Stockton Frank Richard

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
THE DAWN OF A WEDDING-JOURNEY

Mr. and Mrs. Hector Archibald were prosperous and happy dwellers in a suburb of one of our large towns. Fortune had favored them in many ways – in health and in a good average happiness. They had reached early middle age, and their daughter Kate, their only child, had grown up to be a beautiful and good young woman, and was on the point of marrying a young lawyer – Rodney Bringhurst by name – in every way worthy of her.

Hector Archibald was a little man, with small bright eyes, and hair slightly touched with gray and very much inclined to curl. His disposition was lively. He had a strong liking for cheerful occurrences, and was always willing to do his part in the bringing about of such events. Novelty had a charm for him. He was not bound by precedence and tradition, and if he had found himself at a dinner which began with coffee and ended with oysters on the half-shell, he would have given the unusual meal a most animated consideration, although he might have utterly withheld

any subsequent approbation. As a general thing, he revolved in an orbit where one might always be able to find him, were the proper calculations made. But if any one drew a tangent for him, and its direction seemed suitable and interesting, he was perfectly willing to fly off on it.

The disposition of Mrs. Hector Archibald was different. She was born to be guided by customs, fashions, and forms. She believed it was the duty of a married woman to make her home happy, and she did it. But she also believed that in the best domestic circles there were rules and usages for domestic happiness which would apply to every domestic condition and contingency. It frequently troubled her, however, to find that certain customs, forms, or usages of domestic society had changed, and being of a conservative turn of mind, it was difficult for her to adapt herself to these changes. But, thoroughly loyal to the idea that what was done by people she loved and people she respected ought also to be done by her, she earnestly strove to fit herself to new conditions, especially when she saw that by not doing so she would be out of touch with her family and her friends.

Now of course the wedding of their daughter was the only thing in the world that seemed of real importance to Mr. and Mrs. Archibald, and for this all preparations and plans had been agreed upon and made with great good-will and harmony, excepting one thing, and that was the wedding-trip. Strange to say, the young people did not wish to take

a wedding-trip. They believed that this old-fashioned custom was unnecessary, troublesome, commonplace, and stupid. In the gardens and grounds of the Archibald mansion, and in the beautiful surrounding country, they had loved each other as lovers, and among these scenes they wished to begin to love each other as a married couple. Why should such distasteful and unpleasant ingredients as railroad-cars, steamboats, and hotels be dashed into the pleasing mixture of their new lives? It had been arranged that for a year or two, at least, they should live in Kate's dear old home, and why should they not immediately begin that life there?

Mr. Archibald did not favor this plan, and his wife was strongly opposed to it. A wedding without a wedding-trip ought not to be thought of.

"During the honey-moon a young couple should live for each other, with each other, apart from the rest of the world. It is a beautiful custom, which should not be rudely trampled upon," said Mrs. Archibald.

But although Mrs. Archibald cherished a belief that she ought to conform her ideas to the domestic customs of the day, her daughter Kate cherished the belief that the domestic customs of the day ought to conform themselves to her ideas.

"Of course we should like to be alone in the honey-moon," she exclaimed. "We don't object to that; and if there must be a wedding-journey, you and father can take it and we will stay here. Here are servants, books, things to eat, and everything

our hearts can desire, and here we would really feel as if we were beginning life as man and wife. As for you two, you both need a vacation, and nothing could be more perfectly appropriate and more delightful to everybody than that you should take our wedding-trip. We don't want it; we will make it a present to you. Take it and be happy, and leave us here to be happy. People have done this sort of thing before, so that it is not absolutely wild and unheard of."

Mr. Archibald welcomed this plan with open arms, and hugged it and his daughter to his breast. It suited him admirably, and he declared that all business and engagements of every kind should be set aside, and that he would be ready to start on the wedding-journey with Mrs. Archibald the moment the ceremony should be completed.

"You will wait until the reception is over, father?" said Kate, laughing.

"Yes," said he, "I will wait for that."

This novel proposition sent a chill through every fibre of Mrs. Archibald's physical organism. At first she did not exactly comprehend it, but when she did, the chills increased. When she had recovered herself a little she began to make objections. This was easy enough, for they crowded into her mind like sheep into a pen; but every objection, as she brought it forth, was ruthlessly set aside or crushed to earth by her daughter or her husband, assisted by her expectant son-in-law, of whom she declared she never would have believed such a thing had she been told it.

The discussion ended, of course, by Mrs. Archibald agreeing to go on this absurd wedding-journey. But the good lady's mental troubles were not over when she had given her consent. As this scheme had been devised by those dearest to her on earth, and as it was certain, these dearest persons assured her, to meet with the approbation of all people of advanced thought – at least of those whose thought had advanced far enough to make it worthy of their consideration – she felt that in doing her part she ought to do it honestly and with her whole heart; and at her time of life, to act as a proxy for a young bride by taking a wedding-journey in that young bride's place was a very difficult thing for Mrs. Archibald to do honestly and with her whole heart. But she would try to do it. Whatever else happened, her family must be kept happy, and it should never be said of her that she hung like a millstone around the combined neck of that family when it was unitedly climbing towards altitudes of felicity, which, although she was not able to discern them, must exist, since that fact had been so earnestly insisted upon by Mr. Archibald, Kate, and Rodney Bringhurst.

Thus was this exceptional hymeneal performance decided upon, and at eleven o'clock on Wednesday, the 6th of June, the marriage service was performed. At noon the guests sat down to breakfast, and at two o'clock that afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Hector Archibald departed on the wedding-trip, leaving behind Mr. and Mrs. Bringhurst at home with each other, and "not at home" to the world.

CHAPTER II
ENTER MARGERY

At four o'clock on the afternoon of June 6th Mr. and Mrs. Hector Archibald arrived at a family hotel in the capital of their state. Where they should go from there had not been decided upon. Nothing in regard to their wedding-journey had been decided upon except that they were to return to their home on the 6th of July of that year, and not before. It would have been impossible, with their minds filled with bridal arrangements, for them to make plans for their journey. But at this first stopping-place, where they were free from all responsibility and interruptions, they could, at their leisure, decide where they should go, how they should go, and what they should do when they got there.

After the unrest and turmoil of their own home during the past few weeks, the quiet and repose of this city hotel were delightful. That evening they went to the theatre, and after the performance they had a little supper at a restaurant.

"People may not think we are a newly married pair," said Mr. Archibald, as he poured out a glass of wine for his wife, "but it is not impossible that they may see we know how to enjoy ourselves quite as much as if we were."

The next morning Mr. Archibald procured a number of

railroad maps, time-tables, circulars of steamboat excursions, advertisements of mountain retreats and sea-side resorts, and he and his wife sat down to study these, and to decide upon a destination and a route. After an hour or two of indeterminate examination Mr. Archibald declared himself a little tired, and proposed that they should take a recess from their labors and go and call upon their old friends, the Stanley Dearborns.

"People on wedding-tours do not make calls," said Mrs. Archibald.

"That may be true," said her husband, "in ordinary cases, and although I do not care to announce to everybody the peculiarities of the expedition which we have undertaken, I do not mind in the least telling the Stanley Dearborns all about it. Stanley himself would not appreciate it; he would consider it absurd; but then he is not at home at this time of day, and Mrs. Dearborn is just the woman to enjoy a reform movement of this sort. Besides, she is full of ideas about everything, and she may propose some good place for us to go to."

Mrs. Dearborn was at home, and very glad to see the Archibalds. She was a woman whose soul was in touch with the higher education of women – with female suffrage, the emancipation of the enslaved mind wherever it might be found, and with progress generally. She was a member of many societies, belonged to committees without end, wrote reports and minutes by day and by night, and was one of that ever-increasing class of good people who continually walk forward in order that

their weight may help the world to turn over.

In spite of her principles and the advanced position of her thought, Mrs. Dearborn actually leaned back in her chair and laughed heartily when she learned what sort of a journey the Archibalds were taking. In this merriment Mr. Archibald joined with great glee.

"Ever since I left home," he said, "I have wanted to have a chance for a good laugh at this trip we are taking. It is the most delightful joke I have ever known."

Mrs. Archibald could not help smiling, but her brow was clouded. "If this expedition is merely a joke," she said, "I do not think we should have undertaken it; but if it is an earnest assertion of our belief that there should be a change in the customs of society, then I think we should take it seriously, and I see nothing to laugh at."

"My dear Harriet," said Mrs. Dearborn, "we can be good and glad at the same time; and that is what I am, I am sure. What you are doing is the initiation of one of the most worthy reforms of the day, and if it should have an effect in breaking up that wretched custom of the bridal tramp, which is considered so necessary in this country, society should rise up and call you blessed. But it is funny, for all that. I am sure that the first woman who dared to go without crinoline was very funny, and when I heard of a hospital for cats I could not help laughing; but I believed in it, and worked for it. And now where are you going?"

