

**KATHARINE
HOLLAND
BROWN**

THE HALLOWELL
PARTNERSHIP

Katharine Brown
The Hallowell Partnership

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CHAPTER I

WHEN SLOW-COACH GOT

HIS FIGHTING CHANCE

"Rod!"

No answer.

"Rod, what did that messenger boy bring? A special-delivery letter? Is it anything interesting?" Marian Hallowell pushed Empress from her knee and turned on her pillows to look at Roderick, her brother, who sat absorbed and silent at his desk.

Roderick did not move. Only Empress cocked a topaz eye, and rubbed her orange-tawny head against Marian's chair.

"Rod, why don't you answer me?" Marian's thin hands twitched. A sharp, fretted line deepened across her pretty, girlish forehead. It was not a pleasant line to see. And through her long, slow convalescence it had grown deeper every day.

"Roderick Hallowell!"

Roderick jumped. He turned his sober, kind face to her, then bent eagerly to the closely written letter in his hand.

"Just a minute, Sis."

"Oh, very well, Slow-Coach!" Marian lay back, with a resigned sniff. She pulled Empress up by her silver collar, and lay petting the big, satiny Persian, who purred like a happy windmill against her cheek. Her tired eyes wandered restlessly about the dim, high-ceiled old room. Of all the dreary lodgings on Beacon Hill, surely Roderick had picked out the most forlorn! Still, the old place was quiet and comfortable. And, as Roderick had remarked, his rooms were amazingly inexpensive. That had been an important point; especially since Marian's long, costly illness at college. That siege had been hard on Rod in many ways, she thought, with a mild twinge of self-reproach. In a way, those long weeks of suffering had come through her own fault. The college physician had warned her more than once that she was working and playing beyond her strength. Yet she felt extremely ill-used.

"It wasn't nearly so bad, while I stayed in the infirmary at college." She sighed as she thought of her bright, airy room, the coming and going of the girls with their gay petting and sympathy, the roses and magazines and dainties. "But here, in this tiresome, lonely place! How can I expect to get well!"

Here she lay, shut up in Rod's rooms, alone day after day, save for the vague, pottering kindnesses of Rod's vague old landlady. At night her brother would come home from his long day's work as cub draughtsman in the city engineer's office, too tired to talk. And Marian, forbidden by overstrained eyes to read, could only lie by the fire, and tease Empress, and fret the endless hours away.

At last, with a deep breath, Rod laid down the letter. He pulled his chair beside her lounge.

"Tired, Sis?"

"Not very. What was your letter, Rod?"

"I'll tell you pretty soon. Anything doing to-day?"

"Isabel and Dorothy came in from Wellesley this morning, and brought me those lovely violets, and told me all about the Barn Swallows' masque dance last night. And the doctor came this afternoon."

"H'm. What did he say?"

Marian gloomed.

"Just what he always says. 'No more study this year. Out-door life. Bread and milk and sleep.' Tiresome!"

Roderick nodded.

"Hard lines, Sister. And yet – "

He dropped his sentence, and sat staring at the fire.

"Rod! Are you never going to tell me what is in that letter?"

"That letter? Oh, yes. Sure it won't tire you to talk business?"

"Of course not."

"Well, then – I have an offer of a new position. A splendid big one at that."

"A new position? Truly?" Marian sat up, with brightening eyes.

"Yes. But I'm not sure I can swing it." Rod's face clouded. "It demands a mighty competent engineer."

"Well! Aren't you a competent engineer?" Marian gave his

ear a mild tweak. "You're always underrating yourself, you old goose. Tell me about this. Quick."

Rod's thoughtful face grew grave.

"It's such a gorgeous chance that I can't half believe in it," he said, at length. "Through Professor Young, I'm offered an engineer's billet with the Breckenridge Engineering and Construction Company. The Breckenridge Company is the largest and the best-known firm of engineers in the United States. Breckenridge himself is a wonder. I'd rather work under him than under any man I ever heard of. The work is a huge drainage contract in western Illinois. One hundred dollars a month and all my expenses. It's a two-year job."

"A two-year position, out West!" Marian's eyes shone. "The out-West part is dreadful, of course. But think of a hundred-dollar salary, after the sixty dollars that you have been drudging to earn ever since you left Tech! Read Professor Young's letter aloud; do."

Roderick squirmed.

"Oh, you don't want to hear it. It's nothing much."

"Yes I do, too. Read it, I say. Or – give it to me. There!"

There was a short, lively scuffle. However, Marian had captured the letter with the first deft snatch; and Roderick could hardly take it from her shaky, triumphant hands by main force. He gave way, grumbling.

"Professor Young always says a lot of things he doesn't mean. He does it to brace a fellow up, that's all."

"Very likely." Marian's eyes skimmed down the first page.

" – And as the company has asked me to recommend an engineer of whose work I can speak from first-hand knowledge, I have taken pleasure in referring them to you. To be sure, you have had no experience in drainage work. But from what I recall of your record at Tech, your fundamental training leaves nothing to be desired. When it comes to handling the mass of rough-and-ready labor that the contract employs, I am confident that your father's son will show the needed judgment and authority. It is a splendid undertaking, this reclamation of waste land. It is heavy, responsible work, but it is a man's work, straight through; and there is enough of chance in it to make it a man's game, as well. If you can make good at this difficult opportunity, you will prove that you can make good at any piece of drainage engineering that comes your way. This is your fighting chance at success. And I expect to see you equal to its heaviest demands. Good luck to you!"

"That sounds just like Professor Young. And he means it. Every word." Marian folded the letter carefully and gave it back to her brother. "Honestly, Rod, it does sound too good to be true. And think, what a frabjous time you can have during your vacations! You can run over to the Ozarks for your week-ends, and visit the Moores on their big fruit ranch, and go mountain-climbing – "

Roderick chortled.

"The Ozarks would be a trifling week-end jaunt of three

hundred miles, old lady. Didn't they teach you geography at Wellesley? As to mountains, that country is mostly pee-rary and swamp. That's why this contract will be a two-year job, and a stiff job at that."

"What does district drainage work mean, anyway?"

"In district drainage, a lot of farmers and land-owners unite to form what is called, in law, a drainage district. A sort of mutual benefit association, you might call it. Then they tax themselves, and hire engineers and contractors to dig a huge system of ditches, and to build levees and dikes, to guard their fields against high water. You see, an Illinois farmer may own a thousand acres of the richest alluvial land. But if half that land is swamp, and the other half lies so low that the creeks near by may overflow and ruin his crops any day, then his thousand mellow acres aren't much more use than ten acres of hard-scrabble here in New England. To be sure, he can cut his own ditches, and build his own levee, without consulting his neighbors. But the best way is for the whole country-side to unite and do the work on a royal scale."

