with his tiny forepaws, and nibbling the seeds.

On and on, over the rolling prairie, rattled the hot, dusty train. They were in Indian country now, and at every station a dozen or more dark-faced Crees crouched on the platform, offering buffalo horns for sale.

And this reminds me that I have not mentioned one very important portion of Tom’s outfit. It was a fine No. 4 Kodak, of which he was very proud, and which he “snapped” mercilessly at all sorts of persons and things on the journey. There were other amateur photographers on the Excursion – a dozen or more in all – and great was the good-natured rivalry in securing good views. Indians were bribed, soldiers flattered and precipices scaled in this fascinating pursuit. As to the hundred travelers, the photographers snapped at them and one another with hardly an apology; and as the subject usually looked up and smiled broadly at the critical moment, the general result must have been a collection of portraits of the most marvelously and uniformly merry company that ever boarded a C. P. R. train, or kodaked a Siwash canoe.

Each wielder of this terrible weapon had a different way of holding the camera and doing the deed. Mr. Selborne focused from under his right arm, that embraced the instrument firmly. Pet, who had a little No. 1, always winked hard, and occasionally jumped when she “pressed the button”; thereby, as she afterward discovered, giving her characters a peculiar misty effect, which she declared was enchanting. One indefatigable lady from Kalamazoo invariably held her kodak out in front of her at arms-length, and took aim over the top of it before firing; a proceeding which never failed to disconcert and terrify the subject beyond description.

At a settlement called Swift Current, Tom undertook to photograph an old Cree squaw, who stalked away indignantly around the corner of the freight house. Away went crafty Thomas in the opposite direction, meeting the squaw just half-way around the building. Tom tried to purchase a sitting with a silver quarter, but the wrathful Indian woman poured out a torrent of Cree invective, and hooked at him with a pair of buffalo horns she held in her hands. Finally, he turned his back to her, and holding the camera backward under his arm, pressed the button and so obtained one of his best negatives on the trip.

It must be confessed that he felt rather shabby in thus procuring her portrait against her will; and to atone for his conduct, Bessie knelt beside two little Indian girls and tied bright red ribbons on their arms, to their intense delight.

At Moose-Jaw (which Mr. Houghton said was an abridgment of the Indian name meaning, “The-creek-where-the-white-man-mended-the-cart-with-a-moose’s-jaw-bone”), the travelers were shown a villainous-looking Sioux, who was one of Sitting Bull’s band that massacred General Custer and his troops a few years before. The Indians in that whole section of Canada are kept in order by mounted police – fine-looking fellows, sauntering about the station platforms with whip and spur, and by no means averse to having their pictures taken, Pet found.

All this is very pleasant, but as the day wears on, the green hills and flowery meadow-land give place to scorched, parching, alkali desert, stretching away in dry, tawny billows as far as the eye can reach. Here and there is a lake – no, a pool of dry salt, like the white ghost of a lake. The air in the cars becomes insufferably hot. Look at the thermometer, where the sun does not shine, and the air blows in through the open window. It marks full 105°. Mr. Selborne wins popularity by contracting for a large pitcher of iced lemonade, which he passes through the car. Dust and cinders pour in at doors and windows with the hot air. Waves of heat rise from the shriveled grass. Will night ever come?

Yes, it comes at last, as God's good gifts always come, to refresh and sweeten our lives. The sky flushes with sunset light. Shadows creep up from the east; a cool breeze touches the fevered faces. Night, beautiful, restful, kindly night, spreads its wings over the weary travelers, and, still flying onward through the darkness, they sleep peacefully and dream of the dear New England hills and of home.

CHAPTER III. A HOME LETTER

Banff, July 26, 189 —.

Dear mother:

I know you will want to hear from your children as often as possible, so I write to-day, for both Adelaide and myself, to tell you of our wanderings, and of the wonderful scenes in the midst of which we are resting this bright Sunday.

In my last letter mailed at Brandon, I told you about the railroad ride from Montreal, north of the Great Lakes, through the country where the Jesuit missionaries labored so nobly two centuries ago, and across the green prairies and scorched alkali desert of Manitoba.