"That is what we want to talk to you about," said Mr.

Archibald; and for half an hour they talked about it.

At the end of that time it was decided that the mountains were better than the sea or than a quiet lowland nook; and Mrs. Dearborn strongly recommended Sadler's, where she and her husband had spent a part of a summer a few years before.

"We camped out," said she, "and had a fine time. You can camp out at Sadler's more easily and satisfactorily than anywhere else in the world."

Camping suited Mr. Archibald admirably, and, to his surprise, his wife said she might like it very well.

"If people are going to laugh at us," she said, "when they find out we are on a wedding-journey – and they will be sure to find it out in some way or other – I think the fewer people we mingle with the better. I do not think I shall like camping altogether, but I know it is healthful, and I suppose I ought to get used to it. It would be dreadfully lonely for just Mr. Archibald and me, but I suppose we can take some one with us to guide and cook."

"My dear Harriet," said Mrs. Dearborn, "if you are at Sadler's, you can go into any sort of camp you please. I will tell you all about Sadler's. Sadler is a man of progress. His hotel or inn is on the very edge of the forest country, and away from all the centres of resort. He calls his place the terminal link of public travel in that direction. When you leave him you travel privately in any way you like. He has established what he has named a bureau of camping, and he furnishes his patrons with any sort of a camp they may desire. If the party is few in number and of a timid

disposition, they can have a camp within shouting distance of his house. If they are brave and adventurous, he will send them out into the depths of the forest. If they like water, he locates them by the shores of a lake. If climbing is their passion, he puts them at the foot of a mountain. Those who want to hunt can do so, and those who dislike fire-arms are placed in a camp where the popping of guns is never heard. He provides tents, guides, provisions, and even dangers and sensations."

"Safety is what I want," interrupted Mrs. Archibald.

"And that he furnishes," said the other, "for those who desire it."

"Sadler is the man for me!" cried Mr. Archibald. "We will go to him, look over his list of camps, and select one to suit us."

"By-the-way," said Mrs. Dearborn, "a thought has struck me. How would you like to take Margery with you?"

"Margery!" exclaimed Mr. Archibald. "That delightful little girl whom I taught to ride a tricycle when you were visiting us? I would like it ever so much."

It struck Mrs. Archibald that people on bridal trips did not generally take children or young girls with them, but it also struck her that if they were going into camp it might be pleasant and in many ways advantageous to have some one of her own sex with her; but she had no time to formulate these advantages in her mind before Mrs. Dearborn explained in full.

"Since Mr. Dearborn and I came home from Sadler's," she said, "Margery has been perfectly wild to go there, and as soon

as the leaves began to bud in the parks she began to talk about it. We saw no possible chance of her going there, for her father is too busy to leave home for any length of time this season, and I cannot go to the mountains this year, for I must visit my sister, who is not well, and there are three summer conventions that I am obliged to attend. But if you could take her with you, I do not believe she would trouble you in the least, and you would give her great pleasure. Moreover, to speak practically, which I think we always ought to do, it would not be a bad thing on the score of economy, for things are always proportionately cheaper for three people in a camp than for two."

A great many advantages of female companionship now began to creep into Mrs. Archibald's mind: if her husband should take it into his head to go out and hunt at night by the light of a torch; if there should be thunder-storms, and he away with the guide; if he should want to go off and talk to Indians or trappers, and he always did want to go off and talk to people of every class – it would be very pleasant to have even Margery Dearborn with her. So she consented with great good-will to her friend's proposition, and Mrs. Dearborn was much pleased and thankful.

"Margery is a true creature of impulse," she said; "that is really her predominating characteristic, and she will want to bound to the ceiling when she hears she is to go to Sadler's. She is not at home now, but she will be in very soon. You must take luncheon with us."

About a quarter of an hour after that Margery Dearborn came

home. She was very glad indeed to see the Archibalds, whom she remembered as the kindest of people; and when she heard they were going to take her to Sadler's, she gave a scream of delight and threw herself upon Mrs. Archibald's neck.

"You are an angel," she cried, "an angel of blessedness, my dear Aunt Harriet! Don't you remember, I used to call you that? Won't you let me call you so still?" And without waiting for an answer, she rushed to Mr. Archibald, with outstretched hands. "Dear Uncle Archibald, you are just as good as ever, I see. You know, I wouldn't call you Uncle Hector, because hectoring meant scolding, which never had anything to do with you. Sadler's! Oh, when do we start?"

"To-morrow is Saturday," replied Mr. Archibald; "we must get together some things we will need for camp-life, and we can start on Monday."

When the visitors were left to themselves for a few moments, Mr. Archibald said to his wife, "Harriet, I am astounded. This girl, who used to ride bareback and jump over fences, is a young lady now, and a handsome one, too. She is quite a different person from the girl I agreed to take with us."

"Mr. Archibald," said his wife, "you never can remember that in this world people of all ages grow older. She was fourteen when she was visiting us, and that was four years ago, so of course she is a young lady."

"No," he answered, "I don't feel that I am growing any older, and I don't see that you are, and so I totally forget that proclivity

in other people. But what do you think now? Can we take this young woman with us to camp? Will she not be a dreadful drag?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Archibald, "I much prefer the young lady to the girl. I don't want to be the only woman in camp, and the nearer the other woman is to my age the better."

"All right," said Mr. Archibald; "if you are satisfied, I am; and, if she will agree to it, we will add our ages for the time being, and divide by three, and then we will all stand on a level."

CHAPTER III
SADLER'S

It was in the afternoon of Monday, the 11th of June, when Mr. and Mrs. Archibald, accompanied by Miss Margery Dearborn, arrived at Sadler's, and with feelings of relief alighted from the cramped stage-coach which had brought them eight miles from the railroad station.

"Can this be Sadler's?" said Mr. Archibald, in a tone of surprise.

"Of course it must be," said his wife, "since they brought us here."

"It certainly is the place," said Margery, "for there is the name over that door."

"How do you feel about it?" said Mr. Archibald to his wife.

"I feel very well about it," said she. "Why shouldn't I?"

"How do you feel about it?" he asked of the younger lady.

"Well," she answered, "I don't exactly understand it. I had visions of forests and wilds and tumbling mountain streams and a general air of primevalism, and I am surprised to see this fine hotel with piazzas, and croquet-grounds, and tennis-courts, and gravelled walks, and babies in their carriages, and elderly ladies carrying sun-shades."

"But it seems to me that there is a forest behind it," said Mr.

Archibald.

"Yes," replied Margery, a little dolefully, "it has that to back it up."

"Don't let us stand here at the bottom of the steps talking," said Mrs. Archibald. "I must say I am very agreeably surprised."

In the wide hall which ran through the middle of the hotel, and not far from the clerk's desk, there sat a large, handsome man, a little past middle age, who, in a hearty voice, greeted the visitors as they entered, but without rising from his chair. This was Peter Sadler, the owner of the hotel, the legal owner of a great deal of the neighboring country, and the actual ruler of more of said country than could be easily marked out upon a map or stated in surveyors' terms.

In fact, Peter Sadler, was king of that portion of the vast district of mountain and forest which could be reached in a day's journey in any direction. If he had wished to extend his domain to points at a greater distance than this he would have done so, but so far he was satisfied with the rights he had asserted. He ruled supreme in that region because he had lived longer in the vicinity than any other white man, because he had a powerful will which did not brook opposition, and because there was no one to oppose him.

On the arable land which lay outside of the forest, and which really belonged to him, there were the houses of the men who farmed his fields, and on the outskirts of the woods were scattered here and there the cabins of the hunters and guides he

employed, and these men knew no law but his will. Of course the laws of the State covered the district, but such promulgation and enforcement of these as he might consider necessary were generally left to Peter Sadler, and as to his own laws, he was always there to see that these were observed.

His guests submitted themselves to his will, or they left his hotel very soon. To people of discernment and judgment it was not difficult to submit to the will of this full-bearded, broad-chested man, who knew so much better than they did what they ought to do if they wanted to get all the good out of Sadler's which they were capable of assimilating.

This man, who sat all day in a big rolling-chair, and who knew everything that was going on in the hotel, the farm, and the forest about him, had been a hunter and a guide in his youth, an Indian-fighter in later years, and when he had been wounded in both legs, so that it was impossible for him ever to walk again, he came back to the scenes of his youth and established an inn for sportsmen – a poor little house at first, which grew and grew and grew, until it was the large, well-kept hotel so widely known by his name.