"How do they go about digging those ditches? Where can they find laboring men to do the work, away out in the country?"

"Why, you can't dig a forty-foot district canal by hand, Sis! That would be a thousand-year job. First, the district calls in an experienced engineer to look over the ground and make plans and estimates. Next, it employs a drainage contractor; say, the Breckenridge firm. This firm puts in three or four huge steam

dredge-boats, a squad of dump-carts and scrapers, an army of laborers, and a staff of engineers – including your eminent C. E. brother – to oversee the work. The dredges begin by digging a series of canals; one enormous one, called the main ditch, which runs the length of the district and empties into some large body of water; in this case, the Illinois River. Radiating from this big ditch, they cut a whole family of little ditches, called laterals. The main ditch is to carry off the bulk of water in case of freshets; while the laterals drain the individual farms."

"It sounds like slow, costly work."

"It is. And you've heard only half of it, so far. Then, following the dredges, come the laborers, with their teams and shovels and dump-carts. Along the banks of the ditch they build low brush-and-stone-work walls and fill them in with earth. These walls make a levee. So, even if the floods come, and your ditch runs bank-full, the levee will hold back the water and save the crops from ruin. Do you see?"

"Ye-es. But it sounds rather tangled, Rod."

"It isn't tangled at all. Look." Rod's pencil raced across the envelope. "Here's a rough outline of this very contract. This squirmy line is Willow Creek. It is a broad, deep stream, and it runs for thirty crooked miles through the district, with swampy shores all the way. A dozen smaller creeks feed into it. They're swampy, too. So you can see how much good rich farm-land is being kept idle.

"This straight line is the main ditch, as planned. It will cut

straight through the creek course, as the crow flies. Do you see, that means we'll make a new channel for the whole stream? A straight, deep channel, too, not more than ten miles long, instead of the thirty twisted, wasteful miles of the old channel. The short lines at right angles to the main ditch represent the little ditches, or laterals. They'll carry off surplus water from the farm-lands: even from those that lie back from the creek, well out of harm's way."

"What will your work be, Rod?"

"I'll probably be given a night shift to boss. That is – if I take the job at all. The laborers are divided into two shifts, eleven hours each. The dredges have big search-lights, and puff along by night, regardless."

"How will you live?"

"We engineers will be allotted a house-boat to ourselves, and we'll mess together. The laborers live on a big boat called the quarter-boat. The firm furnishes food and bunks, tools, stationery, everything, even to overalls and quinine."

"Quinine?"

"Yes. Those Illinois swamps are chock-full of chills and fever."

"Cheerful prospect! What if you get sick, Rod?"

"Pooh. I never had a sick day in all my life. However, the farm-houses, up on higher ground, are out of the malaria belt. If I get so Miss Nancy-fied that I can't stay in the swamp, I can sleep at a farm-house. They say there are lots of pleasant people living

down through that section. It is a beautiful country, too. I – I'd like it immensely, I imagine."

"Of course you will. But what makes you speak so queerly, Rod? You're certainly going to accept this splendid chance!"

Rod's dark, sober face settled into unflinching lines.

"We'll settle that later. What about you, Sis? If I go West, where will you go? How will you manage without me?"

"Oh, I'll go up to Ipswich for the summer. Just as I always do."

Rod considered.

"That won't answer, Marian. Now that the Comstocks have moved away, there is nobody there to look after you. And you'd be lonely, too."

"Well, then, I can go to Dublin. Cousin Evelyn will give me a corner in her cottage."

"But Cousin Evelyn sails for Norway in June."

"Dear me, I forgot! Then I'll visit some of the girls. Isabel was teasing me this morning to come to their place at Beverly Farms for August. Though – I don't know – "

Rod's serious young eyes met hers. A slow red mounted to his thatched black hair.

"I don't believe that would work, Sis. I hate to spoil your fun. But – we can't afford that sort of thing, dear."

"I suppose not. To spend a month with Isabel and her mother, in that Tudor palace of theirs, full of man-servants, and maid-servants, and regiments of guests, and flocks and herds of automobiles, would cost me more, in new clothes alone, than the

whole summer at Ipswich. But, Rod, where can I stay? I'd go cheerfully and camp on my relatives, only we haven't a relative in the world, except Cousin Evelyn. Besides, I – I don't see how I can ever stand it, anyway!" Her fretted voice broke, quivering. Mindful of Rod's boyish hatred of sentiment, she gulped back the sob in her throat; but her weak hand clutched his sleeve. "There are only the two of us, Rod, and we've never been separated in all our lives. Not even for a single week. I – I can't let you go away out there and leave me behind."

Now, on nine occasions out of ten, Slow-Coach was Rod's fitting title. This was the tenth time. He stooped over Marian, his black eyes flashing. His big hand caught her trembling fingers tight.

"That will just do, Sis. Stop your forebodings, you precious old 'fraid-cat. I'm going to pack you up and take you right straight along."

"Why, Roderick Thayer Hallowell!"

Marian gasped. She stared up at her brother, wide-eyed.

"Why, I couldn't possibly go with you. It's absurd. I daren't even think of it."

"Why not?"

"Well, it's such a queer, wild place. And it is so horribly far away. And I'm not strong enough for roughing it."

"Nonsense. Illinois isn't a frontier. It's only two days' travel from Boston. As for roughing it, think of the Vermont farm-houses where we've stayed on fishing trips. Remember the

smothery feather-beds, and the ice-cold pickled beets and pie for breakfast? Darkest Illinois can't be worse than that."

"N-no, I should hope not. But it will be so tedious and dull!"

"Didn't the doctor order you to spend a dull summer? Didn't he prescribe bread and milk and sleep?"

"Rod, I won't go. I can't. I'd be perfectly miserable. There, now!"

Roderick gave her a long, grave look.

"Then I may as well write and decline the Breckenridge offer, Sis. For I'll take you with me, or else stay here with you. That's all."

"Rod, you're so contrary!" Marian's lips quivered. "You must go West. I won't have you stay here and drudge forever at office work. You must not throw away this splendid chance. It isn't possible!"

"It isn't possible for me to do anything else, Sis." Roderick's stolid face settled into granite lines. Marian started at the new ring of authority in his voice. "Haven't you just said that you couldn't stand it to be left behind? Well, I – I'm in the same boat. I can't go off and leave you, Sis. I won't run the chances of your being sick, or lonely, while I'm a thousand miles away. So you'll have to decide for us both. Either you go with me, or else I stay here and drudge forever, as you call it. For I'd rather drudge forever than face that separation. That's all. Run along to bed now, that's a good girl. You'll need plenty of sleep if you are to start for Illinois with me next week. Good-night."