On the morning after that terribly hot day, we looked westward – and our journey seemed likely to come to an end then and there. A mighty barrier stretched across our path from north to south. Rising dimly, through the morning mists, their summits hidden among the clouds, their tawny flanks scarred with ravines and whitened with snow, rose the Rocky Mountains.

Soon the train stopped, and we were told of a cascade in the woods near by, bearing the Indian name of Kananaskis. Off we tramped across a bit of flowery upland, snatching handfuls of aster, painted cup and harebell as we went; then down through a thicket of blue-tipped firs, until we heard the voice of many waters calling softly to us.

Another moment and we stood on the brink of the foaming, dashing, sparkling cataract, pouring grandly down its rocky path, as it had done in the days of Paul and Barnabas of Joshua; yes, and of Ahasuerus the king. At the very moment when Queen Esther, the “Star,” stood before the haughty monarch pleading for her people, the stars above shone above the white falls of Kananaskis as they do to-night; the rushing waters lifted up their voice and hastened to their work in the lonely forest; while the Father of all looked down on the silent firs, the silver stream, and the proud walls of Shushan, patient and loving, waiting for his children to know him and his wonderful works, and to love and serve him with gladness of heart.

Oh, the mountains! How we climbed and climbed, the train winding, and roaring, and straining every iron nerve to bear us to the high places! At noon we were in the midst of them. They looked down upon us with kindly faces, yet their granite peaks were awful in their grandeur, uplifted thousands upon thousands of feet above us.

I wandered with a bright young girl in our party, Miss Bessie Percival, whom the boys call “Captain Bess,” down a steep path to the river’s brink. Beneath a sheltering fir which stretched its tiny crosses above our heads, we stopped, and with a tiny, crackling fire beside us, watched the snowy heights, and the hastening river. The harebells, frailest and gentlest of flowers, were there too, to remind us that the same Hand which which —

“Set on high the firmament,
Planets on their courses guided,
Alps from Alps asunder rent,”

was his who said to the storm, "Peace, be still!" – who "considered the lilies," and who took little children in his arms and blessed them.

The waters of the large river which ran past us were turbid with soil from their far-off source; but a small stream entered the larger one near our little fir-shaded hearthstone, and this new-comer was fresh from the snowy hill-tops, "clear as crystal." As far down as we could see, the rivulet never lost its brightness, but swept onward with the larger stream, sweetening and purifying it, yet "unspotted," like a true and simple life in God's world.

There, I won't tire you any more to-night, dear mother. How it would add to our pleasure if you were here! Adelaide gains strength every day, the wholesome, hearty companionship of these young people doing her quite as much good, I think, as the novelty and grandeur of the scenes in which she finds herself. As for me, I ought to preach better sermons all my life, for this trip. This afternoon while I was sitting on the rounded piazza of the hotel, looking out upon the valley and snowy mountain-tops, a bit of blank verse came into my mind. I'm going to write it out for you. A fellow can send his mother poetry (?) which he wouldn't show any one else, can't he?

Within thy holy temple have I strayed,
E'en as a weary child, who from the heat
And noonday glare hath timid refuge sought
In some cathedral's vast and shadowy nave,
And trembles, awestruck, crouching in his rags
Where high up reared a mighty pillar stands.
Mine eyes I lift unto the hills, from whence
Cometh my help. The murmuring firs stretch forth
Their myriad tiny crosses o'er my head;
Deep rolls an organ peal of thunder down
The echoing vale, while clouds of incense float
Before the great white altar set on high.
So lift my heart, O God! and purify
Its thought, that when I walk once more
Thy minister amid the hurrying throng,
One ray of sunlight from these golden days,
One jewel from the mountain's regal brow,
One cup of water from these springs of life,
As tokens of thy beauty, I may bear
To little ones who toil and long for rest.

*Affectionately, your son,
Rossiter.*

P. S. I wish you knew that little "Captain Bess."

She is one of the freshest, sweetest, most unselfish girls I ever met. Hardly an hour passes when she is not doing something for another's comfort – adjusting old ladies' shawls, reading aloud, holding a tired child, or something of the sort. In fact, she's the most like you, mother, of anybody I ever met!