After dinner, at which meal they were waited upon by women, and not by men in evening-dress as Margery had begun to fear, Mr. Archibald sought Peter Sadler and made known to him the surprise of his party at finding themselves in this fine hotel.

"What did you expect?" asked Peter, eying him from head to foot.

"From what we had heard," replied the other, "we supposed we should find some sort of a preparatory camping-ground in the woods, from which we could go out and have a camp of our own."

"That's just what you have found," said Sadler. "In this house you prepare to camp, if you need preparation. If any man, woman, or child comes here and wants to go out to camp, and I see that they are sickly or weak or in any way not fit to live in the woods, I don't let them go one step until they are fit for it. The air and the food and the water they get here will make them fit, if anything will do it, and if these three things don't set them up they simply have to go back where they came from. They can't go into camp from this house. But if they fancy this hotel – and there isn't any reason why anybody shouldn't fancy it – they can stay here as long as they like, and I'll take care of them. Now, sir, if you want to go into camp, the first thing for you to do is to bring your family here and let me take a look at them. I've seen them, of course, but I haven't made up my mind yet whether they are the right sort for camp life. As for you, I think you will do. There isn't much of you, but you look tough."

Mr. Archibald laughed. "That's good rough talk," he said, "and smacks more of camp life than anything I have noticed here. I will go and bring my wife and Miss Dearborn."

"There is another reason why I want to see them," said the bluff Peter. "As you are bent on camping, you'll like to choose a camp, and when anything of that kind is on hand I want to talk

to the whole party. I don't care to settle the business with one of them, and then have him come back and say that what has been agreed upon don't suit the others. I want a full meeting or no session."

When Mr. Archibald returned with his wife and Margery, he found Peter Sadler had rolled his chair up to a large circular table at the back of the hall, on which was spread a map of the forest. He greeted the ladies in a loud voice and with a cheery smile.

"And so you want to go camping, do you?" said he. "Sit down and let us talk it over. I think the young lady is all right. She looks spry enough, and I expect she could eat pine-cones like a squirrel if she was hungry and had nothing else. As for you, madam, you don't appear as if anything in particular was the matter with you, and I should think you could stand a Number Three camp well enough, and be all the better for a week or two of it."

"What is a Number Three camp?" asked Margery, before the astonished Mrs. Archibald could speak.

"Well," said Sadler, "it is a camp with a good deal of comfort in it. Our Number One camps are pretty rough. They are for hunters and scientific people. We give them game enough in season, and some bare places where they can make fires and stretch a bit of canvas. That is all they want, to have a truly good time. That is the best camp of all, I think. Number Two camps are generally for fishermen. They always want a chance for pretty good living when they are out in the woods. They stay in camp in the evenings, and like to sit around and have a good time.

Number Threes are the best camps we put families into, so you see, madam, I'm rating you pretty high. There's always a log-cabin in these camps, with cots and straw mattresses and plenty of traps for cooking. And, more than that, there is a chance for people who don't tramp or fish to do things, such as walking or boating, according to circumstances. There's one of our camps has a croquet-ground."

"Oh, we don't want that!" cried Margery, "it would simply ruin every illusion that is left to me."

"Glad to hear that," said Peter. "If you want to play croquet, stay at the hotel; that's what I say. Now, then, here are the camps, and there's plenty of them to choose from. You've come in a good time, for the season isn't fairly begun yet. Next month every camp will be full, with the hotel crowded with people waiting for their turns."

"What we want," said Margery, rising and looking over the map, "is the wildest Number Three you have."

"Oh, ho!" said Peter. "Not so fast, miss; perhaps we'll wait and see what this lady has to say first. If I'm not mistaken, madam, I think you're inclined the other way, and I don't put people into camps that they will be wanting to leave after the first rainy day. Now let me show you what I've got. Here is one, four hours' walk, horses for women, with a rocky stream through the middle of it."

"That is grand!" cried Margery. "Is it really in the woods?"

"Now let me do the talking," said Peter. "They are all in the woods; we don't make camps in pasture-fields. Even the Number

Sevens, where the meals are sent to the campers from the hotel, and they have bath-tubs, are in the woods. Now here is another one, about three miles west from the one I just showed you, but the same distance from here. This, you see, is on the shore of a lake, with fishing, boating, and bathing, if you can stand cold water."

"Glorious!" cried Margery. "That is exactly what we want. A lake will be simply heavenly!"

"Everything seems to suit you, miss," said Peter, "just as soon as you hear of it. But suppose we consider more of them before you choose. Some two miles north of here, in the thickest of the forest, in a clearing that I made, there is a small camp that strikes the fancy of some people. There is a little stream there and it has fish in it too, and it runs through one corner of the log-cabin, so there are seven or eight feet of the stream inside the house, and on rainy days you can sit there and fish; and some people like to go to sleep with the running water gurgling close to them where they can hear it when they are in bed. Then there's an owl to this camp. The men heard him there when they were making the clearing, and he's never left the spot. Some people who were out there said they never felt as much away from the world as they did listening to that little stream gurgling and that owl hooting."

"I believe," exclaimed Margery, "that in a place like that I could write poetry!"

"It would give me the rheumatism and the blues," said Mrs. Archibald, upon which Peter Sadler exclaimed,

"That settles that. Now then, here is another."

Several other camps were considered, but it was the general conclusion that the one by the lake was the most desirable. It had a good cabin with three rooms, with plenty of open space, near by, for the tents of the guides; there was a boat which belonged to the camp, and in every way it seemed so suitable that Mr. Archibald secured it. He thought the price was rather high, but as it included guides, provisions, fishing-tackle, and in fact everything needed, he considered that although it might cost as much as lodgings in a city hotel, they would get more good out of it.

"Has this camp any name?" asked the enthusiastic Margery, in the course of the conference.

"That's about your twenty-seventh question, miss," said Peter, "but it's one I can answer. Yes, it's got a name. It's called Camp Rob."

"Oh!" ejaculated Margery, in a disappointed tone. "What a name!"

"Yes," said Peter, "it isn't much of a name. The first people who went out there named it that, and it stuck to it, and it's all it's got. Camps are like horses – we've got to tell them apart, and so we give them names, and that's Camp Rob."

CHAPTER IV
A CATARACT OF INFORMATION

Peter Sadler would have been glad to have the Archibald party stay at his hotel for a few days, and Mrs. Archibald would have been perfectly satisfied to remain there until they were ready to return to their own house, but her husband and Margery were impatient to be in the woods, and it was therefore decided to start for the camp the next day. Peter Sadler was a man of system, and his arrangements were made promptly and rapidly.

"You've got to have a guide," said he, "and another man to help him, and I think I'll give you Phil Matlack. Phil is an old hand at the business, and if you don't know what you want, he'll tell you. If you are in Phil's hands, you needn't be afraid anything will happen to you. Whatever you want, ask him for it, and ten to one he'll have it, whether it's information or fishhooks. I tell you again, you're lucky to be here early and get the best of everything. Camp Rob with Phil Matlack will stand at a premium in three or four weeks from now."

That evening after supper Mr. Archibald lighted a cigar and went out into the grounds in front of the hotel, where he was presently joined by his wife.

"Where is Margery?" asked he.

"She is in her room," replied Mrs. Archibald, "but she called

to me that she would be down directly."

In about ten minutes down came Margery and floated out upon the lawn. She was dressed in white, with flowers in her hair, and she was more charming, Mr. Archibald said, as she approached, than even the sunset sky.

"You should not speak in that way of works of nature," said his wife.

"Isn't she a work of nature?" he asked.

"Not altogether," was the wise reply. "Why did you dress yourself in that fashion?" she asked Margery. "I did not suppose you would bring such a fine gown, as we started out to go into camp. And even in this hotel a travelling-suit is good enough for any one."

"Oh, I tucked this into one of my bags," replied Margery. "I always like to have something nice to fall back upon. Don't you want to take a little stroll, Aunt Harriet?"

Mr. Archibald leaned back in his garden-chair and slowly puffed his cigar, and as he puffed he took his eyes from the sunset sky and watched his wife and Margery.

A little beyond them, as they walked, sat two elderly ladies on a bench, wearing shawls, and near by stood a girl in a short dress, with no hat on, and a long plait down her back. A little farther on was a tennis-court, and four people, apparently young, were playing tennis. There were two men, and neither of them wore a tennis-suit. One was attired as a bicyclist, and the other wore ordinary summer clothes. The young women were dressed

in dark-blue flannel and little round hats, which suggested to Mr. Archibald the deck of a yacht.

Near the hotel was an elderly gentleman walking up and down by himself, and on the piazza were the rest of the guests he had seen at the table; not very many of them, for it was early in the season.