"Well, but Rod – "

"Run along, I say. Take Empress with you. I want to answer this letter, and she keeps purring like a buzz-saw, and sharpening her claws on my shoes, till I can't think straight."

"But, Rod, you don't understand!" Marian caught his arm. Her eyes brimmed with angry tears. "I don't *want* to go West. I'll hate it. I know I shall. I want to stay here, where I can be with my friends, where I can have a little fun. It's not fair to make me go with you!"

"Oh, I understand, all right." Roderick's eyes darkened. "You will not like the West. You'll not be contented. I know that. But, remember, I'm taking this job for both of us, Sis. We're partners, you know. I wish you could realize that." His voice grew a little wistful. "If you'd be willing to play up – "

"Oh, I'll play up, of course." Marian put her hands on his shoulders and gave him a pettish kiss. "And I'll go West with you. Though I'd rather go to Moscow or the Sahara. Come, Empress! Good-night, Rod."

The door closed behind her quick, impatient step. Roderick sat down at his desk and opened his portfolio. He did not begin to write at once. Instead, he sat staring at the letter in his hand. He was a slow, plodding boy; he was not given to dreaming; but to-night, as he sat there, his sober young face lighted with eager fire. Certain phrases of that magical letter seemed to float and gleam before his eyes.

– "A splendid undertaking... heavy, responsible work, but a

man's work, and a man's game... This is your fighting chance. If you can make good... And I expect to see you equal to its heaviest demands."

Rod's deep eyes kindled slowly.

"I'll make good, all right," he muttered. His strong hand clinched on the folded sheet. "It's my fighting chance. And if I can't win out, with such an opportunity as this one – then I'll take my name off the *Engineering Record* roster and buy me a pick and a shovel!"

CHAPTER II

TRAVELLERS THREE

"Ready, Marian? The Limited starts in thirty minutes. We haven't a minute to spare."

"Y-yes." Marian caught up her handbag and hurried into the cab. "Only my trunk keys – I'm not sure –"

"Your trunk keys! You haven't lost them, of all things!"

"No. Here they are, safe in my bag. But Empress has been so frenzied I haven't known which way to turn."

Poor insulted Empress, squirming madly in a wicker basket, glared at Rod, and lifted a wild, despairing wowl.

"You don't propose to leave Mount Vernon Street for the wilds of Illinois without a struggle, do you, Empress?" chuckled Rod. "Never you mind. You'll forget your blue silk cushion and your minced steak and cream, and you'll be chasing plebeian chipmunks in a week. Look at the river, Marian. You won't see it again in a long while."

Marian followed his glance. It was a silver hoar-frost morning. The sky shone a cloudless blue, the cold, delicious air sparkled, diamond-clear. Straight down Mount Vernon Street the exquisite little panel of the frozen Charles gleamed like a vista of fairyland. Marian stared at it a little wistfully.

"It will all be very different out West, I suppose. I wonder if

any Western river can be half as lovely," she pondered.

Roderick did not answer. A sudden worried question stirred in his thought. Yes, the West would be "different." Very different.

"Maybe I've done the worst possible thing in dragging Marian along," he thought. "But it's too late to turn back now. I can only hope that she can stand the change, and that she'll try to be patient and contented."

Marian, on her part, was in high spirits. She had been shut up for so long that to find herself free, and starting on this trip to a new country, delighted her beyond bounds. At South Station, a crowd of her Wellesley chums stormed down upon her, in what Rod described later as a mass-play, laden with roses and chocolates and gay, loving farewells. Marian tore herself from their hands, half-laughing, half-crying with happy excitement.

"Oh, Rod, I know we're going to have the grandest trip, and the most beautiful good fortunes that ever were!" she cried, as he put her carefully aboard the train. "But you aren't one bit enthusiastic. You stodgy tortoise, why can't you be pleased, too?"

"I'm only too glad if you like the prospect, Sis," he answered soberly.

Marian's spirits soared even higher as the hours passed. Roderick grew as rapt as she when the train whirled through the winter glory of the Berkshires. Every slope rose folded in dazzling snow. Every tree, through mile on mile of forest, blazed in rainbow coats of icy mail. The wide rolling New York country was scarcely less beautiful.

At Buffalo, the next morning, a special pleasure awaited them. A party of friends met them with a huge touring car, and carried them on a flying trip to the ice-bridge at Niagara Falls. To Marian, every minute spelled enchantment. She forgot her dizzy head and her aching bones, and fairly exulted in the wild splendor of the blue ice-walled cataract. Roderick, on his part, was so absorbed by the marvellous engineering system of the great power-plant that for once he had no eyes nor thought for his sister, nor for any other matter.

Their wonderful day closed with an elaborate dinner-party, given in their honor. Neither Marian nor Rod had ever been guests at so grand an affair. As they dashed to their train in their host's beautiful limousine, Marian looked up from her bouquet of violets and orchids with laughing eyes.

"If this is the West, Rod, I really think it will suit me very well!"

Rod's mouth twisted into a rueful grin.

"Glad you enjoy it, Sis. Gloat over your luxury while you may. You'll find yourself swept out of the limousine zone all too soon. By this time next week you'll be thankful for a spring wagon."

By the next morning, Marian's spirits began to flag. All day they travelled in fog and rain, down through a flat, dun country. Not a gleam of snow lightened those desolate, muddy plains. There seemed no end to that sodden prairie, that gray mist-blotted sky. Marian grew more lonely and unhappy with every hour. She struggled to be good-humored for Roderick's sake.

But she grew terribly tired; and it was a very white-faced girl who clung to Roderick's arm as their train rolled into the great, clanging terminal at Saint Louis.

Roderick hurried her to a hotel. It seemed to her that she had scarcely dropped asleep before Rod's voice sounded at the door.

"Sorry, Sis, but we'll have to start right away. It's nearly eight o'clock."

"Oh, Rod, I'm so tired! Please let's take a later train."

"There isn't any later train, dear. There isn't any train at all. We're going up-river on a little steamer that is towing a barge-load of coal to our camp. That's the only way to reach the place. There is no railroad anywhere near. There won't be another steamer going up for days. It's a shame to haul you out, but it can't be helped."

An hour later, they picked their way down the wet, slippery stones of the levee to where the *Lucy Lee*, a tiny flat-bottomed "stern-wheeler," puffed and snorted, awaiting them. As they crossed the gang-plank, the pilot rang the big warning bell. Immediately their little craft nosed its way shivering along the ranks of moored packets, and rocked out into mid-channel.