CHAPTER IV. THE GLACIER AND THE BEAR

Thus far the trip had been free from special adventure beyond the ordinary happenings in the course of an extraordinary journey. But on the day following the departure from Banff, one or two incidents occurred to break the monotony. In the first place, there was Tom's affair with the bear. But I must retrace my steps slightly, before introducing Bruin.

The Excursion left Banff on the ninth morning from Boston. The road now lay through a wilderness of mighty hills. Onward and upward labored the train, following the curves of mountain streams, rattling in and out of tunnels, and creeping cautiously over high trestles that creaked ominously beneath the heavy cars.

An observation car had been added, and here the Percivals gathered, defying cinders and wintry air. Far above the ravine through which the stubborn Canadian Pacific had pushed its way, they caught glimpses of snow-banks and glaciers, which sent foaming torrents down the mountain-side to join the Kicking-Horse River.

Late in the afternoon they whirled around the last dizzy curve, plunged into a snow-shed and out again, and halted for the night beside a picturesque little hotel in the very heart of the Selkirks.

Most of the party, including all the Percivals except Tom, at once started along a forest path for new wonders that were said to lie beyond. Adelaide Selborne was too tired to go, and her brother, having seen her comfortably resting in a delightful little room in the hotel, hurried off to join the rest.

Bessie, who had lingered behind a moment to pick a handful of starry wild flowers, heard his steps and turned to greet him with a bright look of welcome. "I'm so glad you've come," she said, in her frank way. "You see, Randolph has gone ahead with Pet Sibley, and Kittie is with Fred, so I was kind of rear-guard, all alone."

"What kind of a flower is that?" he asked.

Bess did not know, nor did her companion.

"It seems so strange to find real wild wild-flowers," she exclaimed. "The little home violets and mayflowers seem as tame as possible, compared."

"This forest has never been cut into," observed Rossiter, as they sauntered along the narrow path. The lofty trees, unscarred by axe or fire, towered high above them; beside the path waved tall ferns, starred here and there with boughs of the white blossoms the little Captain had been picking. An unseen stream, hastening downward from far-away rocky heights, called softly through the dim aisles.

After a mile or two of this thick wood, they emerged upon rough, open ground, over which they hurried, crossing a rude bridge which spanned the torrent, and – there was the Great Glacier of the Selkirks!

Bessie caught her breath, in the wonder and grandeur of it.

For in comparison with this mighty stream of ice, the glaciers of Europe are but frozen rivulets. All the Swiss glaciers combined would not reach the bulk of this monster, which covers thirty-eight square miles of mountain-side with a moving mass of ice five hundred feet thick. It is fitly guarded by the solitary peak of "Sir Donald," whose top is lost in clouds eight thousand feet above the valley.

They moved forward at length, climbing to the edge of the glacier, and even mounting upon its wrinkled back.

The advanced division of the party were already quite at home with the big glacier, and sang their gay songs as merrily as in the cosey "Kamloops." Fred and Randolph caught tin cupfuls of water from an icy rill, and passed it to the rest.

"I wish," said Bessie, "that I could run up to that next corner. The view would be splendid."

Kittie and the rest were just starting downward. Mr. Selborne heard the Captain's remark, and instantly was at her side.

"Come on," he said. "We can do it and catch up with the rest before they reach the hotel."

Bessie, remembering her experience on Mount Washington the year before, hesitated. But the opportunity was too tempting.

"I'll go," she said hastily, "if you'll hurry, please. Mother will worry about me if I stay up here too long."

Aided by a strong hand and arm, she clambered up over the bowlders which lay along the mountain slope in a confused mass.

"There!" she exclaimed, in the same tone of triumph with which she had announced the success of her fire on the shores of Nipissing, "we've done it, haven't we?"

After all, it was hardly worth the climb, for the newly gained position only disclosed further reaches, each promising a better outlook than the next below. Rossiter glanced at the gathering clouds.

"Perhaps we'd better start, Miss Bessie," he said, "if you've got your breath."