Mr. Archibald now turned his eyes again to the sky. It was still beautiful, although its colors were fading, and after a time he looked back towards his wife. She was now talking to the two elderly ladies on the bench, and Margery was engaged in conversation with the girl with the plait down her back.

"When I finish my cigar," thought Mr. Archibald, "I will go myself and take a stroll." And it struck him that he might talk to the old gentleman, who was still walking up and down in front of the hotel. After contemplating the tops of some forest trees against the greenish-yellow of the middle sky, he turned his eyes again towards his wife, and found that the two elderly ladies had made room for her on the bench, that the tennis-game had ceased, and that one of the girls in blue flannel had joined this group and was talking to Margery.

In a few moments all the ladies on the bench rose, and Mrs. Archibald and one of them walked slowly towards an opening in the woods. The other lady followed with the little girl, and Margery and the young woman in blue walked in the same direction, but not in company with the rest of the party. The two young men, with the other tennis-player between them, walked

over from the tennis-court and joined the first group, and they all stopped just as they reached the woods. There they stood and began talking to each other, after which one of the young men and the young woman approached a large tree, and he poked with a stick into what was probably a hole near its roots, and Mr. Archibald supposed that the discussion concerned a snake-hole or a hornets' nest. Then Margery and the other young woman came up, and they looked at the hole. Now the whole company walked into the woods and disappeared. In about ten minutes Mr. Archibald finished his cigar and was thinking of following his wife and Margery, when the two elderly ladies and Mrs. Archibald came out into the open and walked towards the hotel. Then came the little girl, running very fast as she passed the tree with the hole near its roots. In a few minutes Mrs. Archibald stopped and looked back towards the woods; then she walked a little way in that direction, leaving her companions to go to the hotel. Now the young man in the bicycle suit emerged from the woods, with a girl in dark-blue flannel on each side of him.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Archibald, and rising to his feet, advanced towards his wife; but before he reached her, Margery emerged from the wood road, escorted by the young man in the summer suit.

"Upon my word," Mr. Archibald remarked, this time to his wife, "that ward of ours is not given to wasting time."

"It seems so, truly," said she, "and I think her mother was right when she called her a creature of impulse. Let us wait here until

they come up. We must all go in; it is getting chilly."

In a few minutes Margery and the young man had reached them.

"Thank you very much," said this creature of impulse to her escort. "My uncle and aunt will take care of me now. Aunt Harriet and Uncle Archibald, this is Mr. Clyde. He saw a great snake go into a hole over there just before supper-time, and I think we ought all to be very careful how we pass that way."

"I don't think there is very much danger after nightfall," said Mr. Clyde, who was a pleasant youth with brown hair, "and to-morrow I'll see if I can kill him. It's a bad place for a snake to have a hole, just where ladies would be apt to take their walks."

"I don't think the snake will trouble us much," said Mrs. Archibald, "for we leave to-morrow. Still, it would be a good thing to kill it."

After this there were a few remarks made about snakes, and then Mr. Clyde bade them good-evening.

"How in the world, Margery," said Mrs. Archibald, "did you get acquainted so quickly with that young man – and who is he?"

"Oh, it all happened quite naturally," said she. "As we turned to go out of the woods he was the gentleman nearest to me, and so of course he came with me. Those two girls are sisters, and their name is Dodworth. They introduced Mr. Clyde and the other gentleman, Mr. Raybold, to me. But that was after you had been talking to Mrs. Dodworth, their mother, who is Mr. Raybold's aunt. The other lady, with the shawl on, is Mrs. Henderson, and –

would you believe it? – she's grandmother to that girl in the short dress! She doesn't begin to look old enough. The Dodworths don't go into camp at all, but expect to stay here for two weeks longer, and then they go to the sea-shore. Mrs. Henderson leaves day after to-morrow.

"Mr. Clyde and his friend live in Boston. They are both just beginning to practise law, though Mr. Clyde says that Mr. Raybold would rather be an actor, but his family objects. The old gentleman who is walking up and down in front of the hotel has heart-disease, some people say – but that is not certain. He stayed here all last summer, and perhaps he will this year. In two weeks hardly any of the people now in this hotel will be here. One family is going into camp when the father and two sons come on to join them, and the rest are going to the sea-shore, except one lady. You may have noticed her – the one with a dark-purple dress and a little purple cap. She's a school-teacher, and she will spend the rest of the summer with her sister in Pennsylvania.

"That man Phil Matlack, who is going with us to-morrow, is quite a character, and I expect I shall like him awfully. They say that about five years ago he killed a man who made an attack on him in the woods, but he was never tried for it, nor was anything whatever done to him, because Mr. Sadler said he was right, and he would not have any nonsense about it. There are people about here who believe that Phil Matlack would fight a bear single-handed if it happened to be necessary. Mr. Sadler would do it himself if he could walk. Nobody knows how many men he killed

when he was fighting Indians; and, would you believe it? his wife is a plain, little, quiet woman, who lives in some part of the hotel where nobody ever sees her, because she is rather bashful and dislikes company.

"The other person who is going with us is not very much more than a boy, though they say he is very strong and a good hunter. His name is Martin Sanders, and I forgot to say that the old gentleman with the heart-disease is named Parker.

"It's generally thought that Phil Matlack would rather have some one else than Martin Sanders to go with him, because he says Martin knows too much. The fact is that Martin is well educated, and could have gone into some good business, but he was so fond of the woods that he gave up everything to come out here and learn guiding. You know we were told that our camp in the woods has three rooms in it? Well, it really has four, for there was an artist there last year who built a little room for a studio for rainy days. I expect Mr. Sadler forgot that, or didn't think it worth counting. There are no snakes at all where we are going to camp, but two miles farther on there are lots of them."

"Over the brink of Niagara," interjected Mr. Archibald, "they say eighteen million cubic feet of water pour every minute. Where on earth, Margery, did you fill your mind with all that information?"

"I got it from those two Dodworth girls and Mr. Clyde," said she. "Mr. Raybold told me some things, too, but mostly about his bicycle. He feels badly about it, because he brought it here, and

now he finds there is no place to use it. I should think he ought to have known that the primeval forest isn't any place for a bicycle."

"Mr. Archibald," said Mrs. Archibald, when they had retired to their room, "I did not agree with you when you wished we could have started for camp to-day, but now I am quite of your mind."

Tuesday was fine, and preparations were made for the Archibald party to start for their camp after an early luncheon.

The bluff and hearty Peter took such an interest in everything that was being done for their comfort, giving special heed to all the possible requirements of Mrs. Archibald, that the heart of Mr. Archibald was touched.

"I wish," said he to his good-natured host, "that you were going with us. I do not know any one I would rather camp with than you."

"If I could do it," replied Peter, "I'd like it ever so well. So far as I have been able to make you out, you are the sort of a man I'd be willing to run a camp for. What I like about you is that you haven't any mind of your own. There is nothing I hate worse than to run against a man with a mind of his own. Of course there have to be such fellows, but let them keep away from me. There is no room here for more than one mind, and I have pre-empted the whole section."

Mr. Archibald laughed. "Your opinion of me does not sound very complimentary," he said.

"It is complimentary!" roared Peter Sadler, striking the table

with his fist. “Why, I tell you, sir, I couldn’t say anything more commendable of you if I tried! It shows that you are a man of common-sense, and that’s pretty high praise. Everything I’ve told you to do you’ve done. Everything I’ve proposed you’ve agreed to. You see for yourself that I know what is better for you and your party than you do, and you stand up like a man and say so. Yes, sir; if a rolling-chair wasn’t as bad for the woods as the bicycle that Boston chap brought down here, I’d go along with you.”

Mr. Archibald had a very sharp sense of the humorous, and in his enjoyment of a comical situation he liked company. His heart was stirred to put his expedition in its true light before this man who was so honest and plain-spoken. “Mr. Sadler,” said he, “if you will take it as a piece of confidential information, and not intended for the general ear, I will tell you what sort of a holiday my wife and I are taking. We are on a wedding-journey.” And then he told the story of the proxy bridal tour.

Peter Sadler threw himself back in his chair and laughed with such great roars that two hunting-dogs, who were asleep in the hall, sprang to their feet and dashed out of the back door, their tails between their legs.

“By the Lord Harry!” cried Peter Sadler, “you and your wife are a pair of giants. I don’t say anything about that young woman, for I don’t believe it would have made any difference to her whether you were on a wedding-trip or travelling into the woods to bury a child. I tell you, sir, you mayn’t have a mind that can give

out much, but you've got a mind that can take in the biggest kind of thing, and that is what I call grand. It is the difference between a canyon and a mountain. There are lots of good mountains in this world, and mighty few good canyons. Tom, you Tom, come here!"

In answer to the loud call a boy came running up.