Marian peered back, but she could see nothing of the city. A thick icy fog hung everywhere, shrouding even the tall warehouses at the river's edge, and drifting in great, gray clouds over the bridges.

"The river is still thick with floating ice," said the captain, at her elbow. "The *Lucy* is the first steam-boat to dare her luck,

trying to go up-stream, since the up-river ice gorge let go. But we'll make it all right. It's a pretty chancy trip, yet it's not as dangerous as you'd think."

Marian twinkled. "It looks chancy enough to me," she confessed. She looked out at the broad, turbid stream. Here and there a black patch marked a drifting ice cake, covered with brush, swept down from some flooded woodland. Through the mist she caught glimpses of high, muddy banks, a group of sooty factories, a gray, murky sky.

"I don't see much charm to the Mississippi, Rod. Is this all there is to it? Just yellow, tumbling water, and mud, and fog?"

"It isn't a beautiful stream, that's a fact," admitted Rod. Yet his eyes sparkled. He was growing more flushed and alert with every turn of the wheels that brought him nearer to his coveted work, his man's game. "This is too raw and cold for you, Marian. Come into the cabin, and I'll fix you all snug by the fire."

"The cabin is so stuffy and horrid," fretted Marian. Yet she added, "But it's the cunningest place I ever dreamed of. It's like a miniature museum."

"A museum? A junk-shop, I'd call it," Rod chuckled, as he settled her into the big red-cushioned rocker, before the roaring cannon stove.

The tight little room was crowded with solemn black-walnut cabinets, full of shells and arrowheads, and hung thick with quaint, high-colored old pictures. Languishing ladies in chignons and crinoline gazed upon lordly gentlemen in tall stocks and

gorgeous waistcoats; "Summer Prospects," in vivid chromos fronted "Snow Scenes," made realistic with much powdered isinglass. Crowning all, rose a tall, cupid-wreathed gilt mirror, surmounted by a stern stuffed eagle, who glared down fiercely from two yellow glass eyes. His mighty wings spread above the mirror, a bit moth-eaten, but still terrifying.

"Look, Empress. Don't you want to catch that nice birdie?"

Poor bewildered Empress glared at the big bird, and sidled, back erect, wrathfully sissing, under a chair. Travel had no charms for Empress.

"Will you look at that old yellowed pilot's map and certificate in the acorn frame? '1857!'" chuckled Rod. "And the red-and-blue worsted motto hung above it: 'Home, Sweet Home!' I'll wager Grandma Noah did that worsted-work."

"Not Grandma Noah, but Grandma McCloskey," laughed the captain. "She was the nicest old lady you ever laid eyes on. She used to live on the boat and cook for us, till the rheumatism forced her to live ashore. Her husband is old Commodore McCloskey; so everybody calls him. He has been a pilot on the Mississippi ever since the day he got that certificate, yonder. He's a character, mind that. He shot that eagle in '58, and he has carried it around with him ever since, to every steamer that he has piloted. You must go up to the pilot-house after a bit and make him a visit. He's worth knowing."

"I think I'd like to go up to the pilot-house right away, Rod. It is so close and hot down here."

Obediently Rod gathered up her rugs and cushions. Carefully he and the captain helped her up the swaying corkscrew stairs, across the dizzy, rain-swept hurricane deck, then up the still narrower, more twisty flight that ended at the door of the high glass-walled box, perched like a bird-cage, away forward.

Inside that box stood a large wooden wheel, and a small, twinkling, white-bearded old gentleman, who looked for all the world like a Santa Claus masquerading in yellow oilskins.

"Ask him real pretty," cautioned the captain. "He thinks he runs this boat, and everybody aboard her. He does, too, for a fact."

With much ceremony Roderick rapped at the glass door, and asked permission for his sister to enter. With grand aplomb the little old gentleman rose from his wheel and ushered her up the steps.

"'Tis for fifty-four years that I and me pilot-house have been honored by the ladies' visits," quoth he, with a stately bow. "Ye'll sit here, behind the wheel, and watch me swing herself up the river? Sure, 'tis a ticklish voyage, wid the river so full of floatin' ice. I shall be glad of yer gracious presence, ma'am. It will bring me good luck in me steerin'."

Marian's eyes danced. She fitted herself neatly into the cushioned bench against the wall. The pilot-house was a bird-cage, indeed, hardly eight feet square. The great wheel, swinging in its high frame, took up a third of the space; a huge cast-iron stove filled one corner. For the rest, Marian felt as if she had

stepped inside one of the curio-cabinets in the cabin below; for every inch of wall space in the bird-cage was festooned with mementoes of every sort. A string of beautiful wampum, all polished elks' teeth and uncut green turquoise; shell baskets, and strings of buckeyes; a four-foot diamond-back rattlesnake's skin, beautiful and uncanny, the bunch of five rattles tied to the tail. Close beside the glittering skin hung even an odder treasure-trove: a small white kid glove, quaintly embroidered in faded pink-and-blue forget-me-nots.

"Great-Aunt Emily had some embroidered gloves like that in her trousseau," thought Marian. "I do wonder – "

"Ye're lookin' at me keepsakes?" The pilot sighted up-stream, then turned, beaming. "Maybe it will pass the time like for me to tell ye of them. There is not one but stands for an adventure. That wampum was given to me by Chief Ogalalla; a famous Sioux warrior, he was. 'Twas back in sixty-wan, and the string was the worth of two ponies in thim days. Three of me mates an' meself was prospectin' down in western Nebraska. There came a great blizzard, and Chief Ogalalla and three of his men rode up to our camp, and we took them in for the night."

"And he gave you the wampum in payment?"

"Payment? Never! A man never paid for food nor shelter on the plains. No more than for the air he breathed. 'Twas gratitude. For Chief Ogalalla had a ragin' toothache, and I cured it for him. Made him a poultice of red pepper."

"Mercy! I should think that would hurt worse than any

toothache!"

"Maybe it did, ma'am. But at least it distracted his attention from the tooth itself. That rattlesnake, I kilt in a swamp near Vicksburg. Me and me wife was young then, and we'd borrowed a skiff, an' rowed out to hunt pond-lilies. Mary would go in the bog, walkin' on the big tufts of rushes. Her little feet were that light she didn't sink at all. But the first thing I heard she gave a little squeal, an' there she stood, perched on a tuft, and not three feet away, curled up on a log, was that great shinin' serpent. Just rockin' himself easy, he was, makin' ready to strike. An' strike he would. Only" – the small twinkling face grew grim – "only I struck first."

Marian shivered.

"And the little white glove?"

The old pilot beamed.