If truth be told, Bess would have liked a little longer rest; but she did not like to confess the fatigue she felt. Besides, it was all down hill now, so she held out her hand to her companion without misgiving.

Before they had gone twenty yards, moving cautiously down from boulder to boulder close beside the ice, the air darkened and a fine rain set in.

"That will hurry the rest along," thought Bessie, "for they're already in the easy part of the path, and they can run." But she said nothing to distress her escort, who was already troubled enough by the prospect.

"Be careful!" he called suddenly, as he saw Bessie spring over a mimic chasm, and barely miss losing her balance on the further side. "The rain makes these rocks slippery, and" —

He was interrupted by a cry from Bess. She sank down on a boulder and lifted a white face to him.

"My ankle," she said. "I've turned it, and it hurts — dreadfully!"

"Let me help you, dear."

He was used to calling his sister that, you know.

Bessie clung to his arm and tried to rise, but sank back with a sharp little moan of pain.

"It's no use," she gasped. "I can't stand. You'll have — to go — and send somebody up — for me."

She looked so white that he thought she was going to faint. But the little Captain had no idea of giving way, if she could possibly help it.

"Go, please," she repeated, clutching the rough rim of the rock to control herself.

Rossiter looked around, above, below. Not a living creature was in sight. It was no use to call for help, in that grim solitude. The rain drifted across the black forest in gray columns.

"Won't you leave me?" pleaded Bessie again.

For reply he stooped, and lifting her in his arms as if she were a child, began to pick his way downward, slowly and cautiously.

At the end of half a dozen rods his breath was gone. He placed his burden gently on the rocks.

"O, Mr. Selborne!" cried Bess, with quivering lips, "it's hurting you worse than me. Please" —

But he had rested enough, and just smiling for reply, started along the path once more.

It was now raining heavily, and the traveled way became more and more difficult to distinguish in the gathering dusk. Bessie was a strong, healthy young girl, and no light weight for a man to carry.

The bridge was reached at last, and, narrow and slippery as it was, stretching above a deep and swift mountain stream, crossed in safety.

In a few moments they were at the edge of the forest; but Rossiter, little used in late years to active sports or athletic exertion of any kind, felt his strength leaving him. Great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead, though the air was bitter cold and the rain like ice.

He staggered and saved himself with difficulty from falling, with Bessie in his arms. As he placed her on the ground at the mossy foot of a huge tree, he spoke to her, but she did not answer. This time she had fainted in earnest.

But it is time to return to the solitary representative of the Percival family – or at least of the younger portion of it – who found more attraction at the base of the mountain than on its lofty and ice-clad slopes. Mr. and Mrs. Percival had gone to the hotel at once, and were glad to rest there while the tireless young people “explored.”

The moment the train had stopped and the passengers began to pour out of the cars, Tom had caught sight of an animal which by this time had become pretty familiar to the travelers; namely, a bear. At almost every station they had passed, since leaving Winnipeg, was one or more of these furry friends in captivity. Tom had made overtures to all of them, sometimes barely escaping a dangerous scratch or bite from the half-tamed animals. The boy was just now an ardent naturalist, in his impulsive way, and felt a great interest in every strange creature on four legs – especially bears.

Here was a good chance then, to cultivate Bruin’s acquaintance. While Tom was providing himself with lumps of sugar at the hotel, his sisters and the rest of the party started up the forest path for the Glacier, as we have seen.

“Feed the black bear all you want to, but don’t fool with the cinnamon,” called the clerk after heedless Tom, who was already out of hearing.

Blackie was within a few rods of the hotel, and Tom was soon having great fun with him, tossing him lumps of sugar, and then holding them up while the bear, who was only a half-grown cub, stood clumsily on his hind legs and, supporting himself against the boy’s shoulders, stretched out his little gray snout for the coveted sweets.

They were in the midst of their frolic when Tom heard a chain rattle, up toward the woods. Something was moving among the stumps – another bear.

“Good-by, Pomp,” shouted Tom, letting his shaggy playmate down rather unceremoniously on all fours. “I must call on your cousin, over there.”