"Go into my room," said Peter Sadler, "and bring out a barrel bottle, large size, and one of the stone jars with a red seal on it. Now, sir," said he to Mr. Archibald, "I am going to give you a bottle of the very best whiskey that ever a human being took into the woods, and a jar of smoking-tobacco a great deal too good for any king on any throne. They belong to my private stock, and I am proud to make them a present to a man who will take a wedding-trip to save his grown-up daughter the trouble. As for your wife, there'll be a basket that will go to her with my compliments, that will show her what I think of her. By-the-way, sir, have you met Phil Matlack?"

"No, I have not!" exclaimed Mr. Archibald, with animation. "I have heard something about him, and before we start I should like to see the man who is going to take charge of us in camp."

"Well, there he is, just passing the back door. Hello, Phil! come in here."

When the eminent guide, Phil Matlack, entered the hall, Mr. Archibald looked at him with some surprise, for he was not the conventional tall, gaunt, wiry, keen-eyed backwoodsman who had naturally appeared to his mental vision. This man was

of medium height, a little round-shouldered, dressed in a gray shirt, faded brown trousers very baggy at the knees, a pair of conspicuous blue woollen socks, and slippers made of carpet. His short beard and his hair were touched with gray, and he wore a small jockey cap. With the exception of his eyes, Mr. Matlack's facial features were large, and the expression upon them was that of a mild and generally good-natured tolerance of the world and all that is in it. It may be stated that this expression, combined with his manner, indicated also a desire on his part that the world and all that is in it should tolerate him. Mr. Archibald's first impressions of the man did not formulate themselves in these terms; he simply thought that the guide was a slipshod sort of a fellow.

"Phil," said Mr. Sadler, "here is the gentleman you are going to take into camp."

"Glad to see him," said Matlack; "hope he'll like it."

"And I want to say to you, Phil," continued Sadler, "right before him, that he is a first-class man for you to have in charge. I don't believe you ever had a better one. He's a city man, and it's my opinion he don't know one thing about hunting, fishing, making a camp-fire, or even digging bait. I don't suppose he ever spent a night outside of a house, and doesn't know any more about the weather than he does about planting cabbages. He's just clean, bright, and empty, like a new peach-basket. What you tell him he'll know, and what you ask him to do he'll do, and if you want a better man than that to take into camp, you want too

much. That's all I've got to say."

Matlack looked at Peter Sadler and then at Mr. Archibald, who was leaning back in his chair, his bright eyes twinkling.

"How did you find out all that about him?" he asked.

"Humph!" exclaimed Peter Sadler. "Don't you suppose I can read a man's character when I've had a good chance at him? Now how about the stores – have they all gone on?"

"They were sent out early this mornin'," said Matlack, "and we can start as soon as the folks are ready."

CHAPTER V
CAMP ROB

It was early in the afternoon when the Archibald party took up the line of march for Camp Rob. The two ladies, supplied by Mrs. Sadler with coarse riding-skirts, sat each upon a farm-horse, and Mr. Archibald held the bridle of the one that carried his wife. Matlack and Martin Sanders, the young man who was to assist him, led the way, while a led horse, loaded with the personal baggage of the travellers, brought up the rear.

Their way wound through a forest over a wood road, very rough and barely wide enough for the passage of a cart. The road was solemn and still, except where, here and there, an open space allowed the sunlight to play upon a few scattered wild flowers and brighten the sombre tints of the undergrowth.

After a ride which seemed a long one to the ladies, who wished they had attired themselves in walking-costume, the road and the forest suddenly came to an end, and before them stretched out the waters of a small lake. Camp Rob was not far from the head of the lake, and for some distance above and below the forest stood back from the water's edge. In the shade of a great oak tree there stood a small log-house, rude enough to look at, but moderately comfortable within, and from this house to the shore a wide space was cleared of bushes and undergrowth.

The lake was narrow in proportion to its length, which was about two miles, and on the other side the forest looked like a solid wall of green reflected in the water beneath. Even Mrs. Archibald, whose aching back began to have an effect upon her disposition, was delighted with the beauty of the scene, which delight endured until she had descended from her horse and entered the log-cabin in which she was to dwell for a time.

It is not necessary to describe the house, nor is it necessary to dive into the depths of Mrs. Archibald's mind as she gazed about her, passing silently from room to room of the little house. She was a good woman, and she had made up her mind that she would not be a millstone around the necks of her companions. Many people have been happy in camps, and, indeed, camp-life has become one of the features of our higher civilization, and this, from what she had heard, must be a camp above the common. So, think what she might, she determined to make no open complaint. If it were possible for her to be happy here, she would be happy.

As for Margery, no determination was needed in her case. Everything was better than she had expected to find it. The cabin, with the bark on almost everything, even the furniture, was just what a house in the woods ought to be; and when she entered the little studio, which was nearer allied to the original forest than any other part of the house, she declared that that must be her room, and that living there she would feel almost like a dryad in an oak.

"You've camped out before?" said Phil Matlack to Mr. Archibald, as he was taking a survey of the scene.

"Oh yes," said the other, "I've been out a few days at a time with fishing-parties, but we never had such a fine camp as this – so well located and such good accommodations."

"You are a fisherman, then?" said the guide.

"Yes. I am very fond of it. I've fished ever since I was a boy, and know a good deal about bait, in spite of what Mr. Sadler said."

"I had an idea of that sort," remarked Phil, "but it ain't no use to contradict Peter. It helps keep up his spirits for him to think he can read the characters of people just as quick as he can aim a rifle. And it's a mighty important thing to keep Peter's spirits up. If Peter's spirits was to go down, things round here would flatten out worse than a rotten punkin when it's dropped."

It did not take long to establish the new-comers in their woodland quarters. The tent for the two men, which had arrived in the morning, was pitched not far from the cabin, and then Matlack and Martin went to work to prepare supper. The dining-room in pleasant weather was the small space in front of the house, where there was a table made of a wide board supported by stakes, with a low and narrow board on each side, also resting on stakes, and forming seats.

The supper was a better one and better served than any of the party had expected. The camp outfit included table-cloths, and even napkins.

"To-morrow," said Matlack, as he brought a dish of hot and savory broiled ham, "after Mr. Archibald gets to work, we'll have some fish."

Mrs. Archibald had been a little fearful that under these primitive conditions the two men might expect to sit at the table with them, but she need have had no such fears. Matlack and Martin cooked and waited with a skill and deftness which would have surprised any one who did not reflect that this was as much their business as hunting or woodcraft.

After supper a camp-fire was built at a safe distance from the house, for although the evening air was but slightly cool, a camp without a camp-fire would not be a camp. The party ranged themselves around it, Mrs. Archibald on a rug brought from the cabin, and her husband and Margery on the ground. Mr. Archibald lighted his pipe, the fire lighted the trees and the lake, and joy inexpressible lighted the heart of Margery.

"If I could smoke a pipe," said she, "and get Mr. Matlack to come here and tell me how he killed a man, I should be perfectly happy."

That night Mrs. Archibald lay awake on her straw mattress. Absolute darkness was about her, but through the open window she could see, over the tops of the trees on the other side of the lake, one little star.

"If I could get any comfort out of that little star," thought the good lady, "I would do it; but I can't do it, and there is nothing else to comfort me."

On the other side of the room, on another straw mattress, she could hear her husband breathing steadily. Then, upon the bare boards of the floor, which were but a few inches below her little cot-bed, she thought she heard the patter of small feet. A squirrel, perhaps, or, horrible to think of, it might be a rat. She was sure rats would eat straw beds, and her first impulse was to wake Mr. Archibald; but she hesitated, he was sleeping so soundly. Still she listened, and now she became almost certain that what she heard was not the patter of small feet; it sounded more like something soft which was dragging itself over the floor – possibly a snake. This idea was simply awful, and she sat up in bed. Still she did not call Mr. Archibald, for should he suddenly spring on the floor, he would be in more danger from the snake than she was.

She listened and she listened, but she heard nothing more, and then her reason began to assure her that a snake's movements on a bare floor would be absolutely noiseless; but in a moment all thoughts of serpents were driven from her head. Outside of the cabin she heard a sound that could be nothing less than the footsteps of some living creature – a wild beast, perhaps a panther. The door was shut and fastened, but the window was open. To call Mr. Archibald and tell him a wild beast was walking outside the house would be positively wicked. Half-awakened, he would probably rush out of the door to see what it was. What could she do? For an instant she thought of lighting a candle and standing it in the window. She knew that wild beasts were afraid of fire, and she did not believe that even a panther would dare

jump over a lighted candle. But if she struck a match and got up, she would waken her husband; and, besides, if the wind, of which she could feel a puff every now and then, did not blow out the candle, it might blow it over and set fire to the cabin.