"Sure, I hoped ye'd notice that, miss. That glove points to the proud day f'r me! It was the summer of '60. I was pilotin' the *Annie Kilburn*, a grand large packet, down to Saint Louis. We had a wonderful party aboard her. 'Twas just the beginnin' of war times, an' 'twould be like readin' a history book aloud to tell ye their names. Did ever ye hear of the Little Giant?"

"Of Stephen A. Douglas, the famous orator? Why, yes, to be sure. Was he aboard?"

"Yes. A fine, pleasant-spoke gentleman he was, too. But 'tis not the Little Giant that this story is about. 'Twas his wife. Ye've heard of her, sure? Ah, but I wish you could have seen her when

she came trippin' up the steps of me pilot-house and passed the time of day with me, so sweet and friendly. Afterward they told me what a great lady she was. Though I could see that for meself, she was that gentle, and her voice so quiet and low, and her look so sweet and kind. I was showin' her about, an' feelin' terrible proud, an' fussy, an' excited. I was a young felly then, and it took no more than her word an' her smile to turn me foolish head. An' I was showin' her how to handle the wheel, and by some mischance, didn't I catch me blunderin' hand in the frame, an' give it a wrench that near broke every bone! I couldn't leave the wheel till the first mate should come to take me place. And Madame Douglas was that distressed, you'd think it was her own hand that she was grievin' over. She would tear her lace handkerchief into strips, and bind up the cut, and then what does she do but take her white glove, an' twist it round the fingers, so's to keep them from the air, till I could find time to bandage them. I said not a word. But the minute her silks an' laces went trailin' down the hurricane ladder, I jerked off that glove an' folded it in my wallet. An' there it stayed till I could have that frame made for it. And in that frame I've carried it ever since, all these long years.

"Those were the grand days, sure," he added, wistfully. "Before the war, we pilots were the lords of the river. I had me a pair of varnished boots, an' tight striped trousers, an' a grand shiny stove-pipe hat, an' I wouldn't have called the king me uncle. It's sad times for the river, nowadays." He looked away up the

broad, tumbling yellow stream. "Look at her, will ye! No river at all, she is, wid her roily yellow water, an' her poor miry banks, an' her bluffs, all washed away to shiftin' sand. But wasn't she the grand stream entirely, before the war!"

Marian looked at the framed river-chart above the wheel. She tried to read its puzzle of tangled lines. The old man sniffed.

"Don't waste yer time wid that gimcrack, miss. Steer by it? Never!" He shrugged his shoulders loftily. "It hangs there by government request, so I tolerate it to please the Department. I know this river by heart, every inch. I could steer this boat from Natchez to Saint Paul wid me eyes shut, the blackest night that ever blew!"

Marian dimpled at his majestic tone.

"Will you show me how to steer? I've always been curious as to how it is done."

"Certain I will."

Keenly interested, Marian gripped the handholds, and turned the heavy wheel back and forth as he directed. Suddenly her grasp loosened. Down the stream, straight toward the boat, drifted a rolling black mass.

"Mercy, what is that? It looks like a whole forest of logs. It's rolling right toward us!"

"Ye're right. 'Tis a raft that's broke adrift. But we have time to dodge, be sure. Watch now."

His right hand grasped the wheel. His left seized the bell-cord. Three sharp toots signalled the engine-room for full head

of steam. Instantly the *Lucy* jarred under Marian's feet with the sudden heavy force of doubled power. Slowly the steam-boat swung out of her course, in a long westward curve. Past her, the nearest logs not fifty feet away, the great, grinding mass of tree-trunks rolled and tumbled by, sweeping on toward the Gulf.

"'Tis handy that we met those gintlemen by daylight," remarked the pilot, cheerfully. "For one log alone would foul our paddle-wheels and give us a bad shaking up. And should all that Donnybrook Fair come stormin' into us by night, we'd go to the bottom before ye could say Jack Robinson."

Marian's eyes narrowed. She stared at the dusk stormy yellow river, the blank inhospitable shores. She was not by any means a coward. But she could not resist asking one question.

"Do we go on up-river after nightfall? Or do we stop at some landing?"

"There's no landing between here and Grafton, at the mouth of the Illinois River. We'll have to tie up along shore, I'm thinkin'." The old man spoke grudgingly. "If I was runnin' her meself, 'tis little we'd stop for the night. But the captain thinks different. He's young and notional. Tie up over night we must, says he. But 'tis all nonsense. Chicken-hearted, I'd call it, that's all."

Marian laughed to herself. Inwardly she was grateful for the captain's chicken-heartedness.

A loud gong sounded from below. The pilot nodded.

"Yon's your supper-bell, miss. I thank ye kindly for the pleasure of yer company. I shall be honored if ye choose to come

again. And soon."

Marian made her way down to the cabin through the stormy dusk. The little room was warm and brightly lighted; the captain's negro boy was just placing huge smoking-hot platters of perfectly cooked fish and steak upon the clean oil-cloth table. They gathered around it, an odd company. Marian and Roderick, the captain, the *Lucy's* engineer, a pleasant, boyish fellow, painfully embarrassed and redolent of hot oil and machinery; and two young dredge-runners, on their way, like Rod, to the Breckenridge contract. Save the captain and Rod, they gobbled bashfully, and fled at the earliest possible moment. Rod and the captain were talking of the contract and of its prospects. Marian trifled with her massive hot biscuit, and listened indifferently.

"I hope your coming on the work may change its luck, Mr. Hallowell," observed the captain. "For that contract has struggled with mighty serious difficulties, so far. Breckenridge himself is a superb engineer; but of course he cannot stay on the ground. He has a dozen equally important contracts to oversee. His engineers are all well enough, but somehow they don't seem to make things go. Carlisle is the chief. He is a good engineer and a good fellow, but he is so nearly dead with malaria that he can't do two hours' work in a week. Burford, his aid, is a young Southerner, a fine chap, but – well, a bit hot-headed. You know our Northern labor won't stand for much of that. Then there is Marvin, who is third in charge. But as for Marvin" – he stopped, with a queer short laugh – "as for Marvin, the least said the soonest mended. He's a

cub engineer, they call him; a grizzly cub at that. He may come out all right, with time. You can see for yourself that you haven't any soft job. With a force of two hundred laborers, marooned in a swamp seven miles from nowhere, not even a railroad in the county; with half the land-owners protesting against their assessments, and refusing to pay up; with your head engineer sick, and your coal shipments held up by high water – no, you won't find your place an easy one, mind that."

"I'm not doing any worrying." Rod's jaw set. His dark face glowed. Marian looked at him, a little jealously. His whole heart and thought were swinging away to this work, now opening before him. This was his man's share in labor, and he was eager to cope with its sternest demands.