Pomp gazed at him with what Tom afterward declared was a most meaning look in his twinkling eyes, and galloped after him – only to be jerked sprawling at the end of his tether. Then he sat down, after the manner of his kind, and watched the retreating form of the dispenser of sugar, shaking his head gloomily.

“I’ll save a lump for you and be back before long, old fellow,” called Tom encouragingly over his shoulder.

The cinnamon proved to be double the size of his black neighbor. Instead of ambling up to his visitor as the other had done, he retreated a pace or two, and eyed him with such an unpleasant expression that Tom stopped short.

“Come, Brownie,” said he, in his most cajoling tones. “Here’s some sugar for you.” And he tossed him a lump.

Cinnamon stretched out his paw, raked the lump nearer, and bolted it. The taste was pleasing, and he slowly advanced, dragging his heavy chain after him.

“Friendly enough,” said Tom to himself. “I’ll try him with a lump in my hand.”

The bear took it rather too greedily for the comfort of the holder, but seemed in nowise inclined to hostile measures.

“Stand up!”

Bruin clumsily erected himself on his haunches, and caught the sugar tossed to him.

Tom was delighted.

“Now put your paws up on my shoulders and get it.” He stood back to the animal and looked at him over his shoulder.

Up came Cinnamon again, though rather sullenly, and reaching both paws around Tom’s neck from behind, clasped them on the boy’s breast.

“There, there!” cried Tom; “that’ll do, old fellow. You’re too heavy for me. Get down!”

A low growl from a shaggy throat within three inches of Tom’s ear, was the only reply.

Tom held up his last lump of sugar, and while his unwelcome comrade-in-arms was crunching it, strove to wriggle himself from the bear’s embrace.

It was of no use. The big, furry necklace only clasped the more tightly, and the menacing growl came again deeper than before.

The boy’s courage began to fail him. He looked down at the two great paws on his chest, armed with long, sharp claws. The bear’s breath came hot and fast on the back of his neck.

“Halloo! help!” shouted Tom desperately.

A savage snarl from the rear told him that a repetition of the cry might be fatal to him. The bear’s patience began to give out. The growls came nearer together, and more angrily. Every moment Tom expected to feel those long, white teeth in his scalp. To make matters worse, he now seemed to remember the words the hotel man had shouted after him, though he had paid no attention to them at the time.

If Randolph and the rest would only come! It was not like a fight with a wild bear. That would be bad enough. But to be killed by a chained beast, as a result of his own folly!

Both hope and courage were at the lowest ebb, and the danger really very great, when Tom’s hand felt in the lining of his coat a hard bunch.

Cautiously, with trembling hands, he ripped out the lining and extracted – a solitary lump of sugar which had slipped down through a hole in his pocket.

He held it out at arms-length. After a fruitless attempt to support himself with one paw and reach the sugar with the other, the bear relaxed his hold and dropped upon all fours.

To fling down the sugar and dart out of the radius of that hard-trodden circle was the work of a moment. Tom was safe!

The bear sprang after him, his little eyes twinkling with rage; but the chain held fast, and his late captive left him sprawling among the stumps.

I am not sure that Tom would have told this story at all, had not Randolph, one or two nights later, caught sight of ten red marks on his room-mate’s breast. Then it all came out, as you have it.

During the struggle with Bruin the sky had darkened, and it now began to rain heavily.

CHAPTER V.

A KING'S DAUGHTER IN A FREIGHT CAR

When Randolph and his party came rushing with shouts of laughter from the woods, they were joined by Tom, who was in an unusually meek mood. Fred looked at him suspiciously, but forbore to ask any questions.

The rain was coming down smartly, and all hands gathered, panting and laughing, around the generous fire in the little hotel office. "Where's Bessie?" asked Mr. Percival, as soon as he could make his voice heard above the merry clamor.

"Oh! she's just behind, with Mr. Selborne," said Kittie. "Randolph, look out of the door to see if they are in sight."

"They'll get dreadfully wet," remarked Pet. "Why didn't they keep up?"