She heard the footsteps no more, and lay down again, but not to sleep. The wind seemed to be rising, and made a wild, unearthly sound as it surged through the trees which surrounded and imprisoned her, and shut her out from the world in which she was born and in which she ought to live. There was a far-away sound which came to her ears once, twice, thrice, and which might have been the call of some ghostly bird or the war-whoop of an Indian. At last she drew the covering over her head, determined that, so long as she could not see, she would not hear.

"A wedding-journey!" she said to herself, and the idea, coupled with the sense of her present grewsome and doleful condition, was so truly absurd and ridiculous that she could not restrain a melancholy laugh.

"What is the matter, my dear?" exclaimed Mr. Archibald, suddenly turning over in his bed. "Are you choking? Is the room too close? Shall I open the door?"

"No, indeed," she said, "for that was a laugh you heard. I couldn't help laughing at the thought that there should be two such idiots in the world as you and myself."

"It is idiotic, isn't it?" said Mr. Archibald. "It is gloriously idiotic, and it will do us both a world of good. It is such a complete and perfect change that I don't wonder you laugh."

Then he laughed himself, clearly and loudly, and turned over on his side and went to sleep.

Mrs. Archibald felt certain that she would not sleep another wink that night, but she did sleep seven hours and a half, and was awakened by Margery singing outside her window.

CHAPTER VI
CAMP ROY

No thoughts of idiocy crossed the minds of any of the camping party during their first breakfast under the great oak-tree. The air, the sunlight, the rippling waters of the lake, the white clouds in the blue sky, the great trunks of the trees, the rustling of the leaves, the songs of the birds, the hum of insects, the brightness of everything, their wonderful appetites – the sense of all these things more than filled their minds.

For the greater part of that day Mr. Archibald fished, sometimes in a stream which ran into the head of the lake about a quarter of a mile above the camp, and sometimes on the shores of the lake itself. Margery sketched; her night in the studio had filled her with dreams of art, and she had discovered in a corner a portable easel made of hickory sticks with the bark on, and she had tucked some drawing materials into one of her bags.

Mrs. Archibald was a little tired with her journey of the day before, and contented herself with sitting in the shade in pleasant places, occupied with some needle-work she had brought with her, and trying to discipline her mind to habits of happiness in camp. This was not very difficult during the first part of this beautiful day, but towards the end of the afternoon she began to think less of the joys of a free life in the heart of nature and more

of the pleasure of putting on her bonnet and going out to make some calls upon her friends. In this state of mind it pleased her to see Phil Matlack coming towards her.

"Would you like a cup of tea, ma'am?" said he.

"No, thank you," she answered. "It would seem rather odd to have afternoon tea in the woods, and I really don't care for it."

"We can have 'most anything in the woods, ma'am," said Matlack, "that we can have anywhere else, providin' you don't mind what sort of fashion you have it in. I thought it might be sort of comfortin' to you to have a cup of tea. I've noticed that in most campin' parties of the family order there's generally one or two of them that's lonesome the first day; and the fact is I don't count on anything particular bein' done on the first day in camp, except when the party is regular hunters or fishermen. It's just as well for some of them to sit round on the first day and let things soak into them, provided it isn't rain, and the next day they will have a more natural feelin' about what they really want to do. Now I expect you will be off on some sort of a tramp to-morrow, ma'am, or else be out in the boat; and as for that young lady, she's not goin' to sketch no more after to-day. She's got young Martin out in the boat, restin' on his oars, while she's puttin' him into her picture. She's rubbed him out so often that I expect he'll fall asleep and tumble overboard, or else drop one of his oars."

"Mr. Matlack," said Mrs. Archibald, "will you please sit down a moment? I want to ask you something."

"Certainly, ma'am," said he, and forthwith seated himself on

a log near by, picking up a stick as he did so, and beginning to shave the bark from it with his pocket-knife.

"Do you know," said she, "if there are panthers in these woods?"

Matlack looked up at her quickly. "I expect you heard them walkin' about your cabin last night," said he; "and not only panthers, but most likely a bear or two, and snakes rustlin' in the leaves; and, for all I know, coons or 'possums climbin' in and out of the window."

"Oh, nothing so bad as that," she replied. "I only thought – "

"Excuse me, ma'am," he interrupted. "I didn't mean that you heard all those things, but most likely a part of them. Hardly any family parties goes into camp that some of them don't hear wild beasts the first night. But they never come no more. Them kind of wild beasts I call first-nighters, and they're about the worst kind we've got, because they really do hurt people by scratchin' and clawin' at their nerves, whereas the real wild beasts in these parts – and they're mighty scarce, and never come near camp – don't hurt nobody."

"I am glad to hear it," said she. "But what on earth can be keeping Mr. Archibald? When he started out after dinner he said he would be back very soon."

"Oh, he's got the fever, ma'am," said Matlack.

"Fever!" exclaimed Mrs. Archibald, dropping her work in her lap.

"Oh, don't be frightened," said he; "it is only the fishin' fever.

It don't hurt anybody; it only keeps the meals waitin'. You see, we are pretty nigh the first people out this year, and the fish bite lively. Are you fond of fishin', ma'am?"

"No, indeed," said she; "I dislike it. I think it is cruel and slimy and generally unpleasant."

"I expect you'll spend most of your time in the boat," suggested Matlack. "Your husband rows, don't he?"

"He doesn't row me," said Mrs. Archibald, with earnestness. "I never go out in a boat except with a regular boatman. I suppose you have a larger boat than the one that young man is in? I can see it from here, and it looks very small."

"No, ma'am," said Matlack; "that's the only one we've got. And now I guess I'll go see about supper. This has been a lazy day for us, but we always do calc'late on a lazy day to begin with."

"It strikes me," said Matlack to himself, as he walked away, "that this here camp will come to an end pretty soon. The man and the young woman could stand it for a couple of weeks, but there's nothing here for the old lady, and it can't be long before she'll have us all out of the woods again."

"You can come in," called Margery, about ten minutes after this conversation; and young Martin, who had not the least idea of going to sleep in the boat, dipped his oars in the water and rowed ashore, pulled the boat up on the beach, and then advanced to the spot where Margery was preparing to put away her drawing materials.

"Would you mind letting me see your sketch?" said he.

"Oh no," said she; "but you'll see it isn't very much like the scene itself. When I make a drawing from nature I never copy everything I see just as if I were making a photograph. I suppose you think I ought to draw the boat just as it is, but I always put something of my own in my pictures. And that, you see, is a different kind of a boat from the one you were in. It is something like Venetian boats."

"It isn't like anything in this part of the world, that is true," said the young man, as he held the drawing in his hand; "and if it had been more like a gondola it would not have suited the scene. I think you have caught the spirit of the landscape very well; but if you don't object to a little criticism, I should say that the shore over there is too near the foreground. It seems to me that the picture wants atmosphere; that would help the distance very much."

"Do you draw?" asked Margery, in surprise.

"I used to be very fond of sketching," said he. "I stayed at Sadler's a good part of the last winter, and when I wasn't out hunting I made a good many drawings of winter scenes. I would be glad to show them to you when we go back."

"Well," said she, "if I had known you were an artist I would not have asked you to go out there and sit as a model."

"Oh, I am not an artist," replied Martin; "I only draw, that's all. But if you make any more water sketches and would like me to put some ducks or any other kind of wild-fowl in the foreground I will be glad to do it for you. I have made a specialty of natural-

history drawings. Don't bother yourself about that easel; I'll carry up your things for you."

About half-way to the cabin Margery suddenly stopped and turned round towards the young man, who was following her. "How did you come to be a guide?" she asked.

He smiled. "That's because I was born a naturalist and a sportsman. I went into business when I finished my education, but I couldn't stand that, and as I couldn't afford to become a gentleman sportsman, I came here as a guide. I'm getting a lot of experience in this sort of life, and when I've saved money enough I'm going on an exploring expedition, most likely to Central America. That's the kind of life that will suit me."

"And write a book about it?" asked Margery.

"Most likely," said he.

That night, after supper, Margery remarked: "Our two guides are American citizens, and I don't see why they can't eat at the table with us instead of waiting until we have finished. We are all free and equal in the woods."

"Margery Dearborn!" exclaimed Mrs. Archibald. "What are you talking about?"

She was going to say that if there were one straw more needed to break her back, that straw would be the sight of the two guides sitting at the table with them, but she restrained herself. She did not want Mr. Archibald to know anything about the condition of her back.

"So long as they don't want to do it, and don't do it," said she,

"pray don't let us say anything about it. Let's try to make things as pleasant as we can."