"Well, it's a good thing you have the pluck to face it. You will need all the pluck you've got, and then some." The captain paced restlessly up and down the narrow room. "Wonder why we don't slow down. We must be running a full twelve miles an hour. Altogether too fast, when we're towing a barge. And it is pitch dark."

He stooped to the engine-room speaking-tube. "Hi, Smith! Why are you carrying so much steam? I want to put her inshore."

A muffled voice rose from the engine-room.

"All right, sir. But McCloskey, he just rung for full speed ahead."

"He did? That's McCloskey, all over. The old rascal! He has set his heart on making Grafton Landing to-night, instead of

tying up alongshore. Hear that? He's making that old wheel jump. To be sure, he knows the river channel like a book. But, even with double search-lights, no man living can see ice-cakes and brush far enough ahead to dodge them."

"Let's take a look on deck," suggested Rod.

Once outside the warm, cheerful cabin, the night wind swept down on them, a driving, freezing blast. The little steamer fairly raced through the water. Her deck boards quivered; the boom of the heavy engine throbbed under their feet.

"Thickest night I've seen in a year," growled the captain. "I say, McCloskey! Slow down, and let's put her inshore. This is too dangerous to suit me."

No reply. The boat fled pitching on.

"McCloskey!"

At last there came a faint hail.

"Yes, captain! What's yer pleasure, sir?"

"The old rascal! He's trying to show off. He's put his deaf ear to the tube, I'll be bound. Best go inside, Miss Hallowell, this wind is full of sleet. McCloskey! Head her inshore, I say."

On rushed the *Lucy*. Her course did not change a hair's breadth.

"No wonder they call him Commodore McCloskey!" Rod whispered wickedly. "Even the captain has to yield to him."

"McCloskey!" The captain's voice was gruff with anger. "*Head her inshore!* Unless you're trying to kill the boat – "

Crash!

The captain's sentence was never finished.

CHAPTER III

ENTER MR. FINNEGAN

With that crash the floor shot from under their feet. Stumbling and clutching, the three, Marian, Rod, and the captain, pitched across the deck and landed in a heap against the rail. The lighted cabin seemed to rear straight up from the deck and lunge toward them. There was an uproar of shouts, a hideous pounding of machinery. Marian shut her eyes.

Then, with a second deafening crash, the steamer righted herself; and, thrown like three helpless ninepins, Marian, Rod, and the captain reeled back from the rail and found themselves, bumped and dizzy, tangled in a heap of freight and canvas. Rod was the first on his feet. He snatched Marian up, with a groan.

"Sister! Are you hurt? Tell me, quick."

"Nonsense, no." Marian struggled up, bruised and trembling. "I whacked my head on the rail, that's all. What has happened?"

"We've struck another bunch of runaway logs. They've fouled our wheel," shouted the captain. "Put this life-preserver on your sister. Swing out the yawl, boys!" For the deck crew was already scrambling up the stairs. "Here, where's Smith?"

"He's below, sir, stayin' by the boiler. The logs struck us for'ard the gangway. She's got a hole stove in her that you could drive an ice-wagon through," answered a fireman. "Smith says,

head her inshore. Maybe you can beach her before she goes clean under."

The captain groaned.

"Her first trip for the year! The smartest little boat on the river! McCloskey!" he shouted angrily up the tube. "Head her inshore, before she's swamped. You hear that, I reckon?"

"Ay, ay, sir." It was a very meek voice down the tube.

Very slowly the *Lucy* swung about. Creaking and groaning, she headed through the darkness for the darker line of willows that masked the Illinois shore.

For a minute, Roderick and Marian stood together under the swaying lantern, too dazed by excitement to move. On Marian's forehead a cheerful blue bump had begun to rise; while Rod's cheek-bone displayed an ugly bruise. Suddenly Marian spoke.

"Rod! Where is Empress! She will be frightened to death. We must take her into the yawl with us."

The young fireman turned.

"That grand big cat of yours, ma'am? You'll never coax a cat into an open boat. They'll die first. But have no fear. We are not a hundred yards from shore, and in shallow water at that. 'Tis a pity the *Lucy* is hurt, but it's fortunate for us that she can limp ashore."

Marian felt a little foolish. She pulled off the cork jacket which Rod had tied over her shoulders.

"We aren't shipwrecked after all, Rod. We're worse frightened than hurt."

"I'm not so sure of that. Keep that life-preserver on, Sis."

The *Lucy* was blundering pluckily toward shore. But the deck jarred with the thud and rattle of thrashing machinery, and at every forward plunge the boat pitched until it seemed as if the next fling would surely capsize her.

Rod peered into the darkness.

"We'll make the shore, I do believe. Shall I leave you long enough to get our bags and Empress?"

"Oh, I'll go too. You'll need me to pacify Empress. She will be panic-stricken."

Poor Empress was panic-stricken, indeed. The little cabin was a chaos. The shock of the collision had overturned every piece of furniture. Even the wall cabinets were upset, and their shells and arrowheads were scattered far and wide. The beautiful old-time crystal chandeliers were in splinters. Worst, the big gilt mirror lay on the floor, smashed to atoms. Only one object in all that cabin held its place: the stuffed eagle. And high on the eagle's outspread wing, crouched like a panther, snarling and spitting, her every silky hair furiously on end, clung poor, terrified Empress. Rod exploded.

"You made friends with the nice bird, after all, didn't you, Empress! Come on down, kitty. Let me put a life-preserver on you too."

No life-preservers for Empress! Marian coaxed and called in vain. She merely dug her claws into the eagle's back and growled indignant refusal.

"Let's go back on deck, Sis. She'll calm down presently."

The *Lucy* was now working inshore with increasing speed. But, as they stepped on deck, the boat careened suddenly, then stopped, with a sickening jolt.

"Never mind, miss," the young fireman quickly assured her. "She has struck a sand-bar, and there she'll stick, I fear. But we are safe enough, for the water is barely six feet deep. We'll have to anchor here for the night, but don't be nervous. She can't sink very far in six feet of water."

"I suppose not." Yet Marian's teeth chattered. Inwardly she sympathized with Empress. What a comfort it would be to climb the stuffed eagle and perch there, well out of reach of even six feet of black icy water!

The captain was still more reassuring.

"Well, we're lucky that we've brought her this near shore." He wiped his forehead with a rather unsteady hand. "Ten minutes ago my heart was in my mouth. I thought sure she'd sink in mid-stream. You're perfectly safe now, Miss Hollowell. Better go to your state-room and get some sleep."