"Oh! Bess wanted to go up the glacier a little farther. I saw her pointing to a big rock" —

"And of course he went," added Fred demurely.

Mr. Percival looked worried. His nephew reported that the missing couple were not in sight.

"It's growing darker every moment," he remarked anxiously. "I must go and look for them."

Two strong young fellows who were employed about the hotel went with him. Leaving the jolly group around the fire, we will accompany the relief party. Those who prefer cosiness and warmth may stay behind!

The contrast was sharp, indeed, as Mr. Percival stepped out-of-doors with his two companions.

The sky was filled with black clouds, that rolled down the valley or hung in threatening masses along the lofty mountain slopes.

As they entered the forest they had to step carefully, lest they should stumble on some root or stone, half-hidden in the darkness. Through the boughs of the trees the rain dripped drearily.

They plodded on for over a mile, when they caught sight of a flickering light, appearing and vanishing, like a will-o'-the-wisp.

The two men from the hotel did not know what to make of it, but Mr. Percival guessed the source of the strange flame in a moment.

"They've built a fire," he said quietly. "Or, at least, Bess has. I don't believe the minister could do it, this wet night, if he tried!"

He could, though, as Captain Bess soon found out, when he had stopped to rest in the edge of the forest. About fifty feet from the path was a huge boulder draped with ferns, with the top slightly overhanging its base.

To the shelter of this great rock the young clergyman had borne his charge, placing her on a dry cushion of moss and fir needles, where the faintness soon left her, though the pain did not. He had then busied himself in a wonderfully handy way, collecting dry stuff from beneath the boulder, and in five minutes had a glorious fire snapping and crackling, right in the midst of the rain.

"That will be a comfort to us," he remarked, eying the blaze with great satisfaction, "and will signal the party they are sure to send out for us."

"O, yes!" cried Bess. And then, of course, she had to tell him, often pausing as the sharp twinges of pain shot more and more fiercely through her ankle, all about the lost party in Maine, and the exploit which had earned for her the title of Captain.

She had hardly finished her story when a shout was heard, and presently the relief party came hurrying into the firelit space.

"What is it, dear? Are you hurt?" asked Mr. Percival, hastily kneeling down beside his daughter and throwing his arms around her. He had not realized until that moment how deeply anxious he had been during that dismal walk.

“Only a little, father. It’s just my ankle. I turned it on the rocks.”

“How did you get here?”

“Mr. Selborne – carried me.”

Her father turned and clasped the young man’s hand, saying simply, “I thank you.” But each of the men knew the already strong friendship between them was deepened.

“Now for getting home,” called out Rossiter. “Too bad to leave the fire, though, isn’t it?”

“You can spend the night here if you like,” laughed Bess, rising painfully and clinging to her father’s arm.

It was clear that she could not walk a step.

The fire was cared for; then the two sturdy young backwoodsmen made an arm-chair with their hands and wrists, and tramped off with Bess between them as easily as if she were a kitten.

Very slowly though, and with great skill and care, feeling the ground carefully with their feet at every step. So they made their way back to the hotel, where there was a general jubilee over their return.

The train was side-tracked that night, close by the station. It was great fun for the young people to climb aboard, and, after a good-night sing, clamber into their berths to be lulled to sleep, not by the rumble of iron wheels, but the rushing waters of the Illicilliwaet.

Bessie, it should be said, was carried to the cars by her father. There was a physician in the party, and by his advice the strained ankle received such wise and timely treatment that by bed-time it was far less painful. In two or three days, the doctor said, she could use it again, though care would be necessary for a fortnight or more.

On the following morning the rain was still falling, but by ten o’clock the sky brightened a little, and the Percivals, with the exception of Bess, set out for a walk down the track. There was a long snow shed not far away, from which Tom hoped to get a good operating field for his kodak.

Hardly had they clambered to the top of the structure and “pressed the button” once, when a flying gust of rain, backed by a portentous black cloud, sent them flying down again.

“Let’s come in under the shed,” proposed Tom. This, however, was so cold and damp, that Fred and Randolph, seeing some detached freight cars, a few rods up the track, started off to explore for a better shelter.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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