Mr. Archibald was lighting his pipe, and when he was sure the tobacco was sufficiently ignited he took the pipe from his mouth and turned towards his wife.

"Harriet," said he, "you have been too much alone to-day. I don't know what I shall do to-morrow; but whatever it is, I am going to take you with me."

"Of course that depends on what it is you do," she answered. "But I will try to do everything I can."

Mr. Archibald heaved a little sigh, which was not noticed by any one, because it sounded like a puff.

"I am afraid," he thought, "that this camping business is not going to last very much longer, and we shall be obliged to make the rest of our wedding-journey in a different style."

The next morning, when Mr. Archibald went out of his cabin door, he looked over the lake and saw a bird suddenly swoop down upon the water, breaking the smooth surface into sparkles of silver, and then rise again, a little silvery fish glittering in its claws.

"Beautifully done!" said he. "A splendid stroke!" And then turning, he looked up the lake, and not far from the water's edge he saw Margery walking with Mr. Clyde, while Mr. Raybold followed a little in the rear.

"Harriet," he cried, quickly stepping into the cabin again, "look out here! What is the meaning of this?"

Mrs. Archibald was dressed, and came out. When she saw the trio approaching them, she was not so much surprised as was her husband.

"I don't know the meaning of anything that happens in these woods," she said; "but if a lot of people have come from the hotel with those young men I cannot say I am sorry."

"Come," said her husband, "we must look into this."

In two minutes the Archibalds had met the new-comers, who advanced with outstretched hands, as if they had been old friends. Mr. Archibald, not without some mental disquietude at this intrusion upon the woodland privacy of his party, was about to begin a series of questions, when he was forestalled by Margery.

"Oh, Uncle Archibald and Aunt Harriet!" she exclaimed, "Mr. Clyde and Mr. Raybold have come out here to camp. Their camp is right next to ours, and it is called Camp Roy. You see, some years ago there was a large camping party came here, and they called the place Camp Rob Roy, but it was afterwards divided, and one part called Camp Rob and the other Camp Roy."

"Indeed!" interrupted Mr. Archibald. "Mr. Sadler did not tell us that ours was only half a camp with only half a name."

"I don't suppose he thought of it," said Margery. "And the line between the two camps is just three hundred feet above our cabin. I don't suppose anybody ever measures it off, but there it is; and Mr. Clyde and Mr. Raybold have taken Camp Roy, which hasn't any house on it. They started before daybreak this morning, and brought a tent along with them, which they

have pitched just back of that little peninsula; and they haven't any guide, because they want to attend to their own cooking and everything, and the man who brought the tent and other things has gone back. They are going to live there just like real backwoodsmen, and they have a boat of their own, which is to be brought up from the bottom of the lake somewhere – I mean from the lower end of the lake. And, Aunt Harriet, may I speak to you a moment?"

With this the young woman drew Mrs. Archibald aside, and in a low voice asked if she thought it would be out of the way to invite the two young men to take breakfast with them, as it was not likely they had all their cooking things in order so early.

Five people sat down to breakfast under the great oak-tree, and it was a lively meal. Mr. Archibald's mental disquiet, in which were now apparent some elements of resentment, had not subsided, but the state of his mind did not show itself in his demeanor, and he could not help feeling pleased to see that his wife was in better spirits. He had always known that she liked company.

After breakfast he took Matlack aside. "I don't understand this business," said he. "When I hired this camp I supposed we were to have it to ourselves; but if there are other camps jammed close against it we may be in the midst of a great public picnic before a week is out."

"Oh, that camp over there isn't much of a camp," replied the guide. "The fact is, it is only the tail end of a camp, and I don't

suppose Peter Sadler thought anybody would be likely to take it just now, and so didn't think it worth while to speak of it. Of course it's jammed up against this one, as you say; but then the people in one camp haven't the right to cross the line into another camp if the people in the other camp don't want them to."

"Line!" said Mr. Archibald. "It is absurd to think of lines in a place like this. And I have no intention of making myself disagreeable by ordering people off my premises. But I would like to know if there is another camp three hundred feet on this side of our cabin, or three hundred feet back of it."

"No, sir," said Matlack, speaking promptly; "there isn't another camp between this and the lower end of the lake. There's a big one there, and it's taken; but the people aren't coming until next month."

"If a larger party had taken Camp Roy," said Mr. Archibald to his wife a little later, "I should not mind it so much. But two young men! I do not like it."

CHAPTER VII
A STRANGER

It was at the close of a pleasant afternoon four days after the arrival of the young men at Camp Roy, and Mrs. Archibald was seated on a camp-stool near the edge of the lake intently fishing. By her side stood Phil Matlack, who had volunteered to interpose himself between her and all the disagreeable adjuncts of angling. He put the bait upon her hook, he told her when her cork was bobbing sufficiently to justify a jerk, and when she caught a little fish he took it off the hook. Fishing in this pleasant wise had become very agreeable to the good lady, and she found pleasures in camp life which she had not anticipated. Her husband was in a boat some distance out on the lake, and he was also fishing, but she did not care for that style of sport; the fish were too big and the boat too small.

A little farther down the lake Martin Sanders sat busily engaged in putting some water-fowl into the foreground of Margery's sketch. A critical observer might have noticed that he had also made a number of changes in said sketch, all of which added greatly to its merits as a picture of woodland scenery. At a little distance Margery was sitting at her easel making a sketch of Martin as an artist at work in the woods. The two young men had gone off with their guns, not perhaps because they

expected to find any legitimate game at that season, but hoping to secure some ornithological specimens, or to get a shot at some minor quadrupeds unprotected by law. Another reason for their expedition could probably have been found in some strong hints given by Mr. Archibald that it was unwise for them to be hanging around the camps and taking no advantage of the opportunities for sport offered by the beautiful weather and the forest.

It was not long before Margery became convinced that the sketch on which she was working did not resemble her model, nor did it very much resemble an artist at work in the woods.

"It looks a good deal more like a cobbler mending shoes," she said to herself, "and I'll keep it for that. Some day I will put a bench under him and a shoe in his hand instead of a sketch." With that she rose, and went to see how Martin was getting on. "I think," she said, "those dark ducks improve the picture very much. They throw the other things back." Then she stopped, went to one side, and gazed out over the lake. "I wonder," she said, "if there is really any fun in fishing. Uncle Archibald has been out in that boat for more than two hours, and he has fished almost every day since he's been here. I should think he would get tired of it."

"Oh no," said Martin, looking up with animation. "If you know how to fish, and there is good sport, you never get tired of it."

"I know how to fish," said Margery, "and I do not care about it at all."

"You know how to fish?" said Martin. "Can you make a cast with a fly?"

"I never tried that," said she. "But I have fished as Aunt Harriet does, and it is easy as can be."

"Oh," said he, "you don't know anything about fishing unless you have fished with a fly. That is the only real sport. It is as exciting as a battle. If you would let me teach you how to throw a fly, I am sure you would never find fishing tiresome, and these woods would be like a new world to you."

"Why don't you do it yourself, then?" she asked.

"Because I am paid to do other things," he replied. "We are not sent here simply to enjoy ourselves, though I must say that I – " And then he suddenly stopped. "I wish you would let me teach you fly-fishing. I know you would like it."

Margery looked at the eager face turned towards her, and then she gazed out over the water.

"Perhaps I might like it," she said. "But it wouldn't be necessary for you to take that trouble. Uncle Archibald has two or three times asked me to go out with him, and of course he would teach me how to fish as he does. Isn't that somebody calling you?"

"Yes," said Martin, rising; "it's Phil. I suppose it's nearly supper-time."

As they walked towards the camp, Margery in front, and Martin behind her carrying the drawing-materials and the easel, Margery suddenly turned.

"It was very good of you to offer to teach me to fish with

flies," she said, "and perhaps, if Uncle Archibald doesn't want to be bothered, I may get you to show me how to do it."

The young man's face brightened, and he was about to express his pleasure with considerable warmth; but he checked himself, and merely remarked that whenever she was ready he would provide a rod and flies and show her how to use them.

Mrs. Archibald had gone into the cabin, and Margery went up to Matlack, who was on his way to the little tent in which the camp cooking was done.

"Did Mrs. Archibald tell you," said she, "that we have invited Mr. Clyde and Mr. Raybold to supper to-night?"

The guide stopped and smiled. "She told me," said he, "but I don't know that it was altogether necessary."

"I suppose you mean," said Margery, "that they are here so much; but I don't wonder; they must do awfully poor cooking for themselves. I don't suppose they will bring anything back that is good to eat."

"Not at this time of year," said he, "but I shall be satisfied if they bring themselves home."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Margery, quickly.