"Yes, the *Lucy* will rest still as a church now," said the young fireman, with a heartening chuckle. "She's hard aground. Though that's no thanks to our pilot. I say, McCloskey! Where were you trying to steer us? Into a lumber-yard?"

Down the hurricane deck came Mr. McCloskey, white beard waving, eyes twinkling, jaunty and serene as a May morning.

"This little incident is no fault of me steerin'," said he, with

delightful unconcern. "'Twas the carelessness of thim raftsmen, letting their logs get away, no less. Sure, captain dear, I'd sue them for damages."

"I'll be more likely to sue you for running full speed after dark, against orders," muttered the captain. Then he laughed. "I ought to put you in irons. But the man doesn't live that can hold a grudge against you, McCloskey. Take hold now, boys. Bank your fires, then we'll patch her up as best we can for the night."

Marian went to her state-room, but not to sleep. There was little sleep that night for anybody. In spite of protecting sand-bar and anchor, the boat careened wretchedly. Strange groans and shrieks rose from the engine-room; hurrying footsteps came and went through the narrow gangway. And the rush of the swift current, the bump of ice-cakes, and the sweep of floating brush past her window kept her aroused and trembling. It seemed years before the tiny window grew gray with dawn.

The captain's voice reached her ears.

"No, the *Lucy* isn't damaged as badly as we thought. But it will take us two days of bulkheading before we dare go on. You'd best take your sister up to the camp in my launch. It is at your service."

"That's good news!" sighed Marian. "Anything to escape from this sinking ship. I don't like playing Casabianca one bit."

She swallowed the hot coffee and corn bread which the captain's boy brought to her door, and hurried on deck. Their embarking was highly exciting; for poor *Empress*, having been

coaxed with difficulty from the eagle's roost, where she had spent the night, promptly lost her head at sight of the water and fled shrieking to the pilot-house. Rod, the pilot, the engineer, and the young fireman together hunted her from her fastness, and, after a wild chase, returned scratched but victorious, with Empress raging in a gunny-sack.

"Best keep her there till you're ashore, miss," laughed the young fireman. And Marian took the precaution to tie the mouth of the sack with double knots.

Up-stream puffed the launch, past Grafton Landing into the narrower but clearer current of the Illinois River. Now the black mud banks rose into bluffs and wooded hills. Here and there a marshy backwater showed a faint tinge of early green. But there was not a village in sight; not even a solitary farm-house. Hour after hour they steamed slowly up the dull river, beneath the gray mist-hooded sky. Marian looked resentfully at her brother. He had unrolled a portfolio of blue-prints, and sat over them, as absorbed and as indifferent to the cold and discomfort as if he were sitting at his own desk at home.

"He's so rapt over his miserable old contract that he is not giving me one thought," Marian sulked to herself. "I just wish that I had put my foot down, and had refused, flatly, to come with him. If I had dreamed the West would be like this!"

Presently the launch whistled. An answering whistle came from up-stream. Rod dropped his blue-prints with a shout.

"Look, Marian. There is the contract camp, the whole plant!"

See, straight ahead!"

Marian stared. There was not a house to be seen; but high on the right bank stood an army of tents; and below, moored close to shore, lay a whole village of boats, strung in long double file. Midway stood a gigantic steam-dredge. Its vivid red-painted machinery reared high on its black, oil-soaked platform, its strange sprawling crane spread its iron wings, like the pinions of some ungainly bird of prey. Around it were ranked several flat-boats, a trim steam-launch, a whole regiment of house-boats. Rod's eyes sparkled. He drew a sharp breath.

"This is my job, all right. Isn't it sumptuous, Marian! Will you look at that dredge! Isn't she magnificent? So is the whole outfit, barges and all. That's worth walking from Boston to see!"

"Is it?" Marian choked back the vicious little retort. "Well, I'd be willing to walk back to Boston – to get away!"

"Ahoy the launch! This is Mr. Hallowell?" A tall, haggard man in oilskins and hip boots came striding across the dredge. "Glad to see you, sir. We hoped that you would arrive to-day. I am Carlisle, the engineer in charge." He leaned over the rail to give Rod's hand a friendly grip. He spoke with a dry, formal manner, yet his lean yellow face was full of kindly interest. "And this is your sister, Miss Hallowell? You have come to a rather forlorn summer resort, Miss Hallowell, but we will do our best to make it endurable for you."

Roderick, red with pleasure, stood up to greet his new chief. Behind Mr. Carlisle towered a broad-shouldered, heavily built

young man, in very muddy khaki and leggings, his blond wind-burnt face shining with a hospitable grin.

"This is our Mr. Burford, Mr. Hallowell. At present, you and he will superintend the night shifts."

Mr. Burford gave Roderick a hearty handshake, and beamed upon Marian.

"Mr. Burford will be particularly glad to welcome you, Miss Hallowell, on Mrs. Burford's account. She has been living here on the work for several months, the only lady who has graced our camp until to-day. I know that she will be eager for your companionship."

Mr. Burford grew fairly radiant.

"Sally Lou will be wild when she learns that you are really here," he declared eagerly, in his deep southern drawl. "She has talked of your coming every minute since the news came that we might hope to have you with us. You will find us a mighty primitive set, but you and Sally Lou can have plenty of fun together, I know. I'd like to bring her and the kiddies to see you as soon as you feel equal to receiving us."

"Thank you very much." Marian tried her best to be gracious and friendly. But she was so tired that young Burford's broad smiling face seemed to blur and waver through a thickening mist. "I'm sure I shall be charmed – "

"Hi, there!" An angry shout broke upon her words. "Mr. Carlisle, will you look here! That foreman of yours has gone off with my skiff again. If I'm obliged to share my boat with your

impudent ruffraff – "

"Mr. Marvin, will you kindly come here a moment?" The chief's voice did not lose its even tone; but his heavy brows narrowed. "I wish you to meet Mr. Hallowell, who is your and Mr. Burford's new associate. Miss Hallowell, may I present Mr. Marvin?"

Marian bowed and looked curiously at the tall, dark-featured young man who shuffled forward. She remembered the captain's terse description – "a cub engineer, and a grizzly cub at that." Mr. Marvin certainly acted the part. He barely nodded to her and to Roderick, then clamored on with his grievance.

"You know I've told the men time and again to leave my boat alone. But your foreman borrows my launch whenever he takes the notion, and leaves her half-swamped, or high and dry, as he chooses. If you won't jack him up for it, I will. I'll not tolerate – "

"I'll take that matter up later, Mr. Marvin." Marvin's sullen face reddened at the tone in his chief's voice. "Mr. Hallowell, I have found lodgings for your sister three miles up the canal, at the Gates farm. Mr. Burford will take you to Gates's Landing, thence you will drive to the farm-house. Your own quarters will be on the engineers' house-boat, and we shall hope to see you here for dinner to-night. Good-by, Miss Hallowell. I hope that Mrs. Gates will do everything to make you comfortable."