"Well," said Matlack, "I don't doubt the bicycle fellow will always come back all right, but I'm afeard about the other one. That bicycle chap don't know no more about a gun than he does about makin' bread, and I wouldn't go out huntin' with him for a hundred dollars. He's just as likely to take a crack at his pardner's head as at anything else that's movin' in the woods."

"That is dreadful!" exclaimed Margery.

"Yes, it is," returned the guide; "and if I had charge of their camp he wouldn't go out with a gun again. But it will be all right in a day or two. Peter will settle that."

"Mr. Sadler, do you mean?" asked Margery. "What's he got to do with it?"

"He's got everything to do with it," said Matlack. "He's got everything to do with everything in this part of the country. He's got his laws, and he sees to it that people stand by them. One of his rules is that people who don't know how to use guns sha'n't shoot in his camps."

"But how can he know about the people out here in the woods?" asked Margery.

"I tell you, miss," said Matlack, speaking slowly and decisively, "Peter Sadler's ways of knowing things is like gas – the kind you burn, I mean. I was a-visitin' once in a city house, and slept in a room on the top floor, and there was a leak in the pipe in the cellar, and that gas just went over the whole house, into every room and closet, and even under the beds, and I've often thought that that was just like Peter's way of doin' things and knowin' things. You take my word for it, that bicycle-man won't go out huntin' many more days, even if he don't shoot his pardner fust."

"He won't go to-morrow," thought Margery; and then she said to Matlack: "I think we ought to know Mr. Sadler's rules. Has he any more of them?"

"Oh, they ain't very many," said Matlack. "But there's one I think of now, and that is that no woman shall go out in a boat by herself on this lake."

"That is simply horrid!" exclaimed Margery. "Women can row as well as men."

"I don't say they can't," said Matlack. "I'm only tellin' you what Peter's rules are, and that's one of them."

Margery made no reply, but walked away, her head thrown back a little more than was usual with her.

"I've got to keep my eye on her," said Matlack to himself, as he went to the cabin; "she's never been broke to no harness."

Mr. Raybold did not shoot Mr. Clyde, nor did he shoot anything else. Mr. Clyde did shoot a bird, but it fell into the water at a place where the shore was very marshy, and it was impossible for him to get it. He thought it was a heron, or a bittern, or perhaps a fish-hawk, but whatever it was, both ladies said that it was a great pity to kill it, as it was not good to eat, and must have been very happy in its life in the beautiful forest.

"It is very cruel to shoot them when they are not strictly game," said Mr. Clyde, "and I don't believe I will do it. If I had the things to stuff them with, that would be different, but I haven't. I believe fishing is just as much fun, and more sensible."

"I do not!" exclaimed Mr. Raybold. "I hold that hunting is a manly art, and that a forester's life is as bold and free to him as it is to the birds in the air. I believe I have the blood of a hunter in me. My voice is for the woods."

"I expect you will change your voice," thought Margery, "when Mr. Sadler takes your gun away from you." But she did not say so.

Mr. Archibald stood with his hands in his pockets reflecting. He had hoped that these two young men were inveterate hunters, and that they would spend their days in long tramps. He did not at all approve of their fishing. Fishing could be done anywhere – here, for instance, right at this very door.

Supper was over, and the five inhabitants of Camps Rob and Roy had seated themselves around the fire which Martin had carefully built, keeping in view a cheery blaze without too much heat. Pipes had been filled and preparations made for the usual evening smoke and talk, when a man was seen emerging from the woods at the point where the road opened into the clearing about the camp. It was still light, for these hungry campers supped early, and the man could be distinctly seen as he approached, and it was plain that he was not a messenger from Sadler's.

He was rather a large man, dressed in black, and wearing a felt hat with a wide, straight brim. Hanging by a strap from his shoulder was a small leather bag, and in his hand he carried a closed umbrella. Advancing towards the fire, he took off his hat, bowed, and smiled. He wore no beard, his face was round and plump, and his smile was pleasant.

"Good-evening, ladies and gentlemen," said he, and his voice was as pleasant as his smile.

"Good-evening," said Mr. Archibald, and then for a moment

there was a pause.

"I presume," said the new-comer, looking about him, "that this is a camp."

"It is a camp," said Mr. Archibald.

"The fact is so obvious," said the man in black, "that it was really unnecessary for me to allude to it. May I ask to be allowed to sit down for a few moments? I am fatigued."

At this juncture Phil Matlack arrived on the scene. "Well, sir," said he, "have you any business with anybody here? Who do you wish to see?"

"I have no business," said the other, "and – "

"And you are a stranger to everybody here?" interrupted Matlack.

"Yes, but I hope – "

"Now then," said the guide, quickly, "I've got to ask you to move on. This is one of Peter Sadler's camps, and he has strict rules against strangers stoppin' in any of them. If you've lost your way, I'll tell you that this road, if you don't turn to the right or the left, will take you straight to Sadler's, and there's time enough for you to get there before dark."

"Mr. Matlack," exclaimed Mrs. Archibald, who had risen to her feet, "I want to speak to you! It's a shame," she said, when the guide had approached her, "to send that man away without even giving him a chance to rest himself. He may be a very respectable person on a walking tour."

"I guess he is on a walkin' tour," said Matlack, "and I guess

he's a regular tramp, and there's no orders we've got that's stricter than them against tramps."

"Well, I don't care who he is," said Mrs. Archibald, "or what your rules are, but when a perfectly good-mannered man comes to us and asks simply to be allowed to rest, I don't want him to be driven away as if he were a stray pig on a lawn. Mr. Archibald, shouldn't he be allowed to rest a while?"

Her husband rose and approached the stranger. "Where are you going, sir?" said he.

The man looked at Matlack, at Martin, who stood behind him, and then at the rest of the company, and after this comprehensive glance he smiled.

"From present appearances," he said, "I think I am going to go."

Mr. Archibald laughed. "When do you expect to get there?" he asked.

"It seems to me," said the other, reflectively, "that I am always going there, and I suppose I shall have to keep on doing it."

"Look here," said Mr. Archibald, turning to Matlack, "give him some supper, and let him rest. There will be time enough for him to get to Sadler's after that. If Sadler has anything to say against it, refer him to me."

"All right, sir," said Matlack, "if you say so. I'm no harder on my fellow-bein's than other people, but rules is rules, and it isn't for me to break them."

"My dear sir," said the stranger to Mr. Archibald, "your words

are more grateful to me than the promise of food. I see that you consider me a tramp, but it is a mistake. I am not a tramp. If you will allow me, after I have eaten a little supper – a meal which I must admit I greatly need – I will explain to you how I happen to be here." And with a bow he walked towards the table where Matlack and Martin had been eating their supper.

"Do you know what I think he is?" said Mr. Clyde, when Mr. Archibald had resumed his seat and his pipe. "I believe he is a wandering actor. Actors always have smoothly shaven faces, and he looks like one."

"Actor!" exclaimed Arthur Raybold. "That's nonsense. He's not in the least like an actor. Anybody could see by his tread and his air that he's never been on the stage. He's more like a travelling salesman. The next thing he'll do will be to pull out of that bag some samples of spool thread or patent thimbles."

"You are both wrong," said Margery – "entirely wrong. I have been looking at him, and I believe he is a Methodist minister with a dead horse. They ride circuits, and of course when their horses die they walk. Just wait a little, and see if I am not right."

They waited a little, and then they waited a little longer, and they had begun to be tired of waiting before the stranger finished his meal and approached the fire. His face was brighter, his smile was more pleasant, and his step had a certain jauntiness in it.

"I thank you all," he said, "for the very good meal I have just enjoyed. I am now going to go, but before I start I would like very much – indeed, I crave it as a favor – to place myself before

you in my proper light. May I have permission to do so, madam and sir?" he said, addressing Mrs. and Mr. Archibald, but with a respectful glance at the others, as if he would not ignore any one of them.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Archibald. "Sit down and tell us about yourself."

The stranger seated himself with alacrity a little back from the circle, and nearer to the young men than to the Archibald party.

CHAPTER VIII
THE BISHOP'S TALE

The stranger placed his broad-brimmed hat on the ground beside him, exposing a large round head somewhat bald in front, but not from age, and the rest of it covered with close-cut brown hair. His black clothes fitted him very closely, their extreme tightness suggesting that they had shrunken in the course of wearing, or that he had grown much plumper since he had come into possession of them; and their general worn and dull appearance gave considerable distance to the period of their first possession. But there was nothing worn or dull about the countenance of the man, upon which was an expression of mellow geniality which would have been suitably consequent upon a good dinner with plenty of wine. But his only beverage had been coffee, and in his clear bright eye there was no trace of any exhilaration, except that caused by the action of a hearty meal upon a good digestion and an optimistic disposition.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.