The launch puffed away up the narrow muddy canal. It was a straight, deep stream of brown water, barely forty feet wide. Its banks were a high-piled mass of mire and clay, for the levee-

builders had not yet begun work. Beyond rose clumps of leafless trees. Then, far as eye could see, muddy fields and gray swampy meadows. Rod gazed, radiant.

"Isn't it splendid, Marian! The finest equipment I ever dreamed of. Look at those barges!"

"Those horrid flat-boats heaped with coal?"

"Yes. Think of the yardage record we're making. Five thousand yards a day!"

Marian rubbed her aching eyes.

"I don't know a yardage record from a bushel basket," she sighed. "What is that queer box-shaped red boat, set on a floating platform?"

"That is the engineers' house-boat, where your brother is to live. Mayn't we take you aboard to see?" urged Burford.

Marian stepped on the narrow platform and peered into the cubby-hole state-rooms and the clean, scoured mess-room. She was too tired to be really interested.

"And that funny, grass-green cabin, set on wooden stilts, up that little hill – that play-house?"

Burford laughed.

"That's my play-house. Sally Lou insists on living right here, so that she and the babies and Mammy Easter can keep a watchful eye on me. You and Sally Lou will be regular chums, I know. She is not more than a year or so older than you are, and it has been pretty rough on her to leave her home and come down here. But she says she doesn't care; that she'd rather rough it down here

with me than mope around home, back in Norfolk, without me. It surely is a splendid scheme for me to have her here." He laughed again, with shy, boyish pride. "Sally Lou is a pretty plucky sort. And, if I may say it, so are you."

Marian managed to smile her thanks. Inwardly she was hoping that the marvellous Sally Lou would stay away and leave her in peace. She was trembling with fatigue. Through the rest of the trip she hardly spoke.

At Gates's Landing they were met by a solemn, bashful youth and a buckboard drawn by two raw, excited horses. They whirled and bumped through a rutted woods road and stopped at last before a low white farm-house. Marian realized dimly that Rod was carrying her upstairs and into a small tidy room. She was so utterly tired that she dropped on the bed and slept straight through the day.

She did not waken until her landlady's tap called her to supper. Mr. and Mrs. Gates, two quiet, elderly people, greeted her kindly, and set a Homeric feast before her: shortbread and honey, broiled squirrels and pigeon stew, persimmon jam and hot mince pie. She ate dutifully, then crept back to her little room, with its mournful hair wreaths and its yellowed engravings of "Night and Morning" and "The Death-bed of Washington," and fell asleep again.

The three days that followed were like a queer, tired dream. It rained night and day. The roads were mired hub deep. Roderick could not drive over to see her, but he telephoned to her daily.

But his hasty messages were little satisfaction. The heavy rains had overflowed the big ditch, he told her. That meant extra work for everybody on the plant. Carlisle was wretchedly sick, so Rod and Burford were sharing their chief's watch in addition to their own duties. Worst, Marvin had quarrelled with the head runner of the big dredge, and "We're having to spend half our time in coddling them both for fear they'll walk off and leave us," as Rod put it. In short, Roderick had neither time nor thought for his sister. Marian realized that her brother was not inconsiderate. He was absorbed in his work and in its risks. Yet she keenly resented her loneliness.

"It isn't Rod's fault. But if I had dreamed that the West would be like this!"

But on the fourth day, while she sat at her window looking out at the endless rain, there came a surprising diversion.

"A gentleman to see you, Miss Hallowell. Will you come downstairs?"

"Why, Commodore McCloskey!" Marian hurried down, delighted. "How good of you to come!"

Commodore McCloskey, dripping from his sou'wester to his mired boots, beamed like a drenched but cheery Santa Claus.

"I've taken the liberty to bring a friend to call," he chuckled. "He's young an' green, an' 'tis few manners he owns, but he's good stock, an' – Here, ye rascal! Shame on ye, startin' a fight the minute ye enter the house!"

Marian gasped. Past her, with a wild miauw, shot a yellow

streak. That streak was Empress. Straight after the streak flew a fat, brown, curly object, yapping at the top of its powerful lungs. Up the window-curtain scrambled Empress. With a frantic leap she landed on the frame of Grandpa Gates's large crayon portrait. Beneath the portrait her curly pursuer yelped and whined.

"Why, he's a collie puppy. Oh, what a beauty! What is his name?"

"Beauty he is. And his name is Finnegan, after the poem, 'Off again, on again, gone again, Finnegan.' Do ye remember? 'Tis him to the life. He is a prisint to ye from Missis McCloskey and meself. An' our compliments an' good wishes go wid him!"

"How more than kind of you!" Marian, delighted, stooped to pat her new treasure. Finnegan promptly leaped on her and splattered her fresh dress with eager, muddy paws. He then caught the table-cover in his teeth. With one frisky bounce he brought a shower of books and magazines to the floor. Mr. McCloskey clutched for his collar. The puppy gayly eluded him and made a dash for the pantry. Marian caught him just as he was diving headlong into the open flour-barrel.

"I do thank you so much! He'll be such a pleasure; and such a protection," gasped Marian, snatching Mrs. Gates's knitting work from the puppy's inquiring paws.

"'Tis hardly a protector I'd call him," Mr. McCloskey returned. "But he'll sure keep your mind employed some. Good-day to ye, ma'am. And good luck with Finnegan."

Poor Empress! In her delight with this new plaything, Marian

quite forgot her elder companion. Moreover, as Mr. McCloskey had said, Finnegan could and did keep her mind employed, and her hands as well.

"That pup is energetic enough, but he don't appear to have much judgment," said Mrs. Gates, mildly. In two hours Finnegan had carried off the family supply of rubbers and hid them in the corn-crib; he had torn up one of Rod's blue-prints; he had terrorized the hen-yard; he had chased Empress from turret to foundation-stone. At length Empress had turned on him and cuffed him till he yelped and fled to the kitchen, where he upset a pan of bread sponge.

"Suppose you take him for a walk, down to the big ditch. Maybe the fresh air will calm him down."

Marian made a leash of clothes-line and marched Finnegan down the sodden woods toward the ditch. She was so busy laughing at his droll performances that she quite forgot the dull fields, the wet, gray prospect. Crimson-cheeked and breathless, she finally dragged him from the third alluring rabbit-hole, despite his pleading whines, and started back up the canal. As she pushed through a hedge of willows a sweet, high, laughing voice accosted her.